

Academic Year 2016- 2017

Revised August, 2016

Welcome New MPA Students:

Welcome to the nationally accredited Master of Public Administration program at California State University, San Bernardino. Our mission is to provide student centered learning that prepares you to become effective public service professionals and citizens. We are committed to teaching ethical behavior, democratic values and the practical complexities of governance. We are further committed to supporting diversity among faculty and students while preparing those students to engage with diverse populations.

We are happy you are here, and we want you to succeed. Part of your success depends on understanding the rules and procedures of the university and the degree program. We have summarized some of the most important pieces of information for you in a series of 27 points. Take the time to review them. This WILL make your life easier. Please read this carefully. We require a new student orientation to review this information at the beginning of your program; students who fail to complete the orientation will have holds put on their registration for the following quarter. These 27 points are also posted on the MPA website under Advising. <http://mpa.csusb.edu/advising.html>.

1. Communications

Many offices and people are involved in your success, often behind the scenes. MPA Director Dr. Jonathan Anderson will provide advice on academic matters and PA staff members Toni Ditty and Karla Shipman provide assistance on administrative matters. Graduate Mentor Melissa Farley will be in touch with you to make sure you are on track.

Our contact information is available on the front page of our website---Please bookmark this site - <http://mpa.csusb.edu>. The website has a great deal of information, so please take the time to review it in depth. Our office phone number is 909-537-5758. Email addresses are available on the website.

YOU MUST monitor your CSUSB email account. If you do not check your email regularly, you will miss important program information for which you are responsible. While there may be communications you are not interested in, that is the place where all CSUSB notices are sent. Access your CSUSB Email at <http://mail.coyote.csusb.edu/>. Please notify us of any address, email, or phone number changes.

We routinely pass on advising information, events, jobs, internships, scholarships and other issues every few weeks through our PA Digest Newsletter. If you do not receive it, please let us know so we can get you on the mailing list. **You are responsible for information we disseminate through the Newsletter.** The newsletter archive is on our website at <http://pa.csusb.edu/newsEventCalendar/PAnewsletter.html>. We also pass on information through Social Media. "Like" us on [Facebook](#).

2. How Long is the MPA Course of Study?

Time to completion depends on your personal situation. A full time graduate student may take three or possibly four classes per quarter. However, a student who is working full time

should take no more than two classes per quarter. Do not overload yourself. If you have more outside obligations you may want to only take one class a quarter. Taking one class a quarter, a student would complete their degree in 4 years. Taking two classes a quarter a student could finish in two years. Full time students without prerequisites might finish in as few as 4 quarters. Several plans for taking courses are listed in the Roadmap document. <http://mpa.csusb.edu/documents/MPARoadmap0614.pdf>

3. Types of Classes: Online or Face to Face

MPA classes are offered in several formats – Regular on-campus classes meet once a week in the evenings for four hours. Web or online classes do not require on-campus attendance. A few classes may use Blackboard Collaborate for live “web-based” classes. Web or Online classes may also have a “virtual” element. Having a virtual day means that while most of your work can be done on your own schedule, there will be occasions when you must be available at a certain time, often for exams. Online classes generally start faster and require more activities, in lieu of class time, in addition to examinations and papers. Online classes also require more continuous online interactions than traditional classes. See our webpage at <http://mpa.csusb.edu/courses/onlineCourses.html>

4. MPA Course Requirements

The program of study for the MPA includes:

- Successful completion of any required prerequisites;
- Nine core classes: PA 611, 603, 663, 615, 650, 662, 664, 672 and 680;
- Three electives: Electives are either independent or required for concentrations. If taking electives independently, one elective must be at the 600 level. [You may take non-PA courses as electives, with the Graduate Coordinator’s prior approval. You must explain how the course is *relevant to public administration* and your career.]
- A comprehensive exam or a graduate research project.
- No grade of a C- or lower can be used to satisfy degree requirements.

5. Prerequisites

There are two prerequisites required to achieve “Classified” status in the MPA program. Those who are required to take any prerequisites are admitted as “conditionally classified” until they are completed, after which your admission status will change to “classified.” Students who do not complete these in their first two quarters will have advising HOLDS put on their account—meaning you cannot register for the next quarter.

