Master of
Public Administration Program
Graduate Student Handbook

SJSU | DEPARTMENT OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

MPA Program Website
https://www.sjsu.edu/mpa/index.php

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION TO THE MPA PROGRAM

Welcome to the Master of Public Administration Program (the Program) at San José State University (SJSU)! The Program is a part of the Department of Urban & Regional Planning (the Department) in the College of Social Sciences. San José State University is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), and the MPA Program is an accredited member of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA).

The SJSU MPA Program is one of the oldest and respected MPA programs in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2022, it ranked 114 nationally among over 370 such programs evaluated by *US News and World Report*. Its alumni include numerous city managers, chiefs of police, fire chiefs, department heads and NGO leaders, as well as military officers, state-level department leaders, elected officials, and educators.

Program Goals and Mission

The Program is focused primarily on expanding the knowledge and skills of fully employed professionals in public and non-profit agencies, on adults seeking career changes, and on recent college graduates who are highly motivated toward a career in public services or non-profit agencies. Our curriculum consists of:

- Core courses in the theory and practice of public management at the local and state government levels, and in locally-serving non-profit agencies, focused on management skills and tools, and policy development and analysis recognizing community needs;
- Opportunities for practical experience through internships in local public and non-profit organizations for those without public or non-profit agency administrative experience;
- Encouragement to use the culminating experience project as a service to a public or non-profit agency, providing research and survey services, analysis and recommendations for implementation of policies and programs to enhance their service delivery.

The mission of the MPA program is to educate and train students to become the next generation of leaders, managers, and analysts in public and non-profit agencies with a focus on serving the San Francisco Bay Area and its diverse population. Students learn to synthesize the academic knowledge, practical tools, and analytical skills they learn in their classes so that they recognize and value diversity, behave with high ethical standards, manage personnel resources equitably, recognize and manage risk, and manage programs and policies efficiently and cost-effectively. Upon completion of the degree, students will employ critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and a public service focus in the delivery of community services with the city, county, special district, state agency, or non-profit agency.

The underlying educational philosophy of the program is that public managers need a grounding in democratic, organizational and managerial theory, and training in the practical application of

the theories in order to properly conduct the people's business. The curriculum also emphasizes the values of social equity, accountability, and community engagement. A faculty of academically and professionally-qualified professors imparts both education and inspiration, leading to a community-focused view of a public service career.

The MPA Program also supports the mission of SJSU by:
- Attracting, retaining, and graduating a highly diverse body of public administration students;
- Providing a disciplinary and interdisciplinary professional education in public administration that is academically rigorous and intellectually challenging;
- Providing a public administration curriculum that reflects its location in the nation's most culturally and ethnically diverse large city, and that encourages critical thinking and social and cultural awareness; and
- Fostering a collegial and cooperative intellectual environment for students and faculty that includes recognition and appreciation of differing viewpoints and promotes academic freedom within the program community.

Program Learning Outcomes

As an accredited program of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration (NASPAA), San Jose State University's MPA program has adopted the following program learning outcomes articulated by NASPAA.

1. **Lead and manage in public governance**
   a. Apply the project management approach to public management models
   b. Manage projects
   c. Understand the relationships between public policy, whether proposed or enacted, and leadership and management in implementation
2. **Participate in and contribute to the public policy process**
   a. Apply techniques for program evaluation and policy analysis
   b. Describe and execute the policymaking process, including defining the problem, setting the agenda, formulating policy, implementing policy and evaluating policy
   c. Prepare a budget reflecting policy priorities
3. **Analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions**
   a. Employ analytical tools for collecting, analyzing, presenting and interpreting data, including appropriate statistical concepts and techniques
   b. Identify and employ alternative sources of funding, including grants, taxes and fees
   c. Understand and apply the legal context of public affairs, administration and policy
4. **Articulate and apply a public service perspective**
   a. Behave ethically and with integrity: tell the truth, keep confidences, admit mistakes
   b. Understand and apply criteria appropriate to public affairs, administration and policy

