

MPA STUDENT HANDBOOK

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I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of a Master of Public Administration (MPA) program is to prepare students for entry into administrative and other professional careers in government and nonprofit sectors through the offer of the MPA degree. For students already in public sector careers (“in-service” students), the MPA degree provides them an opportunity to improve skills, broaden perspectives, and assume positions of greater responsibility. The MPA degree is recognized throughout the United States and in most other countries.

The MPA program at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale started in 1974. It was one of the first programs fully accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). The program, a semi-autonomous unit of the Political Science Department, is interdisciplinary and draws on departments and professional programs from throughout the University. In the spring of 1990, the program began offering a concentration in aviation administration, the first of its kind in the nation.

MPA degree requirements are designed to provide instruction in the core knowledge and competencies in public administration as well as a range of additional subjects appropriate to the student’s career interests. An informal career tracking system allows students to integrate their study of core knowledge and competencies with courses that provide special preparation for entry into such specialty fields as city management, financial management, aviation administration, environmental administration, museum administration, and nonprofit organizations. The program is flexible enough to accommodate full and part-time students. Additional information may be found on the MPA program website at:

<http://www.siu.edu/departments/cola/polysci/mpa/> .

B. Program Administration

The MPA program is staffed by a director, a field representative, and a secretary. The director is appointed by and reports to the chairperson of the Political Science Department. The field representative and secretary are appointed by the director and report directly to the director. The MPA program is staffed by core, contributing, and adjunct faculty. The core faculty consist of members of the Political Science Department whose major academic interests and teaching responsibilities lie in public administration. The core faculty teach public administration courses, serve on student research committees, and assist the director in making decisions affecting various aspects of the program. The contributing faculty are faculty members in Political Science as well as other University departments who make important contributions to program teaching and committee service, but whose major responsibilities reside in other departmental programs or university departments. The adjunct faculty is composed of practicing public administrators from across the Southern Illinois region. An Advisory Board composed of alumni and other professionals advises the program on curriculum matters, engages in fundraising, and helps students and faculty make links with government, nonprofit, and business organizations. The board meets twice yearly, once in fall and once in spring. The current roster of MPA faculty is available in the MPA office.

C. Pre-service and In-service Status

Students who are admitted to the program but possess little or no prior administrative or organizational experience are classified as “pre-service.” Students who are admitted with administrative experience are classified as “in-service.” Students are first informed of their status when admitted.

D. Prerequisite Study

Students with a limited background in public administration may be required to take a prerequisite course before enrolling in a required courses. For this reason, it may be necessary for students to delay enrollment in required courses until their second semester of study. Students who lack adequate undergraduate preparation in American government and/or public administration must complete POLS 340 (Introduction to Public Administration). Graduate credit cannot be awarded for completing POLS 340. Students may demonstrate adequate undergraduate preparation in public administration by (1) a single, survey-type course in the area, or (2) two or more courses in specific topics of the area. The POLS 340 prerequisite may be waived for in-service students if the student’s work experience clearly demonstrates knowledge of the subject matter. Students who are admitted to the MPA program with the condition that they must complete POLS 340 must receiving a grade of “B” or above or they will be dropped from the MPA program.

E. Student Mailboxes

MPA students are assigned mailboxes. Located in the Department of Political Science mailroom, the mailbox system facilitates program, campus, and personal communications flowing to and among MPA students. Students are responsible for checking their mailboxes on a regular basis. The students are also responsible for updating MPA office files with current mailing addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

F. E-mail Communications

All MPA students are assigned e-mail addresses through Information Technology (Computer Lab #1, Faner Hall). At the beginning of their first semester, all new MPA students are required to obtain an e-mail address from IT and give it to the MPA secretary.

G. Public Administration Student Organization (PASO)

PASO is the organization of students in the MPA program. Its objectives are two-fold: (1) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience among students interested in pursuing a career in public administration, and (2) to provide a cooperative atmosphere for joint action and representation of needs and interests of public administration students to the officials and agencies of the University community. Membership is open to any SIUC student, graduate or undergraduate, who is interested in public administration. Additionally, associate memberships are open to MPA alumni or any non-student who is interested in participating in the organization. More information about PASO may be obtained in the MPA office.

H. American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

The MPA program maintains an affiliation with professionals in the field. ASPA provides the link as the professional association in which most public administrators and PA academics belong in the United States and even abroad.

