

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
STUDENT GUIDEBOOK**

**Master of Public Administration Degree Program
at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Revised August, 2009**

MPA MISSION STATEMENT

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration program at UTC. We're pleased that you have decided to pursue your degree with us.

The mission of the MPA program is to prepare students to excel in the leadership and management of public and nonprofit organizations through a curriculum that emphasizes the linkage between theory and practice, critical thinking and analysis, interpersonal and communication skills, ethics, and stewardship. We strive to develop a strong foundation in program and policy management skills in our students. Further, the curriculum seeks to raise the awareness and appreciation of the complex relationships between governmental entities and between government, the nonprofit sector, and society at large.

Our educational philosophy is premised on the conviction that leadership and effective management in public and nonprofit organizations requires more than content knowledge, although content knowledge is extremely important. For our students to excel they will need to appreciate the context in which they manage; they will need well-developed oral and written communication skills; they will need to be able to analyze situations and issues effectively; and they will need the ability to motivate others. Thus, our curriculum is designed to promote these skills and abilities as well as to provide a strong grounding in the various domains of public administration.

The MPA faculty utilizes the following strategies to accomplish our mission:

- We emphasize the linkage between theory and practice in our classes
- We use strategies aimed at developing critical thinking and analytical skills
- We provide opportunities and guidance to help students develop interpersonal, leadership and communication skills
- We promote ethics and stewardship in our courses
- We use strategies aimed at developing strong policy and program management skills
- We emphasize the complex relationships and unique challenges that characterize the environment of public and nonprofit management.

These strategies are consistent with our mission, the resources available to us, and those we serve. Our students expect a complete exposure to the field. They also expect to gain skills and knowledge that they can apply in their careers. Their employers expect that our graduates are capable of accepting important responsibilities and carrying them out ethically, effectively, and efficiently. The university has charged us with us the responsibility to provide a viable and valuable program to our students. Finally, the public at large expects public services to be managed with integrity, efficiency, and effectiveness. We acknowledge and respect these responsibilities.

ADMISSION

Applicants should note that admission into the MPA program is a two-step process. The applicant must first be admitted to the graduate school and then admitted to the MPA program. The procedures and requirements at each step are different. Acceptance of a student by the graduate school does not guarantee admission into the degree program.

IMPORTANT NOTE: All application forms are available through the Graduate Office of UTC. All application materials, including letters or recommendations, should be submitted to the Graduate Office. Application material should NOT be sent directly to the MPA Program or the Department of Political Science. Failure to submit material directly to the Graduate Office may result in delays in completing applications.

Admission to the University

Persons wishing to be admitted to the MPA program must meet all general requirements for admission to the Graduate School of The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga AND must be recommended for admission by MPA faculty. An applicant for admission to the Graduate School must:

- hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university; and
- have a minimum grade point average of 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale) on all undergraduate work taken prior to receiving the baccalaureate degree or a 3.0 in the senior year or qualify for graduate admission by earning a B+ average on 9-12 hours of 300 or 400 level courses taken since graduation.
- Applicants who are seeking admission to a degree program must submit scores on the appropriate admissions test as required by the proposed major department.

Admission to the MPA Program

In addition to meeting all Graduate School requirements for application and admission, applicants to the MPA program must:

- Hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
- Have a minimum grade point average of 2.5 (based on a 4.0 scale) on all undergraduate work taken prior to receiving the baccalaureate degree or 3.0 in the senior year. Applicants whose grade point average is below the required 2.5 **may** also qualify for special admission by earning a B+ average of 9-12 hours of 300 or 400 level approved courses since graduation. [Note: the Graduate Council has approved an increase in the required GPA to 2.7, to be effective with admissions for Fall 2010.]
- Submit GRE test scores (not over 5 years old). Applicants who score less than 3.5 on the GRE Analytical Writing component **may** demonstrate writing ability by taking the departmentally administered Writing Proficiency Exam.

- Complete the Supplemental Data Form (available through UTC's Graduate School).
- Submit three letters of recommendation.

