

Liberal Arts and Sciences
School of Public and Global Affairs
Department of Public Administration
Master of Public Administration

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1. Introduction

The mission of the Department of Public Administration is to strengthen the knowledge and skills necessary for professional and ethical public and nonprofit management through our scholarship in teaching, research and service. We seek to be the preferred program of choice and nationally recognized, providing the highest quality education for careers in public and nonprofit management based on a contemporary curriculum, innovative instruction, scholarly and applied research, and community service. As part of the [School of Public and Global Affairs](#) (SPGA), we are committed to strengthening the knowledge and skills that enhance the management and leadership capacity of individuals pursuing public service careers.

The NIU graduate study in public administration was created in 1963 in recognition that public administration as a discipline was underdeveloped in Illinois, a state still caught in the grip of machine politics. There were growing numbers of suburban city managers that provided a base of support for a graduate professional program in the field. Thus, the focus of the program is deeply rooted in the legacy of professional, council-manager local government. The NIU program was the nation's first public administration program to conceive of the MPA internship as a part-time, 20 hour per week assignment which could be served while students were enrolled in a full program of courses. Prior to the NIU program, all public administration internships were of 10 to 16 weeks duration, usually involved full-time service, and were typically served in the summer months between the first and second year of graduate study. This innovation was particularly significant because it opened up opportunities for graduate study in public administration to students whose families could not afford to support them during their years of graduate study. This NIU developed format is widely copied by graduate programs in public administration today.

Over the years, the local government focus has remained central to the structure of the NIU program. The first specializations were in urban management and planning, fiscal administration, human resources administration, comparative & developmental administration, and general public administration. From 2009-2012, the comparative & developmental administration was eliminated, the human resources administration specialization was revised into a nonprofit management specialization, and a new comparative public governance specialization was developed to facilitate double degree MPA programs in selected universities on each continent.

The mission statement was adjusted in 2011 as the program evolved its orientation from local governments to local governance, embracing the increased role of NGOs in public service delivery, especially in social services. As part of the evolution, the program revised the Human Services Administration specialization (created in the 1970s) to Nonprofit Management and changed several course titles to reflect a broader public service scope (from government agency only). The changes to the mission statement were discussed and supported by the board of advisors for the program. The program retains its primary focus on local government management, and most internships are in local governments. We are working to increase the number of internships available in local NGOs to meet the increasing demand by student applicants for the nonprofit specialization. We have worked hard to help students and employers realize that whether in an NGO or local government, they can help deliver public services needed in communities.

Courses have been offered in the evenings for the convenience of part-time, mid-career students since the program's founding in 1963, when the first mid-career students enrolled in public administration classes. However, the program traditionally was dominated by full-time, pre-career internship students. In 2013, the program modified course delivery mechanisms and actively marketing the graduate certificate in public management (GCPM) as a career enhancement path for mid-career professionals in a variety of local government and nonprofit fields (e.g., park districts, social service agencies, finance professionals, public works officials, and public safety officers). The program is now delivered in a quasi-executive format of 8 week modules using hybrid course delivery rotated through four campuses (DeKalb, Rockford, Naperville, and Hoffman Estates). Students are advised that they cannot plan to complete all

requirements of the degree at any single campus, as course scheduling depends on many factors that preclude such predictability.

2. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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: comparative public service, fiscal administration, local government management, nonprofit management, public management and leadership, or public service law and management specialization. To this end the Department of Public Administration (Department) uses a competencies based curriculum which establishes specific skills and abilities acquired by the students as they complete the required courses.

These competencies are mapped to five competencies domains required for international accreditation by the Commission on Peer Review Accreditation (COPRA) of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). As the basis for its curriculum, accreditation standard 5 requires that the program adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and to public service values. The five required competencies domains include the ability to:

- Lead and manage in public governance (LM)
- Participate in and contribute to the public policy process (PP)
- Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions (DM)
- Articulate and apply a public service perspective (PS)
- Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry (DV).

