

WHAT ANALYSTS ANALYZE

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LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

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Remarks to Berkeley Graduate School of
Public Policy Minority Students
Room 2040, State Capitol
Sacramento, California

WHAT ANALYSTS ANALYZE

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Focus of my Remarks

1. Policy analysis
2. Specifically, my purpose is to alert you to the rewards, challenges, and frustrations that are brought by a career as a policy analyst.

B. Perspective on Public Service

1. Field of public service, of course, includes a lot more than policy analysis.
2. It also includes:
 - a. Advocacy
 - b. Program management
 - c. Policy research
 - d. Policy development

C. My Approach

1. Discuss:
 - a. What policy analysts analyze
 - b. How analytical material is used in the policy-making process
 - c. What it takes to be successful as a policy analyst
 - d. The demand for policy analysts
 - e. Why you're important

- a. Insight into what are issues (early warning function).
 - b. Skills at gathering information (detective function).
 - c. Brains--making information tell a story (analytical function).
 - d. Skills at packaging information (communication function).
 - e. Judgment (advice function).
2. Early warning function (Knox-Keene)
 3. Detective function (Workfare)
 4. Analytical function (Borrowing)
 5. Communication function (UCRS)
 6. Advice function (the Analysis)
- C. Illustrations of What Policy Analysts Analyze

III. HOW ANALYSTS' ANALYSES ARE USED

A. Forums

1. Policy making--new programs
2. Allocation of resources--the budget process
3. Program monitoring--oversight
4. Other ways

B. Uses of Analytical Material

1. Source of ideas
2. Blueprint for action
3. Counterbalance

C. How Does an Analyst Know His Material is Being Used?

1. Changes occur slowly

2. One-to-one causation seldom apparent
3. No place for someone who insists on instant results

IV. WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A SUCCESSFUL ANALYST

- A. Innate Skepticism/Questioning Nature
- B. Ability to Separate Personal Views from Professional Responsibility (Objectivity)
- C. Communications Skills
- D. Ability to Think Fast on Your Feet
- E. Quantitative Aptitude/Skills
- F. High "Frustration Coefficient"

V. MARKET FOR POLICY ANALYSTS

- A. The Market Today
- B. The Outlook (Dick Nathan)
 1. Federal
 2. State
 3. Local

VI. WHY YOU ARE IMPORTANT

- A. Importance of Objectivity
- B. Objectivity does not mean, however, that individual analysts do not have different ways of looking at issues.
 1. In part, it reflects their training.

2. Part, however, is due to their unique experiences, which result in different perspectives, different ideas about what's important, different views on how to weigh the various factors that impinge on an issue.
- C. Diversity among the staff always is desirable, but it's crucial in the field of policy analysis.
1. Government programs touch everyone's lives
 2. It's not satisfactory for a homogeneous group of largely white, well-educated males from middle-class backgrounds to be the sole source of analytical information on programs affecting everyone.
 3. An analytical staff needs diversity to do its job.
- D. The channel through which diversity contributes to the analytical product is through contact at the staff level--that's where the real education process occurs.
- E. --That's why you're important.