

## Academic Year 2023-2024

February 2024

### **Welcome New MPA Students:**

Welcome to the nationally accredited Master of Public Administration program at California State University, San Bernardino. Our mission is to provide student centered learning that prepares you to become effective public service professionals and leaders. We are committed to teaching ethical behavior, democratic values, and the practical complexities of governance. We are further committed to supporting inclusivity among faculty and students and preparing students to engage with diverse populations.

We are happy you are here, and we want you to succeed. Part of your success depends on understanding the rules and procedures of the university and the MPA degree program. We have summarized some of the most important pieces of information for you in a series of points or “important things to know”. Take the time to review them and ask about anything you do not understand.

Please read this carefully. We require a new student orientation to review this information at the beginning of your program; students who fail to complete the orientation will have holds put on their registration for the following semester. These points are posted on the [MPA website landing page](#) as the MPA Handbook and under Advising on the [Advising Page](#).

It is your responsibility to follow the program requirements, to monitor your own progress and contact us with questions. Most of the following recommendations are the same for both students who have been admitted under the quarter system and those who have been admitted under the semester system. For ease of discussion, from this point on we will refer to the former as “quarter students” and to the latter as “semester students”

### **1. How Long is the MPA Course of Study?**

Time to completion depends on your personal situation. There are 12 classes in the MPA program. A full-time graduate student may take two or more classes per term. Depending on how many classes one takes and whether one enrolls in the summer session - the program can be completed in as little as 1.5 years or in four years or longer.

CSUSB operates on a semester system. Students who enrolled under the quarter system will not be penalized. Regardless of whether you are a quarter or semester student – the MPA is still based on completing 12 courses.

## **2. MPA Course Requirements:**

The program of study for the MPA includes:

For semester students:

- Seven core classes: PA 6110, 6030, 6620, 6630, 6640, 6800, 6550.
- PA 6985 Professional Development Seminar – monthly Zoom webinar, which you must enroll in for two semesters.
- A concentration is required of all students.
- For those completing an internal concentration (leadership, public financial management, or nonprofit management) – three concentration classes.
- For those completing an external concentration (cybersecurity) – five concentration classes
- Two open elective classes. If taking electives independently, one elective must be at the 600 level. [You may take non-PA courses as electives, with the Graduate Director's prior approval. You must explain how the course is relevant to public administration and your career].
- A comprehensive exam.

For quarter students:

- Nine core classes: PA 6110, 6030, 6630, 6150, 6500, 6620, 6640, 6720 and 6800.
- Three electives: Electives are either independent or required for concentrations. If taking electives independently, one elective must be at the 600 level. [You may take non-PA courses as electives, with the Graduate Director's prior approval. You must explain how the course is relevant to public administration and your career.]
- A comprehensive exam.
- No grade of a C- or lower can be used to satisfy degree requirements.

Quarter students can elect to graduate under the quarter catalog or the semester catalog depending on which best fits their needs.

## **3. Concentrations (<https://www.csusb.edu/mpa/master-public-administration-mpa/mpa-concentrations> )**

For semester students:

All students admitted under a semester catalog must choose a concentration either internal (leadership, public financial management, nonprofit management) or external (cybersecurity).

For quarter students:

Under quarters, the MPA program has three optional concentrations. No one is

required to take a concentration. The three concentrations are:

- 1) Leadership (three classes)
- 2) Public Financial Management (three classes)
- 3) Cybersecurity (five classes)

For each concentration, students use their three electives to take certain specified courses. Leadership and Public Financial Management must address certain prescribed questions in the comprehensive exam. Cybersecurity has an additional two courses required beyond the three electives. If you wish to add or change a concentration you must file a [Change of Concentration Form](#). [See the website](#) for more details about the concentrations.

