Stephen F. Austin State University
Department of Government

Master of Public Administration Program
Student Handbook
2015-2016

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Preface

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) offers a flexible and challenging program of graduate study that prepares enrolled students for the MPA degree and enhanced professional careers.

This handbook is designed to aid students in their understanding of the MPA Program. In this handbook you will find information relating to degree requirements and program expectations. While this handbook is an excellent guide, students should interact with the faculty in order to receive the full benefits and be aware of the extensive opportunities of the MPA Program at SFA.

Upon successful completion of the program, the student should be prepared for a lifetime of leadership in public and private sector organizations.

Congratulations on your selection of the MPA Program at Stephen F. Austin State University.

MPA Program Faculty

Note: The contents in this handbook are subject to change with little or no notice.
Mission

The mission of the online Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program is to educate students for tomorrow’s management and leadership positions in the public sector, including local governments, state governments, the federal government, and nonprofit agencies. Public administrators in these positions are called upon to act professionally, responsibly, and effectively as they pursue public purposes. The MPA Program is designed to fill the educational demands and needs for better-qualified public administrators. Both pre-service and in-service students seeking professional credentials are served by online courses, special research projects, internships, and graduate assistantships. The program combines academic expertise with “real-world” experiences to provide students with outstanding opportunities to connect knowledge with practice.

Graduate School General Information

For general information on Stephen F. Austin State University Graduate School, please go to //http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate

Master of Public Administration Program

For web information on the Master of Public Administration Program, please go to http://www.sfasu.edu/government/123.asp
I. Introduction into the MPA Program

Advising
After admission to the MPA Program, you will be assigned an academic advisor. Your academic advisor will help to guide you through selecting courses by answering questions and offering suggestions. Your academic advisor will aid you throughout your MPA experience, including your comprehensive exam and capstone project completions. Your academic advisor will also be available to discuss your career interests and development as a professional public administrator. Additionally, if a situation arises that hampers completion of the MPA Program, you are encouraged to bring this to the attention of your academic advisor.

Orientation
Online orientation for the MPA Program is offered at the beginning of both the fall and spring semesters and is required for all incoming MPA students. During orientation, students will learn the intricacies and complexities of the MPA Program. Students will be exposed to several key topics, helping to create a “road-map” in which they can chart their success with ease. In addition, they will be introduced to the faculty and staff who will work with them throughout their MPA experience. Areas of focus during orientation include: being assigned an advisor, designing a degree plan, selecting a capstone chair, program and online culture, creating a capstone project, and graduation. Further, opportunities to become active participants in the MPA Program and chances for involvement in professional networks, associations, and programs will also be discussed.

After completing the online orientation, students will be asked to sign a document of completion, which can be found on the last page of the handbook.

Degree Plan Requirements
After a student is assigned to an advisor and completes orientation, he or she should begin thinking about a degree plan. A degree plan is an agreement between the university and the student that a specific completion of a set of courses will partially fulfill the MPA degree requirements. A student must file his or her degree plan prior to completing 12 hours of coursework. A student will collaborate with his or her advisor in selecting courses. Ms. Joy Rhodes, the Department of Government Administrative Assistant, will complete the degree plan, signatures will finalize the process, and the student will receive a copy of his or her degree plan.

Registration for Courses
Students need to be advised each semester for the courses they wish to take. Prior to the beginning of the semester, you should contact your advisor or the MPA Program Director with the courses you select for enrollment. Your advisor or the MPA Program Director will notify Ms. Joy Rhodes of your advised selections, and she will permit you to take the courses. If you are in good academic standing, you can register for courses after being advised.
II. MPA Curriculum

At Stephen F. Austin State University, the MPA Program is a graduate program that may be completed in two (2) academic years or 21 months. Students typically take one, two, or three courses in a long semester depending on their professional and personal duties and responsibilities. However, students may also complete a five-year plan engaging in both undergraduate and graduate course work.

Courses
The MPA Program has set course requirements. In creating a map for the program, the student should work with his or her academic advisor to ensure completion of program requirements and a satisfactory educational experience.

To obtain the MPA degree from SFA, MPA students must complete a minimum of 36 credit hours of coursework.

Degree Requirements Effective Fall 2011
The MPA degree requires the completion of 36 hours of coursework. All courses are offered online.