Admission to the Nonprofit Certificate Program

In order to qualify for admission to the Certificate in Nonprofit Management program, applicants must:

- Hold a bachelor's degree
- Have significant related experience
- Demonstrate writing ability by taking a writing proficiency exam

OR

- Hold a master's degree in a relevant discipline from an accredited college or university.

Once an applicant for admission to the MPA Program has provided the required information, the MPA Admissions Committee will review his or her application. The committee bases its decisions on the totality of the applicant's materials. Thus, a relatively high score on the Graduate Records Exam may offset a comparatively low undergraduate Grade Point Average. The committee may also take life experiences into account in reviewing applications. Applicants are advised to invest adequate time in preparation for the Graduate Records Exam in order to maximize their scores and their prospects for program admission.

After reviewing an applicant's file, the MPA Admissions Committee will either:

1. ADMIT the applicant to the MPA Program.
2. DENY ADMISSION to the MPA Program
3. DEFER A FINAL DECISION and ask the applicant to fulfill one or more prerequisites or qualifying classes. Once the applicant has completed the specified requirements, the MPA Admissions Committee will again review' his or her file and make a decision regarding admission. Completing the designated requirements will not ensure admission to the MPA program

ADMISSION CLASSIFICATIONS

The Graduate School utilizes several admission classifications (See a current Graduate Catalog). Those that most concern MPA students are:

Degree Graduate

Admission as a degree student is by departmental recommendation and graduate school approval only. Thus, an applicant who wishes to be admitted as a degree graduate must file an application, transcripts, GRE scores and supplemental application materials far enough in advance to allow for evaluation by the department or school. The evaluation will include a review of the applicant's undergraduate program and the specification of any prerequisite courses needed to insure adequate background for the graduate program.

Provisional Graduate

An applicant who meets the Graduate School's admission requirements but whose file is incomplete may be admitted as a provisional graduate student. This type of admission is valid for one semester and may not be renewed. Further, the provisional graduate must have his or her file completed by the end of the first semester or summer term he or she enrolls. If the student fails to complete the graduate file by the specified date, the student will not be permitted to register for a future term.

Individuals admitted as provisional graduate students by the Graduate School may take up to nine hours (three courses) of MPA courses while completing their application file and awaiting a decision regarding their admission to the MPA Program. The MPA Admissions Committee will expect provisional students to maintain a 3.0 GPA in their graduate courses. Provisional students must complete their applications for admission to the MPA Program and be admitted as a Degree Graduate by the end of their first semester at UTC. Note that provisionally admitted students are not eligible for financial aid.

Conditional

In rare circumstances, an applicant to the MPA program may be granted Conditional status. This would allow a student lacking the requisite undergraduate grade point average to take six or nine hours of graduate level courses specified by the MPA Coordinator. An applicant granted Conditional status must, in the two semesters of initial enrollment, earn a grade of B or better in each graduate course taken and a cumulative 3.0 grade point average on all graduate and undergraduate work. Those who do not meet this requirement will be dismissed. Upon completion of conditional work, the student's application material will be reviewed and a final admission decision made. Extension of Conditional status and admission as a degree-seeking student are at the discretion of the MPA Coordinator and faculty. If the student is accepted as a degree-seeking student, courses taken during conditional admission may, with the recommendation of the MPA Coordinator, be accepted into the degree program. Note that conditionally admitted students are not eligible for financial aid.

ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

According to the Graduate Catalog, "Admission to a graduate degree program allows the student to demonstrate ability but does not guarantee the right to continue toward a degree unless he or she is admitted to candidacy."

The application for admission to candidacy should be made after the student has completed in residence 9 semester hours of approved graduate courses (excluding transfer credit and any specified prerequisites). This application must be filed before completion of 18 hours by students pursuing a graduate degree in public administration. The appropriate form may be obtained in the Graduate School or from the MPA Coordinator, and should be returned to the MPA Coordinator for his or her approval. Failure to submit the application for candidacy before completing 18 credit hours of course work will require the student to petition the Graduate Council for late submission. The Application to Candidacy lists courses that the student has taken toward fulfilling degree requirements and those the student intends to take to finish degree requirements. The form is completed in consultation with the MPA Coordinator. **Students are urged to schedule a candidacy advisement session with the MPA Coordinator as soon as possible after completing 9 credit hours in the program.** Note that the Application to Candidacy can be revised as the student progresses towards graduation.