There are 13 program level competencies that students should attain before graduation from the program. Upon completion of the MPA degree at NIU Graduates of the NIU MPA Program should be able to:

No	Competency: <i>Graduates should be able to:</i>	COPRA Domain(s)
1	Effectively work with diverse internal and external stakeholders	LM*
2	Motivate peers and employees to enhance organizational capacity	LM
3	Integrate current and preferred management practices of budgeting, human resources, information technology, statistical analysis, and performance measurement to improve organizations	LM
4	Use strategic management to facilitate goal identification and execution	LM
5	Apply decision-making theories to frame and solve public service problems	DM
6	Effectively participate in the public policy process in a role appropriate to a professional public manager	PP
7	Conduct environmental scans and identify the windows of opportunity to influence decisions	PP
8	Evaluate public service issues in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, equity and economy	DM PS PP

		DV
9	Incorporate professional codes of ethics in public service decision-making to enhance integrity of public services	PS PP
10	Communicate effectively both orally (public speaking) and in writing (analytical and persuasive) for a public service organization and in the public policy process.	LM DM PS PP DV
11	Understand and listen critically to diverse perspectives to address public service issues	DM DV
12	Identify strategies for improving democratic accountability in governance, including improved transparency and civic participation	PS DV PP
13	Develop or adapt policies, programs, goods or services to accommodate changing social demographics for the population they serve.	DV PP. PS

* Primary domain is in **bold**.

There are specialization competencies that students should attain before graduation from the program.

In addition to learning skills and strategies for leadership and management, a graduate student who has completed the **Comparative Public Service Specialization** will demonstrate an advanced ability to:

1. Lead and manage in public governance in a country outside the U.S.
2. Participate in and contribute to the policy process in a country outside the U.S.
3. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions in a country outside the U.S.
4. Articulate and apply a public service perspective in a country outside the U.S.
5. Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry in a country outside the U.S.

In addition to learning skills and strategies for leadership and management, a graduate student who has completed the **Public Service Law and Management Specialization** will demonstrate an advanced ability to:

1. Lead and manage in public governance with legal insights
2. Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions related to the legal issues of a public organization
3. Articulate and apply a public service perspective while serving in a public organization or a law firm that serves nonprofit, local, state, and federal government agencies
4. Communicate, interact, and provide a legal perspective within a diverse and changing citizenry.

Upon completion of the **Local Government Management Specialization** a graduate should be able to:

1. Link local government budgetary practices with service delivery
2. Organize and manage a senior management staff meeting in a municipality
3. Demonstrate knowledge and experience in understanding the roles and responsibilities of elected and administrative officials in local government
4. Analyze options for managing conflict situations.

Upon completion of the **Fiscal Administration Specialization** a graduate should be able to:

1. Use financial information to evaluate the financial condition of public service organizations and make appropriate fiscal policy recommendations
2. Communicate budget and financial information about public service organizations to technical and non-technical stakeholders, including through appropriate graphs and spreadsheets
3. Develop and implement entity-wide financial management policies for public service organizations in accordance with recommendations by GFOA and similar professional organizations
4. Analyze nonprofit financial reports and fundraising activities and make recommendations to promote financial sustainability.

Upon completion of the **Strategic Public Management and Leadership Specialization** a graduate should be able to:

1. Use their knowledge of innovation models, techniques and theories, in addition to models of collaboration and change management, to diagnose organization situations and suggest recommendations for alternative solutions
2. Use their knowledge of strategic management and planning processes models and technologies to assist in the application and implementation of these change and adaptation methodologies
3. Use conflict management models and technologies to recognize and diagnose conflict situations at a skill level to make recommendations on how to resolve specific conflicts
4. Show knowledge of leadership theories, models and applications through experiential learning activities.

Upon completion of the **Nonprofit Management Specialization** a graduate should be able to:

1. Identify the legal and fiduciary environment in which nonprofits operate
2. Motivate and professionalize a volunteer workforce
3. Analyze financial reports and fundraising activities and make recommendations to promote financial sustainability.

3. Program-by-Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes Matrix

N/A

4. Curriculum Map

MPA Learning Outcomes and Course Map

No	Competency: <i>Graduates should be able to:</i>	COPRA Domain(s)	Core Courses <i>(see list)</i>
1	Effectively work with internal and external stakeholders	LM*	600 605 607 608 609 610 612
2	Motivate peers and employees to enhance organizational capacity	LM	600 605 607 609
3	Integrate current and preferred management practices of budgeting, human resources, information technology, statistical analysis, and performance measurement to improve organizations	LM	600 608 607 605 609 610 611 612
4	Use strategic management to facilitate goal identification and execution	LM	600 607 605 609
5	Apply decision-making theories to frame and solve public service problems	DM	600 605 609 610
6	Effectively participate in the public policy process in a role appropriate to a professional public manager	PP	600 608 609 610
7	Conduct environmental scans and identify the windows of opportunity to influence decisions	PP	600 610
8	Evaluate public service issues in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, equity and economy	DM PS PP DV	600 607 608 605 609 610 611 612
9	Incorporate professional codes of ethics in public service decision-making to enhance integrity of public services	PS PP	600 607 609 610
10	Communicate effectively both orally (public speaking) and in writing (analytical and persuasive) for a public service organization and in the public policy process.	LM DM PS PP DV	600 607 608 605 609 610 611 612
11	Understand and listen critically to diverse perspectives to address public service issues	DM DV	600 609 607 605
12	Identify strategies for improving democratic accountability in governance, including improved transparency and civic participation	PS DV PP	600 607 605 610 612
13	Develop or adapt policies, programs, goods or services to accommodate changing social demographics for the population they serve.	DV PP PS	600 609 610 612

* Primary domain is in **bold**.