#### **4. Concurrent MSW/MPA:**

In addition to concentrations, students who are focused on social work, may wish to complete a “Concurrent” MSW/MPA degree. This has a separate application and separate requirements which can be found [HERE](#). Contact Dr. Stokes or Dr. Laurie Smith at Social Work for more information. Concurrent students should contact both departments for additional advising.

#### **5. Types of Classes: Online or Face to Face:**

MPA classes are typically offered in several formats. Regular on-campus classes meet once a week in the evenings for three hours. Web or online classes do not require on-campus attendance. Many online classes will use Zoom for live “web-based” programming. Having a “virtual day” means that while most of your work can be done on your own schedule, there are days you must be available at a certain time. Online classes generally start faster and require more activities, in lieu of class time. Online classes also require more continuous online interactions than traditional classes. See our webpage at <https://www.csusb.edu/mpa/mpa-program/online-courses>

#### **6. Public Service Experience:**

MPA students must have public sector employment experience to complete their degree. If you have not worked in the public sector, you will be required to complete an approved internship. The internship is designated as PA 6755 and is a pass/fail class. An internship does NOT count as a program elective. The Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration has an Internship Office in Jack Brown 134. Internship Coordinator Jessica Chavez can answer many of your questions and assist you in finding an appropriate placement <https://www.csusb.edu/jhbc-student-success-center/internships>. When an internship opportunity has been located, contact her for registration information.

#### **7. Transferring Classes from Other Colleges or Universities:**

With approval of MPA Director Dr. Robert Stokes, you may transfer up to three graduate courses from other Colleges or Universities if they are relevant to the

MPA program of study. To request acceptance of classes as a part of your program of study, you must submit a course description and must have received a B or better in the class. Students planning to take a class outside the Department or University during their course of study should get **prior** written approval from Dr. Stokes. Submit the approval with your Advancement to Candidacy.

### **8. Plan Your Program:**

This is critical. Your program is individual. Students have the freedom to take as many or as few classes as they want, either online or face to face. This offers you freedom, but requires you to proactively plan. All core classes are typically offered every term, either online or face to face. Concentration and elective classes are offered intermittently. You **MUST** plan your schedule ahead of time to avoid problems completing your degree on time. This is up to you! The plan may change over time, but it is critical that you make it. If you have questions about the plan, send them to Dr. Stokes.

### **9. Time Management**

What you gain from this program is in direct proportion to the time you put into it. There is always a temptation to do minimal work and just get by. If you do that- you cheat yourself out of your tuition dollars. For each 3 credit class, plan to spend 6 total hours a week at reading, writing and studying and attending class. Graduate courses are more demanding than undergraduate courses. Be careful about trying to “multi-task” while doing your schoolwork. You will find it takes significantly more time and the result is lower quality performance. Better to find quiet, uninterrupted time to complete your course work. Your results in this program depend on the time you devote to your classes.

Take notes! You need to take notes during your classes. You will NOT just remember everything. Writing things down in itself is a way to reinforce learning and remembering.

### **10. Communications**

Many offices and people are involved in your success, often behind the scenes. MPA Director Dr. Robert Stokes will provide advice on academic matters and PA staff member Ana Sanchez will provide assistance on administrative matters.

Our contact information is available on the front page of our website---Please bookmark this site - <https://www.csusb.edu/mpa>. The website has a great deal of information, so please take the time to review it in depth. Our office phone number is 909-537-5758. Email addresses are available on the website.

**YOU MUST** monitor your CSUSB email account. If you do not check your email regularly, you will miss important information for which you are responsible. While

there may be communications you are not interested in, that is the place where all CSUSB notices are sent. Access your CSUSB Email via My Coyote by clicking on the “student email” tile.

Please notify us of any address, email, or phone number changes.

### **11. Advising and Sequence of Courses**

The required orientation provides initial general advising. The advising points and the [MPA website](#) should answer most of your advising questions, but if they do not please contact the PA office.