Students who wish to seek a waiver of the MPA internship requirement on the basis of prior administrative experience (at least two years of significant supervisory experience in the public and/or nonprofit sector) must submit a formal request with supporting documentation (i.e., a resume, relevant job or position descriptions, or letters from employers evaluating the student's performance in supervisory positions) to the MPA Coordinator before admission to candidacy. The Coordinator will review each request and make a recommendation to either approve or deny the request to the MPA Faculty.

APPLICATION FOR DEGREE

Commencement is held each year in May, August, and December. Students who expect to receive graduate degrees must file an application for the degree with the Office of Records by the date specified by the university. The application form is available in the Office of Records. A graduation fee, set by the university, must be paid before the diploma will be released.

CATALOG EFFECTIVE DATE

Graduate students will follow the catalog in effect at the time of their admission to candidacy.

MPA INTEGRATIVE EXPERIENCE

The MPA program requires all students to complete an integrative experience as a condition for graduation. The MPA Faculty has adopted POLS 540-Applications in Public Administration (also referred to as the capstone course) as the means to fulfill the integrative requirement.

POLS 540 is offered each spring. Students must have completed or be in the process of completing all other core course requirements to register for POLS 540. The course carries three hours credit and is a core course for all students.

PREREQUISITES

Students must complete a course in statistics or research methods prior to enrolling in the MPA sequence in Public Administration Research and Analysis I and II (POLS 502 and 504). This prerequisite can be fulfilled with undergraduate course work.

TIME LIMIT

All credit applied toward the degree must be earned within a six year period beginning with the registration for the earliest course counted (including transfer courses approved for graduate credit). On appeal by a student, and only on appeal, the MPA faculty may grant an extension of the time limit for degree completion of one year or less. The Graduate Council shall be notified promptly and in writing of all such appeals being granted.

MPA CURRICULUM

The MPA curriculum seeks to meet the needs of in-service students, those with prior administrative experience in either the public or nonprofit sectors, and pre-service students, those lacking such experience. The 36 hour program for in-service students consists of 24 hours of core courses (listed below) and 12 hours of elective courses. The 42 hour program for pre-service students consists of 24 hours of core courses, 12 hours of elective courses, and a 6 hour internship in a public or nonprofit agency.

The MPA faculty has structured the required core to provide students with the values, knowledge, and skills identified by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) in their standards for professional master's degree programs. Specifically, the core curriculum seeks to train professionals who are prepared to act ethically and effectively in the management and leadership of public or nonprofit organizations. The 12 hours of elective credit allows students, working with the MPA Coordinator, to plan an individual program tailored to their specific interests and career objectives.

ADVISEMENT

The MPA Coordinator advises all MPA students. An advisement period is scheduled each semester to provide students with the opportunity to meet with the coordinator to review progress and to decide which classes should be scheduled in the upcoming semester. Students are urged to schedule an advisement appointment with the MPA Coordinator each semester. Note that students can schedule an appointment at any time during the semester to discuss program concerns.

MPA **core** courses are offered once each year and include:

- POLS 502- Public Administration Research and Analysis I (Fall)
- POLS 504- Public Administration Research and Analysis II (Spring)
- POLS 512- Organization Theory and Administrative Behavior (Spring)
- POLS 521- Public Administration (Fall)
- POLS 522- Budget and Finance in Public Agencies (Fall)
- POLS 523- Human Resources Management in Public Agencies (Summer)
- POLS 524- Public Policy (Spring)
- POLS 540- MPA Capstone- Applications in Public Administration (Spring)*
- POLS 561- MPA Internship (May be waived for in-service students. Fall and Spring.)*

MPA **elective** courses are scheduled as necessary and include:

