



MPA STUDENT HANDBOOK

2011 - 2012



NASPAA ACCREDITATION

The Master of Public Administration Program at Northern Illinois University is recognized by, and a member of, the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). It is among the first programs in the nation found to be in conformity with NASPAA Standards for Professional Masters Degree Programs in Public Affairs and Administration. NIU is also fully accredited by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

June 28, 2011



Welcome!

The excitement of starting the MPA program is tempered with the realization that this degree requires hard work, persistence, and passion for public service. It is your passion that will see you through this degree and to the next stage of your public service career. It is our passion for teaching and the public administration profession that drives the faculty to improve our program. It is the passion for the NIU MPA program that pushes our staff to deliver their very best for our students and faculty every day. This passion, our enthusiasm for public service, helps to make us one of the very best MPA programs in the country, if not the world. We are proud of our program and we are excited to have you join our NIU MPA family of students, staff, faculty, and alumni. It is a lifelong connection that you are making.

Our friends and alumni advisory board have made it very clear to the faculty that we should increase the emphasis on excellence in writing quality, and the faculty will be raising our already high standards to demand even better writing from you in each of your course papers. We will also be challenging you to improve your oral communication skills by increasing the professionalization of your classroom presentations. There is nothing more important to success in your professional career than excellent oral and written communication skills. Rather than try to "get by" in your writing, I challenge you to reach past your current skills and reach for excellence. The return on your investment will not disappoint you.

The key to a successful internship is learning how to balance office work and course work. These two learning experiences are designed to be complementary, not competitive, fundamentals to your MPA education. Do not sacrifice achievements in your coursework for achievements in your internship; that strategy is short-sighted and will diminish your overall MPA education. The MPA program at NIU is designed to launch your career in public service. This is more than just "getting a job" at the end of your MPA degree. I challenge you to reach beyond your comfort zone to apply for nationally competitive internships and positions in local, state, and federal agencies around the country, in NGOs in the US, Canada, and around the world. Our success in achieving our strategic goals depends in part on you and our other students achieving excellence in your careers, beginning with your first professional position after earning the MPA, whether you are a pre-service or mid-career student.

I want to encourage all MPA students—pre-career and mid-career, men and women—to enroll in our mentoring program. Our friends and alumni are volunteering to mentor an MPA student with career, school, and life issues with which they've also struggled. Our goal is to make sure every MPA student who wants to be mentored will have a mentor. The program is managed through our MPA website. Go to the "current students" page and look under other services; you can complete your protégé profile online.

The program will be working through our reaccreditation in 2011- 2012, and we are developing explicit program and course competencies as part of the process. You will see changes on syllabi and may be called upon to assist our efforts. We encourage your feedback on program competencies and other aspects of the program as well.

We expect great things from each member of the NIU public administration community, and we look forward to a life-long relationship with you, celebrating your successes and helping you rebound from the temporary setbacks in your career. Welcome to the program and the next stage of your career.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kurt Thurmaier".

Kurt Thurmaier
Director

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GUIDELINES FOR PURSUING THE MPA DEGREE

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The overall learning outcome for students completing the Master of Public Administration is to develop a broad conceptual understanding of the theory and practice of management in public or non-profit organizations. Specifically, the curriculum provides students with analytical skills and improved leadership capacity for future service in the public sector.

In order to become effective public leaders, students must develop a solid foundation in technical, analytical, ethical, diversity, accountability, and leadership skills. In addition, students receive greater depth in a specialty area training of their choice— local government management, public management and leadership, fiscal administration, comparative public administration, or nonprofit management.

ADVISEMENT

The MPA Program Coordinator serves as advisor to all MPA students, and will assist students in academic program planning, selection of an area of specialization, application of transfer credits, and choice of electives. The MPA Program Coordinator is also responsible for advising students on all matters pertaining to the internship and for providing information on procedural matters. Other faculty members in the Division of Public Administration are available to assist students on an individual basis.

TRANSFER CREDITS

With the approval of the Division of Public Administration and the Dean of the Graduate School, graduate course work may be accepted from other accredited colleges and universities to meet semester hour requirements for the MPA degree. Any student wishing to apply transfer credits should consult the MPA Program Coordinator and must obtain approval from the director of the MPA program. Normally, no more than 9 semester hours are accepted in transfer from other colleges.

No more than 15 semester hours of course work aggregated from the following sources may be counted toward meeting MPA degree requirements: transfer credits for course work taken at other universities, courses taken while a student-at-large at NIU, and courses taken as electives in the Northern Illinois University College of Law.

REGISTRATION FOR COURSES

Students are to use NIU's MyNIU online registration system at <http://www.niu.edu/myniu> to register for courses each semester. Instructions for utilizing MyNIU can be found at <http://www.niu.edu/myniutaining>.

Most MPA courses are accessible by permit only. To ensure a place in a class, students should obtain permits from the MPA Program Coordinator early during the designated advising periods each fall and spring semester. Registration information, which includes registration timetables, the semester calendar, and add/drop deadlines is available at the Registration and Records Student Resources web page: <http://www.reg.niu.edu/regrec/students.shtml>.

Students who fail to request an advising appointment during the designated advising period in fall and spring semesters cannot expect to receive the classes they desire. Permit numbers must be used within four weeks from the issue date. Students failing to register within this time period, or who drop classes without informing the MPA Program Coordinator, will receive the lowest priority for registration in following semesters.

TIME LIMITATIONS

MPA students must fulfill all requirements for the MPA degree within a period of six consecutive years. The date of entry into the first course of a student's graduate program is viewed as the starting point of the six-year period. ***This includes courses taken as a student-at-large and courses accepted in transfer from other graduate or law programs.*** MPA students must satisfy the degree requirements of the catalog during the term for which they have been admitted to the MPA degree program. With respect to all other policies and regulations, all students are subject to those rules and regulations set forth in the most recently published Graduate Catalog and MPA Student Handbook.

