Handbook for the Master of Public Administration Program

Approved by the SPA Faculty September, 1986
Last revised Spring 2016

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Welcome to the Master in Public Administration program at the School of Public Affairs! If you are a prospective student, this Handbook will give you a sense of our program and let you know how to apply. If you have been accepted into our program, the Handbook contains our program requirements and other information designed to help you be successful in the program.

The MPA program prepares students to become leaders in public service, working in and with government and nonprofit agencies to promote the common good. As an MPA student, you’ll learn about management and policy from leading scholars and practitioners in the field. You’ll learn how to apply both theories and skills to solve the pressing problems of our day, and you’ll have opportunities to work with agencies and organizations to contribute what you have learned to real-world issues. Our highly-ranked program is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, ensuring that your education will be top quality.

At the School of Public Affairs, we are passionate about the importance of public service, and we’re glad you’re considering joining us!

Sincerely,

Christine Martell, PhD
MPA Program Director through 7.31.16

Jane Hansberry, PhD
MPA Program Director as of 8.1.16

Paul Teske, PhD
Dean
## SPA MPA Program – Key Contacts

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**OTHER CAMPUS CONTACTS:**

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Admissions</td>
<td>303-315-2382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid Office</td>
<td>303-315-1850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship/Resource Office</td>
<td>303-315-3540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar (Records and Registration)</td>
<td>303-315-2600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursar (Tuition and Financial Aid)</td>
<td>303-315-1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Career Center</td>
<td>303-556-2250</td>
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<td>Writing Center</td>
<td>303-556-4845</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSCD Testing Center</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

**Purpose of Handbook**

Welcome to the MPA program at the School of Public Affairs! This handbook will acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the School of Public Affairs (SPA) and facilitate your progress toward applying for the program and earning the degree of Master of Public Administration. Read this handbook carefully and consult your advisor whenever you have questions.

Be aware that the policies and procedures described here are subject to change and can be affected by changes in the policies of the University of Colorado. University-wide policies have priority over the policies of SPA. This handbook will be periodically updated. Any relevant revisions to policies and procedures will be updated immediately to the SPA website.

**The School of Public Affairs**

The University of Colorado’s School of Public Affairs is located on the University of Colorado Denver’s Downtown Campus. The School offers five degree programs: Master of Public Administration, Master of Criminal Justice, Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice, Bachelor of Arts in Public Service, and Ph.D. in Public Affairs.

Established in 1973, the School of Public Affairs has statewide authority to provide graduate programs in public administration. SPA’s MPA program is accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), and is one of the most highly ranked programs on all of the CU campuses.

**The MPA Degree**

The MPA degree prepares students to take leadership roles in the public and nonprofit sectors. The mission of the MPA program is as follows:

The Master of Public Administration Program at the School of Public Affairs advances public service in Colorado and beyond through quality education, collaborative research, and strong community leadership. To advance our ‘Lead, Solve, Change’ philosophy, we:

- Provide students with knowledge, skills, experiences, and ethical standards to be innovative leaders in public and nonprofit organizations;
- Support faculty and students in conducting rigorous empirical research and disseminating findings to advance the study and practice of public and nonprofit management and policy; and
- Collaborate with practitioners to enhance the public sector’s ability to make evidence-based management decisions and policy change.
The Master of Public Administration degree is multidisciplinary and designed to provide graduate professional education for individuals who wish to prepare themselves for administrative and/or policy careers in government, the nonprofit sector, or organizations that are concerned with public affairs. The program also provides education and training for those already employed in the public and nonprofit sectors to enhance their skills and advance their careers. The MPA curriculum integrates theory and practice to give public and nonprofit managers and policy makers the knowledge and skills necessary to manage organizations, to formulate and implement policies, and to analyze policies and make recommendations for improvement.

Graduates of the MPA program will have the following competencies, as enumerated by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), our accrediting body:

- The ability to lead and manage in public governance
- The ability to participate effectively in the political process
- The ability to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions
- The ability to understand and apply a public service perspective in their work
- The ability to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

**Administration**

The MPA Program Director is the key administrative officer for the program. The Director serves as the central contact for questions regarding MPA policies, and chairs the MPA Committee, which develops and approves overall MPA policies. SPA’s Director of Student Recruiting and Career Services provides information to prospective students regarding the program and its policies and procedures. SPA’s Student Services Coordinators provide information on applying to the program, registration, financial aid, and related issues, and also serve as advisors for students concerning basic degree planning.
2. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION

Admission Calendar

Admission to the MPA program is made on a rolling basis, and applicants are admitted for each semester. The calendar for submission of admission materials is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Preferred Deadline</th>
<th>Final Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>December 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Session</td>
<td>March 15</td>
<td>May 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applicants should submit all applications materials by these deadlines.

Required Application Materials

Detailed requirements for applying to the School of Public Affairs may be found on the SPA’s website in the Admissions section, and applicants are encouraged to apply online. In general, applicants must submit University of Colorado Application Parts I and II, at least three letters of reference (at least two of which must be from academic sources), resume, statement of purpose, official transcripts from all institutions of higher education attended, and scores from a recent Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or an equivalent exam, such as the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

Applications are reviewed as soon as they are complete, and students are notified by letter as soon as an admission decision is made. Students seeking financial aid must await formal approval for admission by the University. This process may take slightly longer than the SPA admissions process.

Admission Status

Applicants are normally admitted with regular graduate status.

In exceptional cases, students who do not meet the minimum qualifications for admission may be admitted on provisional status if elements of their application suggest they may be able to perform successfully in the program. Those admitted on provisional status are required to take two of three core courses (PUAD 5001, 5003, or 5004) in their first semester and earn at least a B in each course.

Students admitted provisionally should take these required courses in a traditional classroom format unless the online format is the only feasible option or the student is planning to take all courses online through the online MPA option. At the conclusion of their first semester,
students’ performance in these courses will be reviewed to determine if they should be admitted to the program. Provisionally admitted students may take no other SPA courses until they have been formally admitted into the program.

**Taking Classes as a Non-Degree Seeking Student**

Students need not be admitted to the MPA program in order to take courses offered by the School. Such students can attend up to three classes as “non-degree” students by completing an Application for Non-Degree Admission. Non-Degree applications are available online and are processed by the central Graduate School office. Students pursuing a certificate in one of the concentration areas rather than an MPA degree should apply as non-degree students.

Other non-degree students include students who are interested in exploring the courses and either have an application in process or may apply in the future. If a non-degree student later applies and is admitted to the program, no more than nine credit hours of course work taken as a non-degree student may be applied to the MPA degree.

Taking courses as a non-degree student contains some element of risk because admission to the program is not a certainty. Therefore, we encourage students to apply as soon as possible. The non-degree status is most useful when students want to explore the field and/or when their application is not complete (e.g., test scores and/or reference letters have not been received).

