



## Master of Public Administration Program Handbook

### Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program in the School of Public Policy and Leadership at UNLV. The MPA program at UNLV is the only program accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) in the state of Nevada. The MPA program offers professional and academic development to students interested in public service.

The MPA is the professional degree for the field of public administration and it serves to provide public sector practitioners with an understanding of the inner workings of governmental environments. Our program aims to prepare students to become public service professionals in government and nonprofit organizations. In addition to serving administrators in the public and nonprofit sectors, our program is also appropriate for career military personnel and private sector professionals whose responsibilities involve extensive contact with governmental agencies and public-sector personnel.

The MPA program continually strives to enhance the quality of the curriculum through the development of core competencies for public service. As part of our goal serve the needs of working students, we continue to offer a wide range of options for students to complete their degrees. This has included the re-launch of some of the core courses as hybrid, remote live or asynchronous online courses to allow working professional students' additional flexibility and increase the use of technology as a learning tool for the MPA program.

One core characteristic of our program will be the emphasis on applied research and learning opportunities. Students in the MPA program engage in learning focused on building practical skills to help improve their communities through better leadership and management. Our commitment to building the skills and knowledge of students includes having them engage in applied service learning projects that not only create unique learning experiences but also benefit the Southern Nevada Community. This includes actively engaging students in both academic and applied research as part of their program of study in the MPA.

Our goal is to develop our students to ensure their readiness to better serve our community while enhancing their careers.

Christopher Stream, PhD  
Director, School of Public Policy and Leadership

### Mission Statement

The mission of the Master of Public Administration program is to develop in students:

1. an understanding of the governmental, social, and economic environment of public service at the national, state and local levels
2. the skills and values to enable them to manage and lead in areas of policy and governance
3. an understanding of democracy and ethics which will allow them to better serve the public good.

### Purpose

The purpose of this handbook is to provide program specific information that is not found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Students are responsible for understanding and following the policies and procedures delineated in this document and the UNLV Graduate Catalog, as well as the NSHE Code,

UNLV Bylaws, and the UNLV Student Conduct Code. Questions about policies should be directed to the Graduate College: [valarie.burke@unlv.edu](mailto:valarie.burke@unlv.edu) or [GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu](mailto:GradAssociateDean@unlv.edu).

### Department Graduate Faculty

A current listing of the graduate faculty can be found in the UNLV Graduate Catalog. Faculty must hold either associate or full graduate faculty status to be involved in graduate education at UNLV. For up to date information regarding graduate faculty status in your department, visit the Graduate Faculty status web page.

## Program Information

Information about specific degree requirements can be found in the [graduate catalog](#).

## Contact Information

### School of Public Policy and Leadership

Director of the School of Public Policy and Leadership  
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## Program Requirements

Program requirements regarding [admission, coursework and culminating experience are found in the graduate catalog](#).

The School of Public Policy and Leadership has identified the following list of competencies that are key to our program. All course content within the MPA program requires students to gain proficiencies in these five competency areas:

- Leading and managing in public governance
- Contributing to the public policy process
- Learning to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions
- Articulating and applying a public service perspective
- Communicating and interacting productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

The program requires a minimum of 36 credit hours, with a concentration in either Public Administration or Nonprofit Management. While most students will fulfill the requirements within 36 hours, students without appropriate professional administrative experience are required to take a 3- credit hour internship for a total of 39 hours for the MPA program.

A full listing of courses and program descriptions for both the Public Administration and Nonprofit Management concentrations are available on the Master of Public Administration Program page.

## Advisory Committee Guidelines

A formal advisory committee is not required for the Master of Public Administration degree as the program culminating experience requires an experiential capstone project rather than a thesis.

## Degree Program Benchmarks

Student progression through the program includes, course work, a capstone project and a capstone portfolio.

### MPA Course Check Sheet

As you progress through the program, you are strongly encouraged to use the MPA Course Check Sheet. This sheet outlines all course requirements for the program. Use this sheet as you take courses to keep track of your program progress. This course check sheet is not an official degree audit, but it does serve as a guide to assist students in their course planning throughout the program. Your official degree requirements are reflected in the Graduate Catalog that corresponds to your year of admission. A copy of the MPA Course Check Sheet can be provided by the Graduate Coordinator.

