

# Evaluating the Presidential Management Fellows Program

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Has the Implementation of a Standardized  
Assessment Test Altered Student Selection?

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program aims to attract high-performing graduate students into federal service. Given the measured performance of past participants, or Fellows, many Federal agencies use the PMF Program as a cornerstone of their succession planning. Since its inception in 1977, the PMF Program has used a variety of selection mechanisms to identify and assess candidates. The most recent alteration in the PMF Program's selection mechanism in 2007 has raised questions of efficiency. While the implementation of a single standardized test has reduced costs and allowed more candidates to be evaluated, it is unknown if this assessment test holds bias and best identifies worthy candidates.

This study relies on an evaluation of PMF Program candidates and finalists from schools of public affairs and colleges of law over the years 1998-2010. The data are analyzed using tests of independence and linear regressions. Findings indicate that the 2007 assessment test implementation has altered previous selection patterns; however, between schools of public affairs and colleges of law, results indicate that this mechanism has removed previous Program bias. The analyses of program characteristics that affect finalist attainment reveal that the number of candidates and previous success within the PMF Program are both positive estimations of finalist attainment. Additionally, for schools of public affairs, NASPAA accreditation was found to have a negative effect on the number of finalists produced. Further analysis of Fellows is recommended to establish the value that academic degree holds on employment performance. Future estimations of the impact of program characteristics may be improved by the inclusion of student quality measures within schools of public affairs and colleges of law.

## INTRODUCTION

The hiring process for the United States Federal Government adheres to many rules and regulations that attempt to determine a candidate's quality. Because of these guidelines and the enormous volume of applications received for each position, even the most dedicated and highly qualified students may not obtain employment through the competitive hiring process due to a lack of formal work experience. Attempting to address this exclusion, encourage top students to seek federal employment, and foster internal management development, the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program was created by Executive Order in 1977.<sup>1</sup>

The PMF Program currently stands as a two-year position available only to graduate students in their final year of study. Those who become Fellows<sup>2</sup> enter into federal employment through a special hiring authority that is meant to place them on a management track within a federal agency. Fellows can be employed anywhere in the federal government, and over the course of the placement there are formal training requirements, opportunities for rotations, and a guarantee that, upon completing all conditions of the Program, Fellows will be retained as federal employees.

The selection process for the PMF Program involves an application by the student, nomination by that student's university, an assessment, being deemed a finalist, and becoming a Fellow through an agency hire. In the years covered by this research, only the assessment mechanism utilized to determine finalists has been significantly altered within the PMF selection process. As student interest in the Program has recently surged, measurable shifts in finalist attainment have been recognized, and it has become important to evaluate how the 2007 alteration of the assessment process has influenced this outcome. This research attempts to measure this effect by focusing on colleges of law and schools of public affairs, the two most prominent programs from which PMF finalists emerge.

In attempting to address if the reformed selection process has altered finalist identification from colleges of law and schools of public affairs, detailed within this paper is the history of the PMF Program, including a discussion of the past and present selection mechanisms. To understand how these divergent assessment processes have influenced finalist selection, a trend evaluation is calculated using data from 1998-2010. Further evaluations of program characteristics that may influence a university's success are examined, and the paper then concludes with considerations for the PMF Program stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally known as the Presidential Management Intern (PMI) program, it was renamed by Executive Order 13318 in 2003. For the purposes of this paper, the PMF designation will be used throughout.

<sup>2</sup> An individual who has received a position through the Presidential Management Fellows program.

## OVERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWS PROGRAM

The PMF Program is operated by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in Washington, D.C. The application for the Program is open only to students who are in their final year of graduate studies, but is not limited to a specific degree. According to the PMF website,

“The PMF Program attracts to Federal service outstanding men and women from a variety of academic disciplines and career paths who have a clear interest in, and commitment to, excellence in the leadership and management of public policies and programs. The PMF Program, administered by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), is the Federal Government’s cornerstone succession planning program to help agencies meet their critical need for leadership continuity.”

“Since 1977, the PMF Program has helped Federal agencies meet their workforce and succession planning needs by attracting outstanding master’s, law, and doctoral-level students to Federal service. Students can use this two-year fellowship as a stepping stone to highly visible and respected leadership positions in the Federal Government.”

The PMF Program operates in two primary phases: a centrally administered identification and selection process and federal agency-driven hiring and employment. The first phase is managed by OPM and seeks to define the best candidates through an application, nomination, and evaluation process. Students initiate the process by completing an application through [usajobs.gov](http://usajobs.gov).<sup>3</sup> Following the application, eligibility for the PMF evaluation test requires nomination by a designated official within the student’s university program.<sup>4</sup> Failure to be nominated excludes the student from further proceeding in the PMF process (OPM *PMF Website*).

At the Program’s inception, the evaluation process included an intensive application review, individual and group exercises conducted at regional assessment centers, and a writing sample review.

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<sup>3</sup> The application includes an identification of the student’s university, degree, desired assessment test location, and submission of a resume. Resumes, however, are not used in the assessment process, and are only provided to agencies once a candidate has been designated as a finalist. From 2003 to 2006, the application process required the submission of an accomplishment record, which consisted of three essays that focused on problem solving, interpersonal skills, and resilience (Nickels et al., 2006). Beginning in 2007, the accomplishment record was abandoned, and the application collected no information that was utilized in the selection process.

<sup>4</sup> For PMF nominations, each graduate program within a university is required to have a nomination coordinator. This is not completed at the university level and is most often managed by deans and academic program directors. Graduate school grades, recommendations from professors, essays, and oral presentations were once commonly used practices to determine eligibility. In a 2000 survey conducted by the Merit System Protection Board (MSPB), sixty percent of the surveyed Fellows considered their program’s nomination process as either “very” or “somewhat” competitive. As there is no enforced policy for the number of nominees a school may submit, since the 2007 implementation of the PMF assessment test, many programs have discontinued their nomination process and have put forth all interested candidates.

Beginning in 1995 (Table 1), changes were made to the assessment process that resulted in the discontinuation of the assessment centers, during which time the application review was the sole determinate of finalists. The assessment center was reintroduced in 1997, along with a questionnaire students completed during their application that was used to evaluate a candidate's leadership and managerial potential. Until its discontinuation in 2007, the assessment centers evaluated students on their performance through three components: an individual oral presentation, a group discussion, and a written exercise. By conducting these exercises, five of the eight competencies defined in OPM's Leadership Effectiveness Framework were measured at the assessment center.<sup>5</sup> As the number of students that the assessment centers could efficiently evaluate was estimated at 1,200 candidates, the increase of applicants in 2003 led to the development of an additional screening mechanism (MSPB, 2001). Due to further and more rapid growth in the number of PMF applicants<sup>6</sup> and the resource-intensive nature of this evaluation process, in 2007 a standardized assessment examination replaced all other forms of measurement to determine finalist status. The PMF Program Office reported that costs from the evaluation process were reduced by more than fifty percent due to change to a single standardized examination (OPM, 2008). The PMF assessment test ranks students based on three multiple-choice tests, consisting of critical thinking skills, life experience, and writing fundamentals.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The remaining three competencies were measured through the nomination, achievement record review, and subsequent evaluation of the written exercise. The competencies measured at the assessment center included: analytical thinking, demonstrated leadership, interpersonal and team skills, oral communication, and written expression (Nickels et al., 2006). The complete competency measurement schedule can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> In 2001, there were about 1,800 nominees to the PMF program. By 2006, there were nearly 3,000 nominees, and most recently, in 2010, there were over 6,800 total nominees (OPM *FOIA Request*, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> The three components of this test have remained unchanged since 2007. Sample questions from the PMF preparation guide can be found in Appendix B.

**TABLE 1: OPM ADMINISTERED PMF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES (1977 - 2010)**

YEARS	EVALUATION MECHANISMS
1977 - 1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application Review</li><li>• Assessment Center Evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Oral Presentation</li><li>- Group Exercise</li></ul></li><li>• Writing Sample Review</li></ul>
1995 - 1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application Review</li></ul>
1997 - 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Questionnaire</li><li>• Assessment Center Evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Oral Presentation</li><li>- Group Exercise</li><li>- Written Exercise</li></ul></li></ul>
1999 - 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment Center Evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Oral Presentation</li><li>- Group Exercise</li><li>- Written Exercise</li></ul></li></ul>
2003 - 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accomplishment Record</li><li>• Assessment Center Evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Oral Presentation</li><li>- Group Exercise</li><li>- Written Exercise</li></ul></li></ul>
2007 - 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessment Test</li></ul>

Source: MSPB, 2001; Nickels et al., 2006

During the current and previous evaluation processes, the assessment has required students to travel to pre-designated United States cities.<sup>8</sup> While some universities may provide travel funding, students who choose to take the PMF examination are expected to do so at their own expense. Through the history of the Program, the number of finalists has been primarily determined following the federal budget cycle, with each agency submitting an estimate of the number of Fellows it seeks. This estimate is used by OPM to select an adequate number of finalists from which the agencies can hire Fellows. Until 1997, this determination closely linked the number of finalists with the number of available positions; however, since then, only about 60 percent of finalists actually gain Fellow status (OPM, 2008). Of critical note, one complaint levied against the PMF Program is the lack of

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<sup>8</sup> The 2010 assessment sites were located in Atlanta, Austin, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles, New York City, Raleigh, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. (OPM *PMF Website*).

information it provides on the nature of positions Fellows may receive. This may hold particular importance to law students as the Program does not often allow them to serve as attorneys.<sup>9</sup>

Following the determination of finalists, the second phase of the PMF process begins, whereby individual federal agencies select from the pool of finalists. Within the PMF Program, students are not limited by their interests, as placements are allowed in virtually all federal agencies. The primary vehicle for selecting finalists exists through the PMF job fair, which is a three-day event in Washington, D.C. that welcomes all finalists and interested agencies. Finalists, though, have one full year to gain employment as a Fellow, extending the opportunity to locate a placement (*OPM PMF Website*). Despite the fact that agencies have submitted estimates of their desired number of Fellows, they are under no obligation to hire finalists. When finalists match the needs of the agency, they may be hired immediately without passing through the competitive hiring process or any additional evaluation. To hire a Fellow, however, an agency must pay a fee to the PMF Program Office at OPM<sup>10</sup> (MSPB, 2001). Agencies continue to hire finalists in spite of the fee because of the predetermination of finalists' abilities, the opportunity to avoid the delays of the competitive hiring process, and the reputation of past Fellows (Labiner).

