



**SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

## **VEHICLES FOR CONNECTING TO SF STATE'S MPA (Master of Public Administration) STUDENTS AND FACULTY**

### **1. Internships for Course Credit**

Student interns agree to work with an agency and must perform at least 300 hours of substantive work in one semester (exact start and end dates are somewhat flexible) to receive course credit. The work performed should be substantial and substantive, with the exact scope of work being mutually agreed upon by the site supervisor, faculty internship advisor, and the student. Usually one student is placed with an agency and works on-site under the supervision of a staff member. While students may be assigned key projects during their internship, they also are expected to gain insights as to how the organization operates at a broader level. Each student is graded on the effectiveness of the work they conduct for the agency, based on the internship supervisor's written evaluation.

Agencies interested in obtaining the services of a MPA student intern can submit postings to the Department ([mpa@sfsu.edu](mailto:mpa@sfsu.edu)) at any time throughout the year, though most students search for internships in the months of January, May, August, September, and December. Agencies needing more information about MPA student interns and internship requirements are encouraged to contact Dr. Jennifer Shea ([jshea@sfsu.edu](mailto:jshea@sfsu.edu) or phone 415/817-4462). While most student internships coincide with the semester schedule, alternative schedules can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

### **2. Applied Field Experience Opportunities**

These are applied, project-based experiences with an agency that is meant to help graduate students develop specific, substantive professional skills that complement their work in the MPA curriculum as well as assist the agency with specific projects. Usually one student is placed with the agency and negotiates the exact scope of work for a discrete project with the staff supervisor, with most work being done independently and off-site. The student identifies a faculty advisor under whose guidance he/she works. There are 3 credit options that correspond to the number of work hours performed by the student (1 credit = 75 hours; 2 credits = 150 hours; 3 credits = 225 hours). Each student is graded on the quality of the written work they perform for the faculty advisor as well as on the effectiveness of work they conduct for the agency, based on the supervisor's written evaluation. Examples of projects that might apply under this category include applied research projects, data analysis, creation of marketing and outreach plans, or organizational assessments.

Agencies interested in obtaining the services of a MPA student for an applied field experience opportunity are encouraged to contact Dr. Jennifer Shea ([jshea@sfsu.edu](mailto:jshea@sfsu.edu) or phone 415/817-4462). Postings may be submitted at any time throughout the year, though most students search for these opportunities in the months of January, May, August, September, and December. While most applied field experience opportunities coincide with the semester schedule, alternative schedules can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

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### **3. Class-Based Projects and Community Service Learning Opportunities**

Agencies seeking to work with teams of 2 or more students may be best served by working with a member of the faculty to create class-based projects and community service learning opportunities. This requires that agency staff identify the appropriate course and faculty member, and establish contact with the faculty member 2-3 months before the semester begins. To learn more about our courses and faculty, visit our [website](#). Courses particularly well-suited to these projects include program evaluation (PA 775), policy analysis (PA 770), perspectives on nonprofit management (PA 745), Program and Service Delivery (PA 727), Organization Design and Change Management (PA 720) and the research methods sequence (PA 705 & PA 706), though many other classes in the curriculum might be appropriate depending on agency needs. In addition, the MPA program offers one community-service learning course, organizational learning & nonprofit management (PA 746). See the course descriptions below for more information about these classes.

If the faculty member and agency staff person find a match, a project team of 2 or more students will engage in faculty-supported experiential learning in a content area related to their current coursework (e.g., nonprofit management, program evaluation, organization design, service delivery, or budgeting). Courses last for one semester (approximately 15 weeks) and adhere to the university's academic calendar (late August to mid-December; late January to mid-May). The level of student, faculty, and agency staff involvement may vary from course to course. Student performance is evaluated in accordance with the policies set out in the course syllabus.

#### **Substantive Areas of Competence**

The MPA program offers four elective areas of emphasis: (1) nonprofit administration, (2) public management, (3) policy making and analysis & (4) urban administration.