1. MPA students must have taken an introductory statistics class with a grade of C or better. If you have not taken such a course, you will be required to take ADMN 210 or another introductory statistics course before you can enroll in PA 603 Research Methods.
2. MPA students must have public sector employment experience. If you have not worked in the public sector you will be required to complete an approved internship. The internship is designated as PA 675 and is a pass/fail class. **An internship does NOT count as a program elective.** The College of Business and Public Administration has an Internship Office in Jack Brown 134. Internship Coordinator Jessica Chavez can answer many of your questions and assist you in finding an appropriate placement <http://cbpainternships.csusb.edu/>. When an internship

opportunity has been located, students need to (1) fill out the internship request form, (2) get the approval of the MPA Coordinator BEFORE STARTING THE INTERNSHIP and submit those forms to the Internship Office.

6. Concentrations <http://mpa.csusb.edu/MPAConcentrations/index.html>

The MPA program has three OPTIONAL concentrations. No one is required to take a concentration. The three concentrations are:

- 1) Cybersecurity (requires a total of 14 classes)
- 2) Public Financial Management
- 3) Leadership

For each concentration, students use their three electives to take certain specified courses. Leadership and Public Financial Management must address certain prescribed questions in the comprehensive exam. Cybersecurity had an additional two courses required beyond the three electives. If you wish to add or change a concentration you must file a [Change of Concentration form](#). Please [see the website](#) for more details about the concentrations.

7. Advising and Sequence of Courses

The required orientation provides initial general advising. The 27 points and the [MPA website](#) should answer most of your advising questions, but if they do not please contact our office. It is your responsibility to ask for help or advice.

The order of your classes is important. In addition to completion of prerequisites in your first two quarters;

1. PA 611 Public Administration Theory and Practice must be your first class (if available). It is an intensive writing class that satisfies the Writing Requirement for Graduate Candidacy (WRGC). Students must pass it with at least a B- to continue in the program. It may be retaken only once. Students who cannot achieve a B- will be dismissed from the program.
2. PA 603 Research Methods in Administration as your second course, but it must be taken after your prerequisite statistics class (it may also be concurrent),
3. PA 663 Public Budgeting and Finance should normally be taken before PA 615, Public Financial Management
4. PA 680 Public Policy Analysis should be your last core class
5. After completion of all core classes you may register for PA 999 the Comprehensive Exam. You may complete elective requirements during or after the quarter of your exam.

The annual course schedule is available on the MPA website on our [Advising Page](#).

8. PLAN YOUR PROGRAM

This is critical. Your program is individual. Students have the freedom to take as many or as few classes as they want, either online or face to face. This offers you freedom, but requires you to proactively plan. All core classes are offered every quarter, either online or face to face, alternating quarters. Electives are offered intermittently. If you take a concentration you will need to take specific classes that are offered only some quarters. You MUST plan your schedule ahead of time to avoid problems completing your degree on time.

This is up to you! The plan may change over time, but it is critical that you make it. If you have questions about the plan send them to me. I can't emphasize enough how important this is. This is your responsibility as a professional.

9. Registering for Classes

Register for classes through your My Coyote account. A schedule of PA classes is posted on the MPA website to facilitate students' planning <http://mpa.csusb.edu/courses/courseSchedule.html>. This schedule is updated during the year. There are *always* some changes and the schedule is *always* a working draft until the first day of classes. Please register as soon as possible for your courses, because many required courses quickly fill to capacity. If a class is filled and you feel you need it this quarter, make sure you add your name to the waiting list. If a class requires Department permission, contact Karla or Toni in our office. PA 603, Online PA 590 classes, PA 680 and PA 999 always require Department Permission. Just call the Department. As you look at the list of classes for registration, remember that classes with a section number of 70 are online.

10. Holds and Permissions

A Hold means you are prevented from registering for classes until certain requirements are met. Holds may be placed by the university for payment or for other issues. Holds are put in place by the Department for academic issues. Holds will be put on your account if you do not complete your prerequisites within the first two quarters or if you delay completing a required internship. If you do not understand the Hold, contact the PA office.

You may see a requirement for Departmental Permission when you are registering. This is required for PA 603, PA 680, PA 999 and any 500 level online class. These are just there to ensure that you have met the requirements. Karla or Toni can provide permissions.