Once a finalist is appointed by an agency as a Fellow, a two-year placement begins. To successfully complete the PMF Program and convert to a permanent federal position, a Fellow must:

- Construct an agency-approved Individual Development Plan;
- Complete a minimum of 80 hours of formal classroom training each year;
- Complete at least one developmental assignment of four to six months in duration;
- Pass an annual review; and,
- Receive a certification of successful completion of the Program by the appointing agency's Executive Resources Board, or equivalent, at the end of the fellowship.

If these criteria are met, "the Fellow does not serve a probationary period and acquires competitive status immediately upon conversion" (Part 362 of title 5).

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<sup>9</sup> From the "program overview" page of the OPM managed PMF website: "Federal agencies may hire finalists through the PMF Program to fill positions involving policy and legislative program development. It is *extremely unlikely* that an agency will have finalists working on trial and litigation matters during their fellowship. Finalists seeking appointments as an attorney in the Federal Government may wish to look for such opportunities outside of the PMF Program through usajobs.gov. Most attorney positions are typically outside the PMF Program's hiring authority, and if appointed as an attorney, the finalist may no longer be considered a PMF and will be withdrawn from the Program."

<sup>10</sup> Removal of appropriated funds for the PMF program in 1993 required the implementation of agency-paid fees in order to maintain the program. As the operation of the PMF program became a reimbursable activity, in 2000, each agency paid \$3,600 to the PMF program office at OPM to hire a Fellow. In 2004, the cost was \$4,800, and in the years since the assessment test implementation, it has stood at \$6,000 (MSPB, 2001; Labiner).



### ***The Value of a Fellow***

As the PMF Program has continued to exist since the implementation of hiring fees, there is a clear indication that Fellows are highly valued. A 2001 MSPB report on the PMF Program revealed significant findings on the quality of Fellows. Seventy-six percent of supervisors asserted the belief that Fellows they hired were better employees than those hired through other means. Specifically, Fellows were rated “better than average” to “outstanding” on measures of analytical ability (89 percent), writing ability (88 percent), leadership ability (90 percent), and knowledge of public policies and programs (76 percent). Looking at past groups of Fellows who entered between 1982 and 1989, 30 percent of those who remained in federal employment had assumed supervisory status, as opposed to 18 percent of a comparison group. Of this same group, more than 1 in 12 became members of the Senior Executive Service, compared to only 1 out of 100 hired through other means.

### ***History of the Presidential Management Fellows Program***

The PMF was originally created by Executive Order 12008, which was signed by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 and was twice reformed during the Reagan Administration. The Program currently exists through Executive Order 13318, which was signed in 2003 by President George W. Bush. The four Executive Orders that have been generated for the PMF Program illuminate both its prestige and perceived value to the federal government. While the primary goal of the Program has not been greatly altered over its 33-year existence, one key guideline for who qualifies to become a PMF was reconsidered by the Reagan Administration.

As originally defined, “the purpose of [the PMF Program] is to attract to Federal service men and women of exceptional management potential who have received special training in planning and managing public programs and policies.” Executive Order 12008 continued to limit eligibility to those “who have pursued a course of study oriented toward public management at a graduate-level educational institution and who, at the time of application, have recently received or will shortly receive an appropriate advanced degree.” Until President Reagan revoked this order with his own

definition of the Program in 1982, access to the PMF Program was limited to schools of public affairs. As schools of public affairs were the initial focus of the PMF Program, they have remained stakeholders for over 33 years and served to provide the largest portion of annual finalists until 2007 (OPM *FOIA Request*, 2010).

### ***Research Question***

Given the declared purpose of the PMF Program to attract outstanding individuals from a variety of academic disciplines into federal service on a path to serve as the future leadership of the federal government and the resources that are dedicated to the Program, it is important to observe the effect that the 2007 implementation of an assessment test as the sole form of evaluation has held. While the new assessment mechanism has effectively reduced costs and allowed for greater participation, has it served as an efficient selection mechanism? To address that question, this study looks first at the pre- and post-2007 assessment performance of schools of public affairs and colleges of law to appraise the reform's impact on the evaluation process. Following this measurement, focus is given to characteristics within schools of public affairs and colleges of law that may serve as predictors of finalist attainment. The findings may provide OPM with critical insight into the effect of the policy decision to utilize a single psychometric examination to determine finalists and illuminate university characteristics that affect finalist attainment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***The Federal Workforce and the Importance of the PMF Program***

Designated as a “high-risk” area by the General Accounting Office (GAO) in 2001, human capital management has stood as a weakness of the federal government. Stating this clearly, GAO assessed that “federal human capital strategies are not appropriately constituted to meet current and emerging challenges or to drive the needed transformation across the federal government” (2003). As a result, the PMF Program and its ability to attract high-performing, public service-minded graduate students directly into federal service stands as part of the solution to the government’s human capital shortfall (Labiner). Outside of the Program, students face a recruitment process that was detailed by the Second National Commission on the Public Service (2003) as “heavily burdened by ancient and illogical procedures that vastly complicate the application process... the very nature of the application process deters applicants” (as cited by Labiner). This makes the PMF process the most direct means by which graduate students can obtain employment in the federal government. Furthermore, as the PMF Program utilizes a competitive selection process among eligible applicants, it conforms to the standards of federal hiring policies (Labiner).

Based on supervisors’ evaluations, nearly ninety percent of those hired as Fellows were identified as having exceeded job standards (MSPB, 2001). This, coupled with higher numbers of Fellows ascending to supervisory roles and Senior Executive Service than non-Fellows, supports the Program serving as the cornerstone of federal agency succession planning (Nickels et al., 2006; OPM, 2008). As past analysis of the PMF Program has revealed the success of those who have served as Fellows (MSPB, 2001) and determined the validity of the assessment center model (Nickels et al., 2006), it is important to understand the quality of the previous evaluation model and the support for psychometric testing.

### ***Assessment Methods***

The 2006 report by Nickels et al. thoroughly details the “multiple-hurdle selection strategy” that was once employed by OPM to determine finalist status. From 1997-1998 and 2003-2006, each phase of the processes, including the application, nomination, assessment center activities, and written exercise, was designed to evaluate a student’s competency to serve in the federal government (MSPB,

2001; Nickels et al., 2006). The method of prescreening candidates during the application process that served to differentiate 1997-1998 from 2003-2006 was altered after the questionnaire utilized during the earlier period received negative feedback and lacked face validity. As a result, the implementation of the accomplishment record (Hough, 1984) in 2003 provided a prescreen evaluation that held excellent face validity and little negative feedback (Nickels et al., 2006).

Hough developed the concept of an accomplishment record in response to what he viewed as the unneeded, irrelevant, and invasive uses of psychological testing. The accomplishment record allows a candidate to self-report his or her accomplishments in a manner that is relevant to the position being sought (Von Bergen, 1995; Hough, 1984). As a result, within the PMF Program, the 2006 evaluation by Nickels et al. found that the scores applicants received on their accomplishment record submissions were highly correlated to their performance during assessment center exercises.<sup>11</sup> Nickels also found that the mean score for the five measured competencies at the assessment center each increased following the prescreening of candidates using the accomplishment record. Standing as proof that a prescreen mechanism can be effectively used to assess competency, the accomplishment record was a valuable tool within the PMF process. Furthermore, requiring students to construct three essays as the first step in a multiple-hurdle process served as a deterrent to those with marginal interest in the Program.

The assessment centers were further able to evaluate students by using “simulation exercises to observe specific behaviors of the participants” (Thornton, 1992). By matching these exercises with OPM’s Leadership Effectiveness Framework, the activities undertaken at the assessment center allowed for a thorough measurement of a student’s competencies (Gaugler et al., 1987, Thornton, 1992; Nickels, 2006). Evaluators at the PMF assessment centers were primarily federal human resources specialists, and regardless of past participation in the process, they each received yearly procedural training. These evaluators worked in teams to assess students’ oral presentations, group discussion, and written exercise (Nickels, 2006). By working in teams and assigning average scores, Nickels’ assessment center evaluation found that the reliability of multiple raters exceeded that of a

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<sup>11</sup> For the competencies measured during the individual presentations, group discussion, and written exercise, the scores from applicants’ accomplishment records were correlated at a minimum rate of 0.93.

single rater, and according to Thornton's reliability scale, the resulting ratings that fell between 0.82 and 0.94 were considerably high. Including the positive evidence of Fellow performance once on the job, the assessment center model was successful in both estimated and practical terms (MSPB, 2001).