- PBA 500- Survey of Public Administration
  Overview of the field: defining and outlining public administration and its development, including political management, administrative responsibility, policy systems, personnel administration, financial resources management, organization theory, and challenges in public administration. Fall

- PBA 505- Public Administration Methods
  Introduction to the logic and methods used in public administration research and practice, including research ethics, designs, strategies, information collection, analytical techniques, and preparing and presenting research findings. Fall

- PBA 507- Applied Methods for Public Administration
  Introduction to applied quantitative and qualitative methods appropriate for public and nonprofit administration. Undergraduate level statistical knowledge is addressed. Knowledge of measurement, research design, descriptive statistics, probability, inferential statistics, the analysis of nominal and ordinal data, regression analysis, and special topics in using data for management are gained with applications in a public administration context. Suggested Background: PBA 505 Spring

- PBA 510- Public Personnel Administration
  Personnel structures, strategic human resource management, legal issues, recruiting, staffing, job analysis, job evaluation, classification, compensation, training, performance evaluations, appraisals, discipline and dismissal, and issues, opportunities, and challenges in working with human resources. Fall
• **PBA 515 - Public Budgeting and Financial Management**
  Budgeting processes, types of budgets, the politics of budgeting, revenue systems, accounting, cash management, debt administration, purchasing, risk management, and auditing. **Spring**

• **PBA 520 - Policy Systems and Evaluation**
  Policy discussions focused on the national, state, and local levels of government with an emphasis on quantitative evaluation. This course is designed to help students determine the effectiveness of policies and programs. **Spring**

• **PBA 525 - Public Organizations and Management**
  Development of effective and practical managerial skills. Topics include: the evolution of management thought and managerial styles, organizational structures, decision making communication, leadership, motivation, and understanding organizational duress. **Fall**

• **PBA 535 - Leadership in Public Administration**
  A survey of leadership and organizational change theories, styles, and strategies in the public and nonprofit workplace. This includes an examination of leadership in the public sector, including the uniqueness of leading a public organization and the attributes of successful leaders of public organizations. An examination of the role leadership can play in public organizational change and the use of futuring as a tool for leadership are explored. **Spring**

• **PBA 540 - Administrative Law and Procedure**
  This course focuses on the legal foundations of public administration, constitutional requirements of public managers, and administrative procedures in the state of Texas. Topics addressed include due process requirements in administrative law, administrative rulemaking procedures, and requirements for handling information and holding public meetings. **Spring**

• **PBA 545 - Ethics in Public Administration**
  Public employees must maintain high levels of ethical decision making and professional conduct. This course provides students with the theoretical, philosophical, and practical tools needed for making appropriate decisions in the role of an administrator in a public or nonprofit organization. **Fall**

• **PBA 575 - Public Administration Capstone Project**
  Students complete a special research project, which can be related to their in-service work, internship, or an area of interest in public administration. Enrollment is conditional on the approval of a research project proposal, often developed in PBA 505. Completion requires a presentation and oral defense before a faculty panel. Students will enroll in three (3) credit hours of PBA 575. This course is graded pass/fail. Some projects will warrant enrollment in **PBA 576** for additional credit hours, as determined on a case-by-case basis. **Fall, Spring, or Summer**
• **PBA 576 - Public Administration Capstone Completion**
  Special enrollment for students failing to complete the PBA 575 requirements within one semester. Students must be enrolled in one (1) credit hour of PBA 576 per semester until the Capstone Project is completed, approved, and graded as determined on a case-by-case basis. These hours may not be used to fulfill degree credit hour requirements. This course is graded pass/fail.

Students may enroll in PBA 576 two times without appeal, allowing a total of three semesters for completion of the Capstone Project.

Students entering the program during or after the Fall 2011 semester will be required to take either PBA 530 or PBA 599.

• **PBA 530 - Topics in Public Affairs**
  The study of a selected subject area related to contemporary public administration. These areas may include comparative administration, local politics, nonprofit administration, policy issues, political institutions, or public administration theory. This course is offered during the Summer II semester and may be repeated with a change in topic.

• **PBA 599 - Public Administration Internship**
  Practical public administration experience under the direction of an experienced public administrator in an agency. Seminars, faculty supervision, and a final administrative report are required; these requirements are adjusted on a case-by-case basis. Your advisor may treat this as a core requirement for students not meeting an acceptable level of prior experience. For students seeking a Criminal Justice specialization, this requirement may also be met with CJS 560 with faculty approval. These courses are graded pass/fail.

**Oral Comprehensive Exam**

An oral comprehensive examination is given during the student’s final semester of coursework. Please see the section below on the oral comprehensive exam for more information.

