

1993

Master of Public Administration

Nova University

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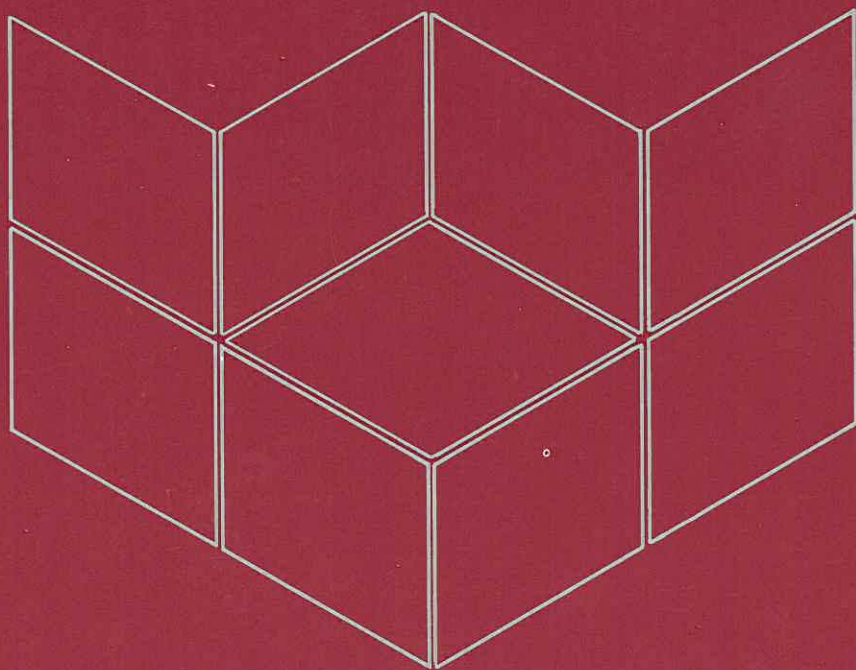
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MPA



the
Master of Public Administration
degree



This brochure, intended for employers and students, describes the broad range of topics and issues covered in a graduate public administration curriculum, and some of the opportunities for a career in the field. Because curricula and career options vary, the descriptions are meant to be representative, not exhaustive.



The MPA Degree: Strength in its Diversity

Depending on the university, graduate education in the field of public affairs and administration can have different emphases and the degree granted can have a number of different names. While a master's degree in public administration—the MPA—is the most common degree, it also may be known as a master of governmental administration, a master in public affairs, a master's in political science with a major in public administration, or a master's of international relations. In every case, the degree is a professional one and the educational program is designed to train individuals for government service and related fields.

While the title of the degree is not important, the substance is. Every graduate program has a core curriculum designed to teach the skills required for effective public management—planning; decision-making; managing people, money and programs; and representing the public interest. Beyond this core, universities offer many specializations and individualized courses of study. At present, over 200 universities provide training and education in the field and over 6,000 graduate degrees are awarded annually.

These graduates have a wide range of skills. They are prepared for many different jobs. Yet they have something in common. They understand the challenge, anticipate the excitement, and accept the responsibility that comes with managing in the public sector.

Why Public Administration?



In 1960 one out of eight persons in the work force was employed by government. By 1980 this figure had increased to one in six. While the growth in public sector employment has slowed, government spending still accounts for over a third of the Gross National Product.

The scope of government extends beyond these impressive numbers. The demarcation between the public and private sectors is blurring. Laws, regulations, tax policies, contracts, grants and loans require an interaction between the two sectors so that even in the private sector an understanding of public administration and government is critical.



The Educational Foundations for Public Administration

The purpose of a graduate program in public affairs and administration is to prepare individuals for positions of leadership in the public sector. The core curriculum typically covers the following areas:

- *political and legal institutions and processes*
- *economic and social systems and forces*
- *organizational and managerial skills and practices*
- *concepts and techniques of financial administration*
- *techniques of analysis, including quantitative, economic and statistical methods, and computer systems*

These core elements constitute the building blocks for a diverse field of study. The choices range from city management and international affairs to personnel administration and strategic planning.

Educational programs in public administration draw on a wide variety of academic disciplines, such as political science, economics, business administration, and law. Public administration is a unifying field of study that effectively merges the specialties of others. Yet public administration has its own unique set of competencies and areas of expertise as it applies the disciplines of other fields to the public and not-for-profit sectors.