With the continued growth in applicants, maintaining the assessment centers would have required a significant increase in the cost of hiring a Fellow. Nickels et al. noted in 2006, "Because the applicant numbers have continued to increase, OPM now faces a new dilemma... [as] the volume of applications is growing beyond the expected efficiency of even the accomplishment record approach." As a result, in 2007 OPM unveiled its new single-assessment test, which abandoned all previous evaluation techniques and marginalized the university nomination process. This marked the end of the multiple-hurdle process, as a single psychometric examination was now employed to determine federal workforce competency.

As this test has only existed for four years, OPM has yet to complete an evaluation of its success in comparison to the previous evaluation process. Support for psychometric testing, however, presumes that if developed properly, it can stand equally as effective as an assessment center evaluation. Analysis by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) demonstrated the ability of standardized testing to produce consistent returns. However, with this style of evaluation, the accuracy of the assessment test to identify the desired competencies may remain unknown until an evaluation of employee performance can be conducted (Jenkins, 2001). As one component of the PMF assessment exam can only be identified as a personality measure, the predictive quality of such measures is less consistent. This is particularly true with the sampling error that may occur as candidates self-report personal characteristics. These self-identifications may lead to the intent to provide the "correct" answer, rather than a statement of that candidate's true behavior. Research by Tett et al. (1991), however, found significant correlations between the use of personality measures during the recruitment process and job performance. If this is the case, there is support for the implementation of the 2007 PMF assessment test as an efficient evaluation mechanism. With a full evaluation of Fellow success since the implementation of the single assessment model likely to take a decade or more (MSPB, 2001), there could be significant negative long-term ramifications of an inexact assessment mechanism for both finalist attainment and federal agency succession planning.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The data in this study include the schools receiving rankings in 2008 from *U.S. News and World Report*. For schools of public affairs, each program received a score on a scale of one to five, and was ranked accordingly.<sup>12</sup> *U.S. News* did not report the scores for programs that received an average score below 2.5. Due to this, 99 schools received designation, with rankings ranging from one to ninety. Two schools of public affairs were removed from the sample, as they had no record of public affairs graduates during the years of the study.<sup>13</sup> For colleges of law, many more factors are considered in their ranking.<sup>14</sup> As a result, law schools were scored on a scale of one to one-hundred. Scores were not reported for programs receiving fewer than 40 points, which corresponded to a rank of 100. The resulting rankings included 102 schools.

As rankings are a publicly referenced categorization that may serve as an indicator of a program's quality and guide the decisions of potential students, one aspect of this research attempts to estimate the effect that *U.S. News* rankings has on finalist attainment. Therefore, for both schools of public affairs and colleges of law, institutions that were unranked by *U.S. News* were excluded regardless of the number of finalists. Programs that remained in the analysis were categorized as public or private institutions. Additionally, the accreditation status for both program types was gathered.<sup>15</sup> These measures were included to evaluate the effect that school characteristics hold on participation in the PMF Program.

Distance calculations were made from the location of each university to both the nearest PMF assessment test site and Washington, D.C. These measurements were generated using the shortest possible distance between the two points. The measurement of distance to the nearest PMF test site was included to estimate the impact that proximity to the evaluation site holds on finalist status. As universities range in distances that can place the test locally, or require students to take a flight and

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<sup>12</sup> Description of *U.S. News* ranking methodology can be found under "Schools of Public Affairs" in Appendix C.

<sup>13</sup> Graduate totals were obtained using the IPEDS Data Center. For the Naval Postgraduate Academy (ranked 45<sup>th</sup>) and Willamette University (ranked 90<sup>th</sup>), values of zero were found for degree attainment in each year. This is possibly explained by both institutions having a closely linked public affairs and business administration degree. Correspondingly, neither of these schools had any nominees or finalists during the period of this study.

<sup>14</sup> Description of *U.S. News* ranking methodology can be found under "Colleges of Law" in Appendix C.

<sup>15</sup> Schools of public affairs receive accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). Colleges of law are accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA). Full list of schools and their designations can be found in Appendix E.

stay overnight, this variable may serve as an indicator of how the convenience of the assessment test impacts the number of finalists. With the majority of PMF placements existing at agency headquarters, the measure of distance to Washington, D.C. potentially serves to reveal the impact of two characteristics that affect finalist status.<sup>16</sup> First, a student's proximity to Washington D.C. may incline him or her to have a higher interest in federal employment because of his or her ability to gain exposure to federal employment while enrolled in college. The second implication of this measure may be that students who attend schools that are further from Washington, D.C. may be less inclined to relocate. While the explanation of this measure can only be hypothesized in this study, a measure of the effect that this distance holds is estimated. In instances that a test site was located in the same city as a university, or a university was located within Washington, D.C., a value of one mile was assigned as their distance.

Nominee and finalist totals were obtained from OPM and were divided by university, program of study, and number of students obtaining finalist status during that year. Designation as a nominee implies that a student has applied to the PMF Program and been nominated by his or her academic program. In both the previous and current assessment processes, only those designated as nominees were eligible to participate in the PMF evaluation process. As the resulting finalists are those who are eligible to be hired outside of the competitive hiring process, they provide an important indication of the Program's selectivity. In the data received from OPM, law students were those identified by the degree designation of "Law (JD or other law degree)." Students from schools of public affairs arose under the two designations of "Policy Analysis" and "Public Administration." Universities not holding any finalists over the duration of the study, but appearing in the *U.S. News* rankings, were included with values of zero.

Totals of annual graduates were obtained from the *IPEDS Data Center* and include all those identified as "Public Administration" and "Public Policy Analysis" for schools of public affairs. For colleges of law, only those recognized as "Law (LL.B, J.D.)" were counted. A measure of graduates was included in the estimations to determine the effect of program size.

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<sup>16</sup> Observing PMF classes from 1995 to 1999, MSPB found that about eighty percent of Fellows during those years worked in Washington, D.C. In comparison, about sixty percent of non-Fellows with a comparable occupation and level of education worked in Washington, D.C. during this period (MSPB, 2001).

**TABLE 2.1: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

VARIABLE	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	MEAN	
		Schools of Public Affairs (N=97)	Colleges of Law (N=102)
US News Score <sup>1</sup>	2008 U.S. News and World Report Graduate School Rank Score	3.15 <sup>A</sup>	57.13 <sup>B</sup>
Public Institution <sup>2</sup>	Percentage of Schools that are Public Institutions	78.4	49.0
Accreditation <sup>3</sup>	Percentage of Accredited Schools	73.2 <sup>C</sup>	100 <sup>D</sup>
Distance to Test <sup>4</sup>	Average Distance from University to Nearest PMF Test Location	157.4 <sup>E</sup>	148.0 <sup>E</sup>
Distance to DC	Average Distance from University to Washington, D.C.	772.9 <sup>E</sup>	861.1 <sup>E</sup>
1998 Nominees <sup>5</sup>	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 1998	4.27	1.09
1999 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 1999	3.99	1.26
2000 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2000	4.00	1.28
2001 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2001	4.23	1.58
2002 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2002	4.66	2.37
2003 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2003	5.68	4.47
2004 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2004	5.77	4.05
2005 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2005	6.55	4.40
2006 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2006	5.61	4.95
2007 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2007	6.05	6.72
2008 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2008	6.44	6.47
2009 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2009	9.80	10.72
2010 Nominees	Average Number of Nominated Applicants per School in 2010	10.71	16.07
1998 Finalists <sup>5</sup>	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 1998	1.75	0.41
1999 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 1999	1.94	0.45
2000 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2000	1.63	0.49
2001 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2001	1.97	0.39
2002 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2002	1.72	0.76
2003 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2003	1.76	1.10
2004 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2004	1.79	0.99
2005 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2005	1.56	0.74
2006 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2006	1.38	0.87
2007 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2007	1.46	1.68
2008 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2008	1.63	1.63
2009 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2009	1.61	1.75
2010 Finalists	Average Number of PMF Finalists per School in 2010	1.37	2.66

<sup>A</sup> Out of 5 possible points

<sup>B</sup> Out of 100 possible points

<sup>C</sup> Accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA)

<sup>D</sup> Accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA)

<sup>E</sup> Distances are reported in 'as the crow flies' mileage



**TABLE 2.2: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

VARIABLE	VARIABLE DESCRIPTION	MEAN	
		Schools of Public Affairs (N=97)	Colleges of Law (N=102)
2001 Graduates <sup>2</sup>	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2001	46.41	239.29
2002 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2002	49.93	244.93
2003 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2003	51.20	245.59
2004 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2004	56.82	249.85
2005 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2005	63.54	261.74
2006 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2006	63.70	259.29
2007 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2007	63.28	258.85
2008 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2008	64.91	258.81
2009 Graduates	Average Number of Program Graduates per School in 2009	67.68	255.93

Sources: <sup>1</sup> *U.S. News and World Report 2008 Graduate School Rankings*

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics: IPEDS Data Center

<sup>3</sup> NASPAA (Schools of Public Affairs) *2009-10 Roster of Accredited Programs* and ABA (Colleges of Law) website

<sup>4</sup> Google Maps Distance Calculator

<sup>5</sup> PMF Data Provided by OPM (obtained through FOIA request April 2010)

As observed in Table 2.1, the means of the *U.S. News* scores that are utilized to rank graduate programs lie above the middle possible value of 2.5 for schools of public affairs and 50.0 for colleges of law. For schools of public affairs, however, the mean of 3.15 translates to a percentage that is 63 percent of the total possible score. Law schools produce a smaller average of just over 57 percent, which may serve as an indication of three factors. First, there may simply be more public affairs schools than law schools, which would cause more colleges of law that fall below a fifty percent assessment score to appear in the top-100 rankings.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, as described by *U.S. News*, “Data were standardized about their means, and standardized scores were weighted, totaled, and rescaled so that the top school received 100; others received their percentage of the top score.” The possibility also exists that there is a larger drop-off between colleges of law than for schools of public affairs.