RE-ADMISSION/RE-ENTRY:

Per the Graduate School Catalog “A degree-seeking student who does not register for course work in a 12-month period must submit a reentry application and a new program of courses, as well as obtain permission from the program to reenter.” This form can be accessed at:

http://www.grad.niu.edu/grad/audience/pdf/Reentry_Request_Form.pdf

Reentry must be approved by the MPA Director and the Graduate School. Approval is not automatic. The student must argue successfully for reasons to be readmitted to the program.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The NIU Graduate Catalog states: “Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated, for example, if they copy the work of another or use unauthorized notes or other aids during an examination or turn in as their own a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.” A record of each suspected incident is required to be filed by the faculty member with the university judicial office. There is often some degree of uncertainty regarding just what constitutes plagiarism. To clarify the situation, the following may be referred to as examples of plagiarism or violations of academic integrity:

- Copying word for word from the work of another student or author without proper citation
- Heavily paraphrasing the work of another student or author without acknowledgment
- Using another’s concepts, ideas, or suggested frameworks/models without acknowledging their assistance or contribution to your effort.

In the research of any paper or assignment, you will certainly refer to the ideas and models of others. The literature review justifies the relevance of your topic and citations of related works are perfectly acceptable **as long as you give credit for the source**. Credit can be given either in a footnote or a bibliographic reference. Sometimes an acknowledgment will suffice, but **anything you use that does not represent your own ideas, thoughts, or opinions must be cited** unless it is common knowledge. It is best to err on the side of being too careful. If you are in doubt about whether or not a citation is in order, ask your instructor’s opinion.

Students are urged to complete the Online Tutorial about academic integrity at <http://www.ai.niu.edu/ai/students/>

MPA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The MPA degree normally requires the completion of 41-50 semester hours of approved graduate study in the public policy/management core and a selected specialization. The student must complete a minimum of 39 semester hours of course work exclusive of internship hours. The distribution of hours is as follows:

- 29 semester hours of core courses (required of everyone)
- 12 semester hours within an area of specialization (required of everyone)
- 3-8 semester hours of PSPA 695: Internship in Public Administration (required of those without “appropriate professional experience” - See page 6 for definition)

CORE COURSES

The 29 semester hours of core courses are:

PSPA 600 - Scope and Dynamics of Public Administration

Examines the history of public administration and the basic issues which confront it, including administrative responsibility and ethics, and the formulation and implementation of public policy.

PSPA 601 - Data Analysis in Public Administration

Examines techniques for the collection, manipulation, interpretation, and presentation of data and information in public policy and management processes, and demonstrates applications of the techniques using micro-computer technology.

PSPA 604 - Public Program Evaluation Methods

An examination of the techniques of evaluation and their application to selected policy areas, including a discussion of experimental, quasi-experimental, and other evaluative tools. Requires design of a research project. PRQ: PSPA 601 or consent of department.

PSPA 605 - Organization Theory and Behavior

A survey of selected theory and research on organizations relevant to public administration, with a focus on key organizational functions and ways of defining and responding to organizational problems.

PSPA 609 - Human Resources Management in Public Service Organizations

An examination of techniques, methods, and policies concerning the management of personnel in public and nonprofit organizations.

PSPA 610 - Public Budgeting and Financial Management

Examination of the public budgetary process and related financial management techniques.

PSPA 611 - Public Revenue Analysis and Financial Management

An investigation of theories and politics of taxation, features and impacts of alternative revenue generation methods, and financial management topics including procurement and procurement systems, enterprise resource planning systems, and contract management.

PSPA 612 - Information Technology in Public Service Organizations

An introduction to concepts and skills concerning the management of information technology in the public sector. Coverage of topics related to managing information and information technology to support public service delivery.

PSPA 699 - Public Service Research (Capstone Paper)

Research and writing related to the completion of the capstone paper requirement for the MPA degree. To be taken for 2 semester hours upon first enrollment and 1 semester hour in each term thereafter until departmental acceptance of the completed capstone project. May be repeated to a maximum of 12 semester hours, and a minimum of 5 semester hours is required for graduation. S/U grading. PRQ: PSPA 604 or consent of department.

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

In addition to the core courses, students must also complete the requirements to develop expertise in a specialized field of academic and professional interest.

1. **Public Management and Leadership** - a study of public administration, focusing principally on knowledge of and leadership skills for the management of public organizations.

Course Requirements:

- a) **one** of the following
 - PSPA 650 - Leadership in Public Sector Organizations
 - PSPA 660 - Ethics and Public Service in America
 - POLS 620 - Study of Public Policy
- b) PSPA 695 - Internship in Public Administration
- c) Nine additional semester hours of approved graduate study.

2. **Local Government Management** - an analysis of urban problems, especially the political and administrative problems of local government management and community organization activities.

Course Requirements:

- a) PSPA 630 - Local and Metropolitan Government
- b) **one** of the following courses:
 - PSPA 631 - Urban Planning and Zoning
 - PSPA 632 - Problems of Municipal Administration
 - PSPA 635 - Local Economic Development Policy
- c) PSPA 695- Internship in Public Administration
- d) Six additional semester hours of approved graduate study.

3. **Fiscal Administration** - a critical examination of techniques and problems in the areas of fiscal management, accountancy, budgetary policy, and political economy.

Course Requirements:

- a) PSPA 657X - Accounting for Public Administration
- b) PSPA 653 - Intermediate Public and Nonprofit Financial Management
- c) PSPA 695 - Internship in Public Administration
- d) Six additional semester hours of approved graduate study.