### III. Practical Experience

The MPA Program at Stephen F. Austin State University provides plenty of opportunities for the student to gain practical experience in the field. This exposure can be in several areas, including internships and overseas coursework.

**Internships**

All pre-service students are encouraged to complete a three credit hour internship. Internships provide students with the opportunity to apply course knowledge, gain meaningful work experience, and build their resumes. The MPA Program Director will assist internship placement. Students enroll in PBA 599.
**Overseas Coursework**

Students in the MPA Program may have the opportunity to study overseas. Some of the travel opportunities made possible through the program have been in such locations as Ghana, Scotland, England, Ireland, and Spain. Future courses will be in other international locations.

**IV. Portfolio Requirement**

*Required for students admitted during or after the Fall 2011 semester and recommended for all other students*

Throughout the program, students are required to keep an academic portfolio.

**Purpose:** Students should be able to document professional development while enrolled in the MPA Program. The portfolio is designed to organize students' path of study and help them prepare for the oral comprehensive exam. Students and faculty will be able to view the development of enhanced knowledge, skills, and competencies that the program affords by reviewing a portfolio.

As students complete the MPA Program degree requirements, they should compile a portfolio that demonstrates six cross cutting professional development abilities that are important to public service: (1) academic performance and course integration, (2) leadership skills, (3) application, (4) ethics and professional standards, (5) public service, (6) professional growth and continuing education. These abilities will primarily be cultivated in the MPA courses. Other abilities may require additional efforts or taking advantage of opportunities beyond coursework.

1. **(1) Academic Performance and Course Integration**

Courses completed toward the MPA degree requirements should be included in a MPA portfolio table of contents, which will demonstrate student learning by including graded/completed assignments, presentations, exams, case analysis, research papers, memos, journals, and all feedback from instructors in the program. Subheadings in the table of contents or subfolders for each course within the MPA portfolio should be used to organize materials. Evidence of course integration is necessary and will be illustrated in the annotatable table of contents.

2. **(2) Leadership Skills**

Document the development of leadership skills, teamwork abilities, and group dynamic skills.

3. **(3) Application**

Document any application of course-gained knowledge or public administration practice that shows your ability to deal with complex administrative or policy situations.
(4) Ethics and Professional Standards

Document your understanding and applications of professional standards and codes of ethics for public administration and academic worlds. This understanding and these applications should demonstrate knowledge of democratic values, constitutional principles, and an understanding of human dignity and diversity.

(5) Public Service

Document your work in-service or during an internship. Include a professional resume in this section.

(6) Professional Growth and Continuing Education

Document your efforts to enhance your administrative and managerial abilities.

V. Capstone Project

Purpose of Project

Students will complete a special research project (Capstone Project) related to their in-service work, internship, or an area of interest in public administration. This work will provide the student with an opportunity to display mastery of public administration. Successful completion of the project is necessary for fulfillment of the MPA degree requirements. Students enroll in PBA 575 during his or her first semester of the Capstone Project.

Eligibility

Traditionally, this project is the focus of the student's final semester in the program. A student may enroll in the PBA 575 Public Administration Capstone Project course after the completion of twenty-four (24) hours of coursework or current with his or her enrollment in thirty (30) hours of coursework. The course constitutes three credit-hours of graduate work and is a part of the 36 hours required for program completion. Students are strongly encouraged to complete PBA 505 and PBA 507 prior to selecting a topic for PBA 575.

Proposal and Enrollment

Students should select a capstone chair and discuss their preliminary topic. To be considered for enrollment in PBA 575, Public Administration Capstone Project, the student is required to submit a two page (800 to 1200 words) proposal to his or her capstone chair. Each capstone chair will have different proposal requirements. In any case, the proposal should be extensive and thoughtful. After the proposal has been approved by the capstone chair, students will be permitted by the capstone chair to enroll in three (3) credit hours of PBA 575, Public Administration Capstone Project. It is suggested that the proposal be completed at least 30 days prior to the beginning of the semester of enrollment for the course.
Purpose of the Capstone Chair

Your capstone chair will guide you in your project and offer suggestions in the production of a final paper that is ready to present and defend.

While the student has the option to have a different capstone chair and academic advisor, it is highly recommended that the student/academic advisor/capstone chair connection remain intact throughout the student's program experience in order to foster rapport and sound communication.