MPA Graduate students may be capable of performing work in any of the following areas, depending on the coursework they have completed and their area of focus:

- Budgeting, Budget Planning and Budget Evaluation
- Community Engagement
- Diversity Plan Development
- E-Government (website critique, e-government strategy critique and strategy development)
- Financial Management
- Fundraising/Development Planning
- Organizational Development
- Community Needs Assessments
- Performance Measurement, Performance Measurement Strategy Development
- Policy Analysis
- Program Development or Planning
- Program/Performance Evaluation
- Qualitative Data Collection, Management & Analysis
- Quantitative Data Collection, Management & Analysis
- Strategic Planning
- Workforce Planning

## **SAMPLE COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

### **PA 705 – Design & Consumption of Research**

This class provides a theoretical and practical introduction to social science research methods for public and nonprofit administration. In it, we will cover the ways that administrators can pose research questions and the methodologies they can use to answer these questions. We will cover both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and will look at ways to collect and analyze data.

Through this course, you will learn how to approach articles and reports that contain research. The class will help you understand how to evaluate the quality of research and how to ask what additional questions are raised by the research findings. An additional goal for the course is to permit you to intelligently contract for research. Public and nonprofit administrators often work with program evaluators. This class will help you know what questions to ask of them, and to make thoughtful decisions about the quality of their work.

### **PA 706 – Applied Data Analysis**

This course is the second in a two-part series on the conduct of empirical research in public administration. This course covers basic statistical concepts, techniques, and the language of statistics for data collection and presentation, probability distributions, hypothesis testing, correlation, and regression analysis. The majority of this class will be conducted in lecture format, due to the amount of information that must be covered throughout the semester. Most of the research conducted by SFSU faculty, graduates, and students has an applied focus – it aims to increase human knowledge not just for its own sake but also to improve the human condition. No doubt this is an admirable pursuit, much to be respected and rewarded. It's frequently the case, nonetheless, that our research contributions have limited effects. Sometimes this is because our research is inconclusive, perhaps because poorly executed.

Learning the logic and practice of research design and methods may help you free your minds a bit by supplying standards against which to assess evidence advanced for various claims. It may also help you to design and execute credible research of your own. Statistics is the science of collecting, organizing, and interpreting numerical facts, which are called data. Statistics teach us how to make honest, verifiable arguments from data, putting reason back in charge, and use data to make sense of the world.

### **PA 720 – Organization Design and Change Management**

Public administration is founded on a good knowledge of organization from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Essential to effective practice of public, for-profit, or non-profit management is an understanding of the formal and informal structures of decision making, motivation, systems knowledge, inter-organizational relationships, and adaptive processes in organizations, including learning strategies. In this course, students are trained, using social science knowledge, to critically analyze organizations and their management, identify issues in organizational design and change, and develop corresponding solutions. Some of the social science frameworks and corresponding questions they raise include the following:

- Classical perspectives – enjoin students to analyze organizational structures, expertise, and division of functions, task design, process management, and information management
- Human resource perspectives – enjoin students to examine leadership, staff motivations, group climate, professional development and other economic and non-material incentives influencing organizational relationships, knowledge management, and productivity

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- Decision making perspectives – enjoin students to examine the flow of decision making in an organization, written procedures and non-written premises of decision making, and strategies for more efficient decision making
- Environmental perspectives – enjoin students to examine the context of the organization, its supportive and competitive relationships with other organizations, its networks and resource dependencies
- Systems perspectives – enjoin students to look at the interrelationships of human systems, equipment, procedures, environmental elements and other factors behind task performance or organizational performance

#### **PA 745 – Perspectives on Nonprofit Management**

Nonprofit management studies and practices are constantly evolving, with scholars and practitioners learning together and from one another. Effective nonprofit managers must be able to sort through a variety of perspectives – not only from practitioners and scholars, but also those focused on specific subsectors, organizational models, or different areas of the world. In addition, nonprofit managers must be able to identify key elements of several cross-cutting issues – most notably ethics, diversity, and technology – that can complicate or help address management challenges. Having an understanding of various and oftentimes competing perspectives on nonprofit management can help nonprofit professionals navigate ambiguity and manage change while addressing the concerns of various stakeholders, both internal and external.