4. **Nonprofit Management** - a study of the unique challenges posed by the administration of nonprofit organizations in both the domestic and global contexts, including communication and promotion, fundraising and grant writing, and intersectoral collaboration with public and private sectors.

Course Requirements:

- a) PSPA 624 - Resources Management for Nonprofit Organizations
- b) PSPA 626 - Non-Governmental Organizations and Governance
- c) PSPA 656 - Management for Not-For-Profit Agencies
- d) PSPA 695 - Internship in Public Administration
- e) Three additional semester hours of approved graduate study.

5. **Comparative and Developmental Administration** - a critical study of the economic and social problems of developmental administration, and an examination of bureaucratic functioning in other cultures.

Course Requirements:

- a) **one** of the following courses:
 - PSPA 671 - Public Management in a Globalized Environment
 - PSPA 672 - Administrative Problems of Less Developed Countries
- b) **two** of the following:
 - POLS 621 - Comparative Public Policy
 - POLS 633 - International Biotechnology Policy
 - POLS 668 - Seminar in the Political Economy of Developing Areas
 - POLS 684 - Political Economy of International Relations
 - PSPA 671 or PSPA 672, if not counted under (a)
- c) Six additional semester hours of approved graduate study. These courses may be from those listed above, but not counted under (a) or (b).

SEQUENCE FOR COMPLETING THE MPA PROGRAM

An MPA student carrying a full load of courses (9 hours per semester) and serving an internship may complete his/her sequence of courses as illustrated below:

Fall 2011

PSPA 600	Scope and Dynamics of Public Administration
PSPA 601	Data Analysis in Public Administration
PSPA 609 or 610	Human Resources Mgmt. or Public Budgeting & Financial Mgmt.
PSPA 695	Internship in Public Administration

Spring 2012

PSPA 604	Public Program Evaluation
PSPA 609 or 610	Human Resources Mgmt. or Public Budgeting & Financial Mgmt.
PSPA 611	Public Revenue Analysis and Financial Management
PSPA 695	Internship in Public Administration
PSPA 699	Public Service Research (2.0 Credit Hours)

Summer 2012

XXX	Elective in area of specialization
PSPA 695	Internship in Public Administration
PSPA 699	Public Service Research (1.0 Credit Hour)

Fall 2012

PSPA 605	Organizational Theory and Behavior
PSPA 612	Information Technology in Public Service Organizations
XXX	Elective in area of specialization
PSPA 695	Internship in Public Administration
PSPA 699	Public Service Research (1.0 Credit Hour)

Spring 2013

XXX	Elective in area of specialization
XXX	Elective in area of specialization
PSPA 695	Internship in Public Administration
PSPA 699	Public Service Research (1.0 Credit Hour)

ELECTIVE COURSES

Elective courses, including external options, are selected with the aid of an advisor with regard to the stated objective of each specialization, and in terms of the specific career goals of individual students.

Students may select elective courses from other graduate programs at Northern Illinois University, or from certain approved courses offered by the NIU College of Law, but all elective courses, including those on the College of Law approved list, must be approved in advance by the student's MPA Program Coordinator as being appropriate for the individual student's program of study. Likewise, you must get approval from the College of Law to enroll in a law course.

Students wishing to take courses offered by the NIU College of Law and count them as electives toward the fulfillment of MPA degree requirements should consult with the MPA Program Coordinator to secure the necessary permission, and with the MPA faculty member who has been designated to serve as an advisor for MPA students studying in the College of Law. Elective courses taken in the College of Law are considered as transfer credits by the Graduate School and thus are subject to the 15-hour limitation on the number of transfer and SAL credits that may be counted toward fulfilling MPA degree requirements.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Pre-service and mid-career students are required to complete professional development activities over the duration of their graduate studies. These activities are to be documented by the student and reviewed with the MPA Program Coordinator during semester advising sessions. Students are responsible for tracking and reporting any discrepancies to ensure all completed activities meet division requirements. The reporting form is available in Appendix B and on the division website.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE

Graduate students at NIU must maintain at least a 3.00 cumulative grade point average in order to remain in good standing. Following the end of any academic term in which the cumulative graduate GPA falls below 3.00, the student will be considered on academic probation. A student on probation who fails to bring the GPA back to 3.00 upon completion of nine additional semester hours of graduate work will be academically dismissed by the Graduate School. (See Graduate Catalog for additional information). However, MPA students must earn a cumulative GPA greater than 3.0 to be eligible to take the comprehensive examination. Any student who does not meet this minimum requirement will need to enroll in further coursework and improve their GPA before they will be allowed to sit for the comprehensive exam.

MID CAREER STUDENTS

About one half of the MPA students at NIU are mid-career students. These students have at least two years of professional experience in a government or nonprofit agency. They usually are employed full-time in their professional position while they enroll in one or two classes each semester to earn their MPA. Apart from the capstone requirements, all students must enroll in 36 hours of courses (3 hours/course). Mid-career students who enroll in one course per semester, including a course each summer session, earn 9 credits each calendar year, and can finish their coursework in four years. Allowing for an additional semester to sit for the comprehensive exam and finish their capstone paper, mid-career students can earn their MPA degree in approximately 13 semesters (including the summer sessions). Some students are able to enroll in two courses in some semesters, depending on the demands of their family and workplace, and they can finish their degree sooner.

Mid-career students must comply with professional development requirements (page 5) and capstone requirements (page 9). The requirements differ slightly for mid-career and pre-career students, but the focus and the outcomes for these degree requirements are the same (Appendix B). If mid-career students anticipate changing jobs when they have completed their MPA, they can take advantage of 2nd year orientation activities, including workshops and simulations for interviews and resumé reviews. Mid-career students can also take advantage of other professional services offered by the [NIU Career Counseling Center](#).

