PROGRAM ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STUDENT OUTCOMES
ALUMNI SURVEY RESULTS
CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER
HIGHLIGHTS OF PDV ALUMNI SURVEY

- The Cohort/Intensive Model was reported by respondents to be the most beneficial and compelling aspect of the program. Students are accepted into the Program on Domestic Violence (PDV) as a cohort that travel through the domestic violence courses together. The core domestic violence courses are offered in a series of weeklong face to face sessions referred to as “intensives.”
- All four core domestic violence courses and the instructors were frequently identified by students as the PDV experience they found most powerful.
- Ninety three percent of alumni would recommend the PDV to others.
- Alumni indicated the knowledge and skills taught in the PDV were necessary to their current professional position.
- On average, 85.6% of respondents believed they had mastered to fully mastered the six core competencies established for the PDV.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Founded in 2000, the Center on Domestic Violence is an academic, research and service center based at the University of Colorado Denver. Three primary goals define the work of the center, to: (1) Develop skilled and informed leadership for the movement to end domestic violence; (2) Inform and empower domestic violence service providers, advocates, and policymakers through original research; and (3) Serve the community through direct services, training and advocacy. These combined efforts are reflected in the center’s mission: to end domestic violence by fostering institutional and social change through leadership development, education, research, and community collaboration.

The flagship program of the Center is the Program on Domestic Violence (PDV), developed to create transformative leaders for today’s domestic violence movement through a broad array of academic offerings. As the first graduate program of its kind in the nation, the PDV serves a national audience with a unique course curriculum that combines online learning with intensive periods of study at the University of Colorado Denver. The programs offered are: Master of Public Administration with a concentration in Domestic Violence; a Master of Criminal Justice with a concentration in Domestic Violence; a graduate level academic Certificate in Domestic Violence Studies and a Certificate in Interpersonal Violence and Health Care.

The student audience for the PDV has included individuals in organizations that serve victims of interpersonal violence and those who wish to enter the field, including new college graduates as well as professionals looking for a career change. The content of the program is designed to prepare a workforce with the knowledge and ability to reduce, treat, intervene and prevent domestic violence.

In the spring of 2012, while looking forward to graduating its tenth cohort of students from the program, the Center on Domestic Violence embarked upon an academic review of the PDV. The goal of the review was to ensure that the structure and content of the program remain as current, useful, and inspiring to students as possible. An 18 person Program Review Committee was established comprised of faculty and staff from the CU Denver School of Public Affairs and other academic units, current and past instructors in the program, potential employers, and alumni. In order to gain greater insight into the value and outcomes of the program, a survey of alumni was conducted. The survey was distributed electronically in the spring of 2013 to all current alumni for whom email addresses could be confirmed. Of the 100 alumni contacted, a response was received from 43 individuals. A summary of those responses is provided in this report.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Ninety five percent of respondents were were women; 87% were non-Hispanic Anglo. Most of these individuals had achieved an MPA with a concentration in Domestic Violence (N = 35, 83.3%), and a few received related credentials, e.g., Master of Criminal Justice with a concentration in Domestic Violence (N = 3, 7.11%) or a Certificate in DV Studies (4, 9.5%).

![Ethnicity of Respondents](chart.png)
EMPLOYMENT

- 91% of graduates that took the survey reported working full time; an additional 7% were employed part time. This compares to an average current employment rate in the U.S. of 92.5%. (U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, Colorado Economy at a Glance, 2012).
- 80% of respondents currently work in the field of domestic violence.
- 50% of PDV graduates reported serving in a managerial position within their organization, including Executive/CEO, Manager/Supervisor or Program/Deputy Director.
- 79% of alumni reported that the PDV has been important to their career success.

PROGRAM CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Respondents indicated that the content of the program offered the knowledge and skill competencies necessary for success in their current professional positions; similarly, there was a high level of satisfaction with the structure of the Program on Domestic Violence.

CONTENT

Alumni were asked about the knowledge and skills needed for their current position compared to the competencies offered by the Program on Domestic Violence. The table to the right offers a side by side look at the competencies needed in their work compared to the mastery of those competencies received as a result of the PDV. On average, over 79% of respondents indicated they did receive needed skills and knowledge from the PDV.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies needed for their career (N)</th>
<th>Competencies received from the Program on Domestic Violence (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading and managing organizations focused on interpersonal violence (IPV)</td>
<td>52% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and advocating for policies and practice related to IPV</td>
<td>65.7% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the nature, scope, and root causes of IPV</td>
<td>85% (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the psychological impact of interpersonal violence and how to effectively support victims</td>
<td>94% (41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the legal system and use of that information to advocate on behalf of victims</td>
<td>70% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the intersections between historically-oppressed communities and IPV</td>
<td>70% (23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STRUCTURE

The table to the left offers a listing of the various structural aspects of the PDV and indicates respondents’ level of satisfaction with each.