### Capstone Experience

Upon completion of the program's course requirements, students will engage in two final courses that provide the program's Culminating Experience. The Culminating Experience courses are part of the MPA program's Capstone experience and along with the 3-hour analytical course are also part of the program's analytical sequence. These two courses must be taken in sequence and are generally done towards the end of a student's MPA course work. These courses include:

PUA 725 - Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation PUA 729 - MPA Capstone Experience

Students must request permission to begin their capstone experience before starting their final two semesters of their program and after they have completed PUA 723 along with the majority of their core courses. Generally, students will begin their capstone experience by taking PUA 725 after having completed 21 to 24 credit hours. Students should plan accordingly as they approach their anticipated graduation date. Once students are enrolled in PUA 725 they will work in teams on an applied research project for two consecutive semesters. This allows students adequate time to work with stakeholders on the design and implementation of the project.

### Capstone Portfolio

As part of the culminating experience, students are required to complete a capstone portfolio assignment that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements. The portfolio will reflect both the student's program expectations and learning experiences. The portfolio will consist of selected written assignments from their program course work, as well as a reflective essay. All portfolio materials will be uploaded and graded through an E-portfolio website. Instructions and details regarding the creation of this site will be provided by the Graduate Coordinator.

Instructions for the portfolio assignment are as follows:

- 1.** The portfolio should consist of at least one written assignment from seven courses that reflect your skills and proficiencies in one of the five competency areas (found under program requirements). These written assignments should be chosen to reflect your growth as a public service professional within the context of a given competency. It is not necessary that assignments be major assignments for a particular course, short/minor assignments are acceptable. Rather, assignments should be chosen that represent a critical learning element of your program experience.
  - a.** At the beginning of the program, students will use the instructions provided by the Graduate Coordinator to develop a personal E-portfolio website
  - b.** Starting your first semester in the program, you should begin collecting graded assignments (artifacts) and uploading them to your E-portfolio
- 2.** The portfolio will include a critical essay that explains why each assignment was chosen and how they contributed to your development in the aforementioned five competency areas. This essay will be completed during your last semester in the program. Critical essays are to be uploaded to the E-portfolio site. Essays should be written and formatted in accordance with the American Psychological Association style writing manual. In order to have a successful portfolio, students must clearly demonstrate how their proficiencies were enhanced in each of the five universal competencies.
- 3.** Complete your portfolio by the following dates:
  - a.** To be considered for fall graduation - November 20
  - b.** To be considered for spring graduation - April 15

Students transferring from one of the certificate programs can use existing portfolio materials. However, their final MPA portfolios must consist of course work taken in addition to the certificate program work. The portfolio and the essay must reflect your full experience throughout the MPA program.

### Culminating Experience Evaluation and Program Completion

Within the last semester of the program, students will submit a culminating experience form, on which their culminating experience will be evaluated. Additionally, students are responsible for submitting all additional required forms to the School of Public Policy & Leadership for approval and applying for graduation. This must be done within the last two semesters prior to completing the degree requirements.

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have completed all required course work prior to graduation. Students are required to conduct a degree audit to track their academic progress and submit the appropriate plan of study form. Students are strongly encouraged to become familiar with the policies and procedures of the UNLV Graduate College.

In order to successfully apply for graduation, all students must satisfactorily fulfill all degree requirements and complete the following:

- Use the MPA course check sheet to check your course progress
- Submit an approved Plan of Study Form
- Submit a Culminating Experience Form
- Apply for graduation  
(see [Graduation Deadlines](#) for updated deadlines)
- Register for at least 3 credit hours during the semester of graduation
- Pay all graduation fees

The [Plan of Study](#) and [Culminating Experience forms](#).

## Program Timeline

The Master of Public Administration Program is a 2-year program designed to be completed within 6 to 7 semesters.

## Professional Code of Ethics/Discipline Guidelines

UNLV Graduate College policy regarding academic integrity can be found in the graduate catalog. However, the MPA program is a professional program and students are expected to carry themselves in a professional manner. This means that students are expected to maintain etiquette in their attire and their actions. The classroom is a safe space for students to gain instruction, express ideas and to fully engage in the process of learning. Any form of disruptive behavior, harassment or violence can lead to immediate dismissal from the program. Instructors within the program reserve the right to have a disruptive student removed from the classroom.

### Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at: [Student Conduct Code](#).

In general, academic dishonesty includes the following:

- Reusing material developed for other courses to meet writing assignments in the current course
- Receiving unauthorized external assistance with exams or other assignments. This includes but is not limited to collaborating with other students, using outside consultants (i.e. professional editor, professional research company) for assignments, and using a camera or smartphone or other devices for assistance
- Copying information or ideas from a book, article, or website without proper credit to the author
- Falsifying information for inclusion in an assignment
- Attempting to influence or change an academic evaluation or assignment
- Falsifying or misrepresenting attendance
- Acting or attempting to act as a substitute for another student

Plagiarism and academic misconduct in any form will face disciplinary action that could result in receiving an "F" in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the University.

