### Portfolio in Support of the Nomination of the Master of Science in Conflict Management at Kennesaw State University January 2004

#### I. Statement of Philosophy and Goals

In July 1995 the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia promulgated the Regents' Conflict Resolution Initiative. The Initiative included an expectation that every campus in the University System should assess conflict on campus and design a program for conflict resolution that would meet the needs of the institution.

Kennesaw State University responded to the Regents' challenge with the creation of an ombuds office in 1996, the establishment of the Center for Conflict Management in 1998, and the development of two academic programs: an undergraduate certificate program in Alternative Dispute Resolution and a master's degree program in Conflict Management. In the fall of 1999, the Board of Regents approved Kennesaw State University's Master of Science in Conflict Management, the only such program in the University System. The first cohort of students entered the program in September 2000, and as of January 2004, three cohorts have graduated from the program, and the fourth cohort has begun its study.

The Master of Science in Conflict Management (MSCM) is designed to educate students to be conflict resolution practitioners in varied environments. The program seeks to develop graduates who:

- (1) understand the nature of conflict from the perspective of multiple disciplines;
- (2) understand the continuum of responses to conflict;
- (3) possess the necessary skills to facilitate the management of various types of conflict;
- (4) demonstrate the ability to analyze and research conflict in an organizational environment;
- (5) demonstrate the ability to design conflict intervention procedures and strategies appropriate to a particular situation or environment;
- (6) demonstrate the ability to evaluate the efficacy of a given intervention or system of interventions; and

(7) successfully participate in conflict management on a practical level in one or more specific environments.

The program's curriculum includes courses in conflict theory and social science research methods, as well as clinics in design and delivery of advanced conflict resolution skills. Through this balance of theory and practice, the MSCM prepares students to identify and pursue opportunities to enhance their present careers or to embark on new paths related to conflict management. Further, students develop substantive expertise in a specific area of conflict intervention through an extensive capstone project.

The following Program Objectives have guided the MSCM program's evolution since its inception:

- To provide a working knowledge of the fundamentals of conflict management
- To provide students with clear direction for independent study
- To provide students with appropriate process models for approaching conflicts
- To guide students in the design, implementation, and evaluation of process models for specific conflict environments
- To help students develop a process model for collaboration
- To demonstrate intentional collaboration through the development of the cohort
- To encourage students to develop the habit of reflection and to incorporate the principles of reflective practice into the class process

To realize these objectives the program faculty and staff seek to create and maintain an environment conducive to learning. Students are encouraged to think independently, critically, and creatively; courses are designed to provide a space for genuine dialogue through mutual respect and shared responsibility. Just as 'selfdetermination' is a fundamental tenet of mediation, it is also the heart of mentoring and teaching adult learners.

The values that guide the classroom teaching and mentoring in the MSCM program are consistent with the principles of the democratic classroom and adult learning. They are also congruent with principles and values of conflict management. Teaching conflict management is unusual in that it provides an opportunity—and a

responsibility—to "walk the talk" at every class meeting and in every interaction with colleagues and students.

The field of conflict management has been marked by a gulf between scholars and practitioners. Scholars argue that far too many practitioners are guided mainly by gut feelings and not research findings, while practitioners complain that much of the scholarship in the field is inaccessible, if not irrelevant. The MSCM program innovatively bridges theory and practice, combining rigorous academic work with over 100 hours of clinical training in mediation, advanced mediation skills, facilitation, family mediation, train-the-trainer, ombudsing, and an orientation to diversity issues. The MSCM program is designed to ensure that every student achieves far more than a superficial mastery of theoretical content and skills and develops the depth of understanding and the imagination to apply these theories and skills in many different contexts.

Because the field of conflict management is related so many other fields, the points of intersection and application are limited only by a student's imagination. An important goal of mentoring in the MSCM program is to help students identify points of intersection in their own lives and in their own careers.