- POLS 529- Administrative Law
- POLS 530- Intergovernmental Relations
- POLS 531- Government, Politics, and Policy in Metropolitan Areas
- POLS 532- State Government, Politics, and Policy
- POLS 534- Executive Processes in Public and Nonprofit Agencies
- POLS 535- Community Building
- POLS 536- Government and Nonprofits
- POLS 537- Nonprofit Development
- POLS 538- Nonprofit Marketing
- POLS 539- Strategic Planning in Nonprofit Organizations
- POLS 543- Nonprofit Management
- POLS 551- Local Government Management
- POLS 552- Performance Measurement
- POLS 553- Urban Political Economy
- POLS 555- Economic Development
- POLS 556- Applied Public Financial Management
- POLS 554- Anatomy of the City
- POLS 501r- Special Topics*
- POLS 590- MPA Paper*
- POLS 597- Individual Research*
- POLS 598- Directed Study*

Students may take elective coursework outside the political science department with the approval of the MPA Coordinator.

*Note that registration for courses marked with an asterisk are closed and require special permission of the MPA Coordinator.

Typical Full-Time Program (42 Hours): Pre-Service Students

These schedules are provided for illustration. The MPA Faculty makes every effort to offer courses in the semesters identified in these example schedules. However, courses may occasionally be scheduled in semesters other than those listed. Students may vary the order in which courses are taken.

Year 1 Fall Semester

POLS 502 Public Administration Research and Analysis I (3)
POLS 521 Public Administration (3)
Elective (3)

Year 1 Spring Semester

POLS 504 Public Administration Research and Analysis II (3)
POLS 512 Org. Theory & Administrative Behavior (3)
POLS 524 Public Policy (3)

Year 1 Summer I

POLS 523 Human Resources Management in Public Agencies (3)

Year 1 Summer II

Elective (3)

Year 2 Fall Semester

POLS 522 Budget & Finance in Public Agencies (3)
POLS 561 MPA Internship (6)

Year 2 Spring Semester

POLS 540 Applications in Public Administration (MPA Capstone) (3)
Elective (3)
Elective (3)

Typical Full-Time Program (36 Hours): In-Service Students

Year 1 Fall Semester

POLS 502 Public Administration Research and Analysis I (3)
POLS 521 Public Administration (3)
Elective (3)

Year 1 Spring Semester

POLS 504 Public Administration Research and Analysis II (3)
POLS 512 Org. Theory & Administrative Behavior (3)
POLS 524 Public Policy (3)

Year 1 Summer I

POLS 523 Human Resources Management in Public Agencies (3)

Year 2 Fall Semester

POLS 522 Budget & Finance in Public Agencies (3)
Elective (3)
Elective (3)

Year 2 Spring Semester

POLS 540 Applications in Public Administration (MPACapstone) (3)
Elective (3)

THE MPA INTERNSHIP

All pre-service MPA students are required to complete an internship under the direction of the MPA Internship Director. For in-service students—that is, students who have had considerable experience in the public sector or are currently in the public sector—the internship is optional. In-service vs. pre-service status is determined by the MPA Coordinator.

The MPA internship provides students with work experiences to give them realistic exposure to organizational-bureaucratic environments. This experience should develop the student's knowledge of the internal dynamics of public service organizations, promote their identification with the public service ethos, and provide an opportunity to test and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes discussed in MPA coursework.

Internships require a minimum 300 hours of on-site work in a public agency or nonprofit organization. Part-time internships require a minimum 20 hours per week for 15 weeks; full-time internships must last at least 10 weeks. Interns receive 6 hours of academic credit for 300-hour internships.

The internship experience strives to:

1. Develop and enhance students' sense of professionalism.
2. Develop and enhance students' job-related skills.
3. Provide students with the opportunity to link public administration theory to practice through observation and participation in applied settings and functional situations.
4. Provide students with the opportunity to practice and develop methodological skills and techniques commonly used in data collection and analysis.
5. Develop students' decision-making skills.

Students required to complete a MPA Internship normally do so during their last year in the program. The MPA Internship Director works with each student to arrange a placement that matches student interests and agency needs.