MPA INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Pre-career students who enter the MPA program without “appropriate professional experience” will generally be required to serve internships and enroll in PSPA 695. Internships are generally not available for students in the comparative and developmental administration area of specialization and are usually not available for international students. Interns are the employees of the public or non-profit agencies for which they work, and they receive work assignments from their supervisors at the agencies. These assignments provide pre-professional experience which augments their academic program on campus.

“Appropriate professional experience” can generally be defined as: **at least two years of administrative full-time work experience in the student’s area of interest in the MPA program.** Whether the student meets this criterion will be determined by the Director of the Division of Public Administration upon recommendation of the MPA Program Coordinator. When a mid-career student meets this criterion the internship requirement will be waived and the student’s program will consist of 39 semester hours of course work. For all other students, the internship is a requirement to earn the MPA degree at NIU.

Interns generally work between 20 and 24 hours per week and are paid on an hourly basis by their agencies. Specific hours are arranged between students and their employing agencies. Work hours should be planned so as not to conflict with course work, since interns are required to register for a full course load of regular academic study.

ADMISSION AND REGULATIONS

To be considered for an internship, the student is required to complete an application form, prepare a professional resume, and attend the MPA new student orientation. Applications for internships are available from the public administration office and the MPA website. This should be completed and returned to the MPA Program Coordinator with a copy of the student’s resume.

The MPA Program Coordinator nominates several candidates for each internship opening by sending out copies of student resumes to each agency. Candidates are interviewed by the employing agency. Internships cannot be guaranteed to any particular student, but every effort will be made to develop opportunities and work with the student to increase his or her marketability as an intern. The availability of internships fluctuates according to demand and time of the academic year.

Internships are subject to the following conditions:

1. Student preferences regarding internship assignments will be considered, but the program offers no promises or guarantees that any student’s preferences can be met, especially in regard to type of assignment and geographic location. The student is expected to take responsibility for working out any discrepancies regarding these issues with the representative of the employing agency before accepting an internship.

2. Internships are awarded solely by the employing government agency after interviews by said agency. The MPA Program Coordinator nominates intern candidates to individual agencies based upon expressed interest and availability.
3. Except for students with internship appointments financed by NIU funds, internship stipends are determined by the employing government agency. Stipend amounts will not be taken into consideration by the MPA Program Coordinator when making internship nominations. It should also be noted that a high-quality internship experience is not necessarily correlated with a high hourly rate.
4. The internship is designed to give students a two-year professional experience in a public or non-profit agency. As such, students typically retain the same internship for the duration of their graduate study. Students may be enrolled in internships for less than two years or more than two years, with consent of the MPA Program Coordinator and internship supervisor. There may be occasions when modifications in one's existing internship or a complete change of internships may be warranted. Students **must not** make a change in their internship without the prior consent of the MPA Program Coordinator.
5. Students should *immediately* notify the MPA Program Coordinator if there are problems in their internship or if there is an increase to more than 24 hours, or a decrease to less than 20 hours per week, during any regular fall or spring semester in which the student is to receive a tuition waiver. Work hours during semester break periods, especially summer, are not subject to these limitations, providing they are acceptable to the internship supervisor. Students who serve in a graduate assistantship work 20 hours per week and do not work over semester breaks. However, assistantships may be extended through the summer session with additional remuneration.
6. Interns must comply with all internship requirements imposed by both the agency and the program faculty. On the academic side, this includes attendance at all colloquia sponsored by the MPA Program and finalizing a checklist of approved professional development activities (See Appendix B).
7. Students are expected to transport themselves between their place of residence and their chosen internship locations. In practical terms this means the student needs his or her own vehicle, as there is no public transportation operating between DeKalb and the locations of most of the intern sites available.

ACADEMIC REQUIREMENT

Academic credit is given to MPA students who serve in internships. Students taking nine semester hours during the spring and fall semester and a minimum of three semester hours of approved graduate study during the summer term are eligible to register for either one or two semester hours of PSPA 695. This course requires continuous enrollment and may be repeated to a total of eight semester hours. These students will also receive tuition waivers for each term in which they are enrolled full time and serve in the internship. Failure to comply with all internship requirements will result in an unsatisfactory grade for the internship credit, as well as the suspension of the student's tuition waiver and removal from the internship program.

INTERN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Below is a list of basic duties and responsibilities for interns in the NIU MPA Internship Program.

- A. Student Responsibilities to the Academic Institution:
 - recognize and understand the educational objectives of the intern experience;
 - be able to state personal objectives for participating in the experience;
 - consistently meet academic requirements, attend monthly seminars, keep in touch with the program coordinator, and report any problems as soon as they arise;
 - be committed to completing the program in a timely fashion;
 - recognize and respect that he/she is an unofficial representative of the school.
- B. Student Responsibilities to the Sponsoring Agency:
 - report to work on time, dress responsibly, and act in a professional manner;
 - be willing to perform some routine tasks, if asked;
 - expect to observe, as well as participate in, agency activities;
 - be confidential about information gained on the job;
 - always ask before quoting agency personnel in any research work.

C. Student Responsibilities to Himself/Herself:

- see that the internship as an educational as well as professional experience;
- accept work assigned with good grace;
- look for no special favors or treatment;
- be willing to ask questions if an assignment is not understood;
- be aware of the constraints that may prevent an agency from fast action;
- be careful not to be overly aggressive in trying to get things accomplished;
- recognize the need to be rational, impartial, and objective about agency activities.

INTERN EVALUATIONS

Intern supervisors are required to complete evaluations of their interns each semester (see Appendix C). The evaluation form will be sent via division email to all supervisors each semester and should be completed and returned to the MPA Program Coordinator one week prior to the end of the semester in order for the intern to receive credit for the internship. Supervisors are encouraged to contact the MPA Program Coordinator at any time should they have questions or concerns regarding the program or the student intern. Internship grades will be based in part on this interaction between Internship Supervisor and MPA Program Coordinator. The program coordinator also visits each internship site and meets personally with the supervisor at least once during the intern's two-year assignment.