Working with Capstone Chair and Committee

The student will work with his or her chair in selecting appropriate faculty members to serve on the committee. There must be a minimum of two additional tenured/tenure-track faculty members serving with the chair on the capstone committee. At least one additional committee member must be part of the MPA Program Faculty. The student, with consent of the chair, may select one faculty member from outside the MPA Program Faculty. The student must arrange committee participation with the faculty members. The student must work with the capstone chair to complete a draft of the manuscript. The chair will review the manuscript and may suggest/require changes to make it acceptable for defense. Next, the student makes the appropriate changes to the manuscript and receives the approval of the chair. The student will then provide the chair and each of the committee members a Word file of the manuscript. This delivery must occur 30 days prior to commencement during fall and spring semesters or prior to the first day of Summer II classes during the summer semester. Within one week of paper delivery, committee members will read the paper and confer with the capstone chair as to if the paper is ready for presentation and defense. If the paper is ready, the capstone chair will set a date, time, and place for the capstone presentation and defense that is more than a week prior to graduations.

Workload

In order to gauge time commitments to the Public Administration Capstone Project, the student should plan to spend a minimum of 200 hours doing the research, reading literature, collecting information, performing analysis, writing, meeting with faculty members, etc. Normally, the Public Administration Capstone Project will take between four (4) and six (6) months to complete because of length of time required to collect information and to engage in original thought.

The Capstone Manuscript

The Capstone Manuscript will be developed as a manuscript prepared for the purpose of possible publication in an approved refereed journal. The final manuscript may be prepared in accordance with the journal submission or committee chair requirements, and no less than 20 nor more than 30 double-spaced pages in length, excluding title page, table of contents, abstract, references, and appendices, which should include IRB approval forms, questionnaires, etc. The manuscript is typically to be prepared with five major divisions: Introduction and Problem Statement, Literature Review,
Methodology, Findings, and Recommendations and/or Conclusions. The manuscript must include a title page, abstract, table of contents, and references. The final manuscript must provide clear evidence of acceptable research or policy analysis.

**Presentation and Defense**

Students must be enrolled in PBA 575 or PBA 576 during the semester when they present and defend their capstone paper.

To begin the defense, the committee chair will welcome the committee members and observers and introduce the student and the title of the manuscript. The student presentation will fall between 15 and 20 minutes, and the student will not be allowed to read his or her paper. Students are strongly encouraged to have visual displays (PowerPoints, Prezis, flip-charts, or handouts) for reference during the presentation. The presentation and defense will include a summary of the highpoints of the research, a discussion of the next steps for this project, and a presentation of what was learned. The committee chair will then invite questions from the committee. Each committee member will ask questions about the paper, and the student’s responses should demonstrate a mastery of the topic under study. After the questioning and responses are complete, the capstone chair will excuse the student to wait until summoned. The committee chair will permit a discussion between committee members about the student’s presentation and defense and call for a vote of “Pass” or “Fail”. The chair and committee will inform the student of their decision as to whether the defense was successful.

**Capstone Project Completion**

Students may enroll in two additional semesters of PBA 576 for completion. Enrollment in PBA 576 is for one credit hour. Please contact the MPA Program Director for guidance. Once enrolled in PBA 575, enrollment in PBA 576 should be in consecutive semesters.

A student failing to complete the Capstone Project requirements within three semesters, including initial enrollment in PBA 575, will be required to appeal to enroll in PBA 576 a third and final time. The appeal must be made to the Graduate Student Selection Committee and demonstrate a reasonable expectation of completion. Pending the outcome of the Committee's decision, no further enrollment will be permitted.

**Grading**

The determination of a pass grade is made if the manuscript is complete and approved by the student’s committee (subject to final changes) and the student has satisfactorily presented and defended the manuscript before the committee. Members of the committee will complete a grading rubric for final papers in capstone course, share completed rubrics with the student. After the final manuscript has been completed, it needs to be submitted to the capstone chair and the MPA Program Director. A letter grade of pass for PBA 575 and all sections of PBA 576 will be submitted by the capstone chair after chair approves the final manuscript and MPA Program Director receives a copy of manuscript and the completed rubrics. If the manuscript is not complete and no
defense is held, the student will receive a WH for the semester, which will be changed upon completion or the WH will change to a grade of F after one year.

VI. Oral Comprehensive Examination

**Purpose of Examination**

The oral comprehensive examination allows students to demonstrate their overall knowledge and mastery of the field of public administration.

**Eligibility**

The oral comprehensive exam may be scheduled when a student has completed all courses or is enrolled and past the mid-term in all courses. The student must be enrolled in MPA coursework during the semester in which the oral comprehensive exam is completed. The student may enroll in one credit-hour of PBA 576 in order to satisfy this requirement.