**Readmission of Inactive,Withdrawn, and Suspended Students**

Students who have been admitted to SPA must complete their course work within six years from the date of their first course. Occasionally, however, students find it necessary to interrupt their course work for one or more semesters. An extended interruption, however, may result in the student being placed on inactive or withdrawn status.

Students who do not enroll in any classes during the semester for which they were admitted, and students who have not registered for classes for three consecutive semesters (including summer), are placed on inactive status. Inactive students who want to continue their coursework will be required to resubmit a Part I application. Contact your Student Services Coordinator for more information.

Students who have not enrolled in classes for more than twelve consecutive semesters (including summer semesters) will be considered to have withdrawn from the program. Readmission for these students will require repeating the full application process.

A student who has been suspended from the program is not allowed to register for classes. Suspended students may apply for readmission no sooner than one year after the suspension by submitting a new Part I Application. Approval or rejection of this application rests jointly with the SPA Dean and the MPA Director.
Course Revalidation

The revalidation process is required by university policy for any course that was taken more than seven years ago. Course revalidation will only be considered for core courses in which at least a “B-” was obtained and elective courses in which at least a “C” was obtained. To request revalidation of expired courses, students must submit for each course a one-page review of what was learned in the class, how the coursework applies to the student’s profession, and what has changed in the field since the course was taken. Equal space should be dedicated to those three parts.

All necessary course reviews must be submitted to the Student Services Coordinator. The MPA Director will review them and schedule a conversation with the student, and then will make a determination about revalidating the courses. SPA’s objective is to ensure students’ knowledge of the course material is current. Students might consider reviewing relevant top public affairs journals, like Public Administration Review, Journal of Public Policy and Management, Policy Sciences, etc. for information about public management, policy process and leadership issues that have surfaced since the courses were taken. For an elective course, students should also consider reviewing journals of that course’s specialization.

Advising

Upon admission to the MPA program, students should set up a meeting with their Student Services Coordinator. The Student Services Coordinators will assist with registration, understanding program requirements, preliminary degree planning, and selecting a faculty advisor.

Students may request that they be assigned a faculty advisor with particular expertise in a field in which they are interested, so that the faculty advisor may provide advice on appropriate electives and career planning. Students who have declared concentrations or who are enrolled in dual degree programs will be assigned the director of the concentration or dual degree program as their faculty advisor.

3. MPA PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Degree Requirements

To earn an MPA degree the student must:

- Complete a minimum of 36 semester hours of graduate coursework with a total grade-point average of B (3.0) or better;
- Complete an additional three semester hours of internship/field study (if required);
- Receive a grade of B- or better in all core courses, including the final capstone course, and receive a grade of C or better in all elective courses, and;
- Maintain a 3.0 grade point average during the course of graduate study.
Time Requirements for MPA Degree

Students must complete their degree no later than six years after the starting date of their first MPA class, even when that course is taken as a non-degree student. Although the MPA program requires intensive commitment, it does not require full-time study, and many SPA students take classes on a part-time basis. Most courses are offered during evening hours, on weekends on an intensive basis, and/or online. Students in the regular MPA program should expect to complete the degree in no less than one and no more than six years. (The average is about two and one-half years.)

Required Courses

All MPA students except those in the Executive MPA program must complete the following required courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Credit Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5001</td>
<td>Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>PUAD 5002</td>
<td>Organizational Management and Behavior</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5003</td>
<td>Research and Analytic Methods</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5004 OR PUAD 5503</td>
<td>Public Economics and Finance or Public Budgeting and Finance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5005</td>
<td>The Policy Process and Democracy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5006</td>
<td>Public Service Leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5008</td>
<td>Evidence-Based Decision-Making</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUAD 5361</td>
<td>Capstone Seminar</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 24 credit hours

Course descriptions can be found online in the course catalog. Students must receive a B- or better in all core courses, and maintain an overall grade point average of 3.0 or better. Students who receive a lower grade may retake the class once; students who fail to receive a B- or better the second time will be dropped from the program.

Internship Requirement

Pre-service students (those without at least one year of paid full-time work experience in a government or nonprofit setting) are also required to complete a three-credit internship course, bringing their total required course hours to 27 hours and the total hours required for the degree to 39. More detailed internship guidelines are set forth later in this handbook.

The Director of the MPA program examines each student’s application to the program and determines whether an internship is appropriate or should be waived, and students are notified of this decision in their admission letter. Students who believe vital experiences have been
overlooked may ask the MPA Director to reconsider the decision by submitting a Request to Waive the Internship Requirement form, available from the SPA office or the MPA section of the SPA website.

Some students who are initially required to take an internship later obtain employment that would merit a waiver while still a student in the MPA program. In such circumstances, the student can apply for a waiver of the internship requirement. Waivers are considered only when the student’s public or nonprofit experience reaches or exceeds 2000 hours.

**Electives**

In addition to completing the required courses (and the internship, if required), students must complete four elective courses (12 credit hours). Electives should be selected with the approval of the student’s faculty advisor. SPA offers a wide variety of electives in management and policy areas. Some are offered on a routine basis; others may be a one-time offering.

Students may choose to focus their electives in a concentration area. Currently, concentrations are available through the Denver campus in the areas of Nonprofit Organizations; Environmental Policy, Management and Law; Local Government; Emergency Management and Homeland Security; and Gender-Based Violence.

Students also may take courses at other colleges and universities or in other schools and colleges within UCD. Up to nine semester credit hours may be transferred in to SPA from other institutions or departments within UCD. Pre-approval from the student’s faculty advisor or the MPA program director is required.

**Typical Course Load**

Most students at SPA enroll in at least six credit hours (two classes) each fall and spring semester. To qualify for financial aid, a student must take at least five hours each fall, spring, and summer semester.

SPA recommends that students working full time limit their enrollment to six credit hours each semester.

**Independent Study**

Students who are interested in pursuing a specific line of study or inquiry not covered through the regular course offerings may elect to take an independent study course (PUAD 6840) with a member of the faculty. Students should first consider what area of study they would like to pursue and discuss the topic with a willing faculty member who has expertise in the area. With faculty assistance, such students will then develop a course of study which meets the
requirements of the University and SPA, as well as student needs. No more than six hours of independent study credit may apply toward MPA degree requirements.

**Capstone Seminar**

All MPA students, except those pursuing the thesis option, are required to complete PUAD 5361, Capstone Seminar. The Capstone Seminar is taken during the last semester of the student’s degree program. All core courses should be completed before the Capstone Seminar is taken. The seminar cannot be taken during the summer semester except by students enrolled in the AMPA program.

For their capstone projects, students work with a client in a public or nonprofit agency to identify a problem and then, using the knowledge and skills they have gained in the program, carry out a project and write a paper to address the problem. Projects take many different forms including business plans, marketing plans, surveys and interviews, salary studies, etc. The principle of the course is that it provides students with an opportunity to integrate what they have learned and apply their knowledge and skills to a real-world problem. Further, it provides the faculty with an opportunity to judge the student’s ability to perform such work. The Capstone Guidelines are set forth later in this handbook.