The number of ranked public institutions illuminates a notable gap between the two degrees. For schools of public affairs, over 78 percent of ranked programs are at public universities. In contrast,

<sup>17</sup> This hypothesis may be supported by the finalist data that includes 213 schools of public affairs that have produced finalists opposed to 161 for colleges of law.

only 49 percent of the colleges of law hold the same distinction. The average number of accredited programs provides little insight for colleges of law, as every top-100 *U.S. News* ranked program is accredited by the ABA. For schools of public affairs, however, fewer than 74 percent of schools held the comparative designation, which provides for the opportunity to observe the effect that NASPAA accreditation holds on finalist attainment.

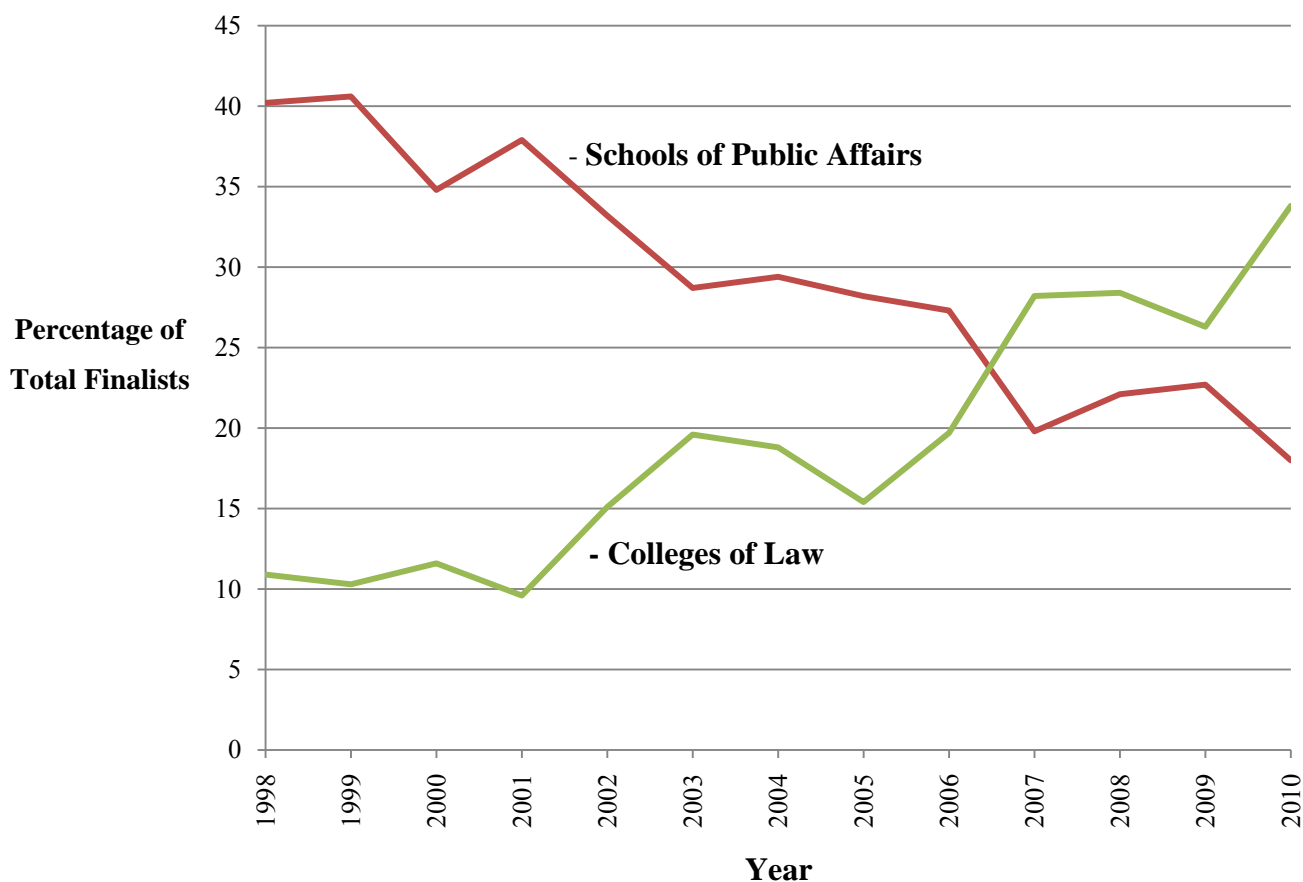
Means of the average distance to the nearest PMF test location for those who became finalists are similar between the two degrees and indicate that, on average, each student traveled 150 miles to take the assessment test. The average finalist distance to Washington, D.C. is 773 and 861 miles for schools of public affairs and colleges of law, respectively. When looking at the median values of distance to Washington D.C., schools of public affairs stand at 493 miles and colleges of law at 556 miles. The difference of roughly 300 miles between the mean and median distances implies that larger variation in total distance exists for the half of finalists that come from beyond the median distance. This logically fits the population density of the United States viewed from east to west.

The remaining data in Table 2.1 all relate to the number of nominees and finalists each degree generated in the years between 1998 and 2010. For schools of public affairs, the thirteen years of data present a trend of increasing annual nominations. However, there has been a subtle decline in the average number of finalists that each ranked university has held during that same period. When evaluating these figures in relation to the total population of finalists (Figure A), there is a clear drop in the percentage of finalists from schools of public affairs, particularly after the implementation of the standardized assessment test in 2007. Comparatively, in 1998 and 1999, public affairs students accounted for more than 40 percent of the finalists. In the last two years of data, students from these same programs averaged just over 20 percent of the total finalists. This serves as an indication that schools of public affairs have not only experienced a decline in the number of finalists over the length of the study, but they have also failed to keep pace with the expanding finalist pool.

For colleges of law, the data reveal an opposing story. Law schools have made clear and noticeable gains in the average number of finalists produced by each university. Colleges of law also experienced significant growth in the percentage of the total finalist pool that they claim (Figure A).

From 1998 to 2001, colleges of law produced fewer than half a finalist per school; however, by 2010, they had roughly six times as many placements. A large explanation of this finding likely relates to the swell of nominees produced by law schools in recent years. With just over one nominee per school in 1998, colleges of law most recently produced an average of sixteen nominees each in 2010. Data in Table 2.2 indicate that the average number of graduates has increased for both programs. However, as program size has remained relatively constant, the recent incline in law school nominees could be explained by increased interest in public service, knowledge of the PMF Program, and a potential decline in the job market for other positions often obtained by law students. Regardless of the cause of this influx, Figure A indicates a clear growth in prominence within the finalist pool as law students overtook public affairs students as the primary recipients of finalist status in 2007.

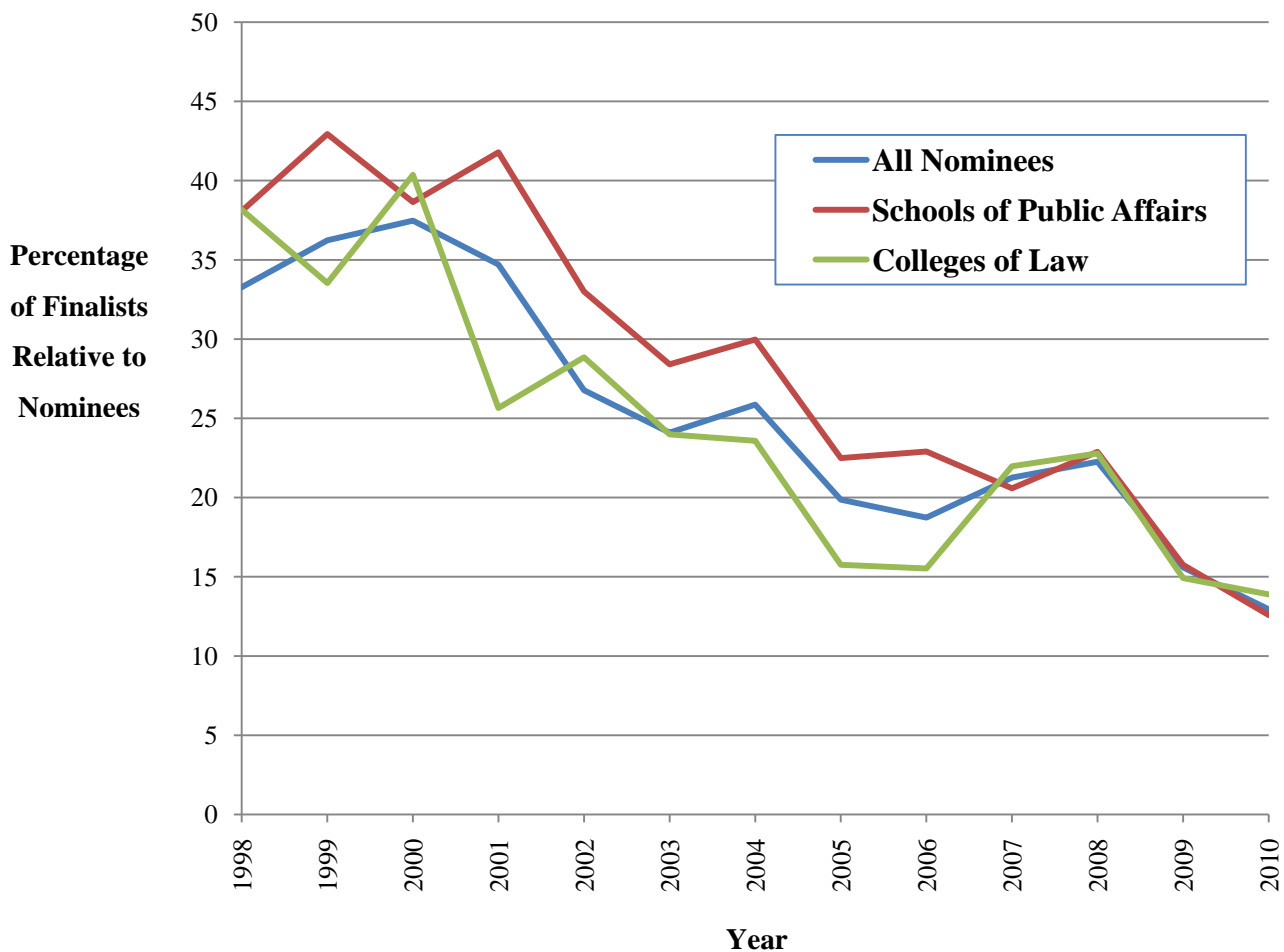
**FIGURE A: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FINALISTS FOR SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND COLLEGES OF LAW (1998-2010)**



