

1

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF GOVERNMENT

This report is about the end of the government-centered public service and the rise of a multisectoral service to replace it. Designed to sustain thirty-year careers with one way in at the entry level and one way out at retirement, the government-centered public service is increasingly unattractive to a work force that will change jobs and sectors frequently, and to workers who are much more focused on challenging work than security. Gone are the days when talented employees would endure hiring delays and a mind-numbing application process to get an entry-level government job. Gone, too, are the days when talented employees would accept slow but steady advancement through towering government bureaucracies in exchange for a thirty-year commitment. In the midst of a growing labor shortage, government is becoming an employer of last resort, one that caters more to the security-craver than the risk-taker.

Simply stated, young Americans are no longer willing to wait patiently for the chance to accomplish something worthwhile. Having set annual volunteering records in college, they want tangible impacts on the job.¹ If that means a job with a private firm or nonprofit agency, so be it. The government-centered public service has been replaced by a new public service in which government must compete for talent. Unfortunately, as this report will argue, government in

general, and the federal government in specific, simply is not configured to offer the work that young Americans want. Battered by downsizing, political scandal, and a never-ending war on waste, the federal government has yet to articulate a clear vision of how to compete against the private sector for talent. Agencies are struggling just to hold the talent they already have, let alone imagine a new public service in which expertise moves more freely across the sectors.

The fact that the erosion of talent is imperceptible does not make it less threatening to democratic life. Ultimately, effective governance is impossible if government cannot attract talented citizens to serve at all levels of the hierarchy. As Alexander Hamilton warned two hundred years ago in *The Federalist Papers*, “a government ill executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be in practice a bad government.” Citizens cannot have confidence in the integrity of the democratic process if their leaders cannot honor the promises they make, but those leaders cannot honor the promises they make if government cannot attract the talent necessary to both draft and execute the laws. Much as Americans complain about the size of government, and much as they believe that the federal government creates more problems than it solves, they also expect it to deliver high performance in their favorite programs, whatever their favorites might be.²

The federal government’s problem in competing for talent is twofold. First, its current hiring system for recruiting talent, top to bottom, underwhelms at almost every task it undertakes. It is slow in the hiring, almost useless in the firing, overly permissive in the promoting, out of touch with actual performance in the rewarding, penurious in the training, and utterly absent in the managing of a vast and hidden work force of contractors and consultants who work side by side, desk by desk with the civil service. Sad to say, when young Americans are asked to picture themselves in public service careers, particularly at the federal level, they picture themselves in deadend jobs where seniority, not performance, rules. And when more seasoned Americans are asked to picture themselves in appointive office, they picture themselves in a nomination and confirmation process characterized by endless inspection, over-disclosure, and delays at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Second, government appears to be less and less able to provide the kind of work that today’s labor market expects. There is no question,

for example, that young Americans are more lightly attached to work than previous generations, nor that the most talented among them can demand more from their employers. The civil service system may have mostly stood still since 1978, but the culture of work has changed dramatically, in no small part due to downsizing and corporate mergers.³ The best available evidence suggests that government is not even winning the battle among young people who have already made the decision to spend their careers serving the public—those battles are being won by private firms and nonprofit agencies.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, there is little evidence that government can win the recruiting battle with higher pay. Pay is no doubt important as students consider first jobs, but it is far less important than the nature of the job itself. Young Americans are not saying “Show me the money” so much as “Show me the work.” And it is on that count that government is losing ground.

The Quiet Crisis Continues

This is hardly the first report to document the decline of the public service. Concerns about the continuing problems in recruiting and retaining government talent eventually led to creation of the National Commission on the Public Service, which was chaired by former Federal Reserve Board chairman Paul Volcker. Convened only a decade after the enactment of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the commission assembled the best available data in describing a “quiet crisis” in the federal service.⁴

The term *quiet crisis* was a nearly perfect description of the slow weakening of the public service in the 1970s and 1980s. By the end of the 1980s, the gap between federal and private pay had widened, attacks on government by the media and political candidates were at an all-time high, the Office of Personnel Management had been weakened by a director who believed that mediocre was good enough for government, and the public had lost confidence in its elected and appointed leaders.⁵ At the same time, America’s most talented citizens had lost interest in public service of any kind, and morale within the civil service was at a modern low. The only problem with the crisis was that it was profoundly quiet. “This erosion has been gradual,

almost imperceptible, year by year,” the Volcker Commission concluded. “But it has occurred nonetheless.”⁶ Not since the time of Andrew Jackson’s spoils system did civil servants have such good reason to feel beleaguered.