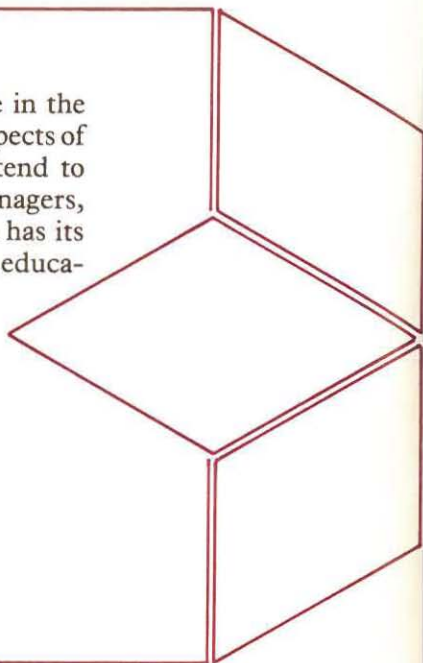
General Areas of Specialization

While all MPA's have a solid base in the political, managerial and analytical aspects of public sector operations, graduates tend to cluster in three general areas—managers, analysts, and policy specialists. Each has its particular strengths and specialized education demands.

MANAGERS

Managers exist at many levels in an organization, from key executives at the top to the first line supervisor. The skills of the effective manager are many and the competencies developed are at the core of the MPA curriculum.

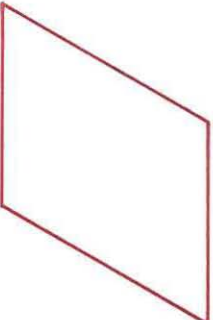
Managers implement policies and programs in public institutions. They allocate resources—money, people and material—to achieve program objectives. It takes the talents and skills of both program and staff managers to deliver the services the public expects and demands.



The Program Manager:

The program manager is the “do-er” in an organization. Program and project management require a range of skills to assure successful implementation of programs. Program managers must be equipped to deal with such issues as:

- *establishing objectives*
- *stimulating productivity*
- *motivating workers*
- *reporting and evaluating work progress*
- *structuring work and allocating resources*
- *coping with internal and external political pressures*
- *ensuring that the public interest is reflected in the work of an agency*



To be effective program managers must enlist the support and understand the skills of staff managers.

Staff Managers:

Staff managers support the work of program offices. Like program managers, these managers must be skilled in staff direction and supervision. In addition, a staff manager's major areas of responsibility include:

- *budgeting and financial management*
- *personnel and labor relations*
- *management information systems*
- *organizational analysis*
- *procurement of supplies and materials*

ANALYSTS

As the role and scope of government have increased so has the need to develop ways to ensure that program objectives are met. At the same time there is a need to look at new ways of meeting the public's requests for service. This is the job of the analyst. MPA programs offering special training for analysts emphasize policy formulation and program evaluation.

Policy Formulation:

Research on social, economic and environmental problems, whether domestic or international, can help inform decision makers in the policy process. Analysts assemble information, organize that information for use by decision makers, and propose optional courses of action.

Program Evaluation:

Once policy is determined, programs and projects must be developed to implement that policy. Analysts monitor the implementation of programs and evaluate results to determine whether these programs met their stated objectives. This information is vital to policy makers and managers. Analysts work in government agencies in planning and evaluation units or budget analysis divisions, or outside government in consulting firms, research institutes, and not-for-profit organizations. Whether the analytic emphasis of their education is on policy formulation or program evaluation, analysts must have a knowledge of

- *research design*
- *methodology including statistics and survey research*
- *cost-benefit analysis*
- *the preparation of briefing papers and analytic presentations*
- *computer applications*



POLICY SPECIALISTS

Public management and politics are clearly related. Policy specialists must understand the political process and know how to accomplish stated program objectives.

These specialists work within and outside of government. In many cases, non-governmental organizations—corporations, trade associations, professional societies, public interest groups, and civic organizations—have assembled professional staffs to monitor legislation from formulation to passage to assure their concerns are fairly presented and protected.

Policy specialists may pursue careers in the legislative affairs office of an executive agency or on the staff of a legislative committee, a public affairs division of a corporation, or a public interest group. Regardless of the employer, the knowledge and skills required include:

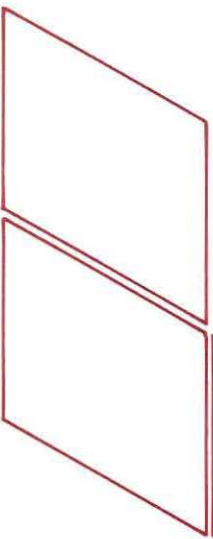
- *understanding the mechanics of legislative, budgetary and regulatory processes*
- *management of issues*
- *impact analysis*
- *coalition building and maintenance*
- *negotiation, compromise and bargaining*
- *public information management*

Career Challenges



As mentioned earlier, the MPA graduate has a range of career options. Public managers run our airports and harbors. They provide health services and redevelop our cities. They are involved in all aspects of the criminal justice system. They help protect our environment. Public managers handle the distribution and delivery of needed social services. They are involved in all phases of public finance - tax planning and administration, budget formulation and execution, program evaluation and the development of new program initiatives. As the following examples illustrate, MPA graduates are involved in every facet of public life.