**Thesis Option**

The thesis option is available for MPA students who are interested in undertaking a research project, pursuing careers in research, or entering the Ph.D. program. Students must select a thesis advisor from the faculty to oversee their work. A thesis may be completed in one semester, but often requires a two-semester, six-credit hour time frame. The student conducts a comprehensive review of the theoretical and research literature in the subject area of their thesis and collects original data or analyzes existing data in new ways.

Minimum eligibility requirements for pursuing a thesis include:

1. Successful completion of all core courses;
2. Overall GPA of 3.50 and permission of faculty advisor
3. Preliminary identification of a thesis topic or area of interest; and
4. Agreement of two SPA faculty members to serve on the thesis committee (one as Thesis Advisor).

A student wishing to undertake the thesis option applies formally through her/his faculty academic advisor, first, to establish eligibility with respect to the above criteria, and second, to identify appropriate faculty members to serve on the student’s thesis committee. The thesis committee consists of three people: a major advisor who is a full-time SPA faculty member, a second faculty member, and a third person who is an expert in the subject area of the thesis. This person may be either from the community or another school or department. Students
conduct a thesis of six credits over two semesters and need to submit their research proposal to Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval.

4. DEGREE OPTIONS AND CONCENTRATION AREAS

SPA offers MPA students a variety of options for obtaining the degree that best meets their needs and interests. In addition to the traditional MPA program, SPA offers an accelerated program, a program for executives, and an online program, as well as dual degrees and concentrations. Students can also combine traditional face-to-face courses with online courses if that is more convenient for their schedules.

The Accelerated MPA Option (AMPA)

This program is a full-time, day-time program designed for strong students who have the desire, energy, and aptitude to complete a master’s program in twelve months. Approximately 20 students complete this program each year as a cohort. Students begin in the fall semester and, if they successfully complete all their course work, they complete the program at the end of the following summer. During the nine-month academic year, the two semesters are divided into quarters and the AMPA students take three courses each quarter. They begin their capstone project during the fourth, or last, quarter, when they are taking only two courses, and complete the capstone project in the summer. Because of the accelerated nature of this program, students may not choose a concentration or electives. Instead, the program consists of the six core courses, five popular electives selected by the MPA program director in advance, and the capstone course.

Because of the intensive schedule of the AMPA program, admissions standards are more selective. Further, students who are employed full-time are not eligible for this program. Students need to have sufficient time to meet the rigors of this one-year master’s program.

The program was designed for the increasing number of pre-service applicants applying for the MPA. (Pre-service students are those who have little or no work experience in the public or nonprofit sectors and have often completed their undergraduate degree recently.) However, while the program includes many young students, it also includes a broad mix of people, including students from other countries and individuals making major career changes.

Students in the AMPA program pay a different tuition rate. The rate is more than the tuition traditional students would pay for one year because the AMPA students are taking many more courses; however, the tuition is less than students would pay if they completed the traditional MPA in two years or more. Information on tuition for the AMPA program may be obtained from the Director of Student Recruitment.
The Executive MPA Option

This option is designed for senior officials and managers at public service organizations. Admission is highly competitive and is based upon (1) evidence of ability to successfully complete graduate-level course work, and (2) executive-level experience in the public or nonprofit sector and the demonstrated potential to provide future executive leadership.

Submission of scores from such aptitude tests as the Graduate Record Examination is not mandatory for students who qualify for the Executive MPA. Applicants whose undergraduate GPA is near the minimum for admission may be advised to present test scores as supporting evidence of academic aptitude.

The Executive MPA requires 30 credit hours of course work at SPA. Nine of these credits are taken as a cohort in intensive residential classes. Typically, the cohort class begins with PUAD 5001 (Introduction to Public Administration and Public Service) in August, continues with leadership training in SPA’s Rocky Mountain Program week-long residential leadership program, usually held in October, and concludes with PUAD 5002 (Organizational Management and Behavior) during the Maymester. Thereafter, each Executive MPA student takes courses individually, according to his or her own pace and preferences.

Two additional core courses (6 credit hours) and four electives (12 credit hours) must be completed, and should be selected after consulting with the Executive MPA Program Director. One of the electives may be an international experience. The Capstone Seminar (PUAD 5361, 3 credit hours) should be the last course in the program.

Although Executive MPA students are not required to take all six core courses, they will be expected to demonstrate competencies in the basic areas of the core upon graduation: administration/management, research/statistics, economics/finance, public policy, and ethics. Skills may be demonstrated by past course work, on-the-job experience, or by successfully completing SPA courses. The Director of the Executive MPA program will determine if the student has demonstrated these skills.

Federal employees may opt to take leadership training through OPM’s Management Assessment Seminar.

The Online MPA Option

Students may complete the MPA degree entirely through online classes, an option which may be attractive for students living outside of the Denver metro area, or for those who require more flexibility in taking courses. Online courses are offered by SPA faculty and lecturers, and
are similar in rigor and content to courses offered in the traditional classroom format. Currently, all concentrations except Gender-Based Violence are offered online.

**Dual Degrees**

A dual degree program allows a student to complete two degrees in less time and with less expense than it would take to earn each degree separately. Currently, SPA offers the following dual degree options:

- **BA or BS/MPA**: This five-year program allows high-performing undergraduates in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at CU Denver to begin taking graduate-level MPA classes during their senior year. Relevant undergraduate majors may include economics, political science, geography, and environmental sciences.
- **MCJ/MPA**: This program allows a student to earn both a master’s degree in criminal justice and a master’s degree in public administration, both through SPA.
- **MURP/MPA**: This program, offered with the College of Architecture and Planning, allows a student to earn both a master’s degree in urban and regional planning and an MPA.
- **MA Econ/MPA**: Students in this program earn a Master of Arts in Economics from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences together with their MPA degree.
- **MPH/MPA**: This program, offered with the Colorado School of Public Health at the Anschutz Medical Campus, allows a student to earn a Master of Public Health together with the MPA.
- **MPA/JD**: This program, offered with the Law School at CU Boulder, allows a student to earn both an MPA and a JD.

Students must apply and be admitted into each program separately. Visit the SPA website for more information about dual degree options.

**MPA Program Concentrations**

Although many students earn a general MPA degree, others choose to pursue a concentration. Students choosing a concentration use their elective hours to take courses in their concentration. Concentrations are available in the following areas:

- Gender-Based Violence
- Emergency Management and Homeland Security
- Environmental Policy, Management, and Law
- Local Government
- Nonprofit Organizations

Concentrations typically require a combination of four required and elective courses related to the field of the concentration.
If you select a concentration, you will be assigned the director of the concentration as your faculty advisor. The concentration director will work with you to select your electives and approve your degree plan in the first year of study.