The crisis may have been building for years, but its impact on the public service was unmistakable. As the commission put it: “too many of the best of the nation’s senior executives are ready to leave government, and not enough of its most talented young people are willing to join. This erosion in the attractiveness of the public service at all levels—most specifically in the federal civil service—undermines the ability of government to respond effectively to the needs and aspirations of the American people, and ultimately damages the democratic process itself.”⁷

In retrospect, the commission’s report marks a last-gasp effort to rescue the old public service in what was already becoming a new labor market. Unfortunately, the commission did not, could not, anticipate the dramatic restructuring of government that has occurred since the end of the cold war, a restructuring that has included a massive downsizing of federal employment and a steady blurring of the lines among government, private, and nonprofit delivery of services.⁸ The symptoms of crisis may have remained unchanged since Volcker, but the causes and, therefore, the solutions most certainly have not.

There can be little doubt that the quiet crisis continues. Public trust in government continues to fall, the senior levels of the hierarchy continues to thicken, and young people continue to express significant doubts about the value of a public service career. If asked to revisit its opening assessment of the state of the public service, the commission would find plenty of evidence of continued erosion despite the modest gain. The erosion remains gradual, almost imperceptible, but it continues nonetheless. It is most certainly time for a reassessment, both of the underlying problems and the potential solutions, and a fresh assessment of how the public service might be strengthened. This reassessment must confront the growing evidence that government must do more than merely become more effective at inviting talented citizens to serve. It must also make that service much more inviting at all levels.

Nor is there much doubt that talented Americans are turning away from the government-centered public service. Start at the entry level, where the federal government has become an increasingly unattractive employer for the nation’s top college graduates. Fewer than one in ten

of the 1998 Phi Beta Kappa graduates surveyed by George Washington University rated the federal government as their first preference for an employer, while nearly six in ten said they would not know how to get a federal job even if they wanted one, and nine in ten said that the process for getting a federal job would be long and burdensome.⁹

Even students who have decided to make public service the focus of their life's work are no longer drawn to government first. Just 53 percent of the 1998 public administration students also surveyed by George Washington University ranked government as their first preference for an employer, with the federal government barely outdrawing state and local government, whereas the rest saw their future outside traditional government posts, with the private sector at 27 percent and nonprofits at 22 percent.¹⁰

Look next inside government, where there is growing evidence that federal employees are finding their work less rewarding. A 1996 Merit Systems Protection Board random-sample survey of nearly 10,000 federal workers found a mix of satisfaction and frustration. The good news is that four out of five respondents were satisfied with their jobs, three out of five would recommend the federal government as a place to work, and most felt pay was adequate. The bad news is that the vast majority of respondents said that the budget cuts, downsizing, and back-to-back government shutdowns in 1995 had a negative impact on their organizations, and four out of ten said that fears of future reductions in force were having a continued, negative impact on productivity.¹¹

This general blend of satisfaction and frustration continues up the hierarchy to the most senior elected and appointed positions. On the one hand, a recent survey of members of Congress, presidential appointees, and career senior executives shows significant job satisfaction; 57 percent of the members of Congress, 64 percent of presidential appointees, and 56 percent of the career members of the Senior Executive Service report that they are very satisfied. Most also say they are more satisfied today than they were when they first started in their jobs.

On the other hand, all three groups of leaders report greater frustration with actually doing their jobs. Political appointees work long hours under great media scrutiny. Although they say they are willing to work as long as it takes, they also report enormous frustration at the amount of time they have to spend in administering antiquated

systems and testifying before Congress on what they see as trivial issues. All three groups complain mightily about not having enough time to work on policy—members of Congress are particularly frustrated with campaign fund-raising, while presidential appointees and senior executives appear desperate to be freed from doing routine administrative tasks and responding to congressional requests.¹²

Overall, the evidence suggests that government has lost whatever competitive edge it might have had in the 1970s in recruiting talented Americans to service. On the whole, government jobs are not particularly inviting these days, nor are agencies doing much inviting. It is still mostly up to talented employees to find government, not vice versa. And there is still mostly just one way into a government job right after high school or college, and mostly just one way out twenty to thirty years later at retirement.