### Professional Code of Ethics

Being the professional degree of public administration, the MPA program trains and expects its students to become professionals that adhere to the professional code of ethics as outlined by the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA):

- Advance the public interest
- Uphold the Constitution and the law
- Promote democratic participation
- Strengthen social equity
- Fully inform and advise
- Demonstrate personal integrity
- Promote ethical organizations
- Advance professional excellence

### Annual Review Procedures

Each winter break and early spring term, graduate students are **required** to complete the Graduate Student Individual Development Plan (IDP) form. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress, and it establishes reasonable goals for the year ahead. Reported student data is shared with students' graduate coordinators and advisors to foster opportunities for discussion about students' strengths and weaknesses, accomplishments and next requirements, and mentoring plans so that students know what they need to do in order to progress successfully through their programs in a timely manner. Students who are graduating are also required to complete the form in order to record their achievements since the data is also used to track metrics related to the annual productivity of all students.. This survey will be sent by the Graduate College to the student's Rebelmail account. The review covers the prior calendar year and assesses student progress while setting goals for the year ahead.

### Probation

If a student fails to successfully progress in their degree program, their department/school will recommend that the student be placed on probation by the Graduate College. Students on probation may be dismissed/separated from their program for failing to successfully meet the conditions of their probation by the deadline provided. Please see the [Probation and Separation](#) section of the Graduate Catalog for more information

## Grade Policies

A grade point average of a 3.0 or higher must be maintained for program eligibility. Failure to maintain a minimum of a 3.0 grade point average will result in the student being placed on academic probation. A grade less than a "B-" is considered an unsatisfactory grade and is insufficient for course

credit. That is, a course in which a grade less than a "B-" is received will not count towards the degree. Students can have no more than one grade less than "B-" to maintain a good status within the program.

At the instructor's discretion, a grade of incomplete (I) may be assigned to a student. A student receiving an incomplete grade, will have one calendar year to complete all course requirements and remove the incomplete grade. Failure to complete the course requirements within one year will result in the "I" automatically becoming a record grade of "F." Within a given semester, a student may have no more than two incomplete grades in order to maintain good academic standing. Having more than two incompletes will result in the student being deemed as unsatisfactory and being placed on academic probation.

Students have a six (6) year window from their start in the program to fulfill all degree requirements. Course work completed beyond the six-year period will not count towards progress within the MPA program.

## Course Delivery and Communications

Classes within this program use the WEBCAMPUS/CANVAS course site platform, which enables online instruction and communication. In order to gain access to courses, course material and information, students must have a Rebelmail (with @unlv.nevada.edu) account to log in. To activate your Rebelmail account go to [Rebelmail Set Up](#)

Students must also obtain a student ID (RebelCard). Without your student ID, students will not be able to partake of certain campus resources, such as the University libraries. To obtain a RebelCard:

- Register for at least one credit hour at UNLV
- Wait 5 to 7 business days for the system to update
- Take a photo ID to the RebelCard Office located in the Student Union

Per FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations, all email correspondences regarding student affairs, requests or any academic business must come from university email accounts.

## Discipline Resources

### Writing Style Guide

In general, the School of Public Policy and Leadership uses the American Psychological Association style for references and citations. It is strongly recommended that students purchase a copy of the latest edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. This style guide can be used in most of your courses to help format your papers and assignments.

### Pi Alpha Alpha

Students exhibiting excellence in their academic work are invited to join the UNLV chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha. Pi Alpha Alpha is the national honor society for public affairs and administration. It recognizes outstanding students in public administration, public policy, and public affairs. To be inducted into this society, students must maintain a 3.7 GPA in 50 percent of their overall program course work. Upon paying the induction fee, students will receive a certificate and a pin in recognition of their outstanding work. Students are inducted into Pi Alpha Alpha during the spring semester of the academic year.

### Professional Associations

The main professional association for students seeking their degree in Public Administration is the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). ASPA is a national organization and students are strongly encouraged to join the local chapter at the student rate and participate in professional development and networking activities. Information about joining ASPA can be found online at [ASPA](#).

For students, studying or interested in nonprofit management as part of the degree program additional opportunities professional development and networking opportunities are available through several local and national organizations, the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organization and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA), the Association for Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN) of Southern Nevada.

