School of Public Affairs
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER

MPA INTERNSHIPS
INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Revised December 2014
Internships - Information for Students

Internships are valuable ways to learn about professional workplaces and expectations, and can be a great way to build your network and make potential employers aware of your knowledge and skills. The School of Public Affairs requires all master’s level students without at least one year of full-time professional experience working in the public or nonprofit sector to complete PUAD 6910, Field Study in Public Administration. Students who are not required to take the internship course may still wish to complete an internship during their time at SPA in order to build their networks, explore possible career directions, or investigate the culture of a particular workplace.

Frequently Asked Questions for Students

Q. Why does SPA require an internship for pre-service students?
A. The internship requirement has four major objectives:
   • To expose MPA students to the challenging career opportunities in the public service
   • To enable public and nonprofit students to attract good students to government, thereby improving the overall quality of the public service
   • To provide pre-service students with “real world” work experiences to allow them to link classroom training with the actual practice of public administration
   • To offer students experiences that will allow them to make better informed career decisions.

Q. Do I need to take the internship course (PUAD 6910)?
A. All students who have not had the equivalent of at least one year of full-time paid work experience in the public or nonprofit sectors must complete the internship course prior to graduation. You should have received notice about whether you are required to take the internship course as part of your admission materials. If you have any questions, contact your Student Services Coordinator.

If you elect one of the concentration areas in the MPA degree, the concentration may require or recommend an internship in that field. Check with the director of your concentration area.

Q. What does the internship course require?
A. The MPA internship course (PUAD 6910) is a semester-long three-credit course that is taken pass-fail. To pass the course, students must meet the expectations of both the employer and the School of Public Affairs. Enrolled students are required to enter into an
internship agreement with the employer, work on a part-time or full-time basis for the employer so that they complete a minimum of 240 working hours during the semester, participate in class discussions and exercises facilitated by the faculty member teaching the internship course, and submit a 6 to 8-page paper reflecting on their experiences at the end of the semester. This packet contains more details about the PUAD 5910 class, including forms for students and employers.

Q. When can I enroll in the internship course?
A. You may enroll in the internship course at any time after you have satisfactorily completed at least three of the required core courses for the MPA degree.

Q. Where do I find government and nonprofit employers interested in hiring interns?
A. You can find employers looking for interns through the career portal on SPA’s website, through the University of Colorado Denver’s Career Center, or through your own network. Contact spa@ucdenver.edu to be added to SPA’s job and internship listserv. The Career Center’s website is at http://www.ucdenver.edu/life/services/careercenter/Pages/default.aspx.

SPA’s faculty and staff can help facilitate finding an internship employer for you, but please be aware that the final responsibility for finding an appropriate internship experience lies with you.

Q. What kind of work experience is appropriate for an internship?
A. Because your internship will take place as part of your graduate education, you should find an internship employer who is able to provide you with substantive work experiences. Depending upon the internship employer’s need, this may include research and evaluation projects, assistance with program delivery, interaction with clients and other stakeholders, organizational development initiatives, and similar meaningful topics. While you may be required to “pitch in” on general office tasks as needed, filing, copying, and similar entry-level administrative tasks should not take up the majority of your time.

Q. What do I do if I want to do an internship but don’t need the academic credit of the internship course?
A. For a non-credit internship, you can arrange the timeframe and terms of the internship however you would like. If you would like to supplement your internship experience with career counseling from SPA, contact Brendan Hardy, Director of Career Services, at Brendan.hardy@ucdenver.edu.
Q. Do I get paid as part of the internship?
A. That depends on the employer. Some employers are willing and able to pay their interns; others do not. Depending on your circumstances, that may affect where you are willing to do your internship.

Q. What if I am working full-time already?
A. Please be aware that students employed in positions outside the public and nonprofit sectors will still be required to complete an internship, even though their prior work experience may be substantial. If scheduling presents a problem, see if your present employer is willing to change your hours during the term of your internship. If this is not an option, you may need to find an internship that does not require your presence during regular working hours, such as an internship that takes place on weekends or that is conducted virtually.

If you obtain a position in the public or nonprofit sector during your course of study that provides the work experience required to waive the internship requirement, you may apply to the MPA Program Director to have the internship requirement waived.

