

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the faculty of the Virginia Tech Center for Public Administration and Policy (CPAP) for a truly wonderful learning experience. Through their guidance and wisdom, I have expanded my knowledge and understanding of human relationships and the significance of those relationships to democratic governance. Most importantly, the program fosters continuous personal and professional growth in a culture that is at once serious and playful, encouraging long term connections to the institution and to my partners in learning, the students of CPAP.

Special appreciation goes to the members of my committee. Professors Larkin Dudley, Susan Gooden, John Rohr, Larry Lane, and Jim Wolf inspired me with their personal enthusiasm and dedication to teaching and learning. Dr. Dudley's early encouragement in pursuing my topic, continual support, and her interest in federal government agencies helped me keep my eye on the goal. Dr. Gooden's knowledge of the personnel field and, in particular, her focus on the research methodology enhanced the quality of the dissertation. Dr. Rohr's expert knowledge of the legal foundations of public administration helped ground the research in the political and legal contexts in which public personnel management is set.

Dr. Lane and Dr. Wolf must be acknowledged in particular as teachers and mentors. Dr. Lane's federal career as an HR senior executive and his second career in academia suggested possibilities I had not considered previously. His interest in and support of my research topic helped keep me moving and opened avenues of thought and action. He was my first connection, as well, to the CPAP program in a cognate course I took during my master's program in Adult and Continuous Learning. Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank Dr. Wolf for his ability to coach and facilitate my efforts to complete this critical phase of the doctoral program. His understanding of organizations and of human resources management helped frame the thesis, organize the approach, and craft conclusions. And his ability to gently but incessantly push me along made all the difference in my achievement.

In pursuing the degree and in conducting the research, I made a number of personal and professional friendships. The staff of the Office of Personnel Management's Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness willingly shared their expertise and gave me the opportunity to learn more about federal HRM from their window on the world. I could not have gotten as broad an understanding of current federal HRM merit issues from collecting data alone. The HRM directors and agency representatives, who took the time to respond to the survey and to talk about the changes occurring in the personnel field, have my gratitude for their forthrightness in discussing HRM policies and practices in their organizations and their interest in improving both the field and their institutions. My colleagues in learning at Tech have enriched my life immensely. I want to especially thank my dinner partners for being there in frustration and in joy. Friends make all the difference.

Finally, there would most likely be not a doctorate without the encouragement and inspiration of the most wonderful family in the world. My parents, Jack and Mary Hoffman, have loved and believed in me in everything I have attempted to do, and especially in this endeavor. My parents-in-law, Pete and the late Woody Woodard, cheered me on throughout the process with love. My children, Kristin and Patrick Walsh, Courtney Elderbaum, and Jennifer Woodard, are my treasures. Their love is constant and my pride in them knows no bounds. And lastly, I give my thanks to my dear husband, Bill Woodard, who is my inspiration, my love, and my friend. He told me to go for it and never wavered in his support. His own accomplishments encourage me to move on to the next challenge.

My thanks and love to all!

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
A. The Quest for Merit in Modern Government	2
B. The Research Question	5
C. The Contribution to the Literature	6
D. The Framework of the Dissertation	6
E. An Overview of the Research Results	9
Section I Building a Model of Merit-based Federal Human Resources Management	10
Chapter I. Crafting an Initial Model of Merit from History and Law.....	12
A. The Merit Story	12
1) Merit and the Democratic Process	13
2) Defining Merit-based HRM	14
3) Merit in Principle	16
4) Merit in Practice	19
a. The Early Years of Government Employment	19
b. The Reform Era	20
c. Merit Meets Scientific Management	22
5) Merit in State and Local Government	23
6) Merit and Collective Bargaining	26
7) Chapter Summary	28
B. The Legal Foundation of Merit	30
1) Title 5 and the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978	31
2) Legislation	33
3) Judicial Decisions	35
C. Crafting an Initial Model of Merit of Merit-based HRM	39