What may make the current state of the public service more troubling is the entry of a mostly new competitor for talent: the private contractors that are delivering more and more of the nation's public services.¹³ Anecdotal reports from the leading public policy and administration schools suggests a significant increase in recruiting pressure from these firms, which do more than just outbid government on entry-level pay and benefits, even as they offer five-figure signing bonuses. They can also out-recruit government on campus, providing a much more polished image of their organizations than does government. They can also offer the opportunity for rapid advancement in growing federal, state, and local government practices.

The challenge for further analysis is less to define the nature of the problem than to understand its origins and potential solutions. Nor is it just to recycle past ideas for rescuing the thirty-year government career, as so many reformers do in nostalgic calls for renewal. Although there is no doubt that the old public service can be strengthened, the current reform proposals ignore the fundamental changes in the market of potential public servants, a market that has become much more deliberate in the search for meaningful work.

Searching for the New Public Service

Beyond the accounts cited above, there is little systematic evidence on the rise of the new public service. One can only infer its rise through

the movement of jobs from government to private firms and nonprofit agencies as Congress and the president have simultaneously downsized the federal work force and devolved responsibilities to states, localities, and nonprofit agencies over the past two decades.

Between 1984 and 1996, for example, the federal government cut roughly 1.6 million full-time-equivalent positions from its combined work force of civil servants, uniformed military personnel, postal workers, contractors, and grantees. Remove the Department of Defense and its massive downsizing from the figures, however, and the true size of the federal work force actually grew from 5.5 million to 6.3 million during the period, including a dramatic increase in the number of positions created under contracts for services. Even at Defense, where the end of the cold war brought an estimated loss of roughly 2.5 million jobs (civilian, military, contractors, and grantees), the service contract work force actually increased by 100,000 jobs, rising from 2.2 million in 1984 to 2.3 million twelve years later. At non-Defense agencies, the increase in service jobs was even more dramatic, rising from 1.3 million to 1.7 million.

Outsourcing fever also hit the state and local levels of government, where private firms are competing for a growing share of public work in managing everything from prisons (Corrections Corporation of America) to welfare (Lockheed Martin). According to William Ryan, “the real news is not the appearance of a few high-profile for-profit players on the field but rather the underlying changes that have made their entry and rapid growth possible. While many nonprofits are still reeling from cutbacks on social spending, for-profits are celebrating the fact that government outsourcing is still growing in so many areas.”¹⁴ From San Diego, California, where Lockheed Martin, Maximus, and Catholic Charities deliver welfare-to-work services on the city’s behalf, to Dade County, Florida, where Lockheed Martin is the paymaster for roughly thirty nonprofits providing those same services for the county, the private sector is getting ever more deeply involved in doing work once done by government. And just who is doing the work for Lockheed Martin? Former government and nonprofit executives who are moving to the big paychecks, leaving a deforested public sector in their wake.

The Changing Shape of Government

The past fifteen years have witnessed the most dramatic, yet least understood, reshaping of the administrative state in U.S. history. During the Clinton administration alone, the federal government reduced its civil service work force by a sixth (191,000 jobs), eliminated a quarter of its middle-level management positions (35,000 jobs), and sliced its Defense contract work force by nearly a third (1.6 million jobs). At the same time, it increased its non-Defense contract and grant work force by a sixth (600,000 jobs). In 1997, for the first time in civil service history, employees at the middle level of government outnumbered those at the lower levels (638,427 to 594,126).

These changes have clearly altered the traditional government-centered nature of public service. Simply stated, as go the jobs, so goes the public service. Viewed in hierarchical terms, for example, the federal government has become more circular, even elliptical, over time. More and more federal employees are doing the supervising and procuring of work from nonfederal employees, who are doing the delivering and producing. Part of the shift reflects the natural evolution of work. The bottom of government has been slimming for decades as new technologies have rendered frontline jobs obsolete. Under unrelenting political pressure to keep the civil service small, agencies have done what comes naturally: push as much front-line work outward and downward as possible.

As I argue in *The True Size of Government*, most of that slimming was a product of attrition-based downsizing and the lack of clear guidelines for deciding which jobs should stay inside government and which should go.¹⁵ It stretches credulity, for example, to argue that nearly 191,000 lower-level jobs suddenly became obsolete in 1993. The federal government eliminated primarily the jobs that were the easiest to cut, meaning the ones with the highest attrition and the lowest political profile.