Please note that not all concentrations are available in all program options.

**Certificates**

Students who do not want to complete the full MPA degree program but who are interested in developing their knowledge and skills in the concentration areas listed in the previous section (Gender-Based Violence, Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Environmental Policy, Management and Law, Local Government, Nonprofit Organizations) may earn an academic certificate by completing four courses in these areas. If you decide to use courses taken for a certificate towards the MPA degree, you must be admitted as a degree-seeking student before completing more than nine credit hours.

**Certified Public Manager Program**

SPA is the only entity authorized to offer the national Certified Public Manager curriculum in Colorado. This program, for non-degree seeking students, is a comprehensive management development program that allows working professionals in public service to improve their management and leadership skills. The curriculum consists of six two-day intensive modules, all taken in-person at the Denver campus. Upon completion of the program, graduates are designated as Certified Public Managers, a nationally recognized designation. Students who wish to continue into the MPA program from the CPM program may, if accepted into the MPA program, apply up to six elective credits towards the MPA degree. To apply the six electives, the CPM Certificate must be completed before matriculating into the MPA program.

**5. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

**Denver Community Leadership Forum**

The Denver Community Leadership Forum is a year-long forum that focuses on a new leadership topic each month. Each class is unique, offering a wide range of approaches, workshops, guest speakers, and group exercises. While the topics are different each session, the program is designed to build on the knowledge gained throughout the entire program year and attendance at each session is critical to maximize the full value of the experience. The University of Colorado Denver offers three hours of graduate academic credit to people who successfully complete the program curriculum.

The Denver Community Leadership Forum maintains five key program objectives:
- Build strong linkages and working relationships among leaders from different sectors in the community, creating a “network of responsibility;”
• Build a critical mass of leaders with a sense of shared concern and commitment to city, state and nation, creating a “constituency for the whole,” which can make a difference;
• Provide an understanding of new leadership needs and capacities;
• Develop a deeper understanding of self and purpose as a leader; and,
• Learn leadership skills that can achieve results and bring about necessary change.

**Rocky Mountain Leadership Program**

The Rocky Mountain Leadership Program is an intensive residential seminar that allows participants to examine their role in the public sector, exploring the changing and demanding environment in which they operate, and develop leadership skills that help facilitate effective public action. If interested, participants may earn three credit hours from the School of Public Affairs.

Participants completing the program will identify leadership skills and values needed to succeed in the public sector, develop a clearer understanding of their own leadership style, model, vision and purpose, and enhance skills needed for successful leadership. They will learn to appreciate diversity in background, style, and perspective and take advantage of different strengths to establish more effective teams. Additionally, they will develop their ability to think more strategically and be a more effective catalyst for organizational and community renewal and change. Interaction with their peers from around the country will create additional unique learning opportunities. Most importantly, participants will be able to apply the knowledge learned to real world situations equipping them for both their current position and new challenges.

**6. INTERNSHIP AND CAPSTONE GUIDELINES**

**Internship Overview**

Students who do not have at least one year of professional experience in the field of public administration or nonprofit management, or the equivalent, must enroll in Field Study in Public Administration (PUAD 6910). Students in the Gender-Based Violence program who do not have at least one year of experience in that field will be required to enroll in PUAD 6910, and internships also may be recommended for students in concentrations who do not have experience in that concentration area. Other students may choose to complete an internship to obtain additional experience that differs from or is more specialized than their past experience. These internships may be completed locally or in another city or state.

In the internship, students work part-time or full-time as interns for government agencies, legislatures, government-related organizations, and nonprofit groups. At a minimum, students are required to complete a total of 300 work hours for the internship. This includes a minimum of 240 hours on the job and 60 hours completing a paper about the internship. The internships
may be paid or unpaid. Students gain useful experience in public management, policy research, and the policy process though their work. The objectives of the internship are:

1. To expose MPA students to the challenging career opportunities in the public service

2. To enable public and nonprofit organizations to attract good students to government, thereby improving the overall quality of the public service

3. To provide pre-service students with “real world” work experiences to allow them to link classroom training with actual practice of public administration

4. To offer students experience that will allow them to make better informed career decisions

**Internship Requirements**

In their internships, students must meet both the requirements of their employing agency and those of the School of Public Affairs. The requirements of the employer are established before actually beginning work through a written agreement. The work period can be for an academic semester or during the summer, and work schedules are arranged with the student’s employing agency. In addition, both the employer and the student will complete an evaluation of the internship experience upon completion of the hours. The field study instructor is the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for domestic students and the Coordinator of International Student Programs for international students.

In addition to performing work for the employer, students also write a paper to describe the nature of the field experience, how they used the knowledge and skills they gained through their course work, and the knowledge and skills they gained in the internship. Portions of this paper should compare and contrast the learning in the organization with learning from the scholarly literature and classroom instruction. The field study instructor will advise the student on the paper, read and provide feedback, and give a final grade for the paper and the internship.

**Internship Application and Administration Procedures**

Students should contact their Student Services Coordinator to obtain more detailed policies on internships. (These policies can also be obtained from the SPA website.) The next step is for the student to find an internship. Requests for SPA interns from agencies and organizations are posted on the SPA Job and Professional Experience Portal. Students use the file to identify potential positions. Alternatively, students may find internships through the campus Career Center or initiate contact with agencies on their own to seek internships. Students should also contact their advisors and other faculty who may have expertise and contacts in the specific area of interest for suggestions concerning internships. Students are responsible for identifying
potential internships, contacting the agencies and arranging for interviews. The SPA office is able to facilitate this process, but the final responsibility lies with the student.

When the student has initially established an internship relationship with an agency or organization, the intern’s supervisor at the agency will need to complete a short form outlining the agreement between the organization and the student and the tasks in which the intern will be involved. The agreement must be approved by the field study instructor before the student begins work.

During their internships, students should meet periodically with their field study instructors to discuss the internship work, how it is building on course work, the knowledge and skills being acquired, and the paper to be produced. Additionally, a site visit by the instructor is scheduled upon completion of 50% of the intern’s field hours whenever possible. The paper must be completed one week prior to the end of the semester in order for a grade to be assigned and credit obtained for the course.

Upon completion of the internship program, both the intern and the supervisor will complete an evaluation report. These forms are available from the SPA Student Services Coordinators or on the SPA website (http://www.ucdenver.edu/Academics/Colleges/SPA). They must be submitted to the field study instructor.

**Capstone Purpose**

The capstone course (PUAD 5361) is designed to provide students with the opportunity to integrate and synthesize what they have learned during the entire MPA course of study. It also provides a process and structure for SPA faculty to determine whether MPA graduates have attained the competencies expected from the MPA program:

- The ability to lead and manage in public governance
- The ability to participate effectively in the political process
- The ability to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions
- The ability to understand and apply a public service perspective in their work
- The ability to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

The capstone requires students to demonstrate knowledge of the concepts and principles conveyed in the MPA curriculum and to apply that knowledge to study a problem confronted by a public or nonprofit sector agency. The written and oral products of this seminar provide tangible evidence of a degree candidate’s qualifications and expertise.