Source: PMF Data Provided by OPM  
 (obtained through FOIA request April 2010)

Notable to the relationship between schools of public affairs and colleges of law is that the two programs have maintained about 50 percent of the total finalist pool in the years analyzed (Figure A). Therefore, as gains have been made by colleges of law, they have almost equally been lost by schools of public affairs. Primarily when looking at the 2007 inversion of each program’s finalist attainment, it has caused some at schools of public affairs to question the fairness of the assessment examination (NASPAA, 2008). While the gains by colleges of law are clear when looking at Figure A, it is important to consider the effect that rising nominee totals has held. Figure B details the percentage of finalists in comparison to the number of nominees.

**FIGURE B: PERCENTAGE OF FINALISTS RELATIVE TO NOMINEES FOR SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, COLLEGES OF LAW, AND TOTAL NOMINEES (1998-2010)**



Source: PMF Data Provided by OPM  
(obtained through FOIA request April 2010)

These figures were generated by first calculating the rate at which nominees attained finalist status for the entire PMF population. Calculations were then made for schools of public affairs and colleges of law, comparing their respective rates of finalist attainment to the average for all degree programs. For the year 2001, this figure indicates that among all nominees, nearly 35 percent were deemed finalists. Observing just the nominees from schools of public affairs, almost 42 percent of those who went through the assessment process earned finalist designation, while fewer than 26 percent of law students attained the same status. Comparing these results to the percentage of all nominees that became finalists, schools of public affairs outperformed the mean by over 7 percent, while colleges of law fell below the mean by more than 9 percent.

The results of this observation explain a situation in which the assessment center model of evaluation that ended in 2006 placed a greater percentage of finalists from schools of public affairs than the total population. Standing as the case for all nine of the analyzed years before the implementation of the assessment test, this positive margin does not necessarily imply bias, as it may be expected that students with a background in public affairs might perform better in an evaluation for a public service position. While there is some variation for colleges of law during this nine-year period, for the majority of years, the assessment system before 2007 produced results below the mean.

Since 2007, there appears to be little difference between the performances of the two programs in comparison to the total nominee pool. As both schools of public affairs and colleges of law appear to gain a proportional total of finalists from each degree's respective number of nominees, it suggests the current assessment test stands without bias between the two programs. However, as the PMF Program is aimed at identifying future federal agency leaders, the absence of degree preference may call into question the validity of what the test is measuring.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Results have varied for other degree programs. As the scope of this analysis was to compare the two programs receiving the largest portion of annual finalists, further estimations of the other degree programs were not pursued. However, a table containing the effect of the 2007 standardized assessment test implementation held on other program's finalist attainment can be found in Appendix E.

## ***Model***

### *PMF Selection Effects*

To examine the significance of finalist selection between schools of public affairs and colleges of law, tests of independence were completed for the years 1998-2010. These tests defined all nominees for each year as finalists and non-finalists for schools of public affairs, colleges of law, and other degree programs (six total designations). These measures tested the null hypothesis that the rate of finalist attainment was independent of program type. The alternative hypothesis is that there is dependence between program types and finalist attainment.

### *Program Effects*

The model used to estimate finalist attainment for schools of public affairs and colleges of law includes universities and annual figures from 2003-2010. A linear regression was completed for each academic program, evaluating the effect that program characteristics, travel distance, and the level of PMF Program participation hold upon finalist attainment. For schools of public affairs, this yielded 388 observations (97 schools over four years) for both the measure before and after the implementation of the PMF assessment test. Similarly, 408 observations (102 schools over four years) were used for colleges of law during each period. The model includes estimations of: (1) *U.S. News* score; (2) status as a public or private university; (3) accreditation (only for schools of public affairs); (4) distance to the PMF test site; (5) distance to Washington, D.C.; (6) number of nominees in the current period; (7) number of graduates in the current period; and, (8) number of finalists in the previous period.

## EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

### *Changes in Finalist Selection*

Figure B suggests that the switch to a standardized assessment examination in 2007 served to marginalize the comparative advantage either academic program realized within the PMF evaluation process. With the lone exception of 2000, the tests of independence in Table 3 provide evidence that the assessment mechanisms used before 2007 generated results dependent of degree type of finalists for schools of public affairs and colleges of law. This may offer the conclusion that the previous assessment mechanism took into account considerations the current test does not. Furthermore, as the results since 2007 have not rejected the null hypothesis and returned rates of finalists that are independent of the measured programs, it is difficult to contend that the current selection mechanism is biased toward colleges of law. However, the lack of degree preference does not conclude that the test is more efficient at identifying successful federal employees. These tests demonstrate that, since 2007, the growth in law school finalists that Figure A related to the decline in public affairs students has been primarily driven by the large increase in college of law nominees.

**TABLE 3: TESTS OF INDEPENDENCE OF FINALIST SELECTION RATE  
AND ACADEMIC PROGRAM TYPE 1998-2010**

Year	Total Nominees	Schools of Public Affairs		Colleges of Law		Other Academic Programs		Estimated Coefficient	p-Value
		Finalists	Non-Finalists	Finalists	Non-Finalists	Finalists	Non-Finalists		
1998	1388	214	348	58	94	261	627	13.504*	0.001
1999	1602	225	299	57	113	272	563	15.573*	< 0.001
2000	1529	201	319	67	99	309	545	1.506	0.471
2001	1540	234	326	59	171	324	664	22.302*	< 0.001
2002	1778	198	402	90	222	309	1009	19.999*	< 0.001
2003	2230	206	519	141	447	371	1296	10.482*	0.005
2004	2980	202	472	129	418	356	1080	8.275*	0.016
2005	2657	177	610	97	519	354	1405	10.407*	0.007
2006	3162	150	505	108	588	291	1289	12.306*	0.002
2007	2931	157	606	223	792	412	1535	0.530	0.767
2008	3725	162	546	208	705	363	1309	0.594	0.743
2009	3293	181	968	210	1198	406	2149	0.686	0.710
2010	5112	159	1105	298	1849	425	2975	2.412	0.299

***Finalist Attainment within Schools of Public Affairs***

For the purposes of analyzing the individual academic programs, the years 2003-2006 were grouped and averaged to measure the before effect of the assessment test implementation. These four years were chosen as an equal-sized sample to the four years following the test. These years were also selected because they stand as a uniform period of nominee evaluation (Table 1).

As observed in Table 4, several variables have a significant effect on students from public affairs programs attaining finalist status. At a 99 percent confidence level for both observed periods, the number of nominees that a school put forth and a school’s previous finalist attainment<sup>19</sup> provided a positive estimation of current finalist attainment. These results indicate that schools submitting more nominees are likely to attain more finalists, and that past success of a university may indicate both a higher interest in the PMF Program and inherent characteristics of students within an academic program.

**TABLE 4: ESTIMATES OF THE IMPACT OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ON FINALIST ATTAINMENT FOR SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS 2003-2010**

EXPLANATORY VARIABLE	Estimated Coefficient		t-Statistic		p-Value	
	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010
US News Score	0.056	0.235	0.29	0.81	0.772	0.422
Public Institution	0.005	0.293	0.02	0.93	0.984	0.357
Accreditation	-0.428*	-0.513*	-2.37	-2.01	0.020	0.047
Distance to Test	< 0.001	< 0.001	0.22	0.48	0.828	0.629
Distance to DC	< 0.001	< -0.001	0.05	-1.03	0.958	0.308
Number of Nominees in Current Period	0.244*	0.188*	8.69	7.94	< 0.001	< 0.001
Number of Graduates in Current Period	-0.003	-0.003	-1.33	-1.06	0.187	0.294
Number of Finalists in Previous Period	0.320*	0.263*	7.20	2.86	< 0.001	0.005
Constant	-0.101	-0.811	-0.17	-0.93	0.866	0.355
	<b>N</b>		<b>R-squared</b>		<b>F-value</b>	
2003-2006	97		0.926		136.58	
2007-2010	97		0.875		77.11	

<sup>19</sup> For the period of 2003-2006, the effect of previous finalist attainment was based on data from the years 1999-2002, a four-year period of homogenous assessment before the implementation of the accomplishment record in 2003. The 2007-2010 estimation was based upon 2003-2006.