The order of your classes is mostly individual;

1. PA 6110 Public Administration Theory and Practice should be your first class (if available). It is an intensive writing class that satisfies the Writing Requirement for Graduate Candidacy. Students must pass it with at least a B- to continue in the program. It may be retaken only once. Students who cannot achieve a B- will be dismissed from the program. MPA grads MUST be able to write well.
2. We recommend PA 6030 Research Methods in Administration as your second course.
3. PA 6630 Public Budgeting and Finance should normally be taken before PA 6150, Public Financial Management  
\*This only relates to Financial Management concentration Students.
4. PA 6800 Public Policy Analysis (for quarter catalog students) should be your one of your last core classes.
5. PA 6550 Strategic Planning/Capstone (For semester catalog students) should be one of your last core class. Students must pass it with at least a B in order to participate in the comp exam and graduate. We are advising students with less than 27 credits should not register for this course.
6. After completion of all core and concentration classes you may register for PA 6980 the Comprehensive Exam. You may complete elective requirements during or after the term of your exam.

The annual course schedule is available on the MPA website on our [Advising Page](#).

### **12. Registering for Classes**

Register for classes through your My Coyote account. A schedule of PA classes is posted on the MPA website [Advising Page](#) to facilitate students' planning and the schedule is updated during the year. There are always some changes and the schedule is always a working draft until the first day of classes. Please register as soon as possible for your courses, because many required courses quickly fill to capacity, particularly online classes. If a class is filled and you feel you need it this semester, make sure you add your name to the waiting list. As you look at the list of classes for registration, remember that classes with a section number in the 60s are online. If you register at the beginning of registration, you are almost assured

of getting your choices.

### **13. Registration Holds and Permissions**

A Hold means you are prevented from registering for classes until certain requirements are met. Holds may be placed by the university for payment or for other issues. Holds are put in place by the Department for academic issues. If you do not understand the Hold, contact the PA office.

You may see a requirement for Departmental Consent or Permission when you are registering. These are just there to ensure that you have met certain requirements. Marisol or Toni can provide permissions.

### **14. Dropping Classes and Withdrawing from Classes**

If you need to drop or withdraw from a class, it is important to do it promptly. Here are the basic principles to keep in mind:

- Dropping a class. This can be done by you until the census date -- which is three weeks into each semester. Telling your instructor that you are dropping a class does not constitute dropping it. Your instructor *cannot* drop you from a class based on your request.
- Dropping after census date requires the instructor's, the Chair's and the Dean's approval. You will need documentation of exceptional circumstances for a late drop. Failure to get approval to drop a class after census results in an F.
- Incompletes. These are at the discretion of the instructor when you have done over half of the work with a passing grade. These automatically change to an IC (incomplete charged), which is equivalent to an F, after one year. A completion contract must be filed stating what you must do and by what date.
- Retroactive withdrawal. This is possible through the Office of Graduate Studies but requires instructor and departmental approval based on truly exceptional circumstances.

<https://www.csusb.edu/graduate-studies/forms>

### **15. Advancement to Candidacy**

After completing five classes and any internship that may be required, students will submit a Request for Advancement to Candidacy with the Department found on our [Forms page](#). List all the courses you still need to take before your degree can be awarded. Once each term we will hold a mandatory Advancement to Candidacy advising session to approve your program plans and review comprehensive exam requirements. Once the program plan is accepted and approved, you are officially "advanced to degree candidacy." Dr. Stokes and Ana can assist with the paperwork.

### **16. Maintaining a 3.0 Grade Point Average**

Failure to maintain a cumulative 3.0 grade point average during your program will

result in being placed on probation. Failure to raise your cumulative GPA to a 3.0 or above at the end of your next enrolled semester may result in dismissal from the program. Students with a sub-3.0 GPA in their first semester may be immediately dismissed from the program. You cannot graduate if your cumulative GPA for MPA coursework is below a 3.0.