THE MPA PAPER

The MPA Paper is offered as an elective for students who wish to engage in extended research on a topic of particular interest. Although not a thesis, it should reflect a level of effort and accomplishment beyond that required for a typical course research paper. Students interested in writing a MPA Paper to fulfill elective course requirements should consult with the MPA Coordinator. A syllabus is available that describes the MPA Paper

process regarding the selection of a MPA Paper Committee, the approval of a research topic, and the submission and defense of the finished paper.

NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT CONCENTRATION AND CERTIFICATE

MPA students may earn a concentration in Nonprofit Management by choosing four of the courses (12 credit hours) listed below to fulfill the elective requirement for the degree. Non-degree students can earn the certificate in Nonprofit Management by completing six of the courses (18 hours).

- POLS 534 Executive Process in Public and Nonprofit Agencies.
- POLS 535 Community Building
- POLS 536 Government and Nonprofits
- POLS 537 Resource Development
- POLS 538 Nonprofit Marketing
- POLS 539 Strategic Planning in Nonprofit Organizations
- POLS 543 Nonprofit Management

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT CONCENTRATION

MPA students may earn a concentration in Local Government Management by choosing four of the courses (12 credit hours) listed below to fulfill the elective requirement for the degree.

- POLS 529- Administrative Law
- POLS 530- Intergovernmental Relations
- POLS 531- Metropolitan Politics and Policy
- POLS 532- State Politics and Policy
- POLS 534- Executive Processes in Public and Nonprofit Agencies
- POLS 535- Community Building
- POLS 536- Government and Nonprofits
- POLS 501- Special Topics
- POLS 590- The MPA Paper
- POLS 597- Individual Research
- POLS 598- Directed Individual Study
- POLS 551- Local Government Management
- POLS 552- Performance Measurement
- POLS 553- Urban Political Economy
- POLS 555- Economic Development
- POLS 556- Applied Public Financial Management
- POLS 554- Anatomy of the City

Note that students may not count the same courses toward fulfilling requirements for both concentrations.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Department Graduate Assistantships The department offers a limited number of half-time and/or full-time graduate assistantships each year on a competitive basis. Assistantships are awarded on the basis of ability and academic excellence. Each assistantship includes a stipend currently \$2750/semester for full-time assistantships) and tuition waiver (9 hours of coursework for full-time). Students who are awarded assistantships are required to assist faculty with teaching or research responsibilities for 20 hours per week full-time or 10 hours per week half-time. Assistantships are normally awarded for a full academic year (fall and spring semesters). Assistantships are occasionally available for the spring semester only. Information and application materials may be obtained by writing to the Graduate Office. To receive full consideration, assistantship applications should be submitted no later than April 15.

University Opportunity Fellowships The University offers a limited number of opportunity fellowships. MPA students who receive these fellowships receive the same benefits and work assignments as those on departmental assistantships. Information and application materials are available through the graduate school.

John A. Dyer Textbook Scholarship This scholarship fund was established to honor John A. Dyer who earned his Ph. D. in public administration from the University of Alabama. Dr. Dyer's career spanned more than three decades, primarily in the field of transportation and transit management, operations and planning. He was involved in designing and managing transportation systems for the Orange County Transportation Authority, the City of Nashville and the City of Austin. For 15 years, he was Chief Executive Officer of two of the largest public transit systems in the U.S. As General Manager of the Southern California Rapid Transit District in Los Angeles, he secured funding for the first two phases of the Los Angeles Metro Rail subway and was responsible for planning the highly successful transportation system for the 1984 Summer Olympic Games. In Miami, as CEO of the Metropolitan Dade County Transportation Administration, he managed the development of the elevated heavy rail and downtown people mover, the first turnkey project built by a transit agency in the U.S. with federal funds.

The scholarship, available only to MPA students, provides \$500 for both the fall and spring semesters to purchase textbooks.

Additional information on available scholarships, grants, and low-interest loans is available from the Graduate Office and/or the Financial Aid Office of the University.