

School of Public Affairs Hosts Palo Alto City Manager **by Barbara Lewkowitz**

The School of Public Affairs was honored to host Dr. Frank Benest, City Manager for Palo Alto, California for a presentation April 3, 2008 on “Coping with Accelerating Change in Local Government”. Frank provided a brief overview of Palo Alto in his introductory remarks. The city has a daytime population of 150, 000 but only 65,000 individuals actually reside in the “Heart of Silicon Valley”. The community is highly educated and has great expectations for this council-manager led city to be responsive, full-service and innovative.

Dr. Benest copes with inevitable, quick change in his municipality by creating a learning culture and “growing successors” from within city government. He firmly believes that positive changes occur in organizations that encourage employee learning. The City of Palo Alto provides seven different opportunities for learning (classroom, project debriefings, pilot-testing ideas, coaching, special assignments, action learning teams and civic engagement). In addition, Palo Alto is developing a pool of municipal leadership talent through its internal Management Talent Exchange Program (MTEP) and the California-ICMA coaching program.

Dr. Benest is firmly committed to identifying and developing key talent in his management teams. His strategies and initiatives meet the community goal of creating a “leader-ful” municipal organization for the City of Palo Alto.



SPA graduate students meet with Frank Benest, City Manager for Palo Alto, California.