Field Study 6910: Checklist for Students

1. Decide which semester you would like to enroll in PUAD 6910, taking into account your schedule and whether you will have completed at least three core courses. Review the MPA Internship Information for Students packet and the MPA Internship Information for Employers packet, available on SPA’s website, so that you are familiar with internship requirements.

2. Decide what you would like to learn from an ideal internship experience and begin looking for internship opportunities that could potentially meet these objectives. If you think you will need assistance finding an internship, contact your internship instructor, your concentration advisor, and/or the director of career services at SPA. You can fill out the internship request form in this packet and email it to Associate Dean Kelly Hupfeld at Kelly.hupfeld@ucdenver.edu, or fax it to (303) 315-2229.

3. As you talk with potential internship employers, provide them with SPA’s MPA Internship Information for Employers packet so that they understand what is required.

4. Enroll in PUAD 5910 and arrange a meeting with the instructor to discuss your interests and potential opportunities. This meeting should take place well before the start of the internship course, so that the details of your internship are already in place when the semester starts.
5. Once you have reached an agreement with your internship employer, have your supervisor fill out the Internship Agreement form in this packet and return it to the instructor. Once the instructor has approved the agreement, you may begin work.

6. Check the syllabus for your course and make sure you complete any assigned readings, class discussions, or other requirements that the instructor may have for you during the semester. It will also be helpful for you to keep a log of your experiences during the internship so that you are prepared to write your final paper.

7. Once you have completed approximately half of your internship, arrange for your instructor to visit your place of employment if possible. If a site visit is not possible, arrange for your supervisor to speak with the instructor concerning the internship.

8. One week before the end of the semester, submit a 6-8 page paper to the instructor that describes the nature of your experience and how you used the knowledge and skills gained through your coursework to enhance your internship. Portions of this paper should compare and contrast what you’ve learned at the organization with learning from scholarly literature and classroom instruction. Check your syllabus for any additional requirements.

9. Once your internship experience is completed, submit the evaluation form contained in this packet to your instructor, and ask your internship employer to submit the employer evaluation form to the instructor. Your instructor will assign you a pass/fail grade.
School of Public Affairs  
University of Colorado Denver  

Request for Internship

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Phone Number: ____________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________

Preference of paid or unpaid internship: □ Paid □ Unpaid

Date available to start: ______________________________________________

Days and hours available to work: _____________________________________

Kind of experience you would prefer: ___________________________________

List briefly your skills/experience: ______________________________________

Number of courses completed in the MPA/MCJ program: ___________________

Grade-point average (GPA): __________________________________________

Student’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Advisor’s Signature: _________________________________________________

Date: ________________

I have completed all core course work with a GPA of 3.0 or better.

I have reviewed the student’s records and he/she is eligible to do an internship.
Internship Agreement

Name of Intern: ____________________________________________________________

Name of Organization: ______________________________________________________

Name of Supervisor: _________________________________________________________

Supervisor’s Phone Number/Email: ___________________________________________

Address: ___________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Dates of Employment: Start: ___________________________ End: _________________________

Title or Nature of Work Assignment

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

Signature and Title ______________________________________ Date ________________
Intern Evaluation Report for

This form is used to evaluate the performance of our student as an intern in your organization and to help us determine the overall effectiveness of the internship program. Please complete the form as completely as possible and add comments where appropriate.

This form will become part of the student’s permanent files at the University.

1. Please check the appropriate level of performance for the intern in each of the following areas:

   a. Written Communication Skills

      Excellent | Average | Unacceptable

   b. Oral Communication Skills

      Excellent | Average | Unacceptable

   c. Use of Time and Promptness

      Excellent | Average | Unacceptable

   d. Cooperation

      Excellent | Average | Unacceptable

   e. Analytical and Research Ability

      Excellent | Average | Unacceptable

   f. Technical Knowledge

      Excellent | Average | Unacceptable
2. Please answer the following:

a. What specific strengths and weaknesses did the intern exhibit?

b. What skills should this intern work on?

c. What can SPA do to improve the quality of the intern program for both the student and the employer?

Signature:__________________________________________ Date:_____________

Title:___________________________________________________________________

Organization:_____________________________________________________________

Dates Intern was employed: ________________________   to   ____________________