

Master of Public Administration: a NASPAA Accredited Program

2010-2011 NASPAA Self Study Report

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) requires member programs to undergo an accreditation review every seven years by demonstrating fulfillment of four conditions:

- The program is providing a professional education and has the resources to support and evaluate its instructional activities.
- The mission, governance, and curriculum demonstrate public service values.
- The program's primary focus prepares students to be leaders, managers, and analysts in the professions of public affairs, public administration, and public policy.
- The program meets the expectation for professional degrees and ensures significant interaction with other students and faculty, hands on collaborative work, socialization into the norms and aspirations of the profession, and observations by faculty of students' interpersonal and communication skills.

During the 2010-2011 academic year, our MPA program underwent its regular seven year accreditation review, which included completion of an extensive self-study report. Listed below are selected portions of that self-study report which highlight our efforts to link our MPA program mission and curriculum to current NASPAA standards.

About NASPAA standards

“The NASPAA Standards are the quality benchmark used by graduate public service programs around the world. NASPAA’s accreditation process is mission-based and driven by public service values. Accredited programs must contribute to the knowledge, research, and practice of public service, establish observable goals and outcomes, and use information about their performance to guide program improvement.” (<http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/NS/about.asp>)

Our MPA program embraces the spirit of the NASPAA standards and we acknowledge the importance of aligning our mission with our program goals and defining student learning outcomes that ensure accomplishment of those goals.

A mission driven, competency-based program

Our mission and curriculum emphasize public service values -important and enduring shared beliefs, ideals and principles. These values reflect a commitment to accountability, transparency, professionalism, ethical behavior, equity, and respect in dealing with citizens as well as others in public service.

NASPAA suggests five universal competencies (i.e. expected skills, knowledge, aptitudes, and capacities) that students should be able to demonstrate:

- 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.

We consider all five NASPAA universal competencies to be applicable and inclusive components of our program. Indeed, one of the five NASPAA universal competencies “to lead and manage in public governance” is embraced within the mission of our program: “to provide diverse, talented graduate students with specific competencies for leadership and management, including the knowledge, skills and values essential to accountable and effective practice.”

Our program, our mission and our institutional affiliations

The MPA program is an academic unit within the School of Public Policy and Administration (SPPA). The mission of SPPA is “to provide undergraduate and graduate education, research, and public service in the fields of leadership, urban affairs and public policy, public administration and disaster management”. The SPPA is part of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), which fosters the

core values of a liberal arts education – discovery, creativity, diversity, innovation, imagination, and transformation. Thus, the MPA program blends its goals with the values of our SPPA and CAS partners to support the University’s mission “to contribute to a global society by preparing leaders with creativity, integrity and a dedication to service.” The MPA program prides itself on articulating and exercising close alignment between our mission and those of the School, College and University.

The MPA program is designed to support our mission and to ensure the delivery of a strong academic program based upon the Delaware Model.

The Delaware Model

We believe the programs that exhibit the values of integrating theory and practice help students to assimilate these concepts naturally in their schoolwork and in their careers. Our curriculum provides several opportunities for the students to have an early immersion in the professional world.

The School of Public Policy and Administration has developed a model of public administration education that seeks to build upon the student’s total experience in such a way that theory and practice are fully integrated. While a faculty member in our School, Dr. Robert Denhardt coined the term “Delaware Model” in recognition of this unique educational model which integrates theory and practice not only in the public administration program, but in the design and operation of the school itself. Further information about this model is available at <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/files/pdf/DelawareModel.pdf>

Our affiliated centers and institutes are a central component of the Delaware Model, by promoting the development of research and public service projects that involve our faculty and students in collaborative efforts. More information about our affiliated centers and institutes is accessible at <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/research-and-service-centers>

Our program performance outcomes and the communities we serve

The relationship between our performance outcomes and the communities we serve can be illustrated by utilizing the eight mission-based goals established for the MPA program:

