Department of Political Science

Master of Public Administration

Welcome!

Thank you for visiting the web page for the Master of Public Administration Program at Montana State University. Our program has a long and rich history, and our graduates have gone on to distinguished careers at all levels of government and in a wide range of public, non-profit and private organizations. We are proud to have built a program that focuses on smaller, live and in-person classes where students have the opportunity for rich interaction with our faculty and each other. We have created a strong community of learning and a culture of collaboration among the students and faculty, with explicit attention to the development of skills necessary for immediate professional success, and the normative awareness for career and professional development well into the future.

We’re excited about the opportunities here at MSU’s MPA program, and we hope you will be too.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me with any inquiries about the program.

Sincerely,
Dr. Eric K. Austin
MPA Coordinator
406-994-5168
eaustin@montana.edu

Program Description

The MPA degree is a professional degree designed to prepare both pre- and mid-career professionals and administrators for supervisory, analytical support and policy-making positions in public sector agencies, and non-profit organizations, at local, state and federal levels. The program stresses sound preparation in wide range of administrative competencies. MPA coursework includes studies in public administration theory, human resource management, public budgeting, leadership, ethics, organization dynamics, and research methods for public administrators. Available courses support specialization in local government, non-profit management, administration of Native American affairs, education leadership, planning and other subspecialties. For early career students, practical experience is gained through a supervised internship with an agency of the student’s choosing.

Upon graduation, MPA students are expected to have built their capacities in the following areas:

- To lead and manage in public governance;
- To participate in and contribute to the policy process;
- To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
- To articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

Admissions Requirements

To be admitted to the MPA program, prospective degree candidates must have completed a bachelor’s degree at an accredited college or university with a 3.0 GPA (grade point average) earned during the last two years of their undergraduate education. A score of 150 on the Verbal Reasoning or a combined score of 300 on the Verbal and Quantitative sections of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is expected. Because of the language intensity of the MPA program, the verbal score is the more important of the Verbal and Quantitative sections. Applicants should also submit a Personal Statement. This Personal Statement is an opportunity for applicants to describe personal and professional objectives, research interests, applicable experience or any other information relevant to the admissions review. Lastly, applicants must submit three letters of recommendation from individuals who can attest to the applicant’s ability to be successful as a graduate student.

Upon review of the application materials, the Political Science Department makes a recommendation to The Graduate School regarding admission. The Graduate School then makes the final admissions decision. Applications may be obtained through the Graduate School website at www.montana.edu/wwwfg/. Information and scheduling of the (GRE) may be obtained from MSU’s Testing Service at 406-994-6984, or on-line at http://www.montana.edu/ehhd/centers/testing/index.html.

Application Deadlines

Applications for regular, Fall admissions must be received by April 15th. Applications received after April 15th will be considered on a rolling, space available basis until July 15th.

Applicants interested in Graduate Assistantships, or departmentally awarded financial aid must apply by April 15th. A supplemental application for Departmental aid can be obtained from Dr. Austin upon request.

A very limited number of applications for Spring admission will be considered under some circumstances, though applicants should be aware that the curriculum is designed to be started in the Fall. Applications for the Spring semester must be received by November 15th.

Admissions Outcomes

Full graduate status: is granted to students who have demonstrated a high quality of performance in prior academic preparation and have otherwise met university and departmental standards on the criteria listed above.

Provisional Admission: may be granted to a student whose application shows reasonable potential for effective graduate work even though the applicant’s record may be deficient in some area. A decision to recommend provisional admission to The Graduate School for an applicant may be based on prior work experience, success in another academic field, completion of supplemental course work, or other criteria pertinent to academic success. A provisionally admitted student will be informed of any special requirements that must be met in order to be granted full graduate status. Upon meeting the specified requirements, recommendations of the Political Science Department, and with approval of the Dean of Graduate Education, a student on provisional status may be advanced to full graduate standing. Full graduate standing is usually considered only after completion of nine or more credits of satisfactory graduate work.

Non-degree Status: Students who desire to take courses of interest but who do not wish to pursue a graduate degree, or those who have not yet been accepted into the program by the Graduate School, may enroll with non-degree graduate status. Graduate credits earned while in non-degree status will not automatically be applied toward graduate degree requirements if the student later applies for and is admitted into the MPA program. Montana State University will allow no more than nine credits of non-degree course work. Furthermore, these credits may only be applied toward the degree if the student would meet all the criteria for admission into full graduate status at the time of entering as a non-degree student.

Degree Requirements

The degree requirements given below are effective for students admitted to the program in the Fall Semester of 2010 or after. The curriculum is structured so that full time students (those taking 9 credits per semester)
should be able to graduate in two academic years. Students taking 6 credits per semester can graduate in three years.

The MPA degree requires completion of 36 credits.

**Core Required Courses (24 credits):**

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSCI 551</td>
<td>Research Methods for Public Administrators</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSCI 552</td>
<td>Public Policy Processes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSCI 554</td>
<td>Foundations of Public Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>PSCI 555</td>
<td>Human Resources Management</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSCI 557</td>
<td>Public Budgeting &amp; Finance</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>PSCI 558</td>
<td>Organization Dynamics</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSCI 520</td>
<td>Government Leadership &amp; Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSCI 560</td>
<td>Ethics and Public Service</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Electives (9 credits)**

Students will select three elective courses that support both their intellectual interests as well as their professional and career objectives. We encourage students to explore the Political Science course catalog as well as course offerings from other departments to identify potential electives. Elective courses will be selected in cooperation with either the MPA Director or the student’s Professional Paper Chairperson. Pre-career students (those entering the program with fewer than two years of progressively responsible professional work experience) will be required to complete a 3 credit, 300 work-hour internship as one of the three elective courses. Elective courses may be taken outside the Political Science Department and may include one 400 level course.

**Professional Paper (3 credits)**

The Professional Paper course (PSCI 574) is taken during the student’s last semester of course work. The purpose of the Professional Paper is to allow MPA students an opportunity to effectively integrate underlying theories, concepts, themes, and patterns found throughout the program’s course work into a final original research project. A formal presentation of the Professional Paper will be given to Public Administration and Political Science faculty, student peers, and other interested parties. All MPA students in the program are expected to attend these presentations. Completion of the Professional Papers must occur in the Fall or Spring semester, not during the summer.

**Comprehensive Exams**

Comprehensive Exams are administered the semester before the student graduates. (e.g. If graduating in the spring, comprehensive exams are taken in the fall. Comprehensive exams are not administered in the summer). The purpose of the comprehensive exam is to verify the student’s mastery of the general concepts derived from the course of study, the integration of those concepts across course topics and the ability to apply the material to real-world administrative problems.

**Transfer of Credits**

Acceptance/transfer of up to nine credit hours of academic course work performed at other institutions is possible by The Graduate School upon recommendation by the Political Science Department. All such credits must have been earned while in graduate status at an accredited college or university.