11. Dropping Classes and Withdrawing from Classes

If you need to drop or withdraw from a class, it is important to do it promptly. Here are the basic principles to keep in mind:

- Dropping a class. This can be done by you until the census date -- which is three weeks into the quarter. Telling your instructor that you are dropping a class does not constitute dropping it. Your instructor *cannot* drop you from a class based on your request.
- Dropping after census date requires the instructor's, the Chair's and the Dean's approval. **You will need documentation of exceptional circumstances for a late drop.** Failure to get approval to drop a class after census results in an F.
- Incompletes. These are at the discretion of the instructor when you have done over half of the work with a passing grade. These automatically change to an IC (incomplete charged), which is equivalent to an F, after one year. A completion contract must be filed stating what you must do and by what date.
- Retroactive withdrawal. This is possible through the Office of Graduate Studies but requires instructor and departmental approval based on truly exceptional circumstances.

12. Advancement to Candidacy

After completing five classes or 20 quarter units and achieving classified status in the program (completing all prerequisites), students must prepare and file a Request for Advancement to Candidacy with the Department found on our Forms page <http://pa.csusb.edu/additionalResources/index.html>. List all the courses you still need to take before your degree can be awarded. Once each quarter we will hold a mandatory Advancement to Candidacy advising session to approve your program plans and review comprehensive exam requirements. Once the program plan is accepted and approved, you are officially “advanced to degree candidacy.” Karla or Toni can assist with the paperwork.

13. Transferring Classes from Other Colleges or Universities

With approval of the MPA Graduate Adviser, you may transfer up to three graduate courses from other Colleges or Universities if they are relevant to an MPA program of study. To request acceptance of classes as a part of your program of study, you must submit a course description and must have received a B or better in the class. Students planning to take a class outside the Department or University during their course of study should get prior written approval from the MPA Graduate Adviser. Submit the approval with your Advancement to Candidacy.

14. Comprehensive Exam PA 999

PA 999 is the final course for the Master of Public Administration degree. The exam **MUST** be taken on the CSUSB campus at the scheduled date. This is the one residency requirement of the program. There are **NO** exceptions.

There are four components to the course that you must complete:

1. Comprehensive Exam
2. Reflective Essay
3. Exit Survey
4. Career Development Activities

NOTE: You must complete all four parts of the course in order to graduate.

The Comprehensive Exam is the final requirement for the degree. It assesses your overall knowledge of Public Administration. The exam is offered each quarter during the academic year in approximately the 3rd week. The comprehensive exam is not offered during the summer. Students sign up for the comprehensive examinations through the Department by registering for PA 999.

Tips for success on the Exam:

- **Prepare:** Do not assume that you can "wing" the exam. It is too demanding not to prepare carefully. The normal fail rate is about 10 to 20%.
 - Focus on two core course areas and the questions in those two areas. Start with a rapid review of the courses such as paging through your textbook in the core classes on which you are focusing.
 - Remember you need to prepare for all five of the integrative questions.
 - Prepare outlines of your responses in your selected areas.
 - Write at least one model answer in your own words. Self critique your answer. Does it have a clear beginning (e.g., a thesis or introductory statement and

potentially an outline of what you will address), a middle (with your argument and at least one example), and ending (a summary of your information or point). The exact format should vary with the type of question. Does it answer EVERY PART of the question?

- Study groups are encouraged, as are sharing model answers. However, be cautious about relying on the model answers of other students. If you do not generate your own outline, you will find that your response in the exam situation is likely to be shallow and clumsy.
- Do NOT try to memorize full answers. Students who do this have a higher incidence of failing because their ability to reproduce rote answers in the exam setting is much less than they anticipate. It is common for students who rely on memorization to "go blank."
- Be sure that you get a good night's sleep the night before.
- **Define your terms:** Remember the examination process is where you demonstrate what you know. When you use a technical term, provide a brief definition so the readers see that you understand what it means.
- **Good writing required:** Comprehensive exams are biased toward students who have worked hard to become good writers. If you are not a good writer, you should plan extra preparation to make up for this handicap. Contact one of our Writing Centers.
- **Sloppy writing or numerous grammatical errors will result in failure:** Be sure to reread your answers for grammar and flow. Be sure to spell-check your answers.
- **Sufficient length:** There is not a length requirement. You are expected to discuss the question thoroughly. Short answers, even though they are on point as far as they go frequently fail because of the lack of thoroughness expected from graduate students. **Answers are generally expected to be in the range of 3-4 double spaced pages. If you turn in 1-2 pages there is HIGH likelihood you will fail that question, and therefore the exam.**
- **Provide specificity:** Think of relevant examples or specific citations that relate to questions. "Vagueness" is a *major* problem for graders.
- **Avoid rambling:** Be careful to present a clear and consistent argument or discussion. Even if sufficient material is included, answers can be failed if the discussion is not well presented. Do NOT use the "kitchen sink" approach. Just writing lots of information, even if correct information, will not pass if it does not answer the question. It will only confuse the graders.
- **Answer all parts of the question.** Unfortunately, from time to time students fail to answer all parts of a question, and therefore fail.
- **Technical errors:** Because you know the questions in advance, technical errors weigh heavily against you. If you misuse a critical term it is a real problem. Not only do you need to make sure that you have enough details to ensure that the answer is not vague, you must be sure that your facts are right.