### **17. Repeating a Course (Discounting)**

Students who receive less than a C in any graduate class must retake the class. The lower grade is still included in the GPA unless it is “discounted.” A student may repeat one course taken for graduate credit and discount the earlier grade. The formal "Petition for Discount of Previous Grade" can be obtained from the [PA website Forms page](#). Two signatures of approval are required, the Graduate Program Coordinator and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

### **18. Continuous Enrollment and Leaves of Absence**

Students are expected to make progress in their degree by taking classes every term (not including summer) after admission. If you know you cannot take classes for one or more terms, you must request a leave of absence (found on the [Forms page](#)) from the Graduate Dean. Leaves of absence cannot be longer than two years and may only be requested if a student is in good academic standing. Students who fail to take a class during the academic year and who have NOT filed a Leave of Absence are automatically dropped from the degree program and must reapply when they want to continue. The leave does not change the 7 year limit on classes applied to the degree. Submit your form through Adobe Sign in your My Coyote.

### **19. Comprehensive Exam PA 6980**

PA 6980 is the final course for the Master of Public Administration degree.

There are three components to PA 6980 that you must complete:

1. Comprehensive Exam
2. Exit Survey
3. Career Development Activities

NOTE: You must complete all three parts of the course in order to graduate.

The Comprehensive Exam is the final requirement for the degree. It assesses your overall knowledge of Public Administration. The exam is offered each term during the academic year. Students sign up for the comprehensive examinations through the Department by registering for PA 6980.

Tips for success on the Exam:

- Create an outline explaining what the scope of your answer will include. This will help you answer each sub-question and stay on task.
- Define your terms: Remember the examination process is where you demonstrate what you know. When you use a technical term, provide a

- brief definition so the readers see that you understand what it means.
- Good writing required: Comprehensive exams are biased toward students who have worked hard to become good writers. If you are not a good writer, you should plan extra preparation to make up for this handicap. Contact one of our Writing Centers.
  - Sufficient length: There is not a length requirement. You are expected to discuss the question thoroughly. Short answers, even though they may reflect a general understanding of the question posted, frequently fail because of the lack of thoroughness expected from graduate students. Answers are generally expected to be in the range of 3-4 double spaced pages. If you turn in 1-2 pages there is high likelihood you will fail that question, and therefore the exam.
  - Provide specificity: Think of relevant examples or specific citations that relate to questions. "Vagueness" is a *major* problem for graders.
  - Avoid rambling: Be careful to present a clear and consistent argument or discussion. Even if sufficient material is included, answers can be failed if the discussion is not well presented. Do NOT use the "kitchen sink" approach. Just writing lots of information, even if correct information, will not pass if it does not answer the question. It will only confuse the graders.
  - Answer all parts of the question. Unfortunately, from time-to-time students fail to answer all parts of a question, and therefore fail.

Grading: Each test is graded independently and anonymously by two readers. If they disagree, a third reader will decide. The High Pass, Pass, and Fail designations are holistic scores based on the graders' overall assessment. Students failing the comprehensive examination may apply to retake it one additional time. Failure a second time means that the student will not receive the MPA degree from CSUSB.

Important Note: Students who are registered for PA 6980 and do not show up for the exam, and have not notified the Department of any problem will be charged with an exam attempt.

With all this being said- the fact is that most students pass the exam on their first attempt. This is not difficult, if you prepare.

There is no specific right answer for any question. We are looking for general understandings of the concepts taught in your classes and the ability to apply them to the real world environment of public administration.

## **20. Graduation Requirements**

Graduation with the MPA requires completion of all core classes and electives with a cumulative 3.0 GPA average and successful completion of the comprehensive exam. No class can be counted with a grade of C- or less.

File your graduation check at least one semester prior to the end of the term of



your expected graduation. Advancement to Candidacy is required before the grad check can be requested. Students may apply for graduation online directly from your My Coyote Student Center.