* 56% of respondents were satisfied with the hotel accommodations provided by the program; the total remaining 43% did not make use of the hotel accommodation and so marked “not applicable.”
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Leadership and management skills are elements woven throughout the Program on Domestic Violence (PDV). After asking the alumni if they considered leadership and management skills to be important to their professional success, the survey measured in which component of the academic program those skills were acquired – courses taken to complete the Public Administration or Criminal Justice degree; Program on Domestic Violence courses; or the PDV cohort sessions. The table below depicts the alumni’s responses.

“The PDV taught me to be critical and question everything I thought I knew about DV.” - PDV Alum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important to their Career</th>
<th>Courses of Degree Program</th>
<th>Domestic Violence Course</th>
<th>Other Cohort Sessions at DV Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Handling Conflict</td>
<td>100% (42)</td>
<td>31% (13)</td>
<td>43% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Leadership</td>
<td>100% (42)</td>
<td>69% (29)</td>
<td>31% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprofit Governance</td>
<td>83% (35)</td>
<td>54% (22)</td>
<td>29% (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Management</td>
<td>100% (42)</td>
<td>78% (31)</td>
<td>15% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Development and Evaluation</td>
<td>100% (42)</td>
<td>63% (25)</td>
<td>35% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Planning</td>
<td>100% (42)</td>
<td>40% (16)</td>
<td>25% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
<td>88% (37)</td>
<td>32% (12)</td>
<td>13% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>88% (37)</td>
<td>49% (20)</td>
<td>10% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>81% (34)</td>
<td>20% (8)</td>
<td>20% (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>86% (36)</td>
<td>26% (19)</td>
<td>15% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-care</td>
<td>98% (41)</td>
<td>5% (2)</td>
<td>60% (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Skills</td>
<td>98% (41)</td>
<td>29% (11)</td>
<td>11% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Helping graduates succeed personally and professionally

The survey asked alumni about their best experiences in the program. Respondents rated the cohort and intensive meeting model of the PDV very highly, stating it was well organized and made good use of experienced instructors who are involved in the domestic violence movement. Alumni also said that the distinguished guest speakers and the community education forums were also beneficial aspects of the PDV. The director of the PDV was praised for her involvement with students.

“I loved the cohort model. I still have both personal and professional relationships with many of those individuals...” – PDV Alum

“Self-care lessons made such a difference in my life. Loved the research and more advanced academics as much as the more esoteric discussions. Diversity and understanding non-traditional groups’ response to violence and the emphasis on social justice were also essential.” - PDV Alum
Alumni said the cohort model was an essential feature of the PDV. Greater than 93% expressed being satisfied to extremely satisfied with the cohort/intensive structure of the program. Benefits of the model identified by respondents include:

- Allows students to learn in a familiar and trusting environment, which in turn made for a deeper level of conversation and debate;
- Created opportunities to think through movement challenges on a deep level
- Cohort activities were great for team building
- Help to develop relationships which last beyond the classroom
- Fostered sharing based on experiences from different areas and perspectives
- Encourages networking during and after the program

“I really liked the cohort model. It provided friendships and a professional network that I will continue to maintain and utilize throughout my life.” - PDV Alum

“Relationships and learning that happened with other members of my cohort, the breadth of knowledge that was shared combined with academics of the courses made for a very enriching learning experience.” - PDV Alum

Alumni expressed value the administrative support they received from Center staff. In addition to overseeing the program, the director was commended for her work in building relationships with students and shepherding success.

“What I liked best about the program is how the director is directly involved with the students. That if there is a problem the director will respond promptly and try to resolve any issues that arise.” - PDV Alum

“What I liked best about my experience in the program on domestic violence was Barb's leadership, enthusiasm and motivation” - PDV Alum

Students found the Program on Domestic Violence courses academically rigorous. Support for all four of the PDV core courses was evident. Particular appreciation was expressed for instructors who were experienced domestic violence practitioners as well as scholars. Course content identified by students as especially valuable include

**Core belief systems and policies that perpetuate interpersonal violence**
- History of violence against women
- The sociological model
- Diversity and understanding nontraditional groups' responses to violence
- Self-care