Grading: Each test is graded independently and anonymously by two readers. If they disagree, a third reader will decide. The High Pass, Pass, and Fail designations are holistic scores based on the graders' overall assessment. Students failing the comprehensive examination may apply to retake it one additional time. Failure a second time means that the student will not receive the MPA degree from CSUSB.

With all this being said- the fact is that most students pass the exam on their first attempt. This is not difficult, if you prepare.

There is no specific right answer for any question. We are looking for general understandings of the concepts taught in your classes and the ability to apply them to the real world environment.

15. Graduate Research Project Option

The graduate research project option is similar to a Master's Thesis and is primarily for those students planning to go on for a doctoral degree. Most students take the comprehensive examination option. Those wishing to pursue a graduate research project option should consult with the Graduate Adviser early in their program. To pursue this option you must obtain the consent of a PA faculty member who will serve as your adviser. You must have a 3.5 GPA before enrolling in PA 695.

The process normally begins with an independent study of the topic where you will undertake a comprehensive literature review and prepare a research design proposal. If you proceed, you will register for PA 695 in your final quarter. If you do not proceed with the Graduate Research Project, the independent study can be used as a program elective.

16. Graduation Requirements

Graduation with the MPA requires completion of all core classes and electives with a cumulative 3.0 GPA average and successful completion of the comprehensive exam or graduate research project. No class can be counted with a grade of C- or less.

File your graduation check two quarters before you plan to graduate. You cannot file the grad check if you have not previously completed your Advancement to Candidacy. The form must be filled out and either mailed or taken personally to the Office of Records and Registration in University Hall.

<https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/Graduation%20Check%20%28Grad%20Check%29%20Request%20%5BPDF%20format%5D.pdf>

17. Maintaining a 3.0 Grade Point Average

Failure to maintain a cumulative 3.0 grade point average during your program will result in being placed on probation. Failure to raise your cumulative GPA to a 3.0 or above at the end of your next enrolled quarter may result in dismissal from the program. *Students with a sub-3.0 GPA in their first quarter may be immediately dismissed from the program.* You cannot graduate if your cumulative GPA for MPA coursework is below a 3.0.

18. Repeating a Course (Discounting)

Students who receive less than a C in any graduate class must take it again. The lower grade is still included in the GPA unless it is "discounted." A student may repeat one course taken for graduate credit and discount the earlier grade. The formal "Petition for Discount of Previous Grade" can be obtained from the PA website Forms page

<http://pa.csusb.edu/additionalResources/formsDocuments.html>. Two signatures of approval are required, the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

19. Continuous Enrollment and Leaves of Absence

Students are expected to make progress in their degree by taking classes every quarter after admission. If you know you cannot take classes for one or more quarters, you must request a leave of absence (see <http://pa.csusb.edu/additionalResources/formsDocuments.html>) from the Graduate Dean. Leaves of absence cannot be longer than two years and may only be requested if a student is in good academic standing. Students who fail to take a class during the academic year (Fall, Winter, Spring) and who have NOT filed a Leave of Absence are *automatically* dropped from the program and must reapply when they want to continue. The leave does not change the 7 year limit on classes applied to the degree.

When you return to classes you must submit a Readmission from a Leave of Absence to Records and Registration <http://rre.csusb.edu/records/documents/RLOAJune2010.pdf>

19. Seven Year Rule

Students must complete their degree within seven years of admission. Courses older than seven years from the date of graduation *cannot* be counted towards your degree and must be retaken.

