



# **Learning by doing: Developing an undergraduate policy analysis course**

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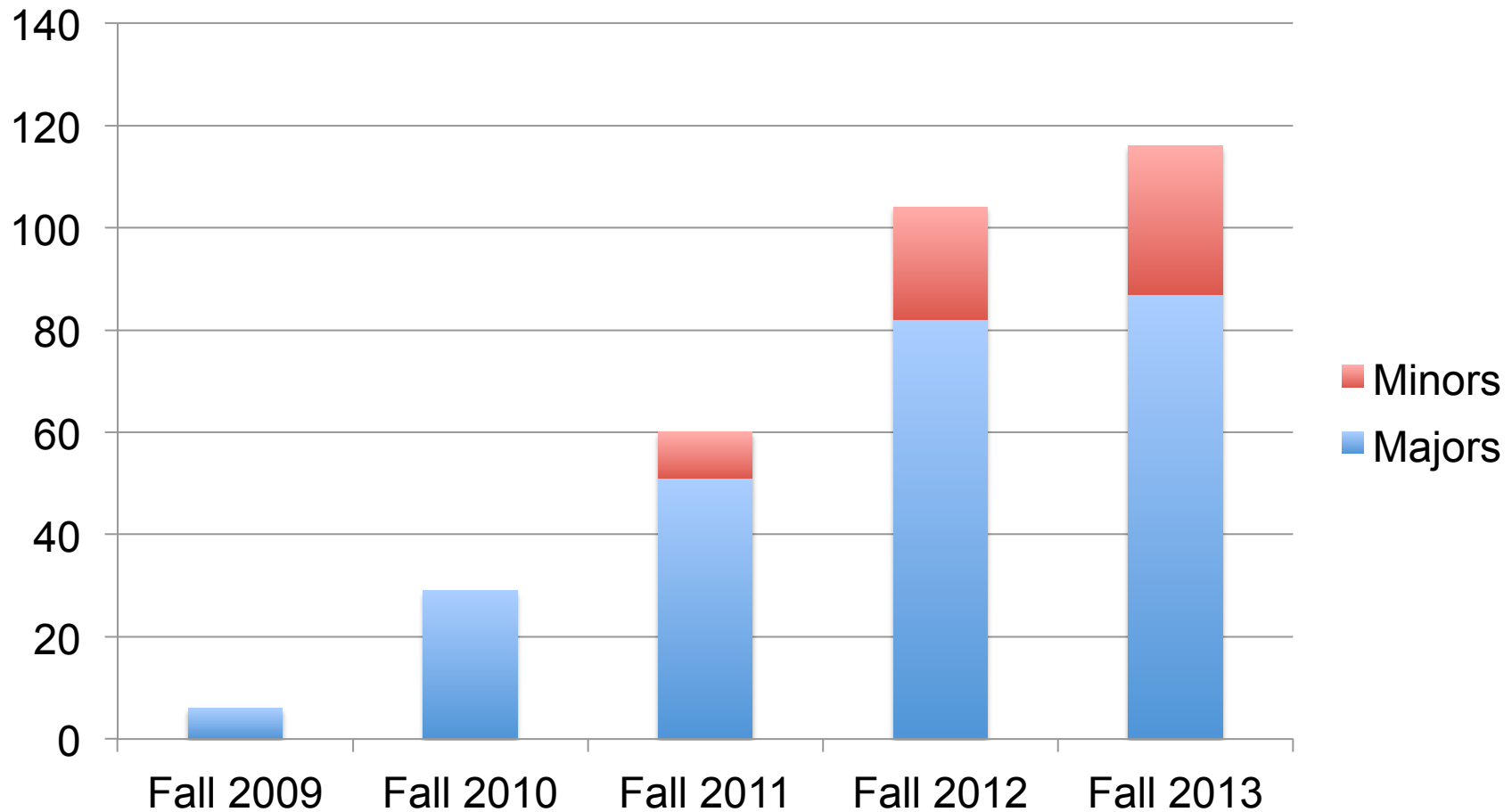
# Agenda

- Delaware's undergraduate program
- Changing course design over past 5 years
- Current course design
- Lessons learned
- Implications

# Delaware's undergraduate offerings

- BA in Public Policy
- Honors BA in Public Policy
- Minor in Public Policy
- Minor in Public Health
- 4+1 BA in Public Policy +
  - MPA
  - MA in Urban Affairs & Public Policy
  - MA in Historic Preservation

# Growth in public policy students



# Delaware's BA curriculum

Required Courses	Concentration Courses
110: Changing the World	15 credits in approved courses in:
225: Crafting Public Policy	--Policy Studies (incl. public health)
<b>325: Public Policy Analysis</b>	--Policy Analysis
300: Public Policy Field Experience (internship)	--Urban Policy, Planning, and Historic Preservation
440: Contemporary Issues in Public Policy (senior capstone)	--Public and Non-Profit Administration

--Public Policy Major is 30 credits out of 124 credits for Bachelor of Arts Degree

--Public Policy Minor is 18 credits; 1<sup>st</sup> 3 required courses plus 9 credits in concentration courses

# Course designs

- Option 1: Graduate-course model
  - Bardach text + evaluate professional examples
  - Individual analytical paper in 3 parts
  - 10 students enrolled (spring 2010)
  - Students had trouble learning techniques and completing assignments adequately; needed more guidance on techniques