Chapter II. Enhancing the Model – A View From Other Sources	43
A. Summary of the Sample Textbook Review.....	43
1) Merit Principles or Values	44
2) Hiring and Staffing	45
3) Classification and Compensation	47
4) Employee Protections	49
B. Demonstration Projects -- Title 5 Waivers	50
C. Interviews and Studies	53
1) The Office of Personnel Management.....	53
2) The National Academy of Public Administration	55
3) The Merit Systems Protection Board	57
D. Finalizing the Model of Merit-based HRM Systems	60
Section II Collecting Data on Title 5-exempt Federal Organizations..	66
Chapter III. Setting the Stage for Research: Background on Government Corporations and Other Title 5-exempt Organizations.....	68
A. An Historical Perspective	69
B. A Place for More Flexible Government	71
C. Oversight and Accountability	72
D. A Decision to Study Title 5-exempt Organizations	73
Chapter IV Methodology -- Multiple Case Study Approach	75
A. The Institutionalization of HRM	75
B. Qualitative Research	76
C. The OPM Field Study	79
1) Identifying the Study Population	81
2) Developing the Survey Instrument and Conducting the Survey	84

Chapter V	Findings -- HRM Practices in Title-5 exempt Organizations	87
	A. Merit Principles or Values	87
	B. Hiring and Staffing	91
	C. Classification and Compensation	100
	D. Employee Protections	111
	E. Recap and Plan for Verifying the Findings	117
Chapter VI	Verifying the Findings in Selected Organizations	120
	A. Data Collection Methodology	120
	B. Overview of Confirmatory Data	121
	C. Discussion of Data Confirmation by Organization	124
	1) Veterans Health Administration	124
	2) Tennessee Valley Authority	127
	3) Federal Aviation Administration	132
	4) Office of Thrift Supervision	137
	D. Recap – Review of the Data Confirmation Process	138
Section III	Analyzing the Present and Framing the Future	140
Chapter VII	Analysis of the Findings and Application of the Merit Model	142
	A. Title 5-exempt Organizations and the Model of Merit-based HRM	142
	B. Patterns and Anomalies of Merit in the Findings.....	148
	1) Merit Principles or Values	149
	2) Hiring and Staffing	151
	3) Classification and Compensation	156
	4) Employee Protections	160
	5) Collective Bargaining	162
	6) Oversight and Accountability	164

Chapter VIII Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?	167
A. Themes Drawn From the Research	167
1) The Institutionalization of HRM	168
2) The Legalization of HRM	169
3) EEO and Merit	171
4) Collective Bargaining and Merit	172
5) Oversight and Accountability in Less Regulated Environments	173
B. Implications for Federal HRM Policy	174
C. Recommendations	177
D. Conclusion	181
 References	 183
 Appendices	
Appendix A Sample Textbook Review	189
Appendix B OPM Special Study Survey Questionnaire	206
Appendix C Summary Matrix of Research Findings	213
Appendix D Narrative Account of Findings by Organization.....	214
 Vita	 249

List of Tables

Table

1	Methodology Overview	79
2	A Continuum of Title 5 Coverage Among Federal Organizations	82
3	Participants in the OPM Special Study on Title 5-exempt Organizations	84
4	Merit Principle or Values – Survey Results	88
5	Numerical Summary of Merit Principles or Values ...	90
6	Hiring and Staffing – Survey Results	91
7	Numerical Summary of Hiring and Staffing Results....	96
8	Classification and Compensation – Survey Results	101
9	Numerical Summary of Classification and Compensation	108
10	Employee Protections - Survey Results	111
11	Numerical Summary of Employee Protections Results	115
12	Summary of the Data Collection Findings in the Four Categories of Analysis	118
13	Summary of Confirmation Data on Four Organizations	121

List of Figures

Figure

1	Multi-phase Dissertation Process	8
2	Initial Model of Merit-based HRM	41
3	Model of Merit-based HRM Systems	64
4	Context and Core Elements of Merit-based HRM Systems	144
5	Influencing Trends for the Future	146
6	A New Model for Federal HRM	182