I. Job Placement

The MPA program tries to assist students in finding professional employment upon graduation. In cooperation with the University Career Services and the Placement Center, the program's field representative maintains job information files, including catalogs and announcements from local, state, and federal agencies, nonprofit and other organizations that are currently hiring MPA graduates. Resources and guidelines for accessing internet job information databases are also available. Through the Preprofessional Seminar (POLS 594), MPA students learn how to prepare resumes, receive tips about interviewing for jobs and receive information about how and where to conduct job searches. Job information resources of the MPA office, web-based resources and other information outlets will be made available to the students.

J. Alumni Services

The MPA program has an alumni association of over 300 graduates. The alumni are scattered over twenty-five states and a dozen foreign countries. MPA alumni are a key to making the MPA program viable. Frequently, the alumni are called upon to assist with and even host student visits, social events, and other program activities in their geographical areas.

A program newsletter, "MPA Affairs," is published twice yearly in an effort to enhance alumni relations and keep alumni abreast of developments in the MPA program. Students, faculty, and alumni contribute articles to the newsletter.

II. MPA STUDENT ADVISEMENT

The MPA program director is the faculty advisor for all MPA students and is assisted by the MPA Field Representative. An advisement session must be scheduled prior to the initial semester of enrollment in the program and in each subsequent semester. In the initial session, general program curricula and student options are discussed; and courses for the first semester are selected. Each subsequent semester students must schedule an appointment to register for the next semester's classes. The program director will discuss the current schedule of courses during student advisement sessions. Advanced registration (within the dates established by the University and MPA office) is recommended. Students are encouraged to use the same form the MPA program uses to record student progress toward the MPA degree. The forms are provided in Appendix A and B.

A. Course Substitution

There are two circumstances in which courses other than those listed in Appendix A may be used to satisfy core course requirements. They are as follows: First, a transfer student who has completed graduate-level study in the subject matter of one of the core courses may request substitution of a core course. The request must be in writing and addressed to the program director. If the program director approves the student's written request, the director will petition the Graduate School dean for approval of the transfer credit. The student will be notified of the dean's decision. Students must note that no more than 15 hours of transfer credit may be applied to the MPA degree and that no more than one core course may be substituted. Second, one graduate level course offered by another university department may be substituted if it covers the same subject matter and is considered equivalent to the particular core course. For example, a student may request to take ESPY 506 Inferential Statistics instead of POLS 503b (Data Preparation and Management). All requests for substitutions must be addressed in writing to the director.

B. Course Waiver

In the case of in-service students, a core course may be waived if the student's record of professional accomplishments clearly indicates knowledge of the subject matter of the course. The waiver of a core course does not waive the 43 semester hour requirement for the MPA degree. The hours must be made up by taking an approved elective. Requests for waivers must be addressed in writing to the director.

C. Incomplete Grades

Students who receive an incomplete grade in any course must satisfy requirements to complete the course with a satisfactory grade by the end of the semester following the incomplete grade. Students who do not clear incomplete grades within one semester are not eligible for graduate assistantships from the MPA program. Students with an incomplete grade in any course are ineligible to begin an internship.

D. Dismissal from the MPA Program

MPA students are required to make satisfactory progress in the program. A minimum level of performance is required of all MPA students. Any student earning a "C" grade or below in more than one of the MPA required courses will be dropped from the program.

E. Time Limits

Students have six years to complete all requirements for the MPA degree. Students must remain registered until completion of their degree. See the section on the requirement for Continuing Research Enrollment (POLS 601) below.

F. Requirement for Continuing Research Enrollment (POLS 601)

Students must register in POLS 601 if they do not enroll for graduate credit in any other course in that semester. The only exceptions are when a leave of absence is granted by the MPA program on formal withdrawals (see below). Students in a graduate program who do have a leave of absence and have not registered by the second week of the Fall or Spring semester will be registered for one hour of POLS 601 automatically. This hour will be dropped if the student subsequently enrolls in a class that semester. The Graduate School notifies graduate programs of students who are enrolled in POLS 601. This 601 policy terminates when the student passes the six years to complete a master's candidacy, or officially withdraws from a program. All students are considered in-state for purposes of 601 enrollment. This policy began with the Fall 1998 semester, and subsequently applies only to Fall and Spring semesters (not Summer).

G. Leave of Absence and Withdrawal from the MPA Program

Leave of Absence: Leaves of absence do not affect time-to-degree requirements. Programs which choose to grant a leave of absence must notify the Graduate School by the 8th week of the semester. Students seeking a leave of absence from the MPA program must submit a request in writing to the MPA director, who approves or denies the leave. Final approval of a request for leave of absence is made by the Graduate School. The written request must clearly state the reasons for requesting the leave. A leave of absence will normally be granted only in special circumstances, such as student health problems or family or personal exigencies. Leaves of absence will not be

