

# Master of Public Administration Student Intern Skills and Knowledge

## Department of Political Science Kansas State University

**Mission:** The Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree at Kansas State University prepares both in and pre-service students to serve the public interest and establish themselves as civic leaders. The program emphasizes a theoretically informed and research driven skills based approach to learning designed to ensure that our students develop specific competencies, which prepare them for the challenges of work in the public and non-profit sectors immediately upon graduation. Our faculty's approach to education begins with a broad exposure to policy systems, political environments, administrative principals and research methods. Additionally, our students are required to think critically, apply knowledge and seek practical solutions to real world problems. Our low faculty to student ratio contributes to a student-centered learning environment in which we are able to instill in our students the ethics of public service and professional management that are critical to the diverse and changing modern workplace.

**Skills Description:** MPA interns are able to engage in a wide range of professional tasks and projects, with guidance and oversight from their supervisor, especially in the areas of developing and planning policies or projects, analysis and evaluation of policy, budget preparation and reporting, public finance, human resources, strategic planning and grant preparation. Our students will have research skills, including, finding information from a range of sources, assessing reliability and validity, and organizing and reporting the information in useful and interpretable ways.

**MPA Core Courses:** In order to provide additional perspective as to the knowledge base mastered by our MPA students, the core courses required of all students are indicated below. Students will vary in terms of the number of these courses they have completed. The intern will clarify with the agency exactly which courses have actually been completed.

- **Research Methods:** Principles of scientific inquiry, research design, and the measurement and analysis of quantitative data typically encountered by administrators are addressed.
- **Public Administration and Society:** An introduction to the discipline and profession of public administration, which may include the cultural, constitutional, institutional, organizational, and ethical context of public administration. Students are also exposed to central issues facing public administrators, using the related perspectives of management, politics, and law.

- **Public Personnel Administration:** The policy aspects of public personnel administration at all levels of government are examined. Specific attention is given to personnel issues unique to the public sector such as rights of public employees, civil service systems, and public service ethics in a democratic society.
- **Policy Analysis and Evaluation:** Focus is upon the relationship between public policy and the distribution of values, goods, and services in society. Students analyze and evaluate policies in an area of their choice.
- **Public Organization Theory:** Theories concerning the structure and mission of public organizations and the role of administrative leadership in applying theory to solve organizational problems will be examined.
- **Public Budgeting:** Budgeting, as a fiscal management tool, is examined within the context of political decision making process. Several budgetary techniques such as Line-item, Performance Budgeting, PPBS, and ZBB will be also studied.
- **Public Finance:** Economics of the public sector, addressing the fundamental issue of the appropriate role of government activity in a market economy. Course also addresses the behavioral consequences of government policy and model construction to explain real world government policymaking.
- **Public Administration Capstone:** Students integrate previous classroom learning with practical experience. Topics include the operation of a government agency on a day-to-day basis and the meaning of public service and communication in the public sector.

**MPA Elective Courses:** Our students are also required to take three elective courses and two area of emphasis courses. Depending upon their progress in the program, MPA students will have taken some mix of the following courses. Again, the intern will clarify with the agency exactly which courses have been completed.

- **Strategic Management of Public Organizations:** Strategic management in the public sector of democratic societies. This course provides a set of tools and research skills to focus thinking, judgment and decision making in order to act strategically.
- **Nonprofit Financial Management:** An introduction to the major issues in nonprofit management. Course highlights include the unique nature of the nonprofit sector with government (public) and business (for-profit) sectors. Issues may include governance roles and responsibilities, ethics and risk management, financial management and resource generation, managing staff and volunteers, performance measurements, and the emerging trends that threaten nonprofits' tax-exempt status.

- **Administrative Law:** Legal analysis of the rule-making, adjudicatory, and enforcement functions of administrative agencies, with emphasis on constitutional framework, judicial review, requirements of procedural fairness, and rights of public employees.
- **Administrative Ethics:** This course focuses upon the ethical issues, approaches, and strategies in public service.
- **Executive Leadership Problems:** This course focuses upon the practical application of various leadership strategies.
- **Urban Politics:** Fundamental problems of political power and decision making in urban suburban governmental settings.
- **State and Local Government:** The United States system of federalism with emphasis on a comparative analysis of the government and politics of the fifty states and their subdivisions.
- **Intergovernmental Relations:** Evolution of the intergovernmental system in the United States. Emphasis upon federal, state, and local interrelationships.