As the distance that a school stands from the PMF assessment test site does not hold significance before or after 2007, within this estimation, it can be concluded that the limited number of sites in which the assessment test is offered is not serving to unfairly advantage the performance of those who are spared the time and cost of travel. Similarly, the distance measure of a school's relation to Washington, D.C. has no large or significant effect on finalist attainment. When holding all else constant, there also appears to be no significant effect of a school's *U.S. News* score, attending a public or private university, or the size of graduating class.

Observed at a 95 percent confidence level, though, programs holding NASPAA accreditation were found to produce about one-half finalist fewer per year. Table 5 displays how accredited and non-accredited programs have produced finalists relative to nominees.

**TABLE 5: FINALIST ATTAINMENT FOR SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS BY ACCREDITATION STATUS AS PERCENTAGE OF NOMINEES 2003-2010**

Years	Accredited	Non-Accredited
2003-2006	25.6	31.7
2007-2010	16.1	22.7

Source: PMF Data Provided by OPM (obtained through FOIA request April 2010)

There are several potential explanations why this may stand true. First, is the possibility that the terms of accreditation produce less desirable outcomes for students who seek federal employment.

Primarily, this would likely stem from the courses required to maintain status as an accredited school of public affairs. However, without a measure of the quality of students who attend accredited and non-accredited schools, it is difficult to surmise the full effect that NASPAA accreditation standards have on the preference the PMF Program has for students from non-accredited schools. A more simple explanation of the estimated effect of NASPAA accreditation may exist in the decision of high-performing institutions choosing not to seek accreditation based upon the ability to attract students through the university's name and program reputation. The opposite case may also hold true, in that public affairs programs at lesser-known universities may seek accreditation to provide legitimacy to their public affairs degree.

***Finalist Attainment within Colleges of Law***

The examination of colleges of law finalists in Table 6 presents some variation between the two periods. For 2003-2006, a small, but statistically significant effect (at 95 percent) estimated finalist attainment was greater for schools located further from Washington, D.C. After 2007, increased distance from Washington, D.C. was associated with fewer finalists, but the estimation lost statistical significance. It is unclear, however, why this was the case. Conversely, gaining significance at a 95 percent confidence level after the assessment test was implemented was the value of a program's previous finalist attainment. This can primarily be explained by the rapid growth in Program participation that colleges of law experienced in 2003 and since 2007 (Table 2.1).

**TABLE 6: ESTIMATES OF THE IMPACT OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ON FINALIST ATTAINMENT FOR COLLEGES OF LAW 2003-2010**

EXPLANATORY VARIABLE	Estimated Coefficient		t-Statistic		p-Value	
	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010
US News Score	0.006	0.029*	1.75	4.53	0.083	< 0.001
Public Institution	-0.093	0.076	-0.90	0.40	0.371	0.688
Distance to Test	< -0.001	< -0.001	-0.64	-0.24	0.523	0.809
Distance to DC	< 0.001*	< -0.001	2.26	-0.95	0.026	0.343
Number of Nominees in Current Period	0.249*	0.150*	22.63	10.44	< 0.001	< 0.001
Number of Graduates in Current Period	< -0.001	0.001	-1.54	1.48	0.126	0.143
Number of Finalists in Previous Period	-0.111	0.193*	-1.93	2.14	0.056	0.035
Constant	-0.101	-1.671	-1.25	-3.71	0.215	< 0.001
	<b>N</b>		<b>R-squared</b>		<b>F-value</b>	
2003-2006	102		0.899		119.32	
2007-2010	102		0.835		68.01	

At a 99 percent confidence level, *U.S. News* scores also have positive significance during the assessment test period. One explanation for this may be that *U.S. News* uses LSAT selectivity as 12.5 percent of their law school ranking.<sup>20</sup> As the PMF assessment test has been hypothesized to be similar to the LSAT, it is possible that the added significance of the *U.S. News* score since 2007 is related.

Similar to schools of public affairs, when holding all else constant, status as a public or private university, the distance to the PMF assessment site, and the number of graduates held no large or significant effects. Also standing parallel between schools of public affairs and colleges of law, at a 99 percent confidence level, is the positive effect of the number of nominees. This serves to reinforce the finding that the greater number of nominees a program submits, the more likely it is to have finalists.

### ***Additional Estimations***

Estimations for how program characteristics affect the number of nominees from each university can be found in Appendix F. These estimations are included to highlight the characteristics related to increased nominee submission, which this study has linked to increased finalist attainment, particularly since 2007. For schools of public affairs (Table 9), statistically significant at a 99 percent confidence level in both periods are positive estimations of *U.S. News* score, the size of graduating class, and previous finalist attainment. Estimating a negative impact of nearly three nominees in both periods, but only being significant before 2007, status as a public institution led to fewer nominees. With positive estimations standing significant at a 99 percent confidence level, graduating class size and previous finalist attainment are relevant for colleges of law. At the same level of confidence, law schools located closer to Washington, D.C. are estimated to produce larger numbers of nominees.

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<sup>20</sup> The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) scores students based upon reading comprehension, analytical reasoning skills, and logical reasoning skills. A full explanation of how the LSAT is measured within the law school rankings can be found in Appendix C.

## DISCUSSION

In the years since the assessment test was implemented in 2007, students from colleges of law have noticeably overtaken those from schools of public affairs in finalist attainment (Figure A). As the declared purpose of the PMF Program is to attract students with a commitment to “excellence in the leadership and management of public policies and programs,” the rise of law students and matching decline of public affairs students is alarming. However, the data indicate that, while the 2007 assessment test has had a pronounced impact, there had already been a downward trend for public affairs finalists that was likely driven by increasing numbers of nominees from other programs. Furthermore, the 2007 assessment test was not found to hold any statistical bias between the two programs. Based on results prior to 2007, this offers the conclusion that the previous assessment mechanism favored public affairs students and may have been biased against law school students. With the measured success that Fellows achieved during their years of employment when the assessment centers were in use, it may prove that a preference for public affairs students best served the PMF reputation and federal government workforce. There is also the possibility with a future assessment of Fellows’ performance that the current assessment mechanism may produce equally or better performing employees.

This study is limited by not having a measure of what degrees students who seek to work in the federal government most often seek. While inferential conclusions would suggest that students who undertake professional preparation for careers in public policy analysis and administration are more likely to hold aspirations of federal employment, students who attend colleges of law may share or exceed that level of interest. Based upon these data, however, it appears that neither degree provides students with an advantage since 2007. If the assessment mechanism for the PMF Program is simply returning a proportional number of finalists relative to the total number of nominees, then the level of student interest in federal employment may serve only to predict the number of nominees.

This study would be improved by having more characteristics of individual schools of public affairs and colleges of law. Data relating to the quality of incoming students (e.g. GRE for schools of public affairs, and the LSAT for colleges of law) and instructional areas of concentration pertaining to

the federal government could illuminate key indicators of significant university characteristics. Potentially providing the largest additional value to this research, though, would be data related to the number of yearly placed Fellows. It is possible that, regardless of the number of finalists, every public affairs student is placed as a Fellow, or that agencies have developed a preference for students from other academic backgrounds. Continued research on this topic should seek to obtain and evaluate these data on placed Fellows to understand more completely the effect that academic background holds. Additionally, understanding the retention rates for Fellows of different academic backgrounds might provide significant insight into which degree is best serving the long-term leadership needs of the federal government. Addressing these questions would further this research by providing evidence that degree bias in the assessment process may be warranted.

As the primary focus of this analysis was to ask if the assessment test that was introduced in 2007 served as an efficient selection mechanism, there is evidence that this was achieved for schools of public affairs. In reducing operational costs, introducing automation to the selection process, and evaluating a larger number of nominees, the estimations for schools of public affairs reveal little change before and after 2007. This offers support for the premise that the assessment test has served as an efficient solution; however, the estimations for colleges of law revealed different characteristics that stand predictive of finalist attainment. This has corresponded to different college of law programs receiving preference between the two periods. Therefore, a definitive statement on efficiency cannot be made by this research.

## **CONCLUSION**

Acknowledging that a further examination of academic program characteristics, student interest in federal employment, and the employment performance of Fellows may each reveal important policy implications; the findings in this paper offer evidence that the current assessment process is unbiased between schools of public affairs and colleges of law. Furthermore, when observing the estimations before and after 2007 for schools of public affairs (Table 6), the argument can be made that with the

cost savings realized by OPM through the utilization of an assessment test, finalists are more efficiently identified.

Analysis of the PMF Program reveals that assessment test served to equalize each academic program's relative opportunity to obtain finalist designations. Furthermore, for both schools of public affairs and colleges of law, it appears that the number of considered nominees has consistently stood predictive of finalist attainment. Past success has also remained as a common predictor of finalist attainment for the two academic programs. Surprisingly, the analysis has revealed no significant effect on finalist attainment for the distance that students must travel to take the assessment. For schools of public affairs, the effect of NASPAA accreditation reveals information that with additional considerations may incline NASPAA to revisit the effects that standards hold on federal employment suitability.