## Course designs (cont'd)

- Option 2: Coplin's skills-based model
  - Coplin's text + other short readings
  - 5 modules on student-selected topics, leading to short memo for policy-maker
  - 14, 10, 22 students enrolled
  - Dissatisfaction from students about “copying” Coplin's course + nickel-and-dime grading scheme
  - Added PBL assignment on pot = successful

# Course designs (cont'd)

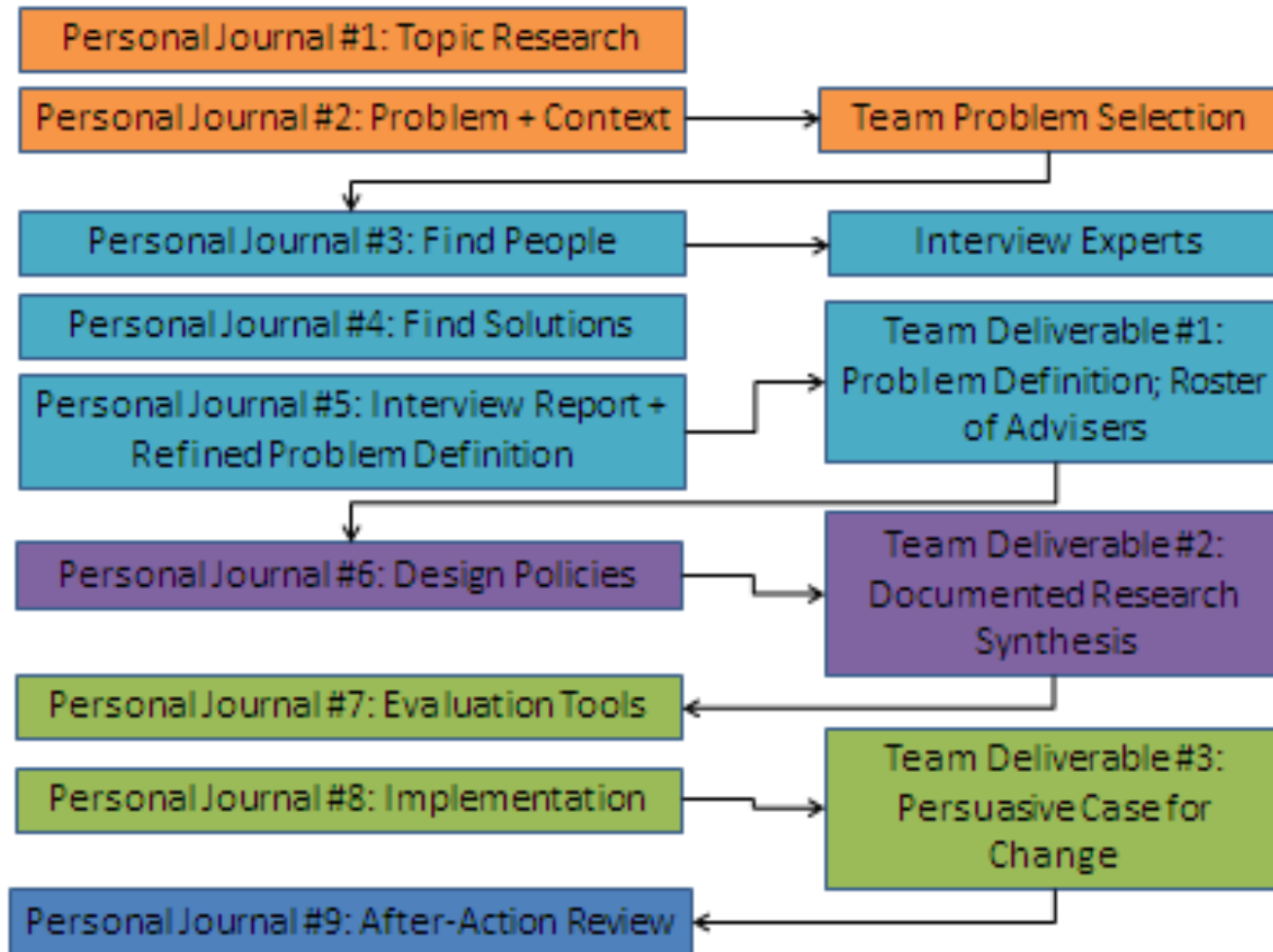
- Option 3: Revising Coplin's model
  - Shorter assignments on student-selected topics + PBL exercise on assigned topic
  - Enrollments ~30 students
  - Experimenting with texts:
    - Mintrom's Contemporary Policy Analysis
    - Smith's Writing Public Policy
    - Bardach + Coplin books
  - Grading load heavy; students didn't like books



## Course designs (cont'd)

- Option 4: Current design
  - Semester long small group projects on student-selected topics of interest to state of Delaware
    - Client: Governor of Delaware
  - Individual journals to prepare for group work
  - Bardach + Majczrak's Methods for Policy Research = complementary approaches

# Sequence of deliverables



# Lessons learned

- Let students pick own “real-world” topics
- Let students find their way: “learn by doing”
  - Give feedback; require revision; learn inductively
- Happy students → happy instructors
- But...
- Grading load is heavy for instructor without TA
- At UD, 30-student sections not profitable
- How bring course “to scale”?

# Implications

- Need repository of undergraduate course syllabi
  - APPAM + NASPAA?
- APPAM: code of ethics for policy analysts?
  - Default = ASPA
- How ensure adequate preparation for course and to be engaged citizens?
- Still searching for *the* undergraduate textbook that teaches basic techniques without presuming much prior knowledge or skill

# Questions or comments?

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