As the MSCM is a premium-priced program, students receive many benefits for their tuition. These benefits include the purchase and delivery of all student books, membership in an international conflict resolution organization that includes a quarterly journal. Students also receive registration, transportation, and accommodations at the field's premier annual conference. In addition, the program brings in national experts and consultants in the field to enrich the curriculum. A focused, energetic, and committed faculty and administrative team are essential to the program's success.

This program's success was validated in the Kennesaw State University 2003 program review process. The Program Review Council found the MSCM to be an exemplary program and suggested its expansion.

#### **II. A Profile of the MSCM**

The Master of Science in Conflict Management entails a sixteen-month course of study that blends a rigorous academic curriculum with extensive skills training. The program is based on a cohort model, which has contributed to high student satisfaction and to the program's outstanding retention and graduation rate.

Students are generally working professionals and come from every walk of life. Among the students who have completed the MSCM have been teachers, nurses, lawyers, a judge, law enforcement officers, engineers, representatives from business, and many other careers. Accessibility fosters significant diversity of students, one of the program's greatest strengths. Ethnic diversity for the four cohorts is 55% White and 45% Black, Asian, and Hispanic. Please see Appendix A for charts illustrating the diversity.

As conflict management is a relatively young field of study, there is no disciplinerelated accreditation available. The MSCM curriculum is consistent with the course offerings of other master's programs in the country, and consists of three semesters of academic work and a semester of field study. Courses include Conflict Theory, the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Continuum, Negotiation Theory, Interpersonal Conflict, Intergroup Conflict, International Conflict, Research and Evaluation Methods, Conflict Management Systems Design, and Conflict in a Specified Environment. The last semester is spent primarily in the conduct of a field study. Students, faculty, and staff also attend an international conflict management conference in the last semester.

Extensive skills training complements academic study through five training clinics offered during the MSCM program. The Mediation Clinic introduces students to interpersonal and civil mediation skills and satisfies the training requirement for registration with the Georgia Supreme Court's Office of Dispute Resolution. An Advanced Skills Clinic on multi-party mediation and facilitation, a Train-the-Trainer Clinic on conflict management education, and a forty-hour Family Mediation Clinic are also provided by MSCM faculty and outside consultants. In 2004 the MSCM has contracted with The Ombudsman Association (TOA), a nationally recognized organization of ombuds officers in government, education, and corporate settings, to deliver a twenty-hour certified training. In addition to a dedicated full-time faculty, the MSCM program hosts guest speakers and faculty from around the state and the nation.

#### **III. The MSCM Program's Distinctive Efforts to Foster Student Learning**

#### Individual and collective faculty efforts to improve teaching and student learning.

Each member of the faculty brings particular strengths to the program in terms of program development, scholarship, teaching, and mentoring. The teaching of visiting faculty and consultants, who handle specific segments of the curriculum, enriches the MSCM program. Outside consultants who are practitioners enrich the program from the standpoint of practical knowledge and expertise.

The three full-time faculty members function well as a team. Their varied educational and practitioner experiences combine to bring to the classroom a robust understanding of the field of conflict management. The faculty have been carefully selected to reflect the diversity and complexity of the field. The Director of the MSCM holds a J.D. degree and served as the first Director of the Georgia Supreme Court's Office of Dispute Resolution. The other two faculty members hold Ph.D. degrees, one from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, and the other from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University. All three are experienced mediators, facilitators, and mediation trainers.

Further, all three serve on various mediation rosters and in professional leadership capacities within the field, including the preeminent organizations the Association for Conflict Resolution, the American Bar Association's Section on Dispute Resolution, and the National Association for Community Mediation. Their published works have appeared in the premier journals in the field, documenting research on a wide range of topics.

All three faculty members are committed to the continuous development and improvement of their instructional methods and materials. In 2003 alone, the faculty delivered presentations on teaching methods at national conferences and published articles on pedagogical approaches and classroom techniques in peer-reviewed journals. Further, the MSCM program was highlighted at the National Conference on Trends in Conflict Resolution in Higher Education for its innovative design in curriculum delivery.

The faculty blends their scholarship in teaching and learning with their professional experience in conflict management and skills training to create a dynamic classroom environment.