The rest of the federal pyramid, and much of the new public service, will still exist in this elliptical future. It will just reside outside of the federal headcount in the millions of people who will work for contractors, grantees, and state and local governments delivering services on the federal government's behalf. As long as the federal mission continues to grow, and there are few hints that it will do otherwise, the faithful execution of the laws will rely more on writing careful con-

tracts, grants, and mandates than on the traditional chain of command between elected representatives and the career work force below. And, in turn, the execution of those contracts, grants, and mandates will fall less to federal employees and much more to a new public service increasingly composed of employees who divide their loyalties and careers between the sectors as they look for work that matters.

The changing shape of the federal government can be seen in its girth, height, and mix of jobs. Its girth has been tightening, thereby reducing opportunities for hiring at all levels; its height has been growing, thereby burnishing its unenviable reputation as an overlaid, frustrating place to work; and its bottom has been disappearing as frontline jobs have been contracted out to the private and nonprofit sectors.

GIRTH. The tightening girth of government can be seen throughout the hierarchy, starting with the very top of government, where presidential appointees and senior career executives work. According to the Winter 1998 edition of the *Federal Yellow Book*, 2,462 federal executives carried some variation of the five top titles in a federal government department: secretary, deputy secretary, under secretary, assistant secretary, and administrator. That number includes everything from chiefs of staffs to associate under secretaries, assistant inspectors general to principal deputy administrators. That figure had increased more than fivefold from 1960 to 1993.

To its credit, the Clinton administration held the total number of executives in check. Those 2,462 officials represent an addition of just fifty-four since January 20, 1993, including seventy-eight jobs in the newly independent Social Security Administration. Subtract those positions from the count, and the executive corps actually lost weight. In contrast, the Reagan administration added 173 posts to the top of government, while the Bush administration added over 600.¹⁶

Also to its credit, the Clinton administration reduced the number of middle managers. The federal government employed 126,000 middle managers in 1997, down from 161,000 in 1992, 150,000 in 1989, but roughly equal to the number of middle managers in 1983. The government employed eight rank-and-file workers for every supervisor in 1993; by 1997 the ratio was eleven to one. Moreover, all but two departments lost mid-level supervisors. Only Justice (up roughly 2,000 supervisors) and State (up 18) increased the number of mid-level

managers, while Interior and Treasury each lost roughly a sixth; Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, and Transportation almost a fifth; Education and the General Services Administration more than a third; the Environmental Protection Agency and Housing and Urban Development almost two-fifths; Energy and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration more than half; and the Office of Personnel Management more than two-thirds.¹⁷

The cuts in middle management were part of a governmentwide reduction in total employment that began in 1989 when Congress ordered the closing of the first of what would become 243 obsolete military bases, accelerated in 1993 when Clinton ordered a 100,000 cut in total federal employment, and culminated with a total cut of 272,900 under the Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994. Although the number of political appointees and senior executives remained constant and management accounted for just 10 percent of the downsizing, the Clinton administration was able to reverse a two-decade rise in the numbers of both senior- and middle-level managers.

HEIGHT. Although the number of senior executives and middle managers remained steady during the 1990s, the number of layers they occupy did not. At the middle levels, for example, many agencies reduced the number of managers by merely assigning different titles. According to the General Accounting Office, 41 percent of the downsizing of supervisors at the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama, involved such reclassification, as did 40 percent of the cuts at the Bureau of Land Management and 35 percent at the Federal Aviation Administration. The Social Security Administration cut nearly 2,800 middle-level supervisory titles from 1993 to 1998 but created 1,900 new nonsupervisory titles, including 500 team leaders and 1,350 management support specialists.

The continued layering of government is most apparent at the top. There, the Clinton administration clearly failed to stem the generation of new titles. Indeed, it witnessed the most significant addition of layers in modern executive history. From 1993 to 1998, the fourteen departments of government created sixteen new senior-level titles, including a stunning number of new *alter ego* deputy posts, including deputy to the deputy secretary, principal assistant deputy under secretary, associate principal deputy assistant secretary, chief of staff to the under secretary, assistant chief of staff to the administrator, and chief

of staff to the assistant administrator. Government's top tier may not have grown wider, but it most certainly grew taller.

The Clinton layering would have been even greater had three titles not disappeared along the way: principal associate deputy under secretary (which had existed in the Department of Energy), associate deputy under secretary (which had existed in six departments and appears to have moved up into the deputy secretary position), and associate assistant administrator (twelve of which had existed in the Department of Commerce). In total, the Clinton administration created nineteen new titles and removed three, yielding a net increase of sixteen, allowing the creation of as many new titles during its first six years as the past seven administrations created over the preceding thirty-three years.