**Scheduling**

Students must sit for the oral comprehensive examination 45 days prior to commencement during fall and spring semesters or prior to the first day of Summer II classes during the summer semester. Portfolio submission (required for students admitted during or after the fall 2011 semester and recommended for all other students) to the members of your examination panel is required two weeks prior to the exam. Members of the examination panel will complete the Grading Rubric for MPA Portfolio and share them with the members on the examination panel two days prior to the scheduled oral comprehensive exam.

**Style of Examination**

The comprehensive examination is conducted orally. Questions from both the MPA Program faculty and answers from the student are in an oral fashion. The examination will be recorded and submitted to the MPA Program Director.

**Examination Panel**

The student’s academic advisor will serve as the chair of the examination panel. The student will decide which two other MPA Program faculty members to serve on the student’s oral comprehensive examination panel. The student’s advisor will consult with the student on committee make-up.

**Types of Questions**

The questions asked during the exam will cover knowledge gained in the MPA Program. Expect comprehensive questions during the exam. You are advised to visit and speak with each professor on your oral comprehensive exam panel weeks in advance of the exam. Some faculty members are willing to use Skype to speak with students about the examination. During the comprehensive exam, you will have to display your knowledge and its application to public administration practice.
Preparation
To prepare for the exam, you must study all materials, this includes textbooks, covered in your courses with a focus on how this knowledge has helped you master the field of Public Administration in both theory and practice. To master the field, you must be able to integrate knowledge learned in each of your courses.

Successful Completion and Reporting
After the questioning is complete, the chair of the examination panel will excuse the student to wait until summoned. The chair of the panel will permit a discussion among panel members about the student's answers and call for a vote of “Pass” or “Fail”. The chair of the panel and its members will summon and inform the student of their decision as to whether the examination was successfully passed. An oral comprehensive examination report is completed after the exam. If the examination committee finds that the student has passed the exam, the form is signed “satisfactory”; if the student has failed the exam, the form is signed “unsatisfactory”. The chair of the examination panel will decide the next steps if the student does not pass the oral comprehensive examination; this may include retaking the exam.

VII. Potential for Degree

Positions in the Field of Public Administration
The MPA Program at Stephen F. Austin State University primarily educates students for administrative positions in the public sector at all levels of government (national, state, and local) and in nonprofit agencies.

Further Education
Successful completion of the MPA Program can create academic paths to doctoral programs and law schools throughout the country.

VIII. Suggestions for Potential Students

Undergraduate Work
Most undergraduate degrees can relate to public administration studies. However, some of the closely linked areas of study are business administration, criminal justice, political science, public administration, and sociology.

Writing Intensive
The MPA Program at Stephen F. Austin State University requires successful submission of writing projects. These projects include research papers such as the capstone project, course required papers and memorandums, and written reports.

All writing in the program is expected to be graduate level work, and students are expected not to commit academic dishonesty as defined by the university (see below).
**Academic Integrity**

Abiding by university policy on academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members must promote the components of academic integrity in their instruction, and course syllabi are required to provide information about penalties for cheating and plagiarism as well as the appeal process.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class;
- falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or,
- helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another;
- submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and,
- incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author due credit.

**Procedure for Addressing Student Academic Dishonesty**

A faculty member who has evidence and/or suspects that academic dishonesty has occurred shall gather all pertinent information, approach the student(s) involved, and initiate the following procedure:

- The faculty member shall review all evidence of cheating or plagiarism and discuss it directly with the student(s) involved. The faculty member shall inform the student(s) of the procedure for addressing academic dishonesty, as well as the appeals process.
- After hearing the student(s)’ explanation or defense, the faculty member will determine whether academic dishonesty has occurred and will inform the student(s) what action will be taken. Penalties may include reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, re-submission of the work, make-up exam, or failure of the course. The faculty member may consult with the academic unit chair/director and dean in making these decisions.
- After a determination of academic dishonesty, the faculty member shall notify the office of the dean of the student’s major by submitting a Report of Academic Dishonesty, along with supporting documentation as noted on the form. This report
shall be made part of the student’s record and shall remain on file with the dean’s office for at least four years.

- Upon second or subsequent offenses, the dean of the student’s major will determine a course of action, which may include dismissal from the university. The dean may refer the case to the college council for review and recommendations before making this determination.

A student’s record of academic dishonesty will not be available to faculty members. The purpose of the record is for the dean to track a pattern of academic dishonesty during a student’s academic career at Stephen F. Austin State University.