The cohort model has been chosen for this program to create a learning environment that fosters a high degree of trust, which in turn encourages a willingness to take risks toward the development of new learnings and skills. Because the integrity of the cohort is central to the learning experience, MSCM classes are not open to other students, and classes outside the MSCM curriculum are not accepted for credit toward the degree.

The cohort joins with the faculty in exploring an approach to working together that furthers the investigation of conflict management. Consequently, each cohort has a unique opportunity to participate in an organic process. The cohort and the faculty constitute a community that is, like any other community, subject to conflict. For this reason, the input of students regarding all aspects of the program is sincerely encouraged. Although the faculty is always available to assist, students are strongly urged to deal with a conflict in a working group by working within the group to resolve problems as they arise.

## Comprehensive assessment of student learning and use of the results to inform teaching practices and curricular development and revision.

The MSCM curriculum has been designed around the findings of a Delphi Study of graduate programs the field of conflict management.<sup>1</sup> Through extensive survey and analysis, this study identified the critical knowledge and skills that should be acquired in a graduate conflict management curriculum. Please see Appendix B for a chart depicting the MSCM's teaching of these essential knowledge and skills.

While the initial MSCM curriculum encompassed the recognized core of conflict management study, the presentation has undergone and continues to undergo modification to meet the articulated needs of the cohorts. As a result of cohort feedback,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The study is reported in William C. Warters, "Graduate studies in dispute resolution: a Delphi Study of the field's present and future." The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution. 2.2, 1-10. May 1999. <u>http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/p2\_2warters.htm</u>.

traditional stand-alone courses have evolved into sequential developmental modules presented by teams of instructors. This method of instruction requires extensive collaboration among the faculty.

Success of both student and teacher is traditionally measured by tests, papers, or projects that demonstrate the student's understanding of material covered. In a highly applied program such as the MSCM, measuring success is a complex task. The MSCM program employs papers, reading questions, group projects, and individual and group presentations as tools for evaluation. A participation grade is given, as well. To date the MSCM program has not used tests in assessing student learning; some forms of testing may be appropriate in this context and are under consideration for future use.

Group work is an important component of the MSCM program, as both its process and outcomes hold value for student learning. Individual or group papers and a group presentation are the final products of group projects in which students are encouraged to share research and ideas. Another element of group work is peer evaluation of group members according to standards created by the group at the beginning of its work.

In every cohort there have been students who enjoy group work and those who resist it. Experience has demonstrated, however, that group projects are particularly beneficial to students studying conflict because in the course of their work, most groups encounter conflict on some level. These projects offer students an opportunity to practice the communication, mediation, and problem-solving skills taught as part of the MSCM program while also delving deeper into substantive areas of theory and practice.

Student evaluations of faculty are an important tool for faculty development, as they enhance understanding of what works and what needs improvement. One particularly rich source of feedback on teaching in the MSCM program has been the Fall 2002 survey of Cohorts I and II as part of the MSCM Program Review. Findings included high satisfaction with the faculty, the curriculum, and the program support to students. On a survey employing Likert scales of opinion, twenty-four of forty-two graduates responded and reported their strong satisfaction with the MSCM in the following areas:

	Cohort I	Cohort II
MSCM Program Area	(% Satisfied)	(% Satisfied)
Academic Content	83.3%	80.7%
Skills Training	78.8%	82.3%
Faculty Knowledge	85.5%	96.4%
Teaching Style	84.4%	90.0%
Faculty Approachability	90.0%	87.9%
Advising and Mentoring	90.0%	82.1%
Guest Faculty	83.3%	71.4%
Admissions and Registration Process	85.5%	95.7%

Table 1. Satisfaction Level of Cohort I and Cohort II

Another measure of program success is student application of MSCM content to challenges faced at work, home, and in the community. A majority of students surveyed report that they have undergone significant change in the way that they deal with others and that the mindful use of a collaborative approach is useful in almost any situation.