Not all of the new layers will hold, however. Only five of the new titles exist in more than one department to date; most of the new titles are held by only one person in one department. But if the past is prologue, many of the titles will spread to other departments, largely through a process that sociologists label as isomorphism and that Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan calls the "iron law of emulation." Except for the secretary title, which has existed since the first Congress created the first department, each title in the phone book originated in only one department.

Whatever the underlying incentive for title copying, the layering increases the distance that ideas must travel up to reach the secretary, and guidance must travel down to the frontlines of government. More hands must touch the paper, more signatures grace the page, and more eyes read the memos. It is impossible for the top to know what the bottom is doing when the bottom remains thirty, forty, or more layers below; it is impossible for the bottom to hear the top when messages go through dozens of interpretations on their journey down. Like the childhood game of "telephone," in which messages become hopelessly distorted as they are relayed from child to child, the layers merely add to the potential confusion and loss of accountability between the top and the bottom.

JOB MIX. Presidential appointees and senior managers were not alone in surviving the downsizing mostly untouched. The middle levels of government also remained intact. Although the number of middle-level managers fell by a quarter, the number of middle level

nonmanagers barely changed at all, dropping by a mere 1 percent from 645,000 to 638,000.

There is no question that the downsizing hit the lower levels of government the hardest. After all, that is where the pay is lowest and attrition rates the highest. The number of employees in the lower grades of the federal general employment schedule dropped by more than 170,000 between 1992 and 1997, while the number of blue-collar jobs fell by an additional 100,000. At the same time, the average employment grade of the lower-level employees who remained in the job actually increased by its largest margin in a decade, meaning that more jobs were removed at the bottom-most levels than anywhere else.

Thus, even as the bottom of government has thinned under the downsizing, the middle of government grew ever so slightly. Notwithstanding the loss of 35,000 middle-management jobs and the separation of thousands of about-to-retire employees, the average middle-level pay grade actually increased.

The relative stability in the middle-level ranks could signal the presence of one or both of two conditions. First, it could be that managers who were reclassified into nonmanagerial positions were left at the same grade. Second, it could be that most of the vacated positions were “backfilled,” meaning that the occupant left, but the job and grade, sans title, were occupied by the person next in line. Neither Clinton’s 1993 executive order nor the Workforce Restructuring Act required that the higher-graded jobs be forever abolished upon the incumbents’ departure. The hierarchy most certainly lost weight in the total number of employees but actually gained weight as measured in the average grade of the employees who remained. This may be a diet that any overweight American would gladly follow, but it is not necessarily healthy for assuring government accountability.

It is not exactly clear where the bottom-level jobs went. Some no doubt disappeared forever; others likely ended up in service contracts. Lacking careful tracking data, one can only have suspicions. Although the Office of Management and Budget specifically asked agencies to collect information on any shift of jobs from employees to contractors, it has not monitored the data, if any data were kept at all. OMB had to depend on agencies to keep caps on contracting despite the fact that those agencies still had to deliver the same amount of goods and services. It is conceivable, for example, that many of the 300,000 jobs lost

during the Clinton administration downsizing were, in fact, obsolete, but that the federal government did not have the means to eliminate them until the early 1990s. They may not have suddenly become obsolete, but they most certainly became expendable.

Finding the New Public Service

These changes clearly affected the public service, in part by introducing competition to what was once a single-sector labor market. Witness the Merit Systems Protection Board surveys of federal morale, the George Washington University surveys of Phi Beta Kappas and public administration students, and the surveys of members of Congress, presidential appointees, and senior executives.

Much as these studies have added to an understanding of what today's public servants are thinking, they do little to describe the changing nature of public service careers. One cannot know, for example, where today's public servants came from, where they went, what motivated them, and how they view their preparation for the new public service created through the changing shape of government. That kind of research would require a study of successive age cohorts, or classes, of public servants, tracking their job movements one by one over time. Ideally, such a study would have begun in the early 1970s, before the federal government began changing shape. Lacking such data, the best one can do is go back in time through the memories of respondents, tracking the contours of career job by job and describing the changing nature of public service through their choices.