5. **Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry**
   a. Communicate effectively in writing: prepares clear, concise and well-organized written materials tailored to the audience's level of expertise and needs
   b. Communicate effectively in speech: presents oral information accurately, clearly, concisely and persuasively, tailored to the level of expertise and needs
   c. Work productively in teams

Program Administration & Governance

The Public Administration Program is located within the College of Social Sciences, Urban & Regional Department in Washington Square Hall, Room 118. The Program's current director is Dr. Laureen Hom, whose office is Washington Square Hall Room 218A and can be reached via email at laureen.hom@sjsu.edu. Day-to-day operations of the department and program are managed by our Department Analyst, Michelle Del Real and Department Coordinator, Patrice Hernandez.

The MPA program is led by the MPA Program Director and full-time, tenured-line faculty in the Urban & Regional Planning and Political Science Departments. These faculty are considered the core MPA faculty who teach the core and elective PADM courses, as well as make decisions about program structure and curriculum. Faculty members conduct research in their respective fields and engage the community through service, consultations and participation in professional organizations. Our program also includes part-time faculty who have advanced degrees and professional experience in the field of public administration, working in both San Francisco Bay Area local government and non-profit organizations. Students are encouraged to build mentoring relationships with all faculty for their intellectual and professional development. Office hours for faculty and staff vary by semester. For the most updated information about office hours, please visit the Department's website and/or contact the core faculty directly.

In addition to the core faculty, the Program has an MPA Advisory Committee, which is made up of leaders in community public and non-profit agencies, alumni and faculty, who provide guidance on curriculum development to meet the evolving needs of their organizations and communities.

More information about the Program is located on our website.

ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM

To-Do Before Your First Day of Class

As a newly admitted SJSU graduate student, please take time to carefully read your admission letter from the department and the College of Graduate Studies. Both contain important information on how to set up your SJSU account and your admission status, including the missing prerequisites and internship requirements.

There are several - and many! - things to do when first starting the program. We advise that you prioritize that you complete the following steps before the first day of instruction:

1. *Official Matriculation:* You will not be considered an officially matriculated graduate student until you register for courses in the first semester of your admission. Your enrollment in classes is your official notification to SJSU of your intent to attend. If for any reason you cannot attend your first semester, you will need to either defer or re-apply to SJSU at the next application period.

   Register for classes on **MySJSU** after fulfilling any University requirements (e.g. required forms, fees, etc). MySJSU is the online site that provides students with access to registration, fee payment, and other services. A student can also find his or her priority registration date, review grades for completed courses, pay fees, and other services. It is available in the [OneSJSU portal](https://one.sjsu.edu) (https://one.sjsu.edu) along with links to other campus resources, including your SJSU email. More information on how to access your MySJSU account is located [here](#).

2. **Obtain a Student ID Card:** The SJSU student identification card is called the "Tower Card." You are required to use this card as student identification to obtain services at the Library, Event Center, Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority (buses & light rail passes), Health Center, Admissions & Records, Career Planning and Placement, as well as to obtain parking permits and other frequently used student services. **You will need your ID card to access most of the buildings on campus!**

   Tower cards are available at the Bursar's Office windows located in the Student Services Center (Bottom Floor of the North Garage). More information about the Tower Card is located [here](#).

3. Attend the **New Student Orientation** held by the Department during the first week of instruction to meet the faculty, your cohort, and new students in the Department's other graduate programs, as well as prepare for your first semester! The New Student Orientation offers an overview of the program, its requirements and faculty expectations. Notices listing the time, day and site of the orientation are sent out to the e-mail addresses of all new students by the department's Admissions Director. **All new students are responsible for the information imparted at the New Student Orientation.** Students who miss the New

Student Orientation should review this Handbook closely and meet with the MPA Director to ensure they are aware of the expectations and requirements of the program.

