PUBLIC AFFAIRS, MPA

Through the master of public affairs (MPA) degree program, students learn the skills needed to transform an interest in public affairs into serious careers. The program offers rigorous professional training across several disciplines and prepares graduates to take positions as managers and analysts in government at all levels, in the rapidly growing nonprofit sector, and in private consulting firms.

The curriculum builds on foundational courses taught by core La Follette School faculty. Students choose from a wide range of courses to meet individual interests and career goals with guidance from a program and faculty advisor. A student can focus on social and poverty policy, environmental policy, energy policy, education policy, urban planning, health policy, policy analysis, or public management, or propose an alternate focus utilizing courses from public affairs and other graduate departments.

Students occasionally find it advantageous to earn two graduate degrees concurrently. The La Follette School offers a double degree program with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, a dual degree with the Law School, and with two programs in the School of Medicine and Public Health—neuroscience (Ph.D.) and public health (MPH). MIPA and MPA students can pursue a graduate/professional certificate in energy analysis and policy and/or in transportation management and policy.

FUNDING

La Follette School fellowships and scholarships are awarded on a merit basis to all public affairs and international public affairs applicants. Priority consideration is given to applications received by the priority admission date January 1. Applications are accepted after this date on a rolling admission basis.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

MASTER’S DEGREES

MPA, with available accelerated track

MINIMUM GRADUATE DEGREE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

MPA: 42 credits
MPA with accelerated track: 36 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE RESIDENCE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

MPA: 16 credits
MPA with accelerated track: 36 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE COURSEWORK (50%) REQUIREMENT

Half of degree coursework (21 out of 42 total credits) must be completed in graduate-level coursework. For MPA accelerated track, 21 of 36 must be completed in graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university’s Course Guide (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle).

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: GRADUATE WORK FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of graduate coursework from other institutions. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements. This work does not appear on UW–Madison transcript nor count toward graduate career GPA.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNDERGRADUATE

Up to 7 credits from a UW–Madison undergraduate degree are allowed to count toward the degree. This work will not appear on the student’s graduate transcript. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNIVERSITY SPECIAL

With program approval, students are allowed to count no more than 9 credits of coursework numbered 300 or above taken as a UW–Madison University Special student. Coursework earned five or more years prior to admission to a master’s degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED

MPA: 13 credits are advised if a student hold other appointments on campus. Students need advisor approval to take 15 credits.
MPA with accelerated track: 15 credits

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COURSES REQUIRED

For program-specific courses, see Master of Public Affairs (http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/degroeprograms/mpa.html) on the school website.

OVERALL GRADUATE GPA REQUIREMENT

3.0 GPA required

OTHER GRADE REQUIREMENTS

Students must earn a B or above in all core curriculum coursework.

PROBATION POLICY

The status of a student can be one of three options:

1. Good standing (progressing according to standards; any funding guarantee remains in place).
2. Probation (not progressing according to standards but permitted to enroll; loss of funding guarantee; specific plan with dates and deadlines in place in regard to removal of probationary status.
3. Unsatisfactory progress (not progressing according to standards; not permitted to enroll, dismissal, leave of absence or change of advisor or program).
ADVISOR/COMMITTEE
Every graduate student is required to have an advisor. To ensure they are making satisfactory progress toward a degree, the Graduate School expects that students meet with their advisor on a regular basis.

An advisor generally serves as the thesis advisor. In many cases, an advisor is assigned to incoming students. Students can be suspended from the Graduate School if they do not have an advisor. An advisor is a faculty member, or sometimes a committee, from the major department responsible for providing advice regarding graduate studies.

A committee often accomplishes advising for the students in the early stages of their studies.

ASSESSMENTS AND EXAMINATIONS
Requirements are determined by the program.

TIME CONSTRAINTS
Master’s degree students who have been absent for five or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS
No language requirement.

ADMISSIONS
Applicants to the master of public affairs must submit official transcripts showing at least a 3.0 undergraduate GPA (on a 4.0 scale), three references, a resume, a statement of purpose and Graduate Record Exam (GRE) scores. Preferred prerequisite courses are an introductory course in microeconomics, an introductory course in calculus or statistics, and an introductory American government course. Applicants without this background may be admitted with the understanding that these courses will be completed before beginning the program.

Every applicant whose first language is not English and whose full-four-year undergraduate instruction was not in English, must provide official scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Michigan Language Assessment Battery (MELAB). The applicant must provide at least one of these minimum standardized test scores: TOEFL computer-based test score 237, TOEFL internet-based test score 92, IELTS score 7, or MELAB 82. Even if a student has the minimum score, the program can require the admitted applicant to take the on-campus ESL exam and register for any recommended English-as-a-second-language course(s) in the first semester of graduate study.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING GOALS

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will demonstrate understanding of major current and past policy debates, research findings, and analytical methodologies in each of the following core areas: microeconomic policy analysis, quantitative tools for policy analysis, policy analysis, the policymaking process, and public management.

• (Knowledge) Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills. They will retrieve and examine the policy literature and evaluate evidence for and against hypotheses, identify knowledge gaps, strengths and weaknesses in existing literature, synthesize knowledge, and develop conclusions.

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will read, comprehend, and effectively summarize policy research and policy-relevant academic research.

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will effectively summarize data for a general (non-academic) or policy audience.

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will demonstrate competency in methods of inferential statistics including those associated with multivariate regression models.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

• (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Students will identify and appropriately respond to scenarios involving the ethical and professional responsibilities of public administration.

• (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain human subjects protections when designing studies, collecting data and reporting results.

• (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Students will know and adhere to high levels of professional conduct, ethical decision-making and legal and regulatory compliance.

• (Professional and Ethical Conduct) Students will demonstrate the ability to maintain fidelity to objective social science-based research methods.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

• (Knowledge) Students will demonstrate understanding of major current and past policy debates, research findings, and analytical methodologies in each of the following core areas: microeconomic policy analysis, quantitative tools for policy analysis, policy analysis, the policymaking process, and public management.

• (Knowledge) Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills. They will retrieve and examine the policy literature and evaluate evidence for and against hypotheses, identify knowledge gaps, strengths and weaknesses in existing literature, synthesize knowledge, and develop conclusions.

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will read, comprehend, and effectively summarize policy research and policy-relevant academic research.

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will effectively summarize data for a general (non-academic) or policy audience.

• (Applied Research Skills) Students will demonstrate competency in methods of inferential statistics including those associated with multivariate regression models.

ADDITIONAL LEARNING GOALS

• (Communication) Students will communicate in clear written language: a real-world policy problem, relevant scholarly studies and practical applications, a policy-analytic method to investigate the problem, and client-oriented advice to mitigate the problem.

• (Communication) Students will communicate substance of point 1 highly concisely and in language understandable to a non-specialist.

• (Communication) Students will communicate substance of point 2 orally.

• (Professional Skills and Career Preparation) Students will develop effective job-seeking tools and utilize job-seeking techniques.

• (Professional Skills and Career Preparation) Students will complete high quality group projects, including demonstration of effective project management and teamwork.

PEOPLE

Faculty: Professors Blank, Cancian, Chinn, Haveman, Herd, Meyer, Moynihan (director), Smeeding, Weimer, Wolfe, Yackee; Associate Professors: Collins, Copelovitch, Fletcher, Nemet, Wallace; Assistant Professors: O’Brien, Tjernstrom