Core Courses

600. SCOPE AND DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (3). Examination of 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.

605. ORGANIZATION THEORY AND BEHAVIOR (3). Survey of 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. Recommended: PSPA 600 or consent of department.

607. PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE I: THEORY AND MANAGEMENT

(3). Overview of evidence-based decision making in public service organizations. Performance measurement theory and practices are introduced and explored through case studies and the creation of a research design. Exploration of public service values and how they influence performance management will also be provided, especially communication with stakeholders, support for a learning and performance organizational culture, and ethics.

608. PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE II: MANAGEMENT AND DATA ANALYSIS (3). Follows PSPA 607. Focus on public service performance and management, adding more skills-based practices of data analysis. Studies the basic theory, techniques, and practice of data collection and analysis so that information can be used to inform management decisions. Examination of generating research questions by identifying knowledge gaps in the organization. Data analysis methods include quantitative techniques (descriptive and inferential statistics, hypothesis testing) and qualitative techniques (focus groups, content analysis, observational data). Results are interpreted and presented.

609. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS (3).

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

610. PUBLIC BUDGETING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (3). Examination of the public budgetary process and related financial management techniques.

611. PUBLIC REVENUE ANALYSIS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (3). 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.

612. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICE

ORGANIZATIONS (3). Introduction to concepts and skills concerning the management of information technology in the public sector. Covers topics related to managing information and information technology to support public service delivery. Recommended: PSPA 605.

5. Assessment Methods

Since our 2012-13 program review, the Department of Public Administration has developed several methods for assessing how effective our program is in meeting its stated learning objectives. The table below lists these methods as well as a description of each method, a timeline for implementation, and the measurement instrument for each method measure.

A primary assessment tool is a Competencies Assessment Inventory (CAI) administered at orientation (O) and graduation (G) to provide pre/post gains in levels of the core and specialization competencies. Students complete the self-assessment at orientation as MPA or Graduate Certificate in Public Management (GCPM) students. The students reassess themselves on those same competencies a month before they graduate. This is for both pre-career and mid-career students. The initial model in 2012 required revision, so the first full cohort for the O/G analysis was the 2013-15 pre-career (intern) cohort. Reports of the O point competencies levels have been provided to faculty and the department's board of advisors (BOA) each year. Beginning in May 2015, faculty and the BOA have received O/G analytical reports to foster curricular reviews that lead to program changes for improved competencies gains. The May 2017 graduating class yielded the first sample size (albeit small) to conduct panel data analysis of O/G competencies gains.

The CAI is also administered to the intern supervisors to provide an external validation of the intern students' self-assessments. Supervisors receive the CAI (slightly reworded) about 3 months into their intern's first semester, and then one month before their intern graduates. The May 2017 graduating class yielded the first sample size (albeit small) to conduct panel data analysis of O/G competencies gains from the perspective of the intern supervisors. All of the CAI reports are available for UAP review.

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement ^a	Program Target ^b	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Competencies Assessment Inventory (CAI)	Students self-assess on operational questions mapped to the MPA degree program's 13 core competencies, which are themselves mapped to 5 competencies domain required for accreditation by COPRA/NASPAA. Students complete the assessment at orientation as MPA or Graduate Certificate in Public Management (GCPM) students. The students reassess themselves on those same competencies a month before they graduate. This is for both pre-career and mid-career students.	1. Level in competencies: % reporting no competencies in inventory skill areas	0%	Beginning and end of degree program; before orientation and 1 month before graduation.	Department staff	Core program Competencies
		2. Level in competencies: % reporting application level (or higher) competencies in 90% of skill areas [^]	80%			
		3. Level in specialization competencies: % reporting application level (or higher) competencies in 90% of specialization skill areas [^]	80%			Specialization Competencies
		4. Gain in competencies: % reporting application level experience in at least 2 of the open-ended experience questions	80%			Core program Competencies
		5. Gain in competencies: % reporting gain in level of competencies [†]	80%			
		6. Code of Ethics: % identifying a code of ethics to guide their professional career	100%			
		7. Code of Ethics: % reporting discussing a code of ethics to guide their professional career with their supervisor	100%			