4. Check the **Canvas** sites at the beginning of the semester for each of your courses after you enroll in classes. This may take up to 24-hours to update. Canvas is the Learning Management System (LMS) of SJSU and most professors will use Canvas to upload their syllabi and other important files related to their course. Every student has access to all their Canvas sites via the [Canvas Dashboard](#).

5. Join the **program and department listservs**. There are two listservs that you should request to join. Both these listservs provide advising updates and reminders, as well as job and internship announcements.
   ○ MPA student listserv: https://groups.google.com/u/2/a/sjsu.edu/g/sjsu-mpa-students-group/about
   ○ Urban Plan Connect listserv: https://groups.google.com/a/sjsu.edu/g/sjsu_urbanplanconnect-group/about

Graduate Classification Status

Your admission letter will also indicate if you are either admitted as conditionally classified or classified standing. If you are admitted "conditionally classified", you will have certain prerequisites that you will need to complete which will be listed in your admission letter from SJSU. These prerequisites must be met before you can be changed to "classified" standing. If you have any questions about the prerequisites listed in your admissions letter, please contact the MPA Director. More information on how to change your standing is located in the Prerequisite Courses for Classified Standing section.

Provisional Admission

Some students may receive a provisional admission to the Program. Your admission letter from SJSU as well as your 'To Do' list on MySJSU will state what specific documents or tasks you need to complete in order to have these provisions cleared. If you do not have these provisions cleared by the designated due date for that semester, a hold will be placed on your record, and you will not be able to register for subsequent semesters. Provisional admission is a status that is placed by Graduation Admissions, so it cannot be removed by your graduate department.

Tuition Costs and Units: Full-Time or Part-Time Status

Students pay their tuition according to whether they enroll as a part-time or full-time student. This is based on the number of units one takes per semester. A part-time graduate student for financial aid purposes is considered one who takes 6 units or less each semester, and a full-time student is one who takes more than 6 units (and at least 6 of those units are 200 level courses). For the most updated information about tuition and fees, please visit the Financial Aid and Scholarship Office [website](#).

The Program supports the needs of both full-time or part-time students, and students should determine which status is best for them depending on their work schedule, finances, and

obligations, as well as any other personal/caregiving needs and responsibilities. We want students to have a good experience in the program, particularly during the first semester. Therefore, students are cautioned against taking too many units in the beginning of the program. Graduate school requires significant amounts of independent and assigned reading, research and writing. All classes involve professional writing, oral presentations, use of computer applications and teamwork. The expectation is that students will spend from 1 to 4 hours outside of the classroom for every hour within the classroom. A typical first semester schedule would include PADM 210: Introduction to Public Administration and one other core course. Ultimately, students are encouraged to meet with the MPA Advisor to plan and discuss their plan for completing the program within a reasonable timeframe.

Typically, MPA students take one to two courses each semester while working full-time. However, it is important to note that courses range from 3-4 units, so students taking up to 6 credits pay part-time tuition and students taking 7 or more credits pay full-time tuition even though in both situations, they are taking two courses. Please make sure that you note these unit differences when enrolling in courses so you are not surprised by your tuition fees!

FULFILLING PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Advising

The MPA Director serves as the primary advisor for all students. Students are strongly recommended to meet with the MPA Director at the beginning of the program to map out a plan to complete the requirements of the program. It is also strongly recommended that students meet with the Director each semester until the candidacy form is filed to plan appropriate courses for the following semester. We also encourage students to build advising and mentorship relationships with other faculty who overlap with their interests.

Students are encouraged to download a personal copy of the Course Planning and Roadmap Worksheet to assist in their planning for the program and as a tool to guide their advising meetings with the MPA Program Director. The file also includes a tab that provides suggestions for how to sequence courses according to full-time or part-time status. Click "File" for downloading options.