1. **Emphasize values of the profession.** By emphasizing the values of the profession while they are enrolled as students, our graduates are better prepared to exercise the same values when they achieve positions of leadership in public organizations.
2. **Recruit diverse, talented students.** By enriching our global perspectives and intellectual wealth, our graduates are prepared to contribute to a global society that requires leaders with creativity, integrity and a dedication to service.
3. **Maintain core courses.** By providing excellent academic quality and conferring essential knowledge and skills in the field of public administration, the MPA program respects the academic bottom line, investing in the broad, long-term scholarly and creative assets that make universities distinctive educational institutions and that underpin their capacity to generate knowledge, conducive to effective practice.
4. **Enhance areas of specialization.** Outcomes from areas of specialization increase our program's scope of impact. For example, the Nonprofit Management area prepares students to meet the needs of those who seek careers in public service, but not necessarily with governmental organizations. The Public Management specialization prepares students for careers in all aspects of public service, but with particular emphasis on governmental operations and management. The Policy and Program Development specialization prepares students for career options that intertwine policy and program development with public agency management and operations. And finally, the Student Designed specialization, which is built in the unique experiences and talent of the individual student, allows for a wide array of career options and may be a good choice for those contemplating continuing their graduate education beyond the master's level.

6. *Involve students in faculty research.* Research assistantships are an integral part of learning in the MPA program and allow students to acquire advanced professional qualifications. They are given opportunities to relate classroom theory to real-world practice while conducting applied research and public service.
7. *Maintain the well-recognized internship program.* Students reinforce the importance of forging a professional approach to public administration, while developing/strengthening competencies essential for successful practice. The internship preparation design allows students to develop skills for locating jobs, furthers interactions with practitioners and laying the foundation for life-long career development.
8. *Establish and maintain relationships with government and nonprofits.* By maintaining close relationships with government and nonprofits our students and faculty are better able to understand and appreciate the challenges facing those working in these fields. Through this understanding, our sponsored research is better able to address these critical needs. In addition, the relationships open opportunities for internships, assistantships and employment after graduation.
9. *Conduct applied research.* Conducting applied research enhances the School's reputation at the regional, national and international level and makes our faculty better instructors, while appreciating the challenges uncovered through the research effort and illuminating the classroom experience by demonstrating links between instructional topics and research challenges.

A committed faculty

Special recognition must be given to our faculty, who are fully engaged in teaching, research, and service, particularly involving students in developing and executing projects of substantial benefit to governments at all levels, nonprofit organizations and other entities.

Diversity of talent among our faculty contributes to the creation of an intellectually motivating environment. This diversity directly contributes to enriching our global perspectives and intellectual wealth - a fundamental outcome that enhances the quality of our programs and raises our scholarly visibility.

Appreciation for diversity

The University of Delaware is committed to creating an educational community that is intellectually, culturally and socially inclusive, enriched by the contributions and full participation of persons from many different backgrounds.

The School of Public Policy and Administration takes great pride in highlighting our appreciation for diversity and equity. To that end, the School's first PhD recipient, Clyde Bishop (former U.S. Ambassador to the Marshall Islands) is recognized as the first African American to earn a doctorate at the University of Delaware. And the MPA directorship has included two minority females, African American Dr. Betty Mc Cummings, and Hispanic Dr. Maria Aristigueta.

The program relies on our faculty to promote an appreciation for diversity in order to recognize, respect and reconcile cultural differences. Consistently with our mission, faculty are expected to nourish our student's skills to become charismatic, value-based leaders, and to prepare them to manage potential conflicts that can arise in the context of a globalized world.

Program completion rate

Utilizing information on the 40 students (33 full time and 7 part time) who began the program in the 2005-2006 academic year, we can report that 31 full time students, graduated within the expected 2 year time period. The remaining 2 full time students did not complete the program for personal reasons.

Of the seven part time students, one individual graduated within the expected three year period, and two more students graduated the following year. Another person completed the degree in 2010 and one student is still active. Finally, two part time students did not complete the program for personal reasons.

Links of interest

Mission Statement <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/master-public-administration>

Program Curriculum <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/mpa-program-curriculum>

Areas of Specialization <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/mpa-program-specializations>

Admission criteria <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/prospective-student-admission-criteria>

SPAA Faculty <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/faculty-staff-directory>

Program Costs <http://www.udel.edu/finaid/rates.html>

Internship Information <http://www.sppa.udel.edu/content/internship-experience>

Internship Placement <http://www.ipa.udel.edu/education/internships/placements.html>