

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
STUDENT GUIDEBOOK**

**Master of Public Administration Degree Program
at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Revised August, 2007**

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 excellent communication skills, both oral and written; 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 the constituencies that we serve. Our students expect a complete exposure of the field. They also expect to graduate with a set of skills 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 granted us the responsibility to provide a viable and valuable program to our students. Finally, the public at large, while perhaps generally unaware of our work in the classroom, expects their 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.

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:

1. hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited college or university;
and
2. 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.
3. 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,

Or qualify for special admission by earning a B+ average of 9-12 hours of 300 or 400 level approved courses since graduation.

Submit GRE test scores (not over 5 years old).

If GRE exam did not include the Writing Assessment component, complete departmentally administered Writing Proficiency Exam.

Complete a supplemental data form.

Submit three letters of recommendation.

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 or lost materials.

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 spend some time preparing 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:

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.

Degree Graduate

Admission as a degree student is by departmental 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.

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 determined by 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 to an applicant is at the discretion of the MPA Coordinator and faculty.

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 12 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.

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. The course carries three hours credit and is a core course for all students.

PREREQUISITES

Students must complete an course in statistics or research methods prior to enrolling in the MPA sequence in Research Methods (POLS 502—Public Policy Research and Analysis I) and Data Analysis (POLS 504—Public Policy Research and Analysis II). 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 39 hour program for in-service students consists of 27 hours of core courses (listed below) and 12 hours of elective courses. The 45 hour program for pre-service students consists of 27 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 of public or nonprofit organizations. At the same time, the 12 hours of electives allow students, working with the MPA Coordinator, to plan an individual program tailored to their specific interests and career objectives. The core courses are offered once each year and include:

POLS 502- Public Policy Research and Analysis I (Fall)

POLS 504- Public Policy 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)

POLS 590 MPA Paper- Students may register for the MPA Paper in any semester after their first semester in the MPA program. Students should consult with the MPA Coordinator prior to registering for POLS 590.

Elective courses currently offered by the Political Science Department 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 501r- Special Topics*

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 require the permission of the MPA Coordinator.

Typical Full-Time Program (45 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 Policy Research and Analysis I (3)
POLS 521 Public Administration (3)
Elective (3)

Spring Semester

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

Summer I

POLS 523 Human Resources Management in Public Agencies (3)

Summer II

Elective (3)

Year 2 Fall Semester

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

Spring Semester

POLS 540 Applications in Public Administration (MPA Capstone) (3)
POLS 590 The MPA Paper (3)**
Elective (3)

Typical Full-Time Program (39 Hours): In-Service Students

Year 1 Fall Semester

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

Spring Semester

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

Summer I

POLS 523 Human Resources Management in Public Agencies (3)

Summer II

Elective (3)

Year 2 Fall Semester

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

Spring Semester

POLS 540 Applications in Public Administration (MPACapstone) (3)
POLS 590 The MPA Paper (3)**

** Note that students may begin work on POLS 590—The MPA Paper before registering for the course. See the information on POLS 590 later in this guidebook.

THE MPA INTERNSHIP

The MPA faculty expects all graduates to have practical administrative experience in either public or nonprofit agencies. The internship removes the student from the traditional classroom environment and places her or him into a more active role as a participant and observer in a public or nonprofit organization. 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, although not a thesis, should reflect a level of effort and accomplishment beyond that required for a typical course research paper. Students writing a MPA Paper should adhere to the POLS 590 Syllabus, available from the MPA Coordinator, 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 seven 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 seven 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

JOB PLACEMENT

The MPA Program does not offer formal placement services but does make efforts to assist students in finding jobs. Program faculty offers job search advisement and workshops. Available positions that faculty becomes aware of will be posted on the program website, which also offers links to job search websites. Faculty will provide referrals at their discretion for students upon request. Students looking for jobs should

also work with the Career Planning Placement Office. In addition, recent openings may be posted on the program bulletin board. Students are advised to begin their job search early in their second year.

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 enjoyed more than three decades 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.