A capstone project must:
- be undertaken for a client who is affiliated with a public or non-profit agency or organization;
- be of significance and practical use to the client organization; and
- be based on scholarly literature in public administration or nonprofit management.

**Capstone Prerequisites**

The capstone course should be taken in the student’s last semester of classes before completing the MPA, though students will be oriented to the capstone course and identify their client and topic prior to the beginning of the semester.

All core courses should have been completed before taking the capstone course. Under exceptional circumstances a student may request that the instructor allow one final core course to be taken concurrently with the capstone. Since the capstone project generally includes a research component, that course may not be Research and Analytic Methods (PUAD 5003). If a core course is taken concurrently with PAD 5361, the capstone project must not concern an issue addressed in the concurrent core course. Although a student may take another elective at the same time as 5361, taking more than one additional course is strongly discouraged because of the work required in the capstone.

**Selecting a Capstone Project**

Students may find a client in many ways. For example, SPA keeps a list of potential clients and their projects for students to contact. Students may also approach an agency or contact person, meet with them and describe the capstone course, and determine if the agency and/or contact person has a project or problem they would like the student to address.

Client-based projects may **NOT** be conducted as part of ongoing work responsibilities, and the client for the capstone cannot have supervisory authority over the student if the student is employed by the client organization. However, students may conduct a project for an organization that employs them if that project is outside of their official responsibilities.

Students completing a concentration must pursue a project that is related to their concentration area.

**Capstone Course Committee**

The capstone course is guided by a primary course instructor. That instructor’s role is to guide the student in selecting a project and specifying its scope, to assist the student as needed in conducting the project, and to provide extensive feedback to the student on various drafts of the project. In order to provide students with the individual attention needed, capstone courses are restricted to no more than 20 students per class. Students may be moved to different sections to accommodate this class size requirement.

Student work on the capstone is guided by a committee comprised of three persons: the first reader (the course instructor), a second reader (a SPA faculty member), and a third reader.
(client or substantive expert). All three readers must ultimately approve the project prospectus. All will help the student with the project and will evaluate the final report and presentation, although the first reader serves as the student’s primary guide.

**The Second Reader**

The second reader should be a rostered SPA faculty member or Buechner Institute for Governance staff member who is not listed as an instructor of record for PUAD 5361 for that term. If a student has declared a concentration, the first or second reader must be a faculty member from that concentration area.

If a full-time faculty member with subject-matter expertise is not available, students may select a SPA lecturer with subject-matter expertise in the area of the project with the approval of the primary instructor.

Second readers should be selected because they have expertise in the content area of the project. Students should consult with them early in the process to get recommendations for references to form the foundation of the client-based project and/or suggestions concerning target journals and references for research projects.

**The Third Reader**

The third reader is the client, i.e., the representative of the organization for which the student is conducting the project.

**Role of Readers**

While the first reader will have the primary responsibility for supervising the student’s project, the second and third readers have responsibility for: (1) approving the student’s project prospectus, (2) commenting on project drafts and approving the final project report, (3) attending and participating in the oral presentation of the project, and (4) evaluating the student’s work. Additionally, the third reader serves to link the student with the client organization and reports on the utility and professionalism of the student’s work for and with the organization.

The first reader determines the student’s grade, but will seek input from other readers to determine the final grade.

**Capstone Course Format**

**No incompletes**

The student must be able to complete the selected project by the end of the semester. An incomplete grade will be issued only under very exceptional circumstances.
Orientation and Preparing for the Beginning of the Capstone

All students are required to participate in the orientation session for PUAD 5361 the semester before they plan to enroll. These sessions normally occur about one month before the end of the previous semester. All students who are eligible for taking the capstone are contacted by the student services staff to attend or participate in this orientation. A capstone orientation video is available on the SPA website for students who are unable to attend the orientation in person.

The orientation provides students with information about how to begin their projects. Before the beginning of the semester, students must identify a client and define their topic for the client. Students are encouraged to contact the person who is likely to be their professor for the capstone seminar to let him or her know of their topic and receive assistance in focusing the topic. Students are also encouraged to contact potential second and/or third readers during this time to get advice on a focus and references to explore. The prospectus for the project is generally due the second week of the semester, so students must undertake some work before the semester begins to be able to complete the prospectus and begin the project.

Prospectus: Week Two

Students will submit a prospectus which describes the goals of their project and the specific questions they hope to answer, identifies the client for whom the project will be conducted, and identifies some preliminary references from the literature relevant to the topic. Finally, the prospectus names the faculty member(s) and client who have agreed to serve as second and third readers. Individual instructors in the capstone may have additional, or slight variations, on their requirements for the prospectus.

Instructors may advise students who have not submitted an acceptable proposal to drop the course. This action must be taken before the official add-drop date, so students can drop the course without penalty. Students who are told to drop the course and to re-enroll the next semester will be given specific feedback and instructions from the primary instructor to allow them to begin the capstone more productively the following semester.

Drafts

The capstone product is unlike a traditional term paper in many ways. One way in which it differs is that students submit several drafts and revise those drafts, often extensively, based on feedback from their primary instructor and other readers. The primary instructor will provide students with their expectations and due dates for drafts in their section. Typically, however, students submit at least two drafts.

Students should check with their second and third readers at each draft to learn whether they prefer to receive the draft after the primary instructor has made suggestions and the student
has revised the draft, or to receive it at the same time as the primary instructor. Some faculty members prefer to receive the paper after the primary instructor has provided feedback concerning the organization and substance of the paper. However, this delay can require them to read the paper quickly and get feedback to the student. On final drafts, the timeline can become particularly tight, so the student should work closely with the primary faculty member and communicate with second and third readers to establish a time frame for this stage.

Papers should be no longer than 25 double-spaced pages, excluding references, attachments, and figures. Instructors may provide more specific guidelines.

Final Report

Having received feedback from all readers, students should revise their final draft and distribute it to all readers at least one week before the oral presentation. In some cases, instructors may choose to have reports completed after the oral presentation based on feedback from the oral conference. Students will learn the specific details of responsibilities and due dates from their individual instructor’s syllabus.

Oral Presentation

Students are expected to make a professional oral presentation, which may include supportive visual materials such as PowerPoint, overheads, or handouts. Oral presentation sessions typically last around one hour, though the actual presentation is limited to 15 minutes. Since readers have read the paper, the student may choose to focus on particular issues of interest or to summarize key points. The remainder of the hour is used for questions and discussion. Students are encouraged to practice the presentation to ensure they are organized and are able to convey all the information they desire within the 15-minute time limit. Oral presentations are a part of the student’s final grade.