ARNOVA is the main professional association for researchers and academics studying nonprofit organizations. Information about ARNOVA can be found online at [ARNOVA](#) AFP Las Vegas Chapter is a professional association which serves individuals who engage in fundraising or development work in the nonprofit sector. This organization is part of a national network of

chapters aimed at improving the professional practice of fundraising and development. For students, interested in pursuing a career in the area fundraising or development this group offers professional development and networking opportunities. Information can be found online at [AFP](#).

YNPN of Southern Nevada is a networking and professional development group organized by young professionals working with and in the nonprofit sector. It is part of national network of similar chapters across the country. The local chapter offers professional development, networking and social activities for its members. Additional information can be found online at [YNPN](#).

#### Important Journals

Below is a list of important scholarly journals in the field of public administration including journals which focus on nonprofit management:

- Administration and Society
- Administrative Theory & Praxis
- American Review of Public Administration
- Governance
- International Journal of Public Administration
- Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory
- Journal of Public Affairs Education
- Journal of Urban Affairs
- Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly
- Nonprofit Management and Leadership
- Policy Studies Journal
- Public Administration Quarterly
- Public Administration Review
- Public Budgeting & Finance
- Publius: The Journal of Federalism
- Review of Public Personnel Administration
- State & Local Government Review
- Urban Affairs Review



## University Resources

### [The Graduate Academy: Innovative Leadership, Professional, and Career Development](#)

The goal of the Graduate Academy is to serve as a virtual resource providing support and many professional opportunities to UNLV graduate students. The Academy offers information about events and services such as graduate certificate programs, workshops, training sessions and career services. You can follow Academy activities via social media or look for regular updates on the website.

### Academic Success Center

The goal of the [Academic Success Center](#) is to help students do well academically and complete their studies on time. They offer or will refer you to such programs and resources as tutoring, advising, skills testing, career exploration and more. They guide students every step of the way to the many established resources created to ensure they complete their educational goals. Learn more about the programs and services the center currently offers.

### Alumni Association

With an alumni base 140,000 strong, the [UNLV Alumni Association](#) offers a variety of services and opportunities in support of alumni and their families. UNLV alumni are encouraged to support the values of higher learning through advocacy, involvement, and giving.

### Commencement Office

Located in the UNLV Office of the Registrar, the [commencement office](#) is the last step in the graduation process. Please check with the commencement office for information on the commencement ceremony and your diploma; for all other information about graduate student degree completion and graduation, including thesis/dissertation requirements and doctoral hooding, please contact the Graduate College. It is the students' responsibility to ensure they apply for [graduation on time](#) and submit all required forms to the Graduate College. Questions regarding thesis/dissertation should be directed to the Graduate College [Student Services Team](#) and questions regarding required forms should be directed to the Graduate College [RPC Team](#).

### Office of Diversity Initiatives

The vision of the [Office of Diversity Initiatives](#) is to advocate, promote, and support the advancement of equity, inclusiveness, and empowerment of a continuously changing collegiate and global community. The mission of the Office of Diversity Initiatives is to provide leadership and support for UNLV's diversity mission: *to nurture equity, diversity, and inclusiveness that promotes respect, support, and empowerment*. This Office also handles UNLV Title IX questions, inquiries, and reporting.

### Disability Resource Center (DRC)

The [DRC](#) is committed to supporting students with disabilities at UNLV through the appropriate use of advocacy, accommodations, and supportive services to ensure access to campus courses, services, and activities. The DRC is the university-designated office that determines and facilitates reasonable accommodations in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Graduate students with disabilities must disclose to the DRC in order to receive appropriate accommodations.

### Office of International Student and Scholars

[International Students and Scholars \(ISS\)](#) ensures compliance with both SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and federal law, so that the university can continue to be authorized by the U.S. federal government to enroll international students; host and hire international scholars; assist and advise employment eligibility and authorization relating to international students and scholars, and visa, travel, and immigration issues; provide critical and specialized services to the international students and scholars of the UNLV community; and facilitate their transition to the campus and the U.S.

### Jean Nidetch Women's Center

The [Jean Nidetch Women's Center](#) is committed to creating a supportive and inclusive environment for all genders through programming, services, and advocacy for the UNLV community. The Women's Center has informational resources, brochures, and flyers for a variety of on and off campus organizations to help empower and protect yourself, and learn about your options. They also provide free tampons, pads, and condoms.