INTERNSHIP EVALUATIONS

Interns are required to complete an internship evaluation each semester (see Appendix D). This form must be completed and submitted to the MPA Program Coordinator via Blackboard on the specified due date in order for the intern to receive credit for the internship. This evaluation does not need to be shared with one's supervisor.

FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is awarded to pre-career MPA students in **one** of two ways, as described below. It must be emphasized that no one is guaranteed financial aid. Financial aid for mid career students is limited to subsidized student loans. Please contact the NIU Financial Aid office for more information.

INTERNSHIPS

The internship program, explained in the previous section, provides financial aid to pre-career MPA students in the form of a university tuition waiver and agency (or university) stipend. Most pre-career MPA students receive this form of financial aid. In order to receive a tuition waiver the student must:

1. be serving in an approved internship;
2. be enrolled in PSPA 695;
3. be taking a full course load (10 hours in fall and spring terms, 4 hours in summer term);
4. pay student fees;
5. maintain a minimum of a 3.00 cumulative GPA; and
6. attend required professional development and advising meetings, including the New Student Orientation before the student's first term of enrollment.

RHOTEN A. SMITH ASSISTANTSHIPS

The Rhoten A. Smith assistantship program was established at NIU to help provide financial support to minority students enrolled in graduate programs in which these groups are under represented. The program, named in honor of the university's sixth president who was himself a member of the public administration faculty, represents part of the institution's commitment to increasing access for minorities to graduate education.

Within the Division of Public Administration, Rhoten A. Smith (RAS) assistantships are used to match other financial support provided to minority students enrolled in the internship program. Through the matching funds arrangement, more internship opportunities are provided to minority students. Funds to support Rhoten A. Smith assistantships are provided by the Graduate School. Like all other MPA interns, Rhoten A. Smith assistants receive a tuition waiver while enrolled in the internship program.

An MPA student participating in the Rhoten A. Smith assistantship program is required to:

1. be serving in an internship;
2. be enrolled in PSPA 695;
3. be taking a full course load (for pre-career MPA students with an internship, a full load is defined as 10 hours in fall and spring terms, 4 hours in summer term);
4. pay student fees;
5. maintain at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA; and
6. attend required professional development and advising meetings each semester, including the New Student Orientation before the student's first term of enrollment.

CAPSTONE PAPER

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE CAPSTONE COURSE

The capstone course is intended to reinforce and further develop the overall objectives of the master in public administration program core courses. Serving as a culmination of a student's coursework for a master's degree in public administration, the capstone paper is an analytical exercise that is expected to be of superior quality. The project expects an MPA student to tie together their learning experiences into a coherent, focused product that effectively blends theory and practice.

The learning outcomes are the improved development of analytical skills, engagement of students in a collaborative environment to foster leadership, problem-solving abilities, and teamwork skills, improvement of students' understanding of research ethics, development of a greater understanding of accountability, and improvement of technological skills.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to complete a capstone paper during their final semester of study for the MPA degree. Under the guidance of their advisor, the students will write a 25-40 page paper based on the application of public administration theory to a practical issue or project in their internship or workplace organization (alternatively, students may choose to complete a traditional paper based on original data collection). After being assigned a faculty advisor, each student is required to get approval of a project idea by submitting the capstone approval form (see Appendix E) to his or her advisor.

Students have a range of styles to choose from for their papers. The choice will depend on the interests of the students, the students' experiences in their internships or in their professional careers, and the consultation between the students and faculty advisors. For example, the paper could be an analytical and theoretical analysis of a project at the internship or work site, a study of the organizational environment using theory to analyze a situation, or a traditional research paper with quantitative or qualitative data collection.

THE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE AND COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Each student will work with a faculty member as a capstone advisor. In addition, all students are enrolled in a specific section of PSPA 699, directed by their capstone faculty member. Each section will meet at least once each semester at the direction of the faculty advisor. In these meetings students and faculty members will give feedback about each of the ongoing capstone projects. The sessions are intended to promote mutual understanding and a greater breadth of perspectives on the topics and issues the students are investigating as well as to improve their problem-solving and presentation skills.

The typical experience is expected to involve multiple meetings of faculty and students. The meetings will typically begin in the second semester for pre-career students or after the completion of 9.0 credit hours for mid-career students. During the semester in which the paper is being written, students will meet to discuss progress and receive feedback about the process of writing the paper. Meetings will continue until the student has turned in the completed paper. A typical sequence of meetings would entail the following series of conversations:

- a. In the second semester for pre-career students. The initial meeting should be one on one between faculty and student. At this meeting, the student must choose which capstone option they prefer: the professional experience analysis or the primary data collection option. Mid-career students should have this meeting after they complete the first three courses in the MPA program. The first

group discussion will relate to the format of the paper, the overall objectives of the assignment, and the expectations of the faculty advisor.

- b. In the third semester for pre-career students. The group session in the internship and work environment will focus on problem identification. This discussion will relate to the paper topic and the methodology chosen for completion of the project. Discussion should include how one identifies and describes a problem or issue in a way that lends itself to potential resolution. Students should make oral presentations to the group (faculty and students) about their problem identifications in this and subsequent sessions.
- c. In the third and fourth semesters for pre-career students. Several group sessions will focus on problem solving and action planning. Discussions should include how one links theory with practice, helping students to develop their capstone papers. Students may also consult individually with the faculty member for specific guidance on their capstone paper's development.
- d. In the fourth semester for pre-career students or final semester for mid-career students. Students will orally defend their capstone paper to faculty and other students with a formal presentation. Faculty will authorize students to sit for the comprehensive examination based on their expectation that the student will complete the final version of the capstone paper by the annual division calendar deadline.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Faculty advisors will assess their students based on their ability to meet mandatory deadlines, attendance at peer group meetings, and the quality of the capstone paper. The course is graded as a pass/fail. Please note: students who do not participate in the meetings and/or who do not submit a quality paper will not be able to pass the course.