To schedule the presentation, students should select 3-5 potential dates and times and send them electronically to all readers to identify a time when all can participate. Second and third readers are required to be in attendance, but may participate electronically if circumstances prohibit their actual presence. Once a date and time are identified, students should contact the Student Services staff to obtain a room and any equipment for the presentation and notify the readers of the location. Students who live outside the Denver metro area will arrange an oral presentation making use of software or telecommunications technology. (Distance students may, and occasionally do, choose to come to Denver for the final presentation, but that is not required.)

Other Key Capstone Issues

Grounding the Project in the Scholarly Public Administration Literature
All capstone projects include a review of the scholarly literature relevant to the project. The actions undertaken in the project should be grounded in the scholarly literature. It is expected that the student will have reviewed prominent refereed journals in the field and relevant to the chosen project, such as *Public Administration Review, American Review of Public Administration, Review of Public Personnel Administration, Public Performance & Management Review, Public Integrity, Administration & Society, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Public Budgeting and Finance, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, Academy of Management Review, and International Journal of Public Management*.

**Collecting and Analyzing Information**

It is expected that the student will support project conclusions with evidence from qualitative or quantitative data. Students may use secondary data or generate primary data.

At this time, the UCD Human Subjects Research Committee Institutional Review Board (HSRC/IRB) has concluded that projects intended for use within an organization do not require their review. However, if a student is collecting original data from a group typically considered as a protected class by IRBs (such as children or prisoners), the faculty member will review the project to ensure human subject protections are being considered.

**Writing and Format**

The capstone report demonstrates a student’s ability to communicate information, including scholarly information, in a professional manner. As noted above, students will complete several drafts and should anticipate substantive work on revisions at each stage. Students are required to use a standard writing format such as APA or Chicago styles.

**Supplemental Documentation**

All projects, regardless of the type, must draw upon at least three courses the student has completed in the MPA program. In addition to the project report, students will submit a brief document (1-2 pages) that describes how the knowledge and skills gained from the designated MPA courses were used to complete the project. At least one of these three courses must be a core course, and, if the student is completing a concentration, at least one must be a concentration course.

**Project Assessment**

The faculty of SPA have developed a rubric to describe expectations for capstone projects. This rubric is based on the competencies established for the MPA program. Readers will use a rubric to report on their judgment of the student’s performance in each relevant area. The primary instructor will, then, determine the grade based on readers’ feedback. See the capstone page on the SPA website for project resources.
7. STUDENT SUPPORT

Advising

Advising at the School of Public Affairs is a joint responsibility of faculty and the Student Services Coordinators. Each admitted student will meet with their Student Services Coordinator to go over program requirements and complete a Degree Plan. In general, questions about program logistics are best addressed by the Student Services Coordinators.

International students are advised by the International Coordinator, who also assists them with other issues specific to international students such as visa requirements.

Students who declare concentrations are assigned to the concentration director as their faculty advisor. Students who do not declare concentrations may request any faculty member as their advisor by speaking to their Student Services Coordinator. Faculty advisors are experts in their fields and can assist students with advice on appropriate electives, professional networking within the field, and ideas for career plans.

Academic Support

SPA students who believe they need academic support are encouraged to first reach out to their instructors. Some classes have teaching assistants who are available to tutor students. SPA also provides general tutoring, online writing tutorials, and periodic workshops for students needing general assistance with writing and with statistics. Visit SPA’s website or contact the Academic Support Coordinator for additional information on how to access these resources. In addition, additional support is available through the University’s Writing Center.

Career Resources

SPA is committed to helping students find meaningful work upon graduation. The School maintains a Job and Professional Experience Portal on its website, and the Director of Student Recruiting and Career Services is available to provide career counseling. SPA offers many events each year designed to provide networking opportunities with professionals in various fields, and students are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities.

8. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is available to support those students who would not be able to attend SPA without aid. The primary source of information about student financial assistance is the
University’s Financial Aid Office. Students interested in learning about available scholarships should contact the Scholarship Resource Office at CU Denver.

The School of Public Affairs offers several types of financial assistance to students. This includes graduate assistantships that are paid out at an hourly rate for student to work with faculty and staff as well as a limited number of scholarships. To apply for a graduate assistantship or a scholarship, visit the SPA website. Applications for fall semester are due back to the SPA office by March 1.

SPA has entered into agreements for reduced tuition for a limited number of entering students who have served in the Peace Corps, City Year, and AmeriCorps. For information about these programs, visit the SPA website.

9. MPA GRADUATION PROCEDURES

Students who have completed all the requirements for the MPA degree can apply for candidacy and graduation in the fall, spring, or summer semesters. (Students who graduate in the summer may participate in graduation ceremonies in the fall. No ceremonies are held in the summer.) There are, however, deadlines for the submission of graduation materials. Should students not be able to meet the deadlines, or if they are unable to complete all the degree requirements by the end of the term in which they seek to graduate, they can reapply for graduation in a subsequent semester.

In order to graduate, students must submit to SPA an approved Application for Admission to Candidacy no later than the add/drop deadline of the semester in which they plan to graduate. In addition, students are also required to notify the Registrar’s Office of their intent to graduate by filling out an Online Intent to Graduate form through their UCDAccess portal.

Students who have completed the Application for Admission to Candidacy and are on the graduation list, but find they will not be able to complete the program requirements before graduation, should notify the SPA office as soon as possible.

10. SPA ACADEMIC POLICIES

Transfer Credits

Students who have taken graduate course work related to public administration at other institutions may be able to transfer some portion of that work into the SPA MPA program if the course work has not already been applied toward a degree. A maximum of nine graduate-level semester hours may be transferred from an accredited university. In order for a course to substitute for a core or required class, the course must have been completed at an NASPAA-
accredited school of public affairs. Students should have received at least a B in courses they request to transfer.

Students should request transfer of credits immediately after admission. In order to request a transfer of credit, students need to complete the Transfer of Credit form available from the SPA Student Services Coordinators and on the SPA website and attach official transcripts to the form (if SPA does not have a copy of the official transcripts). The request is then reviewed by the student’s faculty advisor and the MPA director. Upon review, the MPA director will notify the student of acceptance or rejection of his/her request.

Grading Policies

Grades offered in SPA courses (except internship and thesis) are based on an A to F scale, with each letter grade representing the following standard narrative description:

A = Work beyond the level of a typical graduate student; exemplary work. (An A equals 4 grade points, an A- equals 3.7 points; there is no A+ grade.)

B = Work typical of a graduate student; indicates student has attained the knowledge and skills intended for the course. (A B+ equals 3.3, a B equals 3.0., and a B- equals 2.7 points.)

C = Performance is below graduate-level expectations. (A C+ earns 2.3 grade points, a C yields 2.0).

D = Substandard performance in all aspects of the work of the course; inadequate comprehension of assigned reading material. (D equals 1.0 grade point).

F = Level of performance demonstrably below that expected of a graduate student; little or no indication that the student can succeed in a graduate program.