**Intersections of domestic violence/sexual assault and oppression**
- Psychological impact of domestic violence
- Legal advocacy
- Assessment and use of research
- Social justice focus
- Balance between theory and practice

“All of my instructors were fabulous, strong and intelligent women who opened my eyes, my heart and my spirit towards addressing the inequities of society.” - PDV Alum
RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening the Program on Domestic Violence

In response to a question regarding any areas of study that were not included in the PDV that should be added to the curriculum, alumni identified:

• Impact of domestic and sexual violence on children, teen dating violence and child abuse
• Sexual violence and trafficking
• More information on marginalized community’s experience of violence and oppression, particular GLBTQ communities
• Holding batterers accountable; batterer intervention
• More of an opportunity to focus on intersections with health care, public health and health policy (e.g. primary prevention, addiction)

Though not necessarily seen as topics that should be addressed through the domestic violence specific courses, alumni identified a strong desire for more relevant education in leadership and management:

• Leadership skills that are unique to a feminist workplace and how those differ or are similar in other working environments;
• How to manage change in an organization that is constantly responding to trauma/crisis
• More management content pertinent to a nonprofit, human services environment vs. the public sector with a focus on such tangible management topics such as:
  ◊ Fundraising and Grant Writing
  ◊ Human Resources Management
  ◊ Financial Management
  ◊ Volunteer management
  ◊ Cross systems collaboration; Engaging the community

“The dynamics in crisis organizations just don’t fit the metaphors that we were being asked to employ. What was offered was, ‘Your organization is an amoeba,’ when what would have been helpful was, ‘Your organization is an emotionally and physically wounded amoeba and your job is to guide the healing process in a trauma-informed fashion.’” – PDV Alum

Overall recommendations for improvement to the program identified by survey respondents include:

• Speak to a wide range of violence against women including sexual assault and human trafficking
• Address the need for some students requiring rudimentary information on interpersonal violence outside of the core PDV courses
• Create pathways for maintaining student connections between intensives and following graduation
• Ensure sufficient breaks and other opportunities for self care during the program intensives
• Better inform and engage the SPA faculty in the program’s goals and expertise; Create more opportunities for students to work directly with faculty on research.
• Provide graduates assistance with obtaining jobs in the field, e.g. a mentoring program; promote the value of the degree to potential employers
• Continue to focus on innovative practice, thinking outside of the box of traditional domestic violence services
DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS

Each intensive session of the Program on Domestic Violence includes a full day workshop featuring a Distinguished Guest Presenter that is open to the community at large. The Distinguished Guest is an individual who is engaged in national cutting edge work within the domestic and sexual violence movements. Survey respondents identified the Distinguished Speakers as an important complement to the formal coursework of the PDV.

“I also loved the distinguished presenter and workshops with the community. This helped to connect the theory with the actual practice, which I believe is missed in so much of academia.” – PDV Alum

“Learning about the Battered Women’s Movement from the women who made that history changed my career path. From them I discovered my system's work calling.” – PDV Alum

“The distinguished guests were amazing and I still use so much of what I learned from them. Ellen Pence, Lydia Walker, Shamita Das Dasgupta, Alicia Bierra, etc.”
– PDV Alum

SUMMARY

Overall feedback from alumni on the value of the Program on Domestic Violence was extremely positive. Respondents indicated that both the content and structure of the PDV provided them with skills and knowledge required for their work both in and outside of the domestic violence movement. Alumni appreciated the program director’s level of enthusiasm and responsiveness to students needs. Experienced instructors and nationally renowned guest speakers engaged and challenged students academically and personally.

Primary areas of improvement recommended by respondents include: 1) broaden the scope of the program to include other forms of gender based violence; 2) incorporate more course content on the experiences of children, youth and the GLBTQ community; 3) encourage an increase in tangible management education pertinent to nonprofit, human services environments; and 4) create additional supports for students particularly following graduation and in the job search.

Outcome indicators of the success of the Program on Domestic Violence in preparing students for leadership in anti-violence organizations and groups include a higher than average percentage of students employed; 80% of alumni employed in the domestic violence field and 50% of those in leadership and management positions. Ninety three percent of alumni would recommend the Program on Domestic Violence to others.

“I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Program—and refer to it all the time in my current position. I recommend the model highly and have encouraged similar programming on the campus where I currently am employed.”

“The whole experience was paradigm shifting.” - PDV Alum

“I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the Program—and refer to it all the time in my current position. I recommend the model highly and have encouraged similar programming on the campus where I currently am employed.” PDV Alum