Consider eight challenges in designing such a study, the first being the choice of a profession that might best reveal the changing contours of public service careers. There is certainly no shortage of professions that bear the imprint of change, from government lawyers to school-teachers, social workers, program evaluators, environmental engineers, prison guards, rocket scientists, and computer programmers. Although each one would tell part of the story, this report focuses specifically on the professionals trained at the nation's master's-level public policy and administration programs. Not only are public policy and administration graduates the most likely to reveal the general trends described above, they represent the best of the best in the public service. If government is having trouble recruiting and holding students who have made public service the centerpiece of their graduate training, imagine

the difficulties elsewhere in the recruiting process. Metaphorically, they also represent the future of the public service, a leading indicator of where jobs are moving, how careers are changing, and where government needs to get much stronger to garner its share of talented employees.

The second challenge in such a study of the new public service is to identify a specific set of public policy and administration graduates to carry this metaphorical burden. Should the study focus on a random sample of all graduates? A succession of Presidential Management Interns, which remains the federal government's premier, albeit tarnished, recruitment program for master's level graduates? Graduates who started in government but left? Those who started outside of government and recently returned? Although this report tells the story of public policy and administration graduates from every category, it focuses quite specifically on the career paths of five classes of students who attended the nation's very best programs, those rated by *U.S. News and World Report* in 1998 as the top twenty schools. Metaphorically again, these graduates should be on the leading edge of the changing public service. In theory, they should be the most heavily recruited across the sectors, and the most likely to have a choice of jobs at the start of career. To the extent that the private and nonprofit sectors are becoming more aggressive in claiming a share of the top graduates, the trend should show up first at the very top of the *U.S. News* list.

The third challenge in such a study is to choose a set of age cohorts that might provide a sense of how careers have changed over time. It is important to note that a single public opinion survey, no matter how carefully constructed to rekindle memories of first jobs, cannot substitute for a panel survey of the same respondents over time.¹⁸ Memories change over time as current experience deconstructs and reconstructs experience. Nevertheless, without panel data, the best one can do is define a reasonable sample of respondents and discipline memory through carefully constructed questions. Toward that end, this report focuses on five separate cohorts, or classes, of public policy and administration graduates: the classes of 1973–74, 1978–79, 1983, 1988, 1993. Because respondents are more difficult to find the further back in time one goes, the first two cohorts were expanded to include two classes each to make sure that the study would have enough respondents to assure that comparisons were valid over time,

while the five-year spread between classes was designed to assure reasonable distances between cohorts.

The fourth challenge in such a study using five specific classes of students is to design a fair sample that allows for careful comparison across different types of degrees. It could be, for example, that graduates of the nation's top public policy schools, which emphasize policy analysis, would head in different directions from graduates of the top public administration schools, which emphasize more traditional government-centered careers. Luckily, the *U.S. News* ratings include three types of graduate schools for such comparisons: policy analysis programs such as Carnegie Mellon and Chicago, public administration programs such as the University of Southern California and the University of Kansas, and comprehensive programs such as Harvard and Syracuse, which offer a mix of both policy and administration. Appendix A summarizes the sampling frame, type of contact information, interview procedures, and overall response rate for the survey used by Princeton Survey Research Associates to collect the data for this report in 1998 and 1999.

The fifth challenge in such a study using such a population is to collect the names and phone numbers of the actual respondents to contact. Here, the survey researcher has little choice but to rely on the kindness of the schools to provide alumni lists and the good fortune to find valid phone numbers and addresses. Unfortunately, about half of the schools in the *U.S. News* top twenty list decided not to participate in this research: Princeton (tied for number 3), California, Berkeley (tied 5), Georgia (tied 5), Duke (tied 11), Wisconsin (tied 11), American (tied 14), Columbia (tied 18), George Washington (tied 20), Rand (tied 20), Maryland (tied 20), and Pittsburgh (tied 20). Several replied that they simply did not have active alumni lists, and George Washington worried that the release of names would violate alumni confidentiality.

Luckily, the final pool of participants included representatives from all types of schools and all levels of the top twenty: Syracuse (ranked number 1), Harvard (2), Indiana (3), Texas (tied 5), Carnegie Mellon (tied 5), Michigan (tied 8), Southern California (tied 8), State University of New York, Albany (11), Chicago (tied 14), Kansas (tied 14), North Carolina (tied 14), Minnesota (tied 18), and Washington (one of five tied for 20; because of ties, there were actually twenty-four schools on the top twenty list). The final list of participants included

seven comprehensive schools (Harvard, Indiana, Minnesota, North Carolina, Syracuse, Texas, and Washington), three that specialize in policy analysis (Carnegie Mellon, Chicago, and Michigan), and three that specialize in public administration (Kansas, the State University of New York at Albany, and Southern California). Most of the schools joined the study by forwarding their alumni directories, which were then scanned into a master file for final sampling. Harvard made this process all the easier by supplying an electronic version of its alumni file in several different formats.