Helping students to make the connection between class material and extracurricular experience is a fundamental part of teaching and mentoring. One of the primary mentoring responsibilities of faculty is to assist each student in designing an internship or developing a field project. Working individually with students to outline their field work provides faculty an opportunity to help them focus on their own personal goals while fulfilling an important component of the MSCM requirements. Another measure of success is the degree to which faculty can guide students in this endeavor.

#### Efforts to enable faculty to use innovative and effective forms of pedagogy and technology, e.g. critical thinking, collaborative learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, learning communities, etc.

The cohort model was chosen for the MSCM because it created a learning community. We have seen the positive energy created by this model in the stability and support the students give to each other. The high graduation rate (91%) is evidence of the appropriateness of this structure. Because of the diverse backgrounds and occupations of the members of the cohort, shared perspectives and experiences add a significant dimension to the learning process.

The MSCM faculty constantly experiments with pedagogy that will advance learning. Every class is highly participatory, with extensive use of role-play simulations,

group exercises, and small-group discussion incorporated into every class. Discussions of theory are accompanied by opportunities for application, practice, and reflection. A participatory style of teaching, drawing on the lessons of cooperative learning and adult education, is essential in MSCM classes that are typically five or seven hours in length.

The MSCM faculty shares a commitment to a collaborative atmosphere in the classroom and a collaborative relationship with students and each other. The faculty is committed to the creation of a safe place where everyone's viewpoint is important and anything can be discussed. Students report that they look forward to class weekends, and former students keep in touch with the program and with each other.

The MSCM faculty employ PowerPoint, videos, videotaping, and the Internet in their teaching. The classroom used for teaching in the MSCM program is specially equipped for the extensive use of technology in every class meeting. The MSCM program is delivered in a recently-renovated classroom with round tables and moveable chairs that are appropriate for the active learning that is a cornerstone of the program.

# Strong links between good teaching and various rewards, e.g. compensation, promotion, tenure, grants, leaves, travel, department or program-based awards, etc.

The Department of Political Science and International Affairs is generous with all of its faculty in terms of compensation, travel, and equipment. The MSCM faculty is encouraged to attend regional and national conferences and to participate in professional development opportunities, and is provided the support to do so. In addition to departmental support, MSCM faculty have received college- and university-level awards to fund presentations at national and international conferences. As the MSCM program is quite new, and all three faculty members have been hired since its inception, no member is currently eligible for tenure. However, the Department carefully mentors faculty in the tenure process, and pre-tenure reviews of the faculty have consistently been very positive.

## Departmental/unit policies that encourage collaborative faculty efforts, including team-teaching, teaching discussion groups, interdisciplinary courses, mentoring, etc.

The Department has consistently supported the MSCM philosophy of team teaching. The MSCM faculty is in contact on a daily basis to discuss teaching philosophy,

course content, and student issues on an ongoing basis. Course modules are taught with a team approach, and the faculty coordinates together to deliver course material in a seamless manner. Involvement of at least two members of the faculty in every class presentation assures a broader and richer perspective than a single instructor is able to communicate.

### An ongoing and data-driven process for reviewing and reshaping curricula so that achieving academic excellence and serving the needs of all students remain as top priorities.

The MSCM faculty and staff review the curriculum on an ongoing basis. The exit survey developed in 2002 captured data from the first two cohorts concerning:

- Satisfaction with academic content
- Satisfaction with skills training
- Satisfaction with faculty knowledge
- Satisfaction with teaching style
- Satisfaction with faculty approachability
- Satisfaction with advising and mentoring
- Satisfaction with guest faculty
- Satisfaction with admissions and registration process

The results of this survey were very helpful in evaluation and revision of the curriculum. The same survey will shortly be conducted with members of Cohort III, following their graduation last December. A significant curriculum change based on student feedback was the rescheduling of the trip to the major annual conference so that students attend the conference in their *last* rather than their *first* semester; while it had been anticipated that exposure to the richness of practice would be stimulating in the first semester, students reported instead that it was overwhelming. Feedback from students regarding the utilization of traditional three-credit courses resulted in the development of the sequential modules presented used as instructional units. This structural change resulted in enhanced clarity in goals and objectives.