The Office of Graduate Admissions and Program Evaluations (GAPE)
(http://www.sjsu.edu/gape/) is responsible for all administrative functions related to current graduate students (e.g. ensuring forms are approved, updates on requests and status changes). The MPA Program Director has limited access to these administrative tools and may refer you to GAPE for answers. For any administrative questions about their status and progress, students should reach out to GAPE and/or the assigned GAPE evaluator/advisor for the program.

Curriculum & Degree Requirements

The Program curriculum emphasizes the practical application of administrative theories and skills related to:

- Role of government and non-profit organizations in social and economic systems, with a specific emphasis on the United States
- Public service ethics
- Application of research techniques and strategies to make ethical and data-driven decisions that inform policy analysis, planning, evaluation and implementation
- Nuts and bolts of public and non-profit organization management
- Public finance and budgeting
- Public personnel management
- Community engagement
- Diversity, equity and inclusion

Across all the courses, professors seek to illustrate theory with practical applications through the case study approach and class exercises that use data from the real world.

The program requires that students complete at least **36 units** for graduation, which includes 15 units of core courses, 9 units of advanced seminars, 9 units of electives, and 3 units of PADM 298

to reach the total 36 units. Students are strongly recommended to take PADM 297 as an elective to prepare for the final project.

The 36 units are in addition to completing the prerequisites for the program. Students who have not had substantial administrative work experience are also required to complete an Internship.

Prerequisite Courses for Classified Standing

Students must have Classified Standing in order to complete and graduate from the program. To attain Classified standing in the MPA Program students need to document successful completion of three introductory courses (usually completed through undergraduate coursework):

- American Government (POLS 15, POLS 001 or equivalent)
- Microeconomics
- Statistics (any semester-long statistics course)

Students must also provide evidence of basic EXCEL competence. Students complete this by demonstrating that they have received training in Excel at work, school (e.g. a B+ or better in an Accounting course), or workshop(s) and have knowledge of the major functions of the software. We encourage students to take the SJSU LinkedIn Learning "Master Microsoft Excel" which is free for all SJSU students.

Students must finish the prerequisites before registering for the fifth course in the program. Ideally, students complete statistics before taking PADM 212 and complete microeconomics as well as demonstrate EXCEL competence before taking PADM 218. Exceptions may be applied depending on the discretion of the MPA Director and course instructor.

Prerequisite credit may be given if students have taken an equivalent undergraduate course and/or an advanced undergraduate/graduate level course in that subject. In general, prerequisite credit will not be given for high school Advanced Placement courses or CLEP Tests. Students should meet with the MPA Director to determine if any course substitutions are possible. These courses **do not** count towards the completion of the required 36 units for the program.

All graduate students must be in classified standing before they can apply for candidacy (more information in the next section). To clear your status, students should send proof (e.g. transcripts, certificates, resumes, etc.) demonstrating completion of all the prerequisites. Upon approval from the MPA Director that you have satisfied the prerequisite requirements, students must complete the Change of Classification petition on the GAPE website in order to officially change their status with the university.

Core Courses

There are five core courses that all students must complete and pass (3 units each for a total of 15 units):

- PADM 210 Introduction to Public Administration
- PADM 212 Research Methods
- PADM 213 Public Policy Analysis and Evaluation (URBP 236 is an approved substitute and is a 4 unit course)
- PADM 214 Public Management
- PADM 218 Public Budgeting

Core courses are offered every semester. **PADM 210 - Introduction to Public Administration should be taken in a student's first semester**. This course is the overview of the field, serves as the writing course for the MPA degree, and provides access to important introductory material in its proper sequence. Additionally, upon successful completion of PADM 210, all MPA students will fulfill the university's graduate writing requirement (GWAR), which all students must complete before a student can be admitted to candidacy. All students should complete PADM 210 by the end of the second semester in the program.

In general, core courses should be completed before taking advanced seminars. Students are advised to complete these five core courses as soon as possible. Students also must complete core courses before enrolling in courses to complete their culminating experience/capstone.