The sixth challenge in such a study is to write a questionnaire long enough to describe changes in career but short enough to keep respondents on the line. At least for telephone surveys, where respondents always have the option of hanging up, the shorter the questionnaire, the better. Whether a survey is conducted over the telephone or in person, designing an effective questionnaire requires tough choices over both the number and range of questions. This study was no different. By keeping the number of open-ended questions to a minimum, the questionnaire was expanded to cover a wider range of issues, including career path, trust in the various sectors, the skills needed for career success, and the value of graduate education. Although open-ended questions would have yielded richer information, perhaps, the questionnaire provided a very detailed inventory of information about the past, present, and future of public service.¹⁹ (The final survey is presented with overall percentages in appendix B.)

The seventh challenge in such a study is to actually complete the interviews. Princeton Survey Research Associates committed to making at least twenty callback attempts to connect and complete interviews with every sampled graduate (see appendix A for a brief discussion of the interview completion procedure). In all, the various alumni lists provided 3,549 telephone numbers, of which 941 were dropped because they were out of service, business, fax, or modem numbers; 184 were never answered, always busy, or somehow incomplete; 457 reached answering machines or resulted in a request to call back at another time; 474 connected to households with no eligible graduate; 477 resulted in an interview refusal; and 1,016 produced an interview. Of the interviews conducted between September 22 and November 7, 1998, only 16 produced an incomplete interview, resulting in a final sample of exactly 1,000. All told, the final response rate from the survey was 56.4 percent: 74 percent of the numbers con-

tacted were valid; 77 percent of those numbers produced an interview; and 98 percent of those interviews were completed.

The eighth and final challenge in such a study is to analyze the data. The analyst must put the variables in the proper order, offer alternative explanations for the results, use the appropriate methodologies for separating cause from illusion, and remain cautious about interpretation and generous with possible explanations. That is very much the guiding ethic in the report that follows. This report should be taken less as *the* definitive portrait of the public service at century's end and more as a snapshot of what has happened to some of the nation's most talented public servants as they moved through career.

Plan of the Book

The rest of this book consists of four chapters, the first three offering more details on where the graduates came from, where they went, and how well they were served by their graduate education, and the fourth providing a broad overview of the findings and advice for the various actors in the new public service.

Chapter 2 starts the analysis by examining the histories that the five classes of students brought to graduate schools. Today's public policy and administration graduates are very different from their class of 1973 or 1974 predecessors. Students are more likely to bring significant work experience into school, and much of that experience is likely to occur in the private or nonprofit sector, or both. They are also likely to be more diverse demographically, as is the public service that they seek to join.

Chapter 3 continues the analysis with a profile of the new public service. The chapter starts by reviewing three decades of change in the market for public servants, and continues with a detailed examination of two defining characteristics of the new public service. First, today's public policy and administration graduates are far more likely than were their predecessors to enter the private or nonprofit sectors upon graduation, in part because both sectors have so much to offer by way of challenging work and the opportunity to grow. Second, today's graduates are also more likely to switch jobs and sectors more frequently than did their predecessors, which is no small accomplishment given the high switching rates of the earlier classes in this study. After asking why those who switch do so, the chapter concludes with

an analysis of the underlying motivations to serve and the sources of job satisfaction. The new public service may be more mobile than ever, but the basic motivations to serve have remained remarkably constant over the past quarter-century: graduates of the top schools most want challenging work and the chance to grow.

Chapter 4 completes the survey analysis by asking how well the top schools served their students. The answer is both affirming and challenging. There is no doubt that the graduates interviewed for this report believe their schools gave them a degree with great value to their career success. At the same time, these graduates also report significant gaps between the skills that they believe have been important to their success and the skills that their schools taught well.

Chapter 5 concludes the report with a broad overview of findings and detailed advice to five different audiences concerned with the future of public service: students about to enroll in a public policy or administration graduate school, graduates about to enter the job market, the graduate schools themselves, government agencies that want to become more competitive in hiring talented graduates, and the non-profit sector and its funders. Presumably, the private sector already knows what it needs to do to compete.