21. Academic Integrity

Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated! The University prohibits plagiarism, allows instructors to fail students in a class, and allows programs to dismiss students from the program of study. If asked to do so, students may be required to provide full source materials for review or an oral summary of their work or both. **Online students may be asked to retake tests in proctored environments at the discretion of the instructor.** Failure to do so will be considered positive evidence. Citing a source, but failing to provide quotation marks for the cited material, is a serious form of plagiarism. Faculty take the issue of plagiarism very seriously and take strong measures to counteract it. If you have ANY questions about what constitutes plagiarism, contact your instructor.

22. Career Guidance

If you wish or need career guidance, seek advice from multiple sources. Talk with your professors, the Graduate Director, the CBPA Career Advisor, and professionals in agencies.

- (i) decide what you want to do with your MPA degree,
- (ii) ensure that your MPA education and work experience are consistent with your career goals, and
- (iii) network on an on-going basis to increase your chances of someone offering or recommending you for a job that realizes your goals.

Consult with our Career Adviser Pamela Abell pabell@csusb.edu

There is no career magic that occurs at the end of your program. Figure out what you want to do now! Keep a look out for career fairs; find opportunities to do agency site visits; and attend the local ASPA events. Internships for pre-service students are very important in this regard. The Career Development Center is located at <http://career.csusb.edu>. They can provide information about job fairs such as the Career Expo (usually in April) which does have public sector employers attending, and a monthly listing of job fairs in Southern California. Visit the “coyotelink” at their home page for job listings, on-campus interviews, workshops, etc. The “Discover” link at the same home page is another source: prepare for

an interview, match military experience to civilian careers, match your interests, abilities and values to a career, and find the jobs with the highest salary.

I encourage you to join the American Society for Public Administration or ASPA. The national website is at <http://www.aspanet.org/public/> Our local Chapter website is at <http://www.ieaspa.org/> Local ASPA events occur monthly throughout the year. This is a great networking and professional development opportunity. Another good organization is ICMA.

23. Pi Alpha Alpha

Pi Alpha Alpha is the Honor Society for Public Administration. CSUSB established a local chapter in 2014. The purpose of Pi Alpha Alpha is to encourage and recognize outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in public affairs and administration. Its objectives, such as fostering integrity, professionalism, and effective performance, promote the advancement of quality in the education and practice of the art and science of public affairs and administration. PAA membership identifies those with the highest performance levels in educational programs preparing them for public service careers.

To be eligible for membership graduate students must:

- 1) Have completed 27 units in their program (7 classes)
- 2) Possess a 3.7 GPA

Induction ceremonies take place each year before Commencement.

<http://pa.csusb.edu/clubsOrganizations/piAlphaAlpha.html>

24. Time Management

What you gain from this program is in direct proportion to the time you put into it. There is always a temptation to do minimal work and just get by. If you do that- you cheat yourself out of your tuition dollars. For each 4 credit class, plan to spend 10-12 total hours a week at reading, writing and studying and attending class. Working students usually take 1 or possibly 2 courses a quarter, and full-time students generally take 3 or possibly 4 classes. Graduate courses are more demanding than undergraduate courses. Be careful about trying to “multi-task” while doing your school work. You will find it takes significantly more time and the result is lower quality performance. Better to find quiet, uninterrupted time to complete your course work. Your results in this program depend on the time you devote to your classes.

25. General Advising

We have structured a variety of advising events during your program. Your orientation is the first one. Advancement to Candidacy advising is the second. The College Graduate Student Mentor, Melissa Farley may contact you about various issues noted in your progress. But - it is your responsibility to follow the program requirements, to monitor your own progress and contact us with questions. We cannot help you unless we make that connection.

26. Academic Calendar

The Academic calendar tells when the quarters begin and end, when there are campus closures, registration dates and final exam weeks. Please bookmark.

<http://academicprograms.csusb.edu/academicCalendars.html>

27. University Bulletin

None of the previous supersedes any written statement in the official CSUSB Catalog <http://bulletin.csusb.edu/>. The Catalog (or Bulletin) changes from time to time. You are “ruled” by the catalog of the year you are accepted into the program (or the current one if you choose). Consult first with the information we provide on the MPA website, which is the most current.

These are some of the most important and frequently occurring issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any other issues that you might have. Best wishes for your continued success,



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