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Intern Supervisor's CAI	Intern supervisors assess their interns on operational questions mapped to the MPA degree program's 13 program competencies, which are themselves mapped to 5 competencies domain required for accreditation by COPRA/NASPAA. Supervisors complete the assessment 3 months after orientation, then a month before they graduate. This supervisor CAI is only for pre-career internship students.	1. Gain in competencies: % supervisors reporting gain in level of intern competencies [†]	80%	Beginning and end of degree program; before orientation and 1 month before graduation.	Department staff	Core program Competencies
		2. Gain in competencies: % supervisors reporting gain in level of intern competencies for oral public presentation [†]	80%			
		3. Gain in competencies: % supervisors reporting gain in level of intern competencies to communicate in writing [†]	80%			
		4. Gain in competencies: % supervisors reporting gain in level of intern competencies to engage with people who have diverse perspectives about a particular issue [†]	80%			

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Summative Capstone Course	Students prepare an analytical paper of a case the instructor selects.	1. Capstone Quality: % achieving B+ or better capstone grade	90 % or higher	During Capstone Course	Capstone Instructor	Core Competencies
	<i>This measure is being dropped because we now have a regular semester course.</i>	2. Capstone Progress: % completing within 4 semesters*	85% Pre-career 60% Mid-career			
Oral Comprehensive Exam	Students defend their capstone paper case analysis before a panel of 3 practitioners, 2 faculty, and peers at the end of the capstone course.	1. Oral Comprehensive Exam: % achieving 4.0 or higher (Likert Scale) in both substance and presentation skills.	90%	Usually final semester, a few in penultimate term	Department Faculty	
Department Data	Time to Complete Degree	% of pre-career students completing degree in 5 semesters, including 1 summer‡	90%		Department staff	
		% of mid-career students completing degree in 9 semesters, including 3 summers.	75%			
Exit Interviews	Each graduating student meets with the department chair for 45-60 minutes for an interview	% able to identify personal core competencies	100%	Two weeks before graduation	Department Chair	
		“If you could change one thing...”	No substantive problems identified			

Assessment Method	Explanation					
	Description	Student-Level Achievement	Program-Level Target	When Data Will be Collected	Person Responsible	SLOs
Department Data	The department tracks job placements of each graduate.	Job Placement Success: % of students employed in professional position within 6 months of graduation	90%		Department staff	
Alumni Survey		Alumni Satisfaction: % reporting overall satisfied or very satisfied with MPA program	95%	At least once every 3 years	Department staff	
Employer Survey				At least once every 3 years	Department staff	

Notes: * Includes a summer term. † Measured by rank order statistical test comparing orientation and graduation assessments. ^ Measured by frequency distribution analysis of graduation assessments. ‡ Excludes students who convert to mid-career status before completion of the degree because of professional employment opportunities.

ASSESSMENT METHODS-BY-OUTCOMES MATRIX

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome						
	Effectively work with internal and external stakeholders	Motivate peers and employees to enhance organizational capacity	Integrate current and preferred management practices	Use strategic management to facilitate goal identification & execution	Apply decision-making theories	Effectively participate in the public policy process	Conduct scans, identify windows, influence decisions
Competencies Assessment Inventory (CAI)	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I
Intern Supervisors Competencies Assessment Inventory (CAI)	F, S, D	F, S, D	F, S, D	F, S, D	F, S, D	F, S, D	F, S, D
Culminating Capstone Activity	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D
Oral Comprehensive Exam	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D
Exit Interviews	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D
Employer Survey	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I
Department Data	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D	S, D
Alumni Survey	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I	S, I
<p><i>Note.</i> F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment. See the paragraph above for an explanation of each type of assessment.</p>							

Assessment Method	Program Student Learning Outcome						
	Evaluate public service issues in effectiveness, efficiency, equity & economy terms	Incorporate professional codes of ethics in public service decision-making	Communicate effectively both orally (public speaking) and in writing (analytical and persuasive)	Understand and listen critically to diverse perspectives to address public service issues	Identify strategies for improving democratic accountability, transparency and civic participation	Develop or adapt policies, services to accommodate changing population	<i>Specialization Competencies</i>

Competencies Assessment Inventory (CAI)	S, I						
Intern Supervisors Competencies Assessment Inventory (CAI)	F, S, D						
Culminating Capstone Activity	S, D						
Oral Comprehensive Exam	S, D						
Exit Interviews	S, D						
Employer Survey	S, I						
Department Data	S, D						
Alumni Survey	S, I						
<i>Note.</i> F=formative assessment, S=summative assessment, D=direct assessment, and I=indirect assessment. See the paragraph above for an explanation of each type of assessment.							