For OPM, this analysis provides support for much of the current PMF selection process. However, if schools of public affairs and colleges of law are simply obtaining a proportional number of finalists relative to applicants, it does call into question what the current assessment test is measuring. A strong argument can be made for a multiple-hurdle approach to determine finalists, particularly if schools have begun to disregard the nomination process. As the past analysis of MSPB found improved measurement through the use of an accomplishment record, implementing a similar measure may better identify the quality of finalists.

Without a measurement of employment performance by Fellows after 2007, it is difficult to draw further conclusions on the efficiency of the examination. What stands clear from the past research of MSPB (2001), though, is that the PMF Program has stood a valuable tool for the federal government to employ high-performing individuals. If future research identifies a similar quality of employee performance, then validation will be given to the efficiency of the standardized assessment test implementation.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**PMF APPLICANT ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS**

**TABLE 7: 2003 - 2006 PMF COMPETENCY MEASUREMENT MATRIX**

Measured Competency	School Nomination	Accomplishment Record	Individual Presentation	Group Discussion	Written Demonstration
Interest in government service	X				
Breadth and Quality of Accomplishment	X				
Resilience		X			
Interpersonal Skills		X		X	
Problem Solving		X	X	X	
Oral Communication			X	X	
Adaptability			X	X	
Demonstrated Leadership				X	
Written Expression					X

Source: Nickels et al. *The Presidential Management Fellows Program: Lessons Learned During 27 Years of Program Success*

This table identifies the eight competencies found within OPM’s Leadership Effectiveness Framework. Detailed above is when each competency was measured during the evaluation process that existed from 2003-2006. For each competency measurement, candidates were scored on a scale of one to five. In instances where a competency was measured during multiple stages of the nominee’s evaluation, an average score was taken among the ratings. Therefore, in assessing a nominee’s problem solving aptitude, three inputs were averaged to produce a final score. It is unclear if any measure of problem solving skills is estimated through the current assessment test.

**APPENDIX B:**  
**PMF ASSESSMENT TEST SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

***Test Format***

<b>Assessment Part</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>	<b>Time Allowed</b>
Critical Thinking Skills	42	50 minutes
Life Experience	125	45 minutes
Writing Fundamentals	40	70 minutes

***Critical Thinking***

*The following passage describes a set of facts. The passage is followed by five conclusions. Read the passage and then evaluate each conclusion against the following three options:*

*A) **true**, which means that you can infer the conclusion from the facts given*

*B) **false**, which means that the conclusion cannot be true given the facts*

*C) **insufficient information**, which means that there is insufficient information for you to determine whether the conclusion is true or false.*

Federal Agency X is responsible for monitoring unfair employment practices across the Federal Government. During the second week of March, there was a marked increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices in federal agencies. The second week alone accounted for 75% of the entire reported total of 120 unfair employment practices cases that month. There was also a dramatic increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. In fact, for the preceding six months, whenever there had been an increase in reported cases of unfair employment practices, there had also been an increase in the number of employment applications submitted and an increase in the number of investigations resulting in legal action. However, during the first week of April, when over 50% of the month's 180 unfair employment practices cases occurred, there were only a few reported investigations resulting in legal action.

**Questions:**

- 1) For the preceding six months, whenever there had been a decrease in reported unfair employment practices cases, there has also been a decrease in the number of employment applications submitted and in investigations resulting in legal action.
- 2) In May, there will be more than 180 unfair employment practices cases across the Federal Government.
- 3) During the second week of March, most of the unfair employment practices cases for the month occurred.
- 4) Reported cases of unfair employment practices increased throughout the month of March.
- 5) Past experience has shown that whenever there has been an increase in investigations resulting in legal action, there has also been an increase in unfair employment practices cases.

## APPENDIX B

### *Life Experience*

**Sample Question 1.** In the past when I have given a speech or presentation, I was likely to have prepared ahead of time:

- A) much less than others did
- B) less than others did
- C) about the same as others did
- D) more than others did
- E) much more than others did

**Sample Question 2.** When working as a member of a team, I prefer to:

- A) do less complex tasks
- B) keep a low profile
- C) always take the lead
- D) take on challenging tasks but not take the lead
- E) take the lead at times

### *Writing Fundamentals*

#### **INTERAGENCY MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** ALL EMPLOYEES

**FROM:** OCSCAR P. MARTIN, CHIEF OF SECURITY

**SUBJECT:** NEW EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION BADGES

**DATE:** JANUARY 8, 2007

(1)As part of the Federal Government's plan to increase the security of all federal buildings, new ID badges will now be required for all Customer Service Administration employees. (2)The new badges contain sensors that are scanned when employees enter and exit the building and will increase security in two major ways. (3)First, creating counterfeit ID badges is difficult, as one would have to replicate the special sensors contained in the badge. (4)Second, each time a badge is scanned, a picture of the employee will appear on a screen in the security guard station. (5)Security will compare this picture with the person using the badge and prevent any unauthorized individuals from entering the building. (6)All Customer Service Administration employees are required to report to the Security Center (Room 102) no later than January 22, 2007 to obtain a new ID badge. (7)Beginning on January 23rd, employees without new badges will not be permitted to enter the building. (8)If you fail to obtain your new badge prior to this date, you will be required to schedule an appointment with the Security Center to get a new badge prior to returning to work. (9)All employees needs to obtain his/her own badge since one employee will not be allowed to pick up another employee's badge. (10)Please join us in continuing to keep our building safe. (11)If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Oscar P. Martin at Oscar.Martin@csa.gov or at 555-5555. (12)Please note that Oscar will be on vacation January 10, 2007 - January 18, 2007.

## APPENDIX B

### Questions:

1. Which of the following sentences contains an error?
  - A. Sentence 1
  - B. Sentence 3
  - C. Sentence 4
  - D. Sentence 5
2. Which of the following sentences has incorrect subject-verb agreement?
  - A. Sentence 2
  - B. Sentence 5
  - C. Sentence 6
  - D. Sentence 9
3. Where is the most appropriate place to break the text into paragraphs?
  - A. After sentence 2
  - B. After sentence 5 and sentence 9
  - C. After sentence 6
  - D. After sentence 6 and sentence 10

### *Answers*

#### Critical Thinking:

1. C
2. C
3. A
4. B
5. C

#### Writing Fundamentals

1. B
2. D
3. B

## APPENDIX C:

### U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT RANKING METHODOLOGY

#### *Schools of Public Affairs*

The public affairs program rankings are based solely on the results of a peer assessment survey. Our ranking, completed in 2008 and based on surveys conducted in fall 2007, are based entirely on responses of deans, directors and department chairs representing 269 master's of public affairs and administration programs, two per school. Respondents were asked to rate the academic quality of master's programs on a scale of 1 (marginal) to 5 (outstanding). Scores for each school were totaled and divided by the number of respondents who rated that school. The response rate was 40%.

The lists of schools and individuals surveyed were provided by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM).

#### *Colleges of Law*

The rankings of 184 law schools fully accredited by the American Bar Association are based on a weighted average of the 12 measures of quality described here. Data were collected in the fall 2008 and early 2009.

#### *Quality Assessment (weighted by .40)*

Peer Assessment Score (.25): in the fall of 2008, law school deans, deans of academic affairs, chairs of faculty appointments, and the most recently tenured faculty members were asked to rate programs on a scale from marginal (1) to outstanding (5). Those individuals who did not know enough about a school to evaluate it fairly were asked to mark "don't know." A school's score is the average of all the respondents who rated it. Responses of "don't know" counted neither for nor against a school. About 71% of those surveyed responded.

Assessment Score by Lawyers/Judges (.15): in the fall of 2008, legal professionals, including the hiring partners of law firms, state attorneys general, and selected federal and state judges, were asked to rate programs on a scale from marginal (1) to outstanding (5). About 31% of those surveyed responded. The two most recent years lawyers' and judges' surveys were averaged.

#### *Selectivity (weighted by .25)*

Median LSAT Scores (.125): the combined median scores on the Law School Admission Test of all full-time and part-time entrants to the Juris Doctor (JD) program (2008 entering class). Median Undergrad GPA (.10): the combined median undergraduate grade-point average of all the full-time and part-time entrants to the JD program (2008 entering class). Acceptance Rate (.025): the combined proportion of applicants to both the full-time and part-time JD program who were accepted for the 2008 entering class.

## APPENDIX C

### *Placement Success (weighted by .20)*

Employment Rates for Graduates: the employment rates for 2007 graduating class determine success in this category. Graduates who are working or pursuing graduate degrees are considered employed. Employment rates are measured at graduation (.04 weight ) and nine months after graduation (.14 weight). For the nine-month employment rate, 25% of those whose status is unknown are counted as employed. Those who are unemployed and not seeking jobs are excluded from the calculations and are not counted as unemployed. Those who are unemployed and seeking work are counted as unemployed in the calculations of the employment rates. Bar Passage Rate (.02): the ratio of the school's bar passage rate of the 2007 graduating class to that jurisdiction's overall state bar passage rate for first-time test takers in the winter 2007 and summer 2007. The jurisdiction listed is the state where the largest number of 2007 graduates took the state bar exam. The state bar examination pass rates for first-time test takers in summer 2007 and winter 2007 were provided by the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

### *Faculty Resources (weighted by .15)*

Expenditures Per Student: the average expenditures per student for the 2007 and 2008 fiscal years. The average instruction, library, and supporting services (.0975) are measured, as are all other items, including financial aid (.015). Student/Faculty Ratio (.03): the ratio of students to faculty members for 2008, using the American Bar Association definition. Library Resources (.0075): the total number of volumes and titles in the school's law library at the end of the 2008 fiscal year.

