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Ma e f Pub ic Affai

Student Handbook

Last updated
July 2020

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PROGRAM MISSION

**The Ma   e f Pub ic Affai   (MPA)   g a i a   fe i a deg ee de ig ed
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To accomplish this, we integrate public affairs theory and practice to improve the leadership, managerial, analytical, and communication skills of students. The program promotes teaching, applied research, and service activities that enhance public and nonprofit sector governance, particularly in Western North Carolina. Our course of study provides accessibility to working professionals and flexibility for students to choose from elective courses to fit their professional goals.

As such a graduate program in public affairs, program faculty are concerned that students obtain skills and knowledge enabling them to be effective managers and leaders in the public sector and nonprofit organizations. The program is designed so that, in addition to applied skills, students come to understand the nature of public affairs and the governing principles important to public service. Some electives are offered in an online format particularly during summer session.

As such, the objective of this degree program is to prepare individuals for positions of leadership in these sectors. The curriculum provides a solid base in the political, managerial and analytical aspects of public and nonprofit sector operations.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Welcome to the Master of Public Affairs (MPA) Program at Western Carolina University (WCU). The program requires you to complete 39 hours of graduate coursework. As part of these 39 hours, *pre-service* students must complete an internship and submit an internship report. *In-service* students do not complete an internship, but must complete the same number of required hours by replacing the internship with an alternate elective course.

This Handbook is designed as a supplement to the Graduate Catalog. Information in the

Course Load

A full-time course load is at least 9 hours. Full-

about the dismissal and readmission processes as well as the academic action appeal process can be found in the graduate catalog.

Graduation

Once a student is nearing completion of the program requirements, he/she must begin the steps in the graduation process. The process begins several months prior to graduation. Initially, the student must file an "Application for Graduation" form. Due dates for graduation applications may change, so check with the Graduate School or Registrar for current information.

Instructions for applying for graduation can be found in Appendix A of this Handbook.

Tuition and Fees

Students can find up-to-date information about tuition and fees here: https://www.wcu.edu/apply/tuition-and-fees/fall-spring-graduate-tuition-and-fees.aspx

Financial Aid for MPA Students

Scholarships

The WCU Graduate School has a limited number of scholarship opportunities. You can access information about those by visiting https://www.wcu.edu/apply/scholarships/index.aspx.

MPA students in the past have also proved very competitive for scholarships not directly affiliated with the university. For instance, each year the North Carolina City/County Managers Association offers one $2000 scholarship to a WCU MPA student who is a resident of North Carolina and is interested in a career in local government.

Graduate Assistantships

Many opportunities for employment are available on and off campus. The MPA program, Public Policy Institute, and the Department of Political Science offer up to 10 graduate assistantships every year.

To apply for a Graduate Assistantship, a student must indicate so when they apply to the MPA program. If you are interested in an assistantship, but you did not indicate so when you applied, please contact the program director. Students who are granted an assistantship must enroll in at least 9 credit hours of classes each term and work in the department for 20 hours per week. Work duties include assisting professors in the department with their research (sometimes publishing with them as a co-author), serving as a teaching assistant in selected undergraduate courses, and assisting the department with assessment activities. Graduate Assistantships offer a $4500 stipend per semester.

The department also generally places a number of students in the Public Policy Institute (PPI) and Local Government Training Program (LGTP). Students working in the PPI and/or LGTP gain valuable real world policy experience.

From time to time, students may also receive graduate assistantships to work in other related units on campus. You may wish to contact the Graduate School if you are interested in these options.

Job Placement

The MPA program keeps up-to-date information on alumni employment statistics on the program's website. This data can be found here: https://www.wcu.edu/learn/departments-

5. To communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large

NASPAA also provides guidance regarding faculty composition within the MPA program, and the diversity of students, faculty, and speakers. NASPAA asks that the MPA program assess its effectiveness annually, and requires an annual data report of the program (due October 1 of each year). Finally, NASPAA provides conferences and workshops which focus on everything from MPA program development to faculty and student development and learning.

Advisory Board

The MPA Advisory Board consists of several community leaders with an interest in public service education. Many Advisory Board members are WCU MPA alumni. Some represent the governmental sector. Others, the nonprofit sector. The MPA Advisory Board meets multiple times per year to guide the MPA Director and faculty in curriculum development, student internship/job placement, program outreach, fundraising, and several other areas of program development.

Assessment

The MPA program is assessed annually by the core faculty. Guiding annual assessment are the five core competencies set forth by NASPAA. The WCU MPA program teaches these competencies through core and elective courses, Professional Development Series and other networking events, the internship requirement (PA 685), and capstone (PA 699).

the project, and offer an impactful set of deliverables to the organization at the conclusion of the semester.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students can access Western Carolina University's statement on Academic Integrity here: https://www.wcu.edu/experience/dean-of-students/academic-integrity.aspx

Many courses in the MPA department require some degree of independent work outside the classroom setting (such as take-home exams). During these times the student is expected to conduct themselves according to the Academic Integrity guidelines provided above, and also within any specific directions given by the course professor. Not all professors allow open-book and open-note take-home work, so it is important to understand the specific requests of each instructor.

Appendix A
How-To...

...CONTACT

For general program questions and questions about admissions requirements, please

...GET AN ID CARD

Students can get an ID card at the fall open house at Biltmore Park or can visit the CatCard Office on main campus. See information about CatCards here:
https://www.wcu.edu/discover/campus-services-and-operations/catcard-office/index.aspx

...GET TO CAMPUS