Please note that students must receive at least a B- in a core course to receive credit for the course.

The calculation of a student’s overall GPA shall be based on all course work applied to the degree, including any courses taken as a “non-degree” student. (NOTE: Courses taken in non-degree status are not included in the overall calculation of GPA on the official transcripts, but are included in the overall calculation of GPA as conducted by SPA staff for graduation purposes.)

Probation and Suspension
A student who fails to maintain an overall “B” (3.0) grade-point average will be placed on probation. Any student receiving a grade of F in any course is automatically placed on probation.

Probationary status shall not be allowed to extend beyond two semesters (including summer session) during which the student is enrolled. Failure on the part of the student to remove himself/herself from probation (i.e., by achieving an overall GPA of at least 3.0) during this time interval will result in automatic suspension from SPA.

A suspended student is eligible to apply for readmission after one year. Approval or rejection of this application rests jointly with the student’s faculty advisor, the MPA director, and the Dean.

**Incompletes, Withdrawals, and Retaking Courses**

**Retaking Courses.** A student may retake no more than two courses during the course of the degree program, regardless of whether the need for a retake results from a low grade, an incomplete, or a course withdrawal. Discretion is considered by the program administrator for exceptional, documented circumstances (i.e., military deployment, major medical emergency).

A student who receives a letter grade for a course that is too low to qualify for credit may retake the course once. Both grades will be used to calculate the student’s overall GPA. To retake a course, the student must re-enroll and pay tuition and fees for the course again.

**Incompletes.** An Incomplete may be granted when the student has successfully completed 75 percent or more of the course and is prevented from completing the class by circumstances beyond their control. The course instructor has discretion as to whether to grant an Incomplete, and students should be aware that not all faculty will grant Incompletes. In addition, students in online courses should be aware that they will not have access to the course shell after the ending date of the course, and so incompletes are not available for work that must be completed using the course shell.

If the instructor agrees to grant an Incomplete, the student must make arrangements to complete the remaining coursework with the original instructor within one year by completing an “Incomplete Contract.” The student may not “sit in” on the class in subsequent semesters.

Once the coursework is completed, the instructor will change the grade to a letter grade. The Incomplete notation will appear along with the final grade on the student’s transcript. If the coursework is not completed within a year, the Incomplete will automatically change to an F unless the student and the instructor have agreed in writing to an extension.

A student may be granted no more than two Incompletes during the course of the degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the director of the degree program. No Incompletes may be granted in capstone courses.


*Drops and Withdrawals.* Deadlines for dropping a course are set by the Office of the Registrar and posted on the Academic Calendar each semester. Students are responsible for knowing these deadlines. Students can drop a course during the first week of the semester without being assessed full tuition and without having the course appear on their transcript. Students who drop a course after the first week but before census date may drop in the UCDAccess portal, but a drop charge will apply. Students in intensive format classes must drop prior to the third class meeting to be eligible for a tuition adjustment.

After census date (typically two weeks after the start of classes), the student may withdraw from the course by submitting a Schedule Adjustment Form with the signature of the instructor. A “W” will appear on the student’s transcript.

If the request to withdraw is made after the 10th week of classes, the student must file a late drop petition, in addition to a completed Schedule Adjustment Form, in order to obtain special approval from the program director and the Dean’s office. Students will not be allowed to drop after the 10th week of classes simply because they are failing the course; it is the student’s responsibility to work with the instructor to determine if the course should be dropped due to failing grades prior to the 10th week of classes. If the student is permitted to withdraw, a “W” will appear on the student’s transcript.

No tuition reimbursements are available for withdrawals made after census date, and students may be required to repay financial aid received. Students who believe their circumstances justify an exception to financial obligations may appeal to the university’s tuition appeals committee.

Students must initiate a drop or withdrawal and follow the appropriate procedures. Students who fail to do this and do not complete the coursework will be issued a letter grade of “F” for the course.

A student is allowed to withdraw from no more than two courses during the course of the degree program, absent documented exceptional circumstances and approval by the director of the degree program.

*Retroactive Grade Changes.* Students are not permitted to request grade changes for courses in which a final letter grade (other than an incomplete) has been received except as a result of instructor error or as otherwise warranted through the academic grievance process. A student may not enter into an agreement with an instructor to retroactively change a final letter grade based on work completed by the student after the course has ended.

**Academic Grievance Policy**

This policy describes formal procedures by which a currently enrolled student may seek to remedy academic grievances within the School of Public Affairs. Academic grievances are
challenges to academic actions or decisions, including but not limited to actions such as an academic grade or evaluation of a student’s work in a course, seminar, or other academic forum; a decision with respect to a student’s academic standing in a program or at the School; unjust treatment by a faculty member in a class; actions related to dissertation or capstone procedures.

This policy refers only to academic grievances within the School of Public Affairs. The University has established mechanisms for non-academic grievances such as claims of sexual harassment, complaints against university administrative employees, policies, or procedures, interpersonal conflict resolution, and issues relating to student employment, and students should use those mechanisms for non-academic grievances. Grievances involving claims of plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty are subject to SPA’s Academic Discipline policy, in the next section.

*Step One: Informal Resolution.* The student is strongly encouraged to first attempt to informally resolve the grievance through discussion with the faculty member(s) involved.

*Step Two: Filing the Grievance.* If the student is unable to resolve the dispute with the faculty member(s), he or she should file a written grievance with the Associate Dean, with a copy to the Dean. Absent unusual circumstances, the grievance should be filed within 30 days after the student learns of the event giving rise to the grievance.

The written grievance may be filed via e-mail or delivered directly to the Associate Dean. The grievance should clearly state the basis for the complaint and the remedy requested, and should include any evidence that supports the grievance, such as class syllabi, assignments, and statements from other students.

Students should be aware that grades and other evaluations of student work are traditionally within the jurisdiction of individual instructors, and are not likely to be changed absent evidence that the faculty member (1) determined the grade based on considerations other than student performance; (2) substantially differed from previously announced criteria or procedures in determining the grade; or (3) violated university or school policy in determining the grade. The student bears the burden of proof on these allegations.

*Step Three: Investigating the Grievance.* The Associate Dean will acknowledge receipt of the grievance, forward a copy to the faculty member(s) involved, and begin the investigation of the circumstances of the grievance. He/she may request additional information from the student. The faculty member(s) involved may submit a written response to the grievance, including any evidence in opposition to the grievance, within 21 days of receipt of the grievance. If the grievance involves the need for substantial academic expertise in a particular field in order to assess whether there is a basis for the grievance, the Associate Dean may appoint a panel of faculty members with expertise in the area to investigate the grievance and recommend a decision to the Dean.
In the event that the Associate Dean is involved in the grievance, the Dean shall refer the investigation of the grievance to another faculty member. In the event the Dean is involved in the grievance, the matter will be forwarded to the Graduate School for investigation pursuant to the rules of the Graduate School.