<https://www.csusb.edu/registrar/evaluations/graduation-requirement-check>

### **21. Seven Year Rule**

Students must complete their degree within seven years of admission. Courses older than seven years from the date of graduation cannot be counted towards your degree and must be re-validated or retaken.

### **22. Academic Integrity**

Cheating and Plagiarism will not be tolerated! The University prohibits plagiarism, allows instructors to fail students in a class, and allows programs to dismiss students from the program of study. If asked to do so, students may be required to provide full source materials for review or an oral summary of their work or both. Online students may be asked to retake tests in proctored environments at the discretion of the instructor. Failure to do so will be considered positive evidence. Citing a source, but failing to provide quotation marks for the cited material, is a serious form of plagiarism. Faculty take the issue of plagiarism very seriously and take strong measures to counteract it. If you have ANY questions about what constitutes plagiarism, contact your instructor.

### **23. Career Guidance**

If you wish or need career guidance, seek advice from multiple sources. Talk with your professors, the Graduate Director, the CBPA Career Advisor, and professionals in agencies.

- (i) ) decide what you want to do with your MPA degree,
- (ii) ensure that your MPA education and work experience are consistent with your career goals, and
- (iii) work on an on-going basis to increase your chances of someone offering or recommending you for a job that realizes your goals.

Consult with our Career Adviser Pamela Abell [pabell@csusb.edu](mailto:pabell@csusb.edu)

There is no career magic that occurs at the end of your program. Figure out what you want to do now! Keep a look out for career fairs; find opportunities to do agency site visits; and attend the local ASPA events. Internships for pre-service students are very important in this regard. The Career Development Center is located at <http://career.csusb.edu>. They can provide information about job fairs such as the Career Expo (usually in April) which does have public sector employers attending, and a monthly listing of job fairs in Southern California. Visit the “coyotelink” at their home page for job listings, on-campus interviews, workshops, etc. The “Discover” link at the same home page is another source: prepare for an interview, match military experience to civilian careers, match your interests, abilities and values to a career, and find the jobs with the highest salary.

I encourage you to join the American Society for Public Administration or ASPA. The national website is at <http://www.aspanet.org/public/> Our local Chapter website is at <http://www.ieaspa.org/>. Local ASPA events occur monthly throughout the year. This is a great networking and professional development opportunity.

Other valuable organizations to consider are:

International City/County Management Association- [icma.org](http://icma.org)

Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management-  
[appam.org](http://appam.org)

Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action-  
[arnova.org](http://arnova.org)

#### **24. Pi Alpha Alpha**

Pi Alpha Alpha is the Honor Society for Public Administration. CSUSB established a local chapter in 2014. The purpose of Pi Alpha Alpha is to encourage and recognize outstanding scholarship and accomplishment in public affairs and administration. Its objectives, such as fostering integrity, professionalism, and effective performance, promote the advancement of quality in the education and practice of the art and science of public affairs and administration. PAA membership identifies those with the highest performance levels in educational programs preparing them for public service careers.

To be eligible for membership graduate students must:

- 1) Have completed 7 classes in the program (21 units)
- 2) Possess a 3.8 GPA

Induction ceremonies take place each year before Commencement. See the [Pi Alpha Alpha page](#).

#### **25. Academic Calendar**

The Academic calendar tells when the terms begin and end, when there are campus closures, registration dates and final exam weeks. Please bookmark.

<http://academicprograms.csusb.edu/academicCalendars.html>

#### **26. University Bulletin**

None of the previous supersedes any written statement in the official CSUSB Catalog <http://bulletin.csusb.edu/>. The Catalog (or Bulletin) changes from time to time. You are "ruled" by the catalog of the year you are accepted into the program (or the current one if you choose). Consult first with the information we provide on the MPA website, which is the most current.

These are some of the most important and frequently occurring issues. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any other issues that you might have. Best wishes for your continued success,

Dr. Robert Stokes  
Department Chair and MPA Director

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