Students who are found to have demonstrated academic dishonesty and have withdrawn prior to the award of a grade will continue to have the determination of the infraction within their student records.

**Student Appeals**

A student who wishes to appeal decisions related to academic integrity should follow procedures outlined in Academic Appeals of Students (A-2).

**Out of Class Course Work**

Graduate students should expect to spend between 12 and 18 hours per week for each course during the fall and spring semesters to get full benefit from courses. Students are strongly encouraged to keep up-to-date with the reading assignments. Even if specific aspects or the required course readings are not covered in classes, this knowledge will help gain mastery in the field of Public Administration.

**IX. Graduate School Application**

Official transcripts from each college/university attended must be included with the completed application form ([https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX](https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX)) and sent to the Graduate Office at least 30 days prior to admission and enrollment. Stephen F. Austin State University will accept credit or recognize degrees only from institutions accredited by one of the regional accrediting bodies.

**X. MPA Program Admissions**

**Items to Submit**

Applicants to the Master of Public Administration Program at Stephen F. Austin State University are required to complete registration requirements as detailed for the Graduate School. In addition, applicants for the MPA Program are required to submit to the Graduate School:
- Copies of all college transcripts;
Scores from the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) that are less than three years old, unless the applicant has holds a master's degree from an accredited institution or they have enrolled in the Overlap Program

Submit the following items to the MPA Program Director:
- A professional resume;
- Two letters of reference attesting to your ability to perform graduate work or your professional experience in the public and/or nonprofit sector;
- An essay describing your professional and/or educational accomplishments and what motivates you to earn a professional MPA degree. The writing sample must be between 500 and 1,500 words in length. The sample is expected to be written in an academic style suitable for entry-level graduate students.

No determination for admission status will be made until all materials are received by the Director. If the letters of reference or the writing sample are not acceptable for any reason, the Director will notify you to correct the deficiency before further consideration is given to your application. Determinations for admission are made by formula or by a selection committee.

Requirements for Clear Admission

The Program Director utilizes a formula whereby the GRE scores (verbal and quantitative) are added to the higher of two GPAs, overall or last 60 hours, calculated by the Graduate School and multiplied by 100. For example, a person with a 150 Verbal, 150 Quantitative, and a 3.25 GPA would have a formula score of 625 (150+150+325). If the Quantitative is below 141, the Director may factor in the Analytical Writing score. Generally, if the formula score is 600 or above and you have completed the undergraduate degree requirements, you are automatically admitted to the program.

In the event there are fewer available new-entry student positions than there are applicants eligible for clear admissions, you may be awarded clear admission for the next available semester.

Requirements for Conditional Admission

If the resulting formula score is below 600, and have an undergraduate GPA of 2.8 or higher overall or during your last 60 hours, or a combined verbal and quantitative GRE score over 300, the Director may forward the submitted materials to the Department’s Graduate Student Selection Committee for review. The committee will determine if the formula score is sufficient to admit you conditionally, based on information from the additional materials. Consideration may be given to previous graduate work, resume work history where there is a demonstrated success in the public and/or nonprofit sector, the essay demonstrating an ability to write at the graduate level, and letters of reference indicating evidence of ability to perform graduate level work. The committee will determine each case on an individual basis and may consider other factors including socioeconomic status, first generation college student, anticipated program capacity, program diversity, etc.
If the committee allows conditional admission, you must achieve a B or better in each of your first two courses to be fully admitted to the program. Conditional admission allows the Committee an opportunity to look more holistically at a student’s background and allows the person the opportunity to "work their way" into the program with academic performance.

Conditional status is functionally administered within the program and will be reported to the Graduate School as a clear admission. You will be required to sign an agreement to terms of the internal status before being admitted. Conditional status allows you to participate in financial aid, but imposes strict performance standards for the first semester of enrollment. Conditional students must meet the performance standards in order to enroll in additional MPA coursework.

**Special Requirements for Applicants with Low GPA**

The Director, in consultation with the committee, may require you to take specific leveling courses before considering you for probationary admission. This permits a student with an undergraduate GPA of 2.79 or below, having significant work experience or demonstrating academic promise, to be considered for probationary admission. Students would be required to do leveling work such as the Public Administration introductory and budgeting courses. The student will then be required to achieve at least a B in order to be considered for conditional admission into the MPA Program. The conditional admission requirement would then be applied in determining whether you receive clear admission.