### *Overall Rank*

Data were standardized about their means, and standardized scores were weighted, totaled, and rescaled so that the top school received 100; others received their percentage of the top score.

**APPENDIX D:**

**PMF FINALIST ATTAINMENT BY PROGRAM**

**TABLE 8: PERCENTAGE OF FINALISTS AMONG NOMINEES IN COMPARISON TO THE MEAN OF THE TOTAL PMF PROGRAM POPULATION 1998-2010**

Degree Program	2003-2006	2007-2010	Net Change
Biological Sciences	-0.87	0.51	1.38
Business Management	-0.80	-3.40	-2.60
Economics	2.34	2.84	0.50
Education	-7.79	-6.96	0.83
Engineering	-8.80	1.27	10.07
Environmental Studies	0.77	3.95	3.18
Health Administration	-7.49	-1.67	5.82
International Affairs	8.62	5.33	-3.29
Law	-2.60	0.21	2.81
Public Affairs	3.86	0.05	-3.81
Social Work	-5.95	-5.92	0.03

Source: PMF Data Provided by OPM (obtained through FOIA request)

Related to the findings represented in Figure B, presented here are degree designations for eleven programs found within the PMF nominee and finalist data. Both before and after 2007, these degrees represent about 83 percent of the total nominees and over 85 percent of the total finalists. In some cases, several degree designations were combined under a single categorization, which was maintained for both the nominee and finalist measurements.<sup>21</sup> Looking at the results, prior to the implementation of the 2007 assessment test, students with degrees in engineering received a percentage of placements based upon the total nominees for that degree which were nearly 9 percent fewer than the expected average for all nominees. However, since 2007, this same group of students has gained over one percent more finalists than expected. Between the two periods, this has represented a growth in engineering finalist attainment of over 10 percent since the implementation of the standardized assessment.

<sup>21</sup> For example, students who identified his or her degree as “International Affairs/Administration/Studies,” “International Development/Trade,” and “International Law/Politics” were all considered under the same heading of International Affairs for the purpose of this evaluation.

**APPENDIX E:  
EVALUATED PROGRAMS**

*Schools of Public Affairs*

<b>Accredited Programs - Public</b>	
Arizona State University	University of Alabama - Birmingham
Auburn University	University of Arizona
Auburn University - Montgomery	University of Baltimore
Binghamton University	University of Colorado at Denver
California State University - Los Angeles	University of Connecticut - Storrs
Cleveland State University	University of Delaware
Florida Atlantic University	University of Georgia
Florida International University	University of Kansas
Florida State University	University of Kentucky
George Mason University	University of Louisville
Georgia State University	University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
Indiana University-Purdue University – Indianapolis	University of Missouri - Columbia
Indiana University - Bloomington	University of Missouri - Kansas City
Kansas State University	University of Missouri - St. Louis
North Carolina State University -Raleigh	University of Nebraska - Omaha
Northern Illinois University	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Ohio State University	University of North Texas
Pennsylvania State University - Harrisburg	University of Oregon
Portland State University	University of Pittsburgh
Rutgers University - Newark	University of Tennessee - Knoxville
Rutgers University - Camden	University of Texas at Arlington
San Diego State University	University of Texas at Austin
San Francisco State University	University of Texas at Dallas
Texas A&M University	University of Utah
University of Maryland - College Park	University of Washington
University of Central Florida	Virginia Commonwealth University
University of Illinois at Chicago	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
University of Illinois at Springfield	Wayne State University
University of Maryland - Baltimore County	West Virginia University
University of South Carolina - Columbia	Wichita State University
University at Albany	



**APPENDIX E**

<b>Accredited Programs - Private</b>
American University
Brigham Young University
Carnegie Mellon University
George Washington University
Harvard University
New York University
Northeastern University
Syracuse University
University of Southern California
Villanova University

<b>Non-Accredited Programs - Public</b>	<b>Non-Accredited Programs – Private</b>
Bernard Baruch College	Brown University
John Jay College of Criminal Justice	Columbia University
Georgia Institute of Technology	Cornell University
Louisiana State University	Duke University
The College of William & Mary	Georgetown University
University of Massachusetts - Amherst	Johns Hopkins University
University of Massachusetts - Boston	Monterey Institute of International Studies
University of California - Los Angeles	Pepperdine University
University of California - Berkeley	Princeton University
University of Michigan	University of Chicago
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	University of Pennsylvania
University of Oklahoma	
University of Wisconsin - Madison	
University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee	
Washington State University	

**APPENDIX E**

*Colleges of Law*

<b>Public</b>	
Arizona State University	University of Georgia
Florida State University	University of Houston
George Mason University	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Georgia State University	University of Iowa
Indiana University - Bloomington	University of Kansas
Indiana University-Purdue University – Indianapolis	University of Kentucky
Louisiana State University	University of Louisville
Ohio State University	University of Maine (program hosted at Southern Maine)
Pennsylvania State University – Dickinson	University of Maryland - Baltimore
Rutgers University - Camden	University of Michigan
Rutgers University - Newark	University of Minnesota - Twin Cities
Temple University	University of Missouri - Columbia
The College of William & Mary	University of Nevada - Las Vegas
University at Buffalo	University of New Mexico
University of Alabama	University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
University of Arizona	University of Oklahoma
University of Arkansas - Fayetteville	University of Oregon
University of California - Berkeley	University of Pittsburgh
University of California - Davis	University of South Carolina - Columbia
University of California - Hastings	University of Tennessee - Knoxville
University of California - Los Angeles	University of Texas at Austin
University of Cincinnati	University of Utah
University of Colorado - Boulder	University of Virginia
University of Connecticut	University of Washington
University of Florida	University of Wisconsin - Madison

## APPENDIX E

<b>Private</b>	
American University	Northwestern University
Baylor University	Pepperdine University
Boston College	Saint Louis University
Boston University	Santa Clara University
Brigham Young University	Seattle University
Brooklyn Law School	Seton Hall University
Case Western Reserve University	Southern Methodist University
Catholic University of America	St. John's University
Columbia University	Stanford University
Cornell University	Tulane University
DePaul University	University of Chicago
Duke University	University of Denver
Emory University	University of Miami
Fordham University	University of Notre Dame
George Washington University	University of Pennsylvania
Georgetown University	University of Richmond
Gonzaga University	University of San Diego
Harvard University	University of San Francisco
Hofstra University	University of Southern California
Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago Kent College)	Vanderbilt University
Lewis & Clark College	Villanova University
Loyola Marymount University	Wake Forest University
Loyola University – Chicago	Washington and Lee University
Marquette University	Washington University
New York University	Yale University
Northeastern University	Yeshiva University

**APPENDIX F:**  
**PROGRAM EFFECTS ON THE NUMBER OF NOMINEES**

**TABLE 9: ESTIMATIONS OF THE EFFECT OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ON THE  
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS NOMINEES 2003-2010**

EXPLANATORY VARIABLE	Estimated Coefficient		t-Statistic		p-Value	
	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010
US News Score	2.369*	5.118*	3.47	4.31	0.001	< 0.001
Public Institution	-2.982*	-2.689	-3.65	-1.93	< 0.001	0.057
Accreditation	-0.644	-0.628	-0.95	-0.55	0.344	0.583
Distance to Test	-0.001	< -0.001	-0.53	-0.19	0.600	0.849
Distance to DC	< 0.001	< -0.001	0.60	-0.94	0.551	0.349
Number of Graduates in Current Period	0.046*	0.039*	6.03	3.58	< 0.001	0.001
Number of Finalists in Previous Period	0.594*	1.977*	3.82	5.54	< 0.001	< 0.001
Constant	-2.509	-10.485	-1.13	-2.80	0.359	0.006
	<b>N</b>		<b>R-squared</b>		<b>F-value</b>	
2003-2006	97		0.854		74.13	
2007-2010	97		0.843		68.11	

**TABLE 10: ESTIMATIONS OF THE EFFECT OF PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ON  
THE NUMBER OF COLLEGES OF LAW NOMINEES 2003-2010**

EXPLANATORY VARIABLE	Estimated Coefficient		t-Statistic		p-Value	
	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010	2003-2006	2007-2010
US News Score	-0.024	-0.040	-0.75	-0.89	0.454	0.375
Public Institution	-0.142	-1.606	-0.15	-1.21	0.883	0.230
Distance to Test	0.003	0.008	0.89	1.66	0.375	0.100
Distance to DC	-0.002*	-0.003*	-3.46	-3.30	0.001	0.001
Number of Graduates in Current Period	0.014*	0.020*	2.84	3.00	0.005	0.003
Number of Finalists in Previous Period	2.947*	4.219*	6.64	8.87	< 0.001	< 0.001
Constant	2.086	5.095	0.92	1.61	0.359	0.111
	<b>N</b>		<b>R-squared</b>		<b>F-value</b>	
2003-2006	102		0.483		14.81	
2007-2010	102		0.621		25.96	