Focusing primarily on internal nonprofit management issues in the U.S. context, this course exposes students to a set of core and emerging theories focused on a range of topics as they relate to nonprofit management, including: leadership and governance; accountability and performance management; and resource development and financial management. Relevant theories are presented alongside examples of various organizational models and management functions and in light of current practitioner best practices, common pitfalls, and emerging trends in the sector. By combining scholarly readings with case studies, practitioner-oriented materials, and current issues analyses, and insights from guest speakers experienced in the local nonprofit sector, the course provides students with the toolbox of resources they need to comprehend the essential components of nonprofit management, anticipate and address common management challenges, and stay current throughout their careers.

#### **PA 746 - Organizational Learning & Nonprofit Management**

PA 746 places the management of nonprofit programs in an organizational learning and evaluation framework. That framework structures the course's service learning component and guides relationships with our community-based organization (CBO) partners. Focused at the level of nonprofit program management, the course provides students with a toolbox of resources they need to comprehend the essential components of nonprofit program design and implementation. Students gain familiarity with key concepts in program management and learn strategies for using an evaluation and learning framework to document program effectiveness and improve program design. By the end of the course students will demonstrate an understanding of organizational learning as it applies to nonprofit management and program evaluation.

This class provides students with an opportunity to engage in team-based experiential and reflective learning. Student teams negotiate the scope of work they will implement with their CBO Partners and use their research, assessment, and analytical skills to conduct that scope of work and prepare the final

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report for their CBO Partners. Throughout the course, students gain experience working as a member of a team and in partnership with a CBO client.

### **PA 770 - Policy Analysis**

In the last few years executive, legislative, and judicial actions throughout the United States have weighed on the possibility of legally recognized same-sex marriages, and they have spurred strong emotional debate on both sides of the issue. In California, growing demands and costs for public services have outstripped revenue growth, forcing the legislature and Governor to decide which programs to cut and whether to raise taxes. In the San Francisco Bay Area, issues such as traffic congestion, school integration, and affordable housing fill the agendas of local councils. In all of these issues, what are the best policy choices that should be made?

Why are there differing opinions on the best public policies to solve these issues? Once chosen, how do we know if they actually work? If they do work, how well? If not, why not? Can they be fixed? At the heart of these issues and questions is the work of policy analysts. These skilled professionals assist public decision-making by using their analytical tools to assess and recommend courses of action to address public problems.

This class is designed to introduce you to this work and give you real, practical experience in doing it. It is a "skill-set" class, as opposed to a "knowledge-base" class. That is, its purpose is to expand your clinical skills to help you in your professional life. This class introduces students to some of the major analytic approaches to decision making in a public management environment, including Benefit-Cost Analysis, Linear Programming and Constrained Optimization. As you and your classmates apply these skills to real problems for this class, you will gain in-depth knowledge on a wide variety of policy issues.

### **PA 775 - Program Evaluation**

Increasingly, funders are moving towards outcome oriented granting strategies. Public and nonprofit administrators are asked to document empirically the value of their programs. Is there a documented need for a program? Is it being provided in a way that is consistent with program theory, does the program have the claimed outcomes or impact? Is there a better or more efficient way to deliver the same program?

The request may come from funders, it may come from within the organization, or from elected officials who are concerned that scarce public dollars are wisely spent. Program evaluation is a structured way of answering these questions. It makes use of the skills you learned in research methodology and analysis, but expands on these skills, by applying them within an organizational and political context.

It is assumed that not everyone will carry out an evaluation themselves, although the ability to do so is a marketable skill. However, public and nonprofit administrators often work with evaluators. Public administrators may further require evaluations of the nonprofits under contract to provide services. This class thus has the following aims:

1. To provide an applied introduction to program evaluation and logic models
2. To talk about how to make an evaluation useful –not something that is done simply to satisfy a funder or public agency
3. To gain the knowledge necessary to evaluate evaluation plans and evaluation reports
4. To have a better understanding of how to work with an evaluation consultant.