**Special Requirements for Students Transferring from Other Graduate Programs**

Students seeking to enter the MPA Program with Clear Admission from other graduate programs (whether at this institution or not) are generally required to have a graduate GPA of 3.0, with no grade below C in any graduate level coursework, for Clear Admission to the MPA Program. If a student seeking to enter the MPA Program and they hold a masters degree from an accredited university they will be granted Clear Admission. If one of these conditions is met, transfer students will not have to take the GRE.

If you feel there are extenuating circumstances that should be considered, you may petition the MPA Program Director for special consideration. You will need to submit a statement directly addressing the issues you wish to be considered. The Director may submit your application with the petition to the department’s Graduate Student Selection Committee for their consideration. Factors that may influence a positive decision include: course load, significant events impacting the student's performance, change in work status, extended time between less than satisfactory coursework and program application, etc. The committee may allow you to enter the program under either conditional or probationary admission status.

**Acceptance of Courses from Other Institutions**
The MPA Program will accept up to 12 credit hours from other accredited institutions. Students must apply to the MPA Program prior to the MPA Program Director’s consideration of transfer credits. Students should not only present their transcript but also present course syllabi and all completed/graded work in the course(s) that they wish to transfer. The MPA Program Director will consult with the faculty members that teach the course(s) to be transferred to determine the substitution for a course offered in the MPA Program. If the course is accepted to transfer to the MPA Program, students will need to include this work at other institutions in their portfolios.

**Special Requirements for Applicants Participating in a Five-Year Plan**

Current students participating in one of the five-year plans must comply with the standards established by the Graduate School for the Overlap Program. Students participating in a five-year plan are not required to submit additional application materials or scores from the GRE. Generally, admission determination is neither by formula nor committee but by the student's performance in the Overlap Program. If the student maintains a GPA of 3.0 or higher in graduate-level coursework during the overlap and completes the requirements for the undergraduate degree, the Director will award clear admission immediately upon proof of graduation.

If you fail to meet the requirement for clear admission but achieve a GPA of 2.8 or higher in the graduate-level coursework during the overlap and complete the requirements for the undergraduate degree, you will be conditionally admitted to the program and required to meet those standards for clear admission.

If you achieve a graduate GPA at or below 2.79 and complete the requirements for the undergraduate degree, the director will forward your information to the department’s Graduate Student Selection Committee. The committee will evaluate your performance and make a determination as to the reasonableness of allowing graduate work to continue. Factors that may influence a positive decision include course load and significant events impacting the student’s performance. The committee may allow you to enter the program under either conditional or probationary admission status.

**Overlap Program**

The Overlap Program permits qualified SFA undergraduates to pursue a limited amount of graduate study concurrently with undergraduate study. Overlap students must apply to the MPA Program. Graduate courses taken in the program are not applicable toward the bachelor’s degree. An Overlap Program student is ineligible for a graduate assistantship until the completion of the bachelor’s degree.

To be eligible for the Overlap Program, a student must be enrolled at SFA and must have achieved at least 95 semester hours of undergraduate credit. A student with fewer than 115 hours of undergraduate credit must present a 3.0 grade point average both overall and in the major field. A student with 115 hours or more of undergraduate credit, however, may be admitted to the Overlap Program by presenting a 2.5 grade point average.
point average overall and a 2.8 grade point average in the major field. Any student in
the Overlap Program does not have to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE),
submit a professional resume, two letters of reference, or an essay as the admission’s
decision is based on the student’s performance in Public Administration graduate
coursework.

To be admitted to the Overlap Program a student should:
1. Apply for admission to the MPA Program at applytexas.org. There is a $50 fee to
   submit the application.
2. Complete the Senior Year Overlap Graduate Program Form (can be found at
   http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate/documents/overlap-recommendation.pdf)
3. Submit the Senior Year Overlap Graduate Program Form to the chair of the
   Department of Government. Approval by the chair will send the form to the Dean of
   Liberal and Applied Arts for approval, after which the Graduate Dean will decide a
   student’s acceptance into the MPA Program.
4. After an overlap student graduates, they have to reapply to the Graduate School for
   admission to the MPA Program. Students in the Overlap MPA Program do not have
to repay the $50 application fee, take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE),
submit a professional resume, provide two letters of reference, or write an essay
detailing professional and education accomplishments. The admission’s decision is
based on the student’s performance in Public Administration graduate coursework.
5. Students in the Overlap Program can only take 4 courses or 12 credit hours prior to
   obtaining their undergraduate degree.

**Application Fees**
1. A $50 application fee is to be included with the application materials.
2. A fee of $50 must accompany the application of all foreign applicants, except
   those under university-sponsored exchange programs.