The excellence, success, originality and innovative nature of the MSCM program was recognized in 2003 in the Report of the University Program Review Council. The report praised the "outstanding record in student retention and graduation. ..." and identified outstanding characteristics and practices of the MSCM:

- Sound student advisory program
- Use of expert consultants
- Diversity and global perspective in the curriculum
- Continuous assessment of the program
- Clarity and efficiency built into the cohort model
- Outstanding student diversity
- Capacity of the program to meet a critical need
- Program's consistency with KSU's mission
- Quality and uniqueness in the region
- Blend of theory and practice
- Graduate affiliate program

# Exemplary programs for advising, mentoring, recruiting, and retaining students; co-curricular work with students; out-of-class learning

Mentoring and advising begin with the first contact with prospective students in the MSCM program. Recruitment and enrollment provide the first one-on-one contact with students and the first opportunity for the program to develop a close relationship with each student. The MSCM recruits students through advertising on WABE, in the *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, in the conference program for the Association for Conflict Resolution, and in Delta Airlines' *Sky Magazine*. The MSCM maintains its own web page and advertises online through the reference site Mediate.com. The MSCM also promotes the program through its presence at national and local conferences. In 2003 the MSCM had its first open house for prospective applicants; faculty and staff spent three hours discussing the program through formal presentation and individual conversations with fifty participants.

The MSCM program combines a year of academic study with a final semester of field study. The preparation for the field study begins in the second semester of the

program, and the planning for placement or a project provides an important opportunity for advising and mentoring students. Beyond the extensive mentoring that occurs around the field study, faculty members work closely with students through email and office conferences to monitor their progress throughout the academic portion of the program. Many of the students in the MSCM are returning to graduate school after years away from formal education, and many are apprehensive about the demands of graduate work. Faculty members are always willing to work with students individually and to read drafts of their papers. All full-time faculty members are registered mediators with the Georgia Supreme Court to handle court-referred cases; in this capacity, faculty members extend their teaching beyond the classroom and offer students the opportunity to co-mediate cases following their mediation training.

Students, faculty, and staff attend a national conflict management conference each year. The opportunity for students to share this experience with faculty and staff is a unique source of enrichment. The timing of the conference is such that knowledge and experience gained at the conference informs the field study in which students are engaged in their final semester. Students have an opportunity to interact with leaders in the field; in many instances these include the authors of books and journal articles read in class. The conference provides an excellent opportunity to network and explore the diverse opportunities in the field of conflict management.

Students express a desire to stay in touch with the program after graduation. The MSCM program has a newly-formed alumni association to encourage networking and sharing of experiences and opportunities after graduation. Each year in the Spring, the program provides an opportunity for the cohorts to get together for a picnic.

In response to a request for support of a graduate's continued independent study, the MSCM program and the Center for Conflict Management jointly developed the role of Graduate Affiliate. The designation of Graduate Affiliate is conferred upon students who wish to remain active in the academic study of conflict resolution beyond their completion of the MSCM program. Graduate Affiliates are recommended by a faculty member, approved by the Director of the Center for Conflict Management and the Director of the MSCM Program, and meet specific standards of achievement and seriousness of purpose. Graduate Affiliates may receive privileges including faculty

support and research assistance; they contribute to the University through research efforts or presentations. The Center for Conflict Management, which provides services to clients both on- and off-campus, includes graduates in its roster of consultants and trainers.

Contact and networking between cohorts is an important aspect of the program that is under development. For example, two graduates have accepted students as interns.

Alumni receive information regarding job openings in the conflict management field. The faculty and administration remain actively involved with MSCM graduates, providing advice, recommendations, and other assistance. A newsletter keeps students and alumni in touch with the program.

## Successes of the department's or program's students, e.g., graduation, job placement, acceptance in graduate schools, etc.