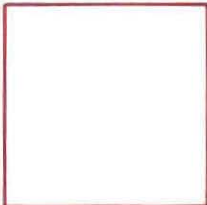
Carol Riley attended a major eastern university where she earned an MPA in 1977. After spending three years in Lagos, Nigeria with the Ford Foundation, she returned to the Foundation's headquarters in New York City to assume her current position with the Rural Poverty and Resources Program. As program officer, Carol coordinates all of the Foundation's overseas programs for women and plays a key role in its development and employment projects in developing countries. She also oversees grants for rural development and related employment projects in the United States. In graduate school, Carol's area of concentration was development studies. She spent her summer internship with the U.S. Agency for International Development Mission in Dakar, Senegal. Upon graduation she received two highly coveted offers: one from the Young Professionals Program of the World Bank and one from the West Africa Field Office of the Ford Foundation. Taking the latter offer because it provided more field experience, Carol traveled to Nigeria where she was responsible for grants in the Foundation's Rural Development Program.



Albert Williams received his MPA from a school in the midwest in 1978. He is now director of the Office of Program Planning, Analysis and Development for the social service department of the State of Ohio. As director of this office, Albert is responsible for evaluating programs administered by the department, as well as developing long-range planning for program improvement and modification. He has most recently completed an evaluation of a demonstration project on adolescent foster care and is currently developing a data retrieval and analysis capability for such programs as public welfare, food stamps, and Medicaid. Having specialized in urban affairs and domestic policies, Albert, spent a summer internship with the U.S. Information Agency in Rome. After graduation, Albert joined a not-for-profit organization created to promote urban revitalization and neighborhood economic development. He became the associate director of that organization in 1980. He assumed his current position in 1983.

As an economist with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System since 1982, Joan White has been primarily responsible for bank merger analysis and research on policies concerning competition in financial markets. Within the Financial Structure Section she has served as the regional director for four reserve districts. Joan received her MPA in public policy analysis with a concentration in economics in 1979 at a university in the southwest. She took a year between her first and second years of graduate school to work with a major consulting firm where she was responsible for the construction and analysis of energy-related data bases. After graduation she became an economist in the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice, where she worked on analyzing energy and transportation issues.

Bill Thompson received his master's degree in public administration from a major west coast university in 1977. Between his first and second years of graduate school Bill spent the summer as an intern in a city manager's office in a rapidly growing city in the southwest. Following graduation, Bill served as a management intern in a major midwestern city. As part of his full time internship experience, Bill had a series of special work assignments throughout the city government. In the fall of 1981, Bill was chosen as the assistant city manager in a suburban Los Angeles community and in the spring of 1984 he was selected as the city manager in another community in the metropolitan area. In this growing city of 10,000 people, Bill is responsible for an operating budget in excess of \$3 million and has nearly 100 employees under his general supervision. Bill has been asked to serve on a number of committees of the regional council of governments.



Vivian Martinez began her professional work experience as a social worker for a county government in the east. After receiving a master's degree in social work, she accepted a more responsible social work position in a larger county within the state. While in this position, she recognized her interest in wanting to manage programs and activities. On weekends and at night Vivian began courses in public administration at the state university 20 miles away. Vivian received her MPA after three years of course work. After looking into a number of potential employers, she elected to accept a management intern position with a major Federal agency rather than return to a social service agency. Following a series of rotational assignments and other developmental experiences, she was placed in the agency's budget office, and now, four years later, she is a division chief supervising a staff of 10 who are responsible for budget preparation and analysis.

About NASPAA

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) is an institutional membership organization of more than 215 university programs of public affairs and administration education. Its members are dedicated to the improvement of public service education. NASPAA serves as a national center for information about programs and developments in public affairs and administration. As such, it strives to set goals and foster standards of excellence in education for the public service.

In carrying out this role, NASPAA has developed standards for professional masters degree programs in public affairs and administration and every two years publishes a comprehensive directory of member school programs. NASPAA provides a forum for the discussion of educational issues affecting the public service.

In addition to its academic institution membership, government agencies, public interest groups, foreign universities and other non-academic organizations interested in public service education are members of the organization.

Much of the work of the organization is carried out through a number of committees, one of which is the Committee on Internships and Placement. This brochure was written and developed under the auspices of that Committee.

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