After a student’s undergraduate degree is posted, they need to reapply to the MPA
Program at applytexas.org. If the student applies within one year of initial application
the $50 fee is waived.

**XI. Courses and Grades**

To remain in good standing in Graduate School and to graduate, a student must
maintain a B average. No course with a grade below C may be used to satisfy degree
requirements.

**Probation, Suspension, Readmission**

To remain in good standing in Graduate School and to graduate, a student must
maintain a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (B average). During any semester or summer session that
the student’s grade point average falls below a B, the student with clear admission to
graduate study will be placed on academic probation; the student with probationary
admission will be placed on academic suspension. A student placed on academic
probation and failing to restore an overall 3.0 (B) average the following semester or summer session will be placed on academic suspension. A student placed on academic suspension is denied the continuation of an academic program as well as the privilege of registering for course work. This suspension period is for one semester or one summer session, whichever follows the period after which the suspension occurred. Thereafter, the student will revert to post-baccalaureate admission status and will be permitted to take course work not applicable toward a degree program. To be reinstated to a degree program, the student must be recommended by the appropriate academic department and approved by the academic dean, the Graduate Council, and the Dean of Graduate School.

**Appeal:** An applicant may appeal an admission decision to the Graduate Council. The appeal should be made in writing and routed through the Dean of the Graduate School.

XII. Graduate Assistantships

**Explanation of General Duties**

The MPA Program offers a limited number of graduate assistantships. Graduate assistants are assigned research projects, administrative duties, and limited teaching assignments with faculty members in the Department of Government. Graduate assistants are considered part time employees and are required to work 20 hours per week.

**Benefits**

Graduate assistant stipends are currently $9,225 for nine months. In addition, a part time graduate assistant will have the option to sign up for medical coverage through the university at the associated rate scale.

**Availability of Positions**

There are limited spots available for graduate assistant positions. A student interested in a graduate assistantship should contact the MPA Program Director and submit a one-page GA application (see http://www.sfasu.edu/graduate/116.asp) well in advance of the semester in which he or she is interested in the assistantship.
### XIII. Public Administration Faculty & Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
XIV. Additional Items

MPA Program Orientation

All students are required to complete the MPA Program Orientation that is offered online at the start of the fall and spring semesters.

Societies and Clubs

At Stephen F. Austin State University, the MPA Program provides students with organizations that foster relationships among graduates as well as networking opportunities. The organizations available include Pi Alpha Alpha and Students for Public Administration.

Pi Alpha Alpha (Dr. Cindy Pressley, Chapter Advisor)

Pi Alpha Alpha is the national honor society formed to recognize and promote excellence in the study and practice of public affairs and administration. PAA membership identifies those with the highest performance levels in educational programs preparing them for public service careers.

In its constitution, the organization dedicates itself:

- To encourage and recognize outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in public affairs and administration,
- To promote the advancement of education and practice in the art and science of public affairs and administration, and
- To foster integrity, professionalism, and creative performance in the conduct of governmental and related public service activities.

Students for Public Administration

The Purpose of Students for Public Administration is to bring students interested in public administration together in a forum to create collegiality among members and to create an awareness of the public administration field and profession.

Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) (Member)

The MPA Program at SFA follows NASPAA’s twofold mission to ensure excellence in education and training for public service and to promote the ideal of public service. http://www.naspaa.org/about_naspaa/naspaa.asp

Professional Organizations

- The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) http://www.aspanet.org/public/
• The International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
  http://www.icma.org/main/sc.asp

• Public Administration Theory Network
  http://www.patheory.net/

Campus Resources

• Networking
  - E-mail (MySFA)

• SFASU Library
  - Calli
  - Writing Center
  - Journals
  - Books
  - Computers

• MySFA
  - News
    o Daily Sentinel
    o Dallas Morning News
    o Houston Chronicle
    o And More...
  - Link to Desire2Learn
  - Link to Library
  - Financial Aid Information
  - And much more...

Program Contact Information

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414 Aikman Drive
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Phone: (936) 468-4408
Fax: (936) 468-2732
E-mail: arhodes@sfasu.edu
Web Address: http://www.sfasu.edu/government/123.asp
MPA Program Orientation

I have completed the online Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program Orientation and I have read the Student Handbook. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the program. I understand that to fulfill the requirements of the MPA degree from Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) I must complete PBA 575, Public Administration Capstone Project, submit a portfolio, and successfully pass an oral comprehensive examination.

_______________________________________________  _________________
Signature                                      Date