### The Intersection

[The Intersection](#) is a one-stop resource for UNLV's highly diverse student body — a comprehensive multicultural center grounded in the academic life of our students. As an intersecting campus resource, the Intersection helps ensure students, particularly first-generation and students of color, successfully navigate their academic careers. Here, all members of campus can discuss their differences, discover their similarities, and build a shared sense of belonging.

### UNLV Libraries

[UNLV Libraries](#) has always been more than books; they are about encouraging students and creating quality programs that elevate growth and learning. Please visit their website for important information about the services they offer to graduate students.

### Graduate & Professional Student Association (GPSA)

The [Graduate & Professional Student Association](#) serves all currently enrolled University of Nevada, Las Vegas graduate and professional students. The GPSA maintains the Graduate Student Commons located in the Lied Library room 2141 and Gateway Building PDAC Room. The facility a working office equipped with a copier, fax,



flatbed scanners, color laser printer, office supplies, and computers with printers and a small kitchen area. The GPSA is the graduate student governance body at UNLV; the GPSA Council consists of one graduate student representative from each graduate department, and they meet monthly. The GPSA also provides volunteer opportunities, sponsors social events, and supports graduate student research through the graduate research and travel grants program.

#### Office of Student Conduct

The [Office of Student Conduct](#) is a student-centered, service-oriented office located within the Division of Student Affairs. The Office of Student Conduct collaborates with the UNLV community to provide an inclusive system through enforcement of the *UNLV Student Code of Conduct* by:

- Promoting awareness of student rights and responsibilities;
- Establishing accountability for student choices;
- Creating opportunities for involvement in the process; and
- Striving to uphold the values and ethics that advance the common good.

#### Military and Veteran Services Center

The [Military and Veteran Service Center](#) is staffed with veterans and veteran education benefits experienced staff to assist more than 1,000 veterans, dependents, active duty service members, National Guard members, and reservists. Their mission is to develop a welcoming, veteran-friendly campus environment that fosters academic and personal success.

#### The Financial Aid & Scholarships Office

The [Financial Aid & Scholarships Office](#) supports higher-education access and persistence by providing financial aid to eligible students. The office partners with student organizations, the UNLV Foundation, the Graduate College, and other external constituents to provide financial aid learning opportunities and scholarship support for graduate students.

#### Writing Center

This is a free service to UNLV students to help you with any writing project, from papers to creative writing, to resumes, and we can work with you at any stage of the writing process. The center can help you brainstorm, make an outline, work on your drafts, or just be a soundboard for your ideas. The center staff can assist you in person, or via the [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) page.

### University Policies and Procedures

Graduate students are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with UNLV Policies and Procedures. To view the most commonly referenced campus policies and procedures, you can refer to the following websites:

- [Academic Integrity](#)
- [Activation for Military Service](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [FERPA/Privacy Rights](#)
- [Health Insurance - Mandatory](#)
- [Jean Clery Campus Safety and Security Report](#)
- [Proof of Immunization](#)
- [Policies and Procedures on the Protection of Research Subjects](#)
- [Rebelmail Policy](#)
- [Student Conduct Code](#)
- [Student Computer Use Policy](#)
- [Title IX](#)

UNLV does not discriminate in its employment practices or in its educational programs or activities, including admissions, on the basis of sex/gender pursuant to Title IX, or on the basis of any other legally protected category as is set forth in NSHE Handbook Title 4, Chapter 8, Section 13. Reports of discriminatory misconduct, questions regarding Title IX, and/or concerns about noncompliance with Title IX or any other anti-discrimination laws or policies should be directed to UNLV's Title IX Coordinator Michelle Sposito.

The Title IX Coordinator can be reached through the [online reporting form](#), by email at [titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@unlv.edu), by phone at (702) 895-4055, by mail at 4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 451062, Las Vegas, NV, 89154-1062, or in person at Frank and Estella Beam Hall (BEH), Room 555.

To ensure compliance with Graduate College policies and procedures, please review the relevant sections of the [Graduate Catalog](#):

- [Academic Calendar](#)
- [Academic Policies](#)
- [Admission and Registration Information](#)
- [Degree Progression Policies & Procedures](#)

In addition, the [Graduate College website](#) contains additional information regarding policies and procedures.

*Nothing in this handbook supersedes any NSHE, UNLV, or Graduate College policy.*

### Handbook Information

Last revised	Revised by	Department Vote Tally: Yes/No/Abs. (date of vote)	Changes summary
April 18, 2018	J. Farmer		Provided program updates and additional
March 23, 2023	J. Word		Fixed formatting and updated information