Matrix of Alignment of Course Objectives, Program Objectives, and Course Assignments

Program Objectives	Capstone Course Objectives	Assignments that Address Objectives
Develop Analytical Skills	Develop Analytical Skill	The capstone research paper requires analysis of data, interview responses, or documents that relate to the paper topic. The paper must demonstrate a student's ability to critically analyze the topic.
Develop Leadership Ability	Engage Students Collaboratively	Students will meet regularly with both their capstone advisor and their peers who are writing about similar topics. This is intended to be an opportunity for students to give and receive feedback on the progress of the research papers.
Receive Training in Ethics	Learn How to Engage in Ethical Research Practices	Ethics training is incorporated into all MPA courses. The capstone paper is an opportunity to apply this classroom learning into a project. Additionally, the meetings with peers and the advisor is likely to include discussions about methods to minimize the potential harm to participants when human subjects are involved. For students conducting research with human subjects, the IRB process that students must complete to begin research for the capstone is a useful exercise in how to engage in ethical research.
Understand Accountability	Demonstrate the Ability to Complete Self-directed Work on a Set Time-Table	Although the capstone paper is completed under the guidance of a faculty member, much of the work is self-directed. In order for students to graduate, they must be able to complete the work in time to meet deadlines for submissions of drafts and the final paper.
Improve Understanding Of Technology in Government	Improve Student's Technical Abilities	Use computers and/or analytical software to complete the capstone paper and use presentation software for a final professional presentation of the project and results.

When completed, capstone papers are kept on file at the Division of Public Administration but are not accessible to the general public or student population, unless the author so designates. Without such appropriate authorization, only program faculty and staff have access to capstone papers. Students who wish to allow others access to their papers should complete and sign the "Capstone Paper Access" form (see Appendix F).

COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

ELIGIBILITY TO SIT FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

In order to qualify for the comprehensive examination, an MPA student must have submitted an application for degree with the Graduate School via MyNIU by the graduate school deadline, made significant progress on a capstone paper, and completed at least 27 semester hours of graduate course work, exclusive of internship hours, with above a 3.00 grade point average. In addition, students cannot be carrying any incomplete grades (except for PSPA 699) at the time they sit for the examination.

The capstone advisor will attest whether a student is far enough along in the development of their capstone paper, defined as being able to complete it in the semester in which the comprehensive exam is taken. If a student is permitted to take the comprehensive exam, but for any reason does not complete their capstone paper requirement, he or she will not be eligible to graduate in that semester.

Students who have not met these deadlines or determine that they will otherwise not be taking the exam must notify the secretary at the Division of Public Administration no later than 72 hours prior to the day of examination and submit a Deferral of Graduation Request with the Graduate School via the Graduate School website.

THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

Each MPA student is required to pass a written comprehensive examination which is offered in March and October of each year. The examination is scheduled for two two-hour periods in one day. The exam will consist of two parts, theory and practice. The theory section will emphasize conceptual and analytical knowledge garnered from the core courses in the MPA curriculum. The practice section will emphasize problem solving and knowledge application employing a situation scenario or examples based on the student's experience.

An informational session will be conducted by conference call several weeks prior to the administration of the examination. Eligible students will be notified by email regarding the time, date, and the conference call number for the information session.

The examinations are evaluated by the public administration faculty. It will normally be four to six weeks before results of the examinations are known. A grade is assigned for each answer, and each grade carries a point value, as follows:

A+ = 4.33	A = 4.00	A- = 3.67	C+ = 2.33	C = 2.00	C- = 1.67
B+ = 3.33	B = 3.00	B- = 2.67	D+ = 1.33	D = 1.00	D- = 0.67

An overall grade is computed by averaging the point values for all graded: at least a 2.67 average is required to pass the examination. Those students who do not pass the examination may sit for it again, provided they obtain approval from the Director of the MPA program and consult with the MPA Program Coordinator before sitting for a second exam.

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

GRADUATION APPLICATION

MPA students who plan to complete their program requirements (i.e., all remaining course work, capstone paper, and comprehensive exam) during a given term must submit an Application for Degree via MyNIU by the Graduate School deadline specified for that term on the Graduate School website. Students who do not apply by the designated term deadline will not be eligible to graduate at the end of that term. Students who apply by the deadline but do not fulfill their program requirements by the end of the term for which the application was made must submit a graduation deferment request form to the Graduate School via the Graduate School website.

EMPLOYMENT OF MPA GRADUATES

Most MPA students are able to secure employment before or just after the completion of program requirements. For those students who do not, however, there are several helpful sources. The job-seeking graduate should consult with the MPA Program Coordinator and MPA faculty members. Often these individuals are notified of employment opportunities before they appear in job registers.

Another source of job opportunities is the Division of Public Administration office which receives job listings from federal, state, and local governmental agencies, in addition to special newsletters. There are also several job listings at Career Services on the Northern Illinois University campus.

Job-seeking graduates should also read the job recruitment bulletins published by the following associations:

American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)
Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA)
Government College Relations Council (GCRC)
Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA)
Illinois Association of Nonprofit Organizations (IANO)
Illinois City Management Association (ILCMA)
International City Management Association (ICMA)
International Hispanic Network (IHN)
International Personnel Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR)
Iowa City/County Management Association (IaCMA)
National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA)
Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA)

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

An important factor in the employment market is professional contact. Students should join, as early as possible, at least one professional association relevant to their career interests. The importance of these early professional contacts cannot be overstated.