The MSCM is an interdisciplinary program that touches many fields such as business, law, government and public policy, education, economics, psychology, sociology, and others. Because of the applicability of the content of the program to many different disciplines, students who are professionals in any given field generally find that the MSCM gives a competitive advantage in their own field. While many students enter the program intending to forge a new career path, a considerable proportion of those reconsider these plans as new opportunities present themselves within their present career.

There have been specific examples of students in the first and second cohorts who are nurses, lawyers, human relations professionals, paralegals, law enforcement professionals, and teachers discovering that the program has enhanced their career opportunities. These enhanced opportunities have taken the form of promotions or, more often, new and unexpected opportunities for a different direction within an existing career. Of twenty-four students surveyed in late 2002, ten had received new job opportunities and five received promotions, raises in salary, or other recognition in their present job as a result of the program. Several others responded that they anticipated new job opportunities or promotions.

Examples include an attorney who was hired as an adjunct professor in a local law school to teach Alternative Dispute Resolution. She writes, "In my present job it has

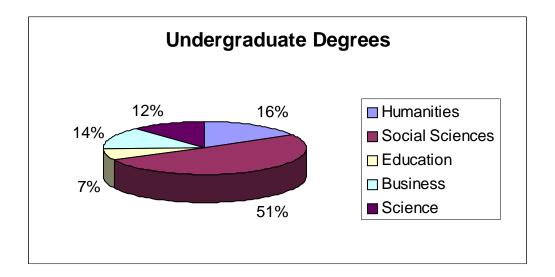
helped me tremendously in convincing my clients and adversaries of the benefits of mediation." A teacher reported a raise in salary and the next level in the teaching degree. Another reported a T-5 teaching certificate with a raise. A graduate who recently became Director of Provider Integrity with the Georgia Department of Community Health feels that his MSCM degree was partially responsible for his being offered the position. Another attorney, who has made recent presentations on conflict management for the American Bar Association, the State Bar of Georgia, as well as law schools, said, "All of these honors and more I would attribute to having participated in the MSCM program. Of course the greatest honor was learning about dispute resolution from the extraordinary faculty and cohorts."

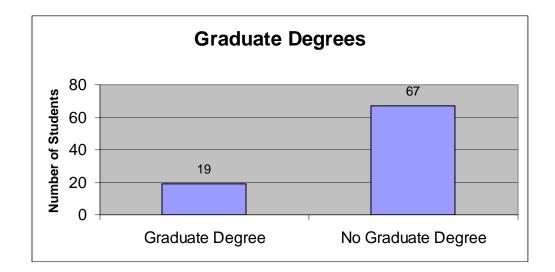
Twenty-six (26) students (30.9%) received company reimbursement for at least part of their tuition. Tuition support of students by their employers is an encouraging validation of the MSCM program. The following companies have participated:

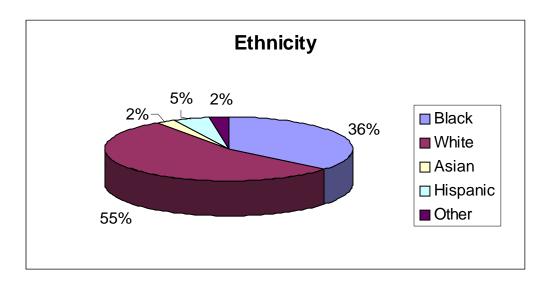
- Syntellect Interactive Services
- SunTrust Bank
- Piedmont Hospital
- American Arbitration Association
- Lockheed Martin
- Kennesaw State University
- Interior Department Fish & Wildlife
- First Data, Inc.
- Georgia Children's Food Services (no longer active)
- Coca-Cola Company
- KDA Holdings, Inc.
- Turner Broadcasting
- Georgia Department of Human Resources
- Atlanta Gas Light Resources
- Sprint
- Georgia State University
- Children's Hospital of Atlanta
- St. Paul's Insurance Company