**Step Four: Decision by the Dean.** Within 30 days of the filing of the grievance, the Associate Dean (or the members of the faculty panel, if one has been appointed) shall give the Dean a written report containing recommendations as to the disposition of the grievance, together with the reasons for the conclusions contained in the report. Within one week of receiving the report, the Dean shall forward the report to the student and the faculty member(s), together with his/her decision on the disposition of the grievance.

**Appealing the Decision of the Dean.** If the student is not satisfied with the Dean’s decision, he or she may make a written request to the Dean within five days that a faculty panel be appointed to review the grievance and consider the appeal. The appeal panel should be different from any panel appointed to investigate the grievance. The appeal panel shall consider all relevant information and make a written recommendation to the Dean within two weeks of the filing of the appeal, with copies to the student and the faculty member(s) involved in the grievance. The Dean shall consider whether to uphold or deny the appeal, and shall notify the student and faculty member(s) within five days.

The decision of the Dean is final with respect to students in the MPA degree program. Students in other SPA programs may appeal the decision of the Dean to the Graduate School Council, pursuant to Graduate School procedures, and the Graduate School Council’s decision is final.

**General:** Any deadline in this policy may be waived with the agreement of the student and the School if needed to ensure that all relevant information is considered.

**Academic Discipline Policy**

According to the Laws of the Regents of the University of Colorado, all matters of academic policy and degree program administration, including academic dishonesty, are under the jurisdiction of the University's schools and colleges. Likewise, matters of student conduct resulting in disruption of the learning environment are also subject to disciplinary action by administrators of the schools and colleges, as well as by campus administrators and campus-wide adjudicative panels.

While definitions and examples of what comprises the substance of academic dishonesty and disruptive behavior subject to disciplinary action are to be found in the catalogs of the University of Colorado at Denver, the purpose of this document is to specify what procedures SPA will follow in the handling of potential disciplinary infractions. Authority for final action on any matter concerning potential disciplinary infractions lies with the Dean.
Identification of Potential Disciplinary Infraction and Initial Action by SPA Faculty and Administration. It is the responsibility of students at the University of Colorado to be aware of what the expected standards of academic integrity and student conduct are on the campus at which they are enrolled. It is also the responsibility of students to report incidents of academic dishonesty or disruptive conduct in the learning environment to either the faculty member in charge of the course in which the alleged conduct occurred, or to school administrators (dean, associate deans, or degree program directors).

Whether through direct experience or information provided by a student, if a faculty member discovers an incident of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism or cheating; see catalog for list of infractions), s/he has the discretion of imposing grade penalties ranging from a point reduction on the assignment, to a grade of F for the assignment, to a grade of F for the course. If the faculty member decides to award an F for the course, s/he shall consult with the Associate Dean concerning the proportionality of the penalty to the nature of the infraction, although final authority for imposition of any grade penalty within this range lies with the faculty member.

Whether through direct experience or information provided by a student, if a faculty member discovers student behavior disruptive of the educational environment, s/he may temporarily suspend the student from further classroom participation for a period of no longer than two weeks, pending an inquiry into the incident by the faculty member and/or the Associate Dean and campus authorities. If the faculty member determines that the infraction is serious enough to warrant administrative dismissal from the class, s/he may file such a request with the Dean. The administration of the school may also determine to take such action on its own initiative, subsequent to inquiry into the matter and after affording the student an opportunity to apprise school administrators of his or her version of the circumstances of the alleged infraction.

If a faculty member assigns a grade of F to coursework or as a course grade for reasons of academic dishonesty, s/he shall so inform the student of this action in writing; and shall maintain a record of any evidence documenting the infraction. If the Dean determines that a student should be administratively dropped from a course for disruptive behavior, the student will also be informed in writing. Such a determination will constitute final action by SPA on the matter, appealable to appropriate authorities in the CU Denver Administration.

Record Keeping and Repeat Offenses. Written notice to a student of the award of an F grade by a faculty member for reasons of academic dishonesty or of Administrative Disenrollment in a class by the Dean for reasons of disruptive behavior will be kept on file in the office of the Associate Dean of the campus at which the disciplinary infraction occurred. If there are no repeated disciplinary infractions by the student, upon successful completion of a degree program the written notice will be removed from the files of the Associate Dean and destroyed. If, however, during a student's continued matriculation in a degree program s/he is found to have committed another disciplinary infraction, such written notice of prior infractions and
penalties assigned will be used in determining the severity of the penalty that should be levied for a repeat offense, including recommendation to the Dean that the student should be dismissed from the degree program for disciplinary reasons. If the recommendation is for permanent dismissal from the program, the student has the right to an immediate review by a Disciplinary Appeals Committee (DAC, described below), as well as to representation. If a student is represented by counsel, the DAC will be advised in the discharge of its mission by the Office of University Counsel.

*Appeals.* If a student subject to suspension or permanent dismissal as described above decides to appeal such action, s/he must do so within 10 working days of receiving notification in writing from the Dean. The appeal must take the form of a letter to the Dean, stating why such action should not be taken, and requesting review by a Disciplinary Appeals Committee (DAC). Within ten working days of the receipt of such an appeal, the Dean shall empanel a DAC, comprised of three tenured or tenure-track SPA faculty who have had no prior involvement in the matter subject to appeal. If the student so desires, s/he may provide a list of no more than three SPA faculty to the Dean, from among whom the Dean may choose one of the three faculty members to serve on the committee. The Dean shall designate one member of the committee to act as chair.

The DAC will review all relevant documentation during the course of inquiry into the alleged disciplinary infraction and action taken by the faculty and/or school administration. The DAC may request additional information from all parties concerned, including interviews, during the course of its inquiry.

When its work is concluded, which must be within 30 working days of its empanelment, the DAC will file a report summarizing its inquiry, stating its findings, and making its recommendations for action to the dean. The DAC may make recommendations ranging from exoneration of the student's conduct, to upholding whatever penalty has been assigned below, to suspension from the degree program for an academic term, to permanent dismissal from the program. In making its recommendations, the DAC shall consider the proportionality of the recommended penalty to the nature of the infraction, and shall also take into consideration whether the student has previously committed one or more similar offenses while enrolled at the school.

*Final Action by the Dean.* Within ten working days of receipt of the DAC's report, the Dean will take final action on the appeal. Final action shall take the form of a letter to the student stating the action and the reasons for taking it. The Dean will append a copy of the DAC's report to the letter. The Dean's decision shall constitute final action by the School of Public Affairs.

*Appeal to Campus Authorities.* Depending on the nature of the disciplinary infraction (i.e., academic dishonesty or inappropriate student conduct) and the penalty assigned, the student may appeal the school's final action to the UCD Graduate Council, or to the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs.
Constitutional Rights. Nothing in this procedure is intended nor should it be construed as abrogating the rights under law accruing to any student at the University of Colorado.