American Society for Public Administration (ASPA)

Membership includes students, academic specialists, and practitioners from local, state, and federal agencies. ASPA has one national meeting each year, and there are also regular multi-state regional meetings and local chapter meetings in many areas. ASPA publishes *Public Administration Review* (PAR), perhaps the most important journal in public administration, which includes articles of commentary, analysis, and research. Members also receive *Public Administration Times*, which includes job openings in various administrative fields, and articles on current events in public administration.

American Society for Public Administration <http://www.aspanet.org>
1120 - "G" Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005

Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA)

ARNOVA is a leading interdisciplinary community of people dedicated to fostering through research and education, the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge on nonprofit organizations, philanthropy, civil society and voluntary action. The Student/ Academic Membership rate for this organization is \$55.

ARNOVA <http://www.arnova.org/>
550 W. North St., Suite 301
Indianapolis, IN 46202

Government College Relations Council (GCRC)

The Government College Relations Council (GCRC) was founded in Chicago in 1968. It is a professional association that supports working relationships between representatives from accredited post-secondary colleges/universities and federal, state, county and local governments. The Student/Academic Membership rate for this organization is \$15.

Government College Relations Council

<http://www.thegcrc.org/>

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA)

The purpose of the Government Finance Officers Association is to enhance and promote the professional management of governments for the public benefit by identifying and developing financial policies and best practices and promoting their use through education, training, facilitation of member networking, and leadership.

Membership in the GFOA is open to everyone whose career, studies or interests involve government financial management. GFOA members form a diverse group of individuals, from entry-level employees to senior managers who work for a broad range of governments, including cities, towns, and other municipalities of all sizes; county governments; school districts and special districts; public employee retirement systems; states and provinces; schools of administration and public affairs; libraries; federal agencies; and accounting firms, law firms, investment banks, and consulting institutions. The Education Membership rate is \$40, and \$35 of your total membership dues pay for a subscription to Government Finance Review, GFOA's bimonthly magazine.

Government Finance Officers Association
203 N LaSalle Street, Suite 2700
Chicago, IL 60601-1210

<http://www.gfoa.org>

Students may also benefit from membership in the Illinois Government Finance Officers Association (IGFOA), located at <http://www.igfoa.org>.

Illinois Association of Nonprofit Organizations (IANO)

IANO is the professional organization for individuals engaged in the administration of nonprofit agencies in Illinois. This organization publishes a quarterly newsletter and a monthly memo including job openings, and topical articles.

Illinois Association of Nonprofit Organizations
8 S. Michigan Avenue, Suite 3000
Chicago, IL 60603

Illinois City/County Management Association (ILCMA)

ILCMA is the Illinois state affiliate of ICMA. ILCMA in turn has three affiliates: Metro Managers Association, Illinois Association of Municipal Management Assistants (IAMMA), and Greater Illinois City and County Managers Association. Members receive a newsletter, which includes job listings. Students interested in joining ILCMA or in learning more about the ILCMA affiliates should contact:

Illinois City Management Association
Regional Development Institute
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115

<http://www.ilcma.org>
<http://www.iamma.org>

International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

ICMA is a professional and educational organization representing appointed managers and administrators in local governments throughout the world. Members receive bi-weekly newsletters and the monthly publication of *Public Management* magazine.

International City/County Management Association
777 N. Capitol Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington DC 20002

<http://www.icma.org>

International Hispanic Network (IHN)

The purpose of the International Hispanic Network is to encourage professional excellence among Hispanic local government administrators, to improve the management of local government, to provide unique resources to Hispanic local government executives and public managers, and to advance the goals of professional, effective and ethical local government administration. The network works with other organizations, such as the International City Management Association, which shares common goals. The Student/ Academic Membership rate for this organization is \$10.

International Hispanic Network (IHN)
2107 N. First Street, Suite 470
San Jose, CA 95131

<http://www.ihnonline.org>

International Personnel Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR)

IPMA-HR is the recognized association for public personnel professionals. Members receive a monthly newsletter which includes position openings, a quarterly journal, and a membership directory.

International Personnel Management Association
1850 K Street, N.W., Suite 870
Washington, DC 20006

<http://www.ipma-hr.org>

Iowa City/County Management Association (IaCMA)

The Iowa City/County Management Association (IaCMA) is an organization of local government management officials (e.g., managers, administrators, assistants and other administrative staff) working together to improve the public administration profession in the state of Iowa. The purpose of IaCMA is to increase the knowledge and ability of members through various means, one of which is the promotion of information exchange between members. The Student/ Academic Membership rate for this organization is \$20.

Iowa City/County Management Association
c/o Iowa League of Cities
317 Sixth Avenue, Suite 800
Des Moines, IA 50309

<http://www.iacma.net>

National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA)

The mission of the NFBPA is embodied in the organization's commitment to strengthen the position of Blacks within the field of public administration; to increase the number of Blacks appointed to executive positions in public service organizations; and, to groom and prepare younger, aspiring administrators for senior public management posts in the years ahead. Students at the undergraduate and graduate levels are eligible to become members of the NFBPA, provided they subscribe to the goals and objectives of the NFBPA and shall be a full-time student as defined by the institution in which they are enrolled. Student Membership is limited to four consecutive years. Adults who are employed full-time and pursue part-time academic study are ineligible for student memberships. Documentation that verifies full-time status is required. Student memberships are \$25.00

National Forum for Black Public Administrators
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 807
Washington, DC 20002

<http://www.nfbpa.org>

Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA)

The Wisconsin City/County Management Association (WCMA) is an organization of professional managers and administrators from counties, cities, villages, and towns throughout the state. The WCMA has two primary objectives: (1) To promote the development of professional municipal management in Wisconsin, and (2) to contribute to the professional development of its members. The Student/ Academic Membership rate is \$20 and includes complimentary membership in WAMCAM.