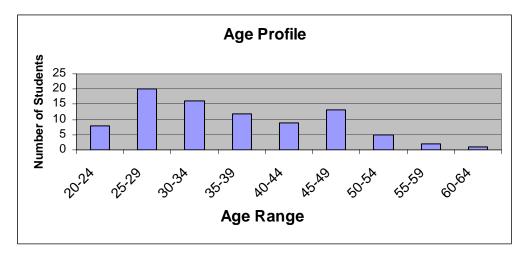
### Appendix A

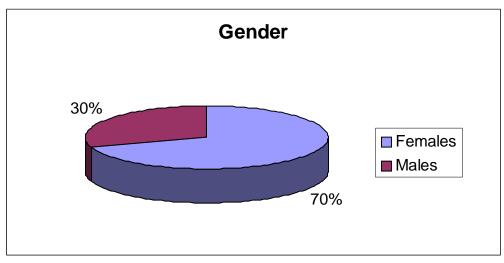
#### Aggregate Profile Cohorts I, II, III, IV (86 Students)

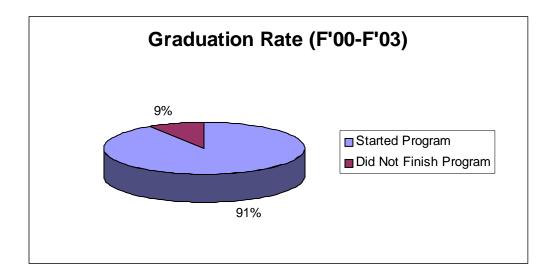












### **Appendix B**

#### Student Evaluation of Program Coverage of Knowledge and Skills of Conflict Management

The following is a list of essential areas of knowledge and core skills identified by participants in a survey of experts in the field of conflict management. The study's participant experts ranked the following essential areas of knowledge and core skills in descending order of importance. For example, they ranked mediation skills first in importance and arbitration and adjudication skills last. Source: William C. Warters (May 1999). "Graduate studies in dispute resolution: a Delphi Study of the field's present and future." *The Online Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution. 2.2, 1-10.* Retrieved June 6, 2000, from the World Wide Web: http://www.trinstitute.org/ojpcr/p2\_2warters.htm.

<u>Please place an asterisk by the core skills and a check by the essential areas of</u> <u>knowledge that were covered each semester by the MSCM program</u>.

	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			<u> </u>	i i
Core skill areas For Masters-level students*	FOUNDATIONS	CRITICAL KNOWLEDGE SKILLS	METHODS/ EVALUATION/ DESIGN	SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTS	Essential areas of Knowledge 🗹
1.Mediation skills and Procedures	*	*	$\checkmark$	*	1. Cont. of methods for addressing conflict
2. Conflict assessment	*	*	*	*	2 Ethics
3. Communication skills-listening/ assertion	*	*	K	*	3. Negotiation theory
4. Ethical sensitivity	*	*	*	*	4. Problem-solving methods
5. Negotiation (distributive/integrative)	*	*	*	*	5. Power issues
<ol> <li>Creative thinking/ problem-solving/ decision-making</li> </ol>	*	*	*	*	6. Range of mediation models
7. Critical thinking	*	*	*	*	7. Competition/ cooperation theories
<ol> <li>Communicating- written (basic &amp; scholarly papers)</li> </ol>	*	*	*	*	8. Cross-cultural; gender, age, race, class
<ol> <li>Application of CM theories in particular contexts</li> </ol>	*	*	*	*	9. Dispute system design
10. Understanding of full range of CM theories	*	*	*	Z	10. Social psychology/ group dynamics
11. Group facilitation	*	*	$\checkmark$	$\checkmark$	11. Sociology of conflict/ social institutions
12. Understanding the use of social science research	*	*	*	Ŋ	12. Communication, language, persuasion, debate
13. CM systems design principles			*		
14. Self-knowledge (self-awareness)	*	*	*	*	
15. Mastery of a specific subject area specialization				*	
16. Working in teams	*	*			
17. Research design, data gathering and analysis			*		
18. Basic understanding of the legal system	*				
19. Arbitration, adjudicator skills	*				S

### Master of Science in Conflict Management