Wisconsin City/County Management Association
3919 Oakmont Trail
Waukesha, WI 53188

<http://www.wcma-wi.org>

AWARDS AND HONORS

PI ALPHA ALPHA

Northern Illinois University has established a local chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honorary Society for Public Affairs and Administration. According to our Chapter Constitution:

The purposes of this society shall be to encourage and reward scholarship and accomplishment among students and practitioners of public affairs and administration, to promote the advancement of education and scholarship in the art and science of public affairs and administration, and to foster integrity and creative performance in the conduct of governmental and related public service operations.

Pi Alpha Alpha membership is prestigious for our students as well as for our public administration program, and the university. We encourage all eligible public administration graduate students, alumni, and faculty to apply for induction.

Eligibility for Pi Alpha Alpha

Classes and qualifications for membership in Pi Alpha Alpha, in accordance with our Chapter Constitution, are as follows:

- A. **Graduate Students:** Master's degree students who have completed at least 21 semester hours of graduate work with a GPA of at least 3.7 may be inducted.
- B. **Alumni Members:** Those who meet all the requirements of student membership but who have graduated before induction by this chapter may be inducted as alumni members. Student members shall become alumni members upon graduation.
- C. **Faculty Members:** Any full-time member of a NASPAA member institution faculty, offering course work in public affairs or administration degree program at which a Pi Alpha Alpha chapter is located, may be elected to faculty membership by such a local chapter.

In addition to the above named requirements for induction, there is a one-time fee which includes the induction fee and PAA Medal. Members of Pi Alpha Alpha are entitled to participate in chapter meetings and national conventions.

MPA AWARDS

Each year the division recognizes the following awards and honors:

ASPA Outstanding Student Award

This award is available to undergraduate and graduate students who have demonstrated outstanding scholarship in the study of public and nonprofit administration and public policy. Members and non-members of ASPA are eligible for this award.

ASPA Outstanding Administrator Award

This award recognizes practitioners in the public sector for outstanding service and contributions in the field of public service and public policy. Members and non-members of ASPA are eligible for this award.

Model Public Administrator Awards

Candidates must exhibit a continuing effort towards excellence in their respective specialization and the field of public administration overall. The student embodies the core values of public leadership and demonstrates a commitment to life long education and professional development.

Academic Achievement Award (GPA 4.0)

This award recognizes students who have achieved a perfect 4.0 cumulative GPA to date.

Distinguished Manuscript

This award recognizes an outstanding capstone paper that is evaluated by faculty as a superior manuscript. The paper should include original data collection and analysis and/or outstanding analytical review. The capstone paper nominations are subjected to objective faculty Division review and award confirmation. Nominations should be submitted by faculty to the Division no later than three weeks before graduation.

Intern of the Year Award

The Intern of the Year recipient will be selected on the basis of the quality of his/her work, management and leadership abilities, analytical skills, demonstration of ingenuity or creativity, and value added to the organization based on the nomination feedback of the internship supervisor.

Only internship supervisors can nominate their intern, and the Division Director and Program Coordinator will use the nominations to make the final decision on the award recipient.

Supervisor of the Year Award

This award provides pre-service interns an opportunity to honor their supervisor(s) for outstanding leadership and mentoring during their internship experience. A one-page nomination letter should be sent to the Division by the required deadline.

Only pre-service interns can nominate their direct internship supervisor(s), and the Division Director and Program Coordinator will use the nominations to make the final decision on the award recipient.

Outstanding Peer Award

This award recognizes a graduating, or recently graduated, student who often serves as a formal or informal leader. The candidate should have a strong commitment to supporting their fellow peers and the Division, and exhibit an outstanding commitment to public service.

The nomination process will be via electronic ballot format. Only eligible students will be listed as options for nomination, and all current students will be eligible to submit their electronic nomination by the stated deadline.

Professor of the Year

This award recognizes a faculty member with a strong commitment to student learning and development. This faculty member upholds the ideals of public service, and goes beyond the traditional required role of faculty. The nomination process will be via electronic ballot format. Only eligible faculty will be listed as options for nomination, and all current students will be eligible to submit their electronic nomination by the stated deadline.

The Director is ineligible for this award recognition to eliminate conflict of interest among voting students.

James M. & Audrey M. Banovetz Fellowship

This competitive monetary grant is selected by the fellowship committee and awarded to an NIU MPA student who has exhibited exceptional potential for a successful career in local government management.

In 2011, an expansion to the fellowship was created to provide an opportunity for minority students to apply for enhanced funding to assist in conference attendance geared towards the professionalization of minority public administrators.

Endowed in 2000 by David and Catherine Arnold, the fellowship honors Professor Emeritus James M. Banovetz for his leadership in developing the NIU graduate program in public administration as one of the premier programs in the United States. In 2006, Audrey M. Banovetz's name was added to honor Audrey for her many years of supporting the program, its faculty, and students.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Division of Public Administration

815 753 0183

Dr. Yu-Che Chen	ycchen@niu.edu	815 753 2205
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Bursar's Office	815 753 1885
Career Services	815 753 1641
Center for Governmental Studies	815 753 1901
Career Services	815 753 1641
CLAS External Programing	815 753 5200
Department of Political Science	815 753 1011
Financial Aid	815 753 1395
The Graduate School	815 753 0395
Housing & Dinning Services	815 753 1525
MPA Computer Lab	815 753 6189
MyNIU Help Line	815 753 8100
NIU - Hoffman Estates	815 753 8850
NIU - Naperville	815 753 8975
NIU - Rockford	815 753 8740
Parking Services	815 753 1045
Registration and Records	815 753 0681
University Bookstore	815 753 1081