Elective Courses

In addition to completing the core classes, students are required to take 18 units of electives. **Nine of these 18 units must be advanced PADM seminars**. Advanced PADM seminars cover specialized areas of public administration, and it is recommended that students choose electives based on their interests and professional goals. They are all 3 unit courses, unless noted otherwise. Students can choose from the following PADM electives:

- PADM 202 Regional Governance
- PADM 215 Public Personnel Administration
- PADM 217 Organization Theory
- PADM 219 Public Financial Management
- PADM 220 Non-Profit Management
- PADM 223 Law and Public Administration
- PADM/URBP 240 Environmental Planning (4 units)
- PADM 295 Special Topics, such as labor relations, social justice, and other topics related to specialized areas of interest to MPA scholars
- PADM 281 Internship (As of Fall 2024, this class will not be regularly offered. If students need course credit for an internship placement, they should speak to the MPA Director about options)
- PADM 284 Directed Reading (1-3 units) (This class is not regularly offered and must be initiated by a faculty to be placed on the schedule. It is an individualized independent

study course that a student and faculty design together. Students must approach and receive approval from an MPA faculty to determine the topic and scope of work for that semester)
- PADM 297 Advanced Seminar in Public Management (This is an optional Capstone course where students develop the required prospectus needed for the capstone/culminating experience. **While not currently required, students are strongly encouraged to take PADM 297 prior to enrolling in the capstone course (PADM 298).**)

PADM elective courses are not regularly offered every semester; they are roughly offered every other year. Students should thus plan accordingly if they are interested in any of these courses as they may only be offered once during their time in the program.

Other elective courses outside of the department may be approved by the MPA Director, based on a student's research interests and career aspirations. This may include 100- to 200-level courses in other departments. Some common non-PADM elective courses include:

- COMM 144 Organizational Communication (4 units)
- MCOMM 104 Introduction to Mass Communications Research (3 units)
- POLS 102 State Government and Politics (4 units)
- POLS 103 Local Government and Politics (4 units)
- URBP 205 Private Development and Urban Planning (3 units)
- URBP 206 Market Analysis, Appraisal and Finance of Real Estate Development (3 units)

While students must seek approval from the MPA Director before enrolling in outside electives, official administrative approval of all electives takes place when the Candidacy Form is completed.

Work Experience/Internship Requirement
An internship is required of anyone who does not already possess significant fulltime managerial or administrative work experience before beginning the program. This will be clearly stated in your admission letter.

For students who are required to fulfill this requirement, students must work with the MPA Director to find an appropriate internship. Students are required to complete at least 280 hours at their internship site. Internship opportunities will be distributed via the MPA student listserv, but students are encouraged to also look for internships independently. An initial list of resources to search for internships and jobs can be found in the Resources section. Students who need to fulfill this requirement should aim to complete their internship prior to declaring their candidacy to graduation.

Once a student finds a possible internship placement they must complete the following steps:
1. Inform the MPA Director via email about the possible internship placement and include details of the internship so that it receives pre-approval that it satisfies the internship requirement.

2. Once the internship is secured, inform the MPA Director of the placement.
3. Upon completion of their internship, students should inform the MPA Director who will then send them the Internship Assessment Form, which must be completed by their direct supervisor. The direct supervisor must send the completed form directly to the MPA Director. Students cannot send it on behalf of their supervisor!

Alternatively, once admitted to the program, if a student accumulates at least two years of full-time relevant experience in the public sector or non-profit work, they may be able to waive the internship. To waive the internship, students must write a memo to the MPA Director, outlining the work experiences, with an up-to-date resume, as well as a letter from their direct supervisor confirming their employment. The Director will review the materials, and the student will be informed in writing of whether the internship requirement is waived.

Culminating Experience - Capstone Project
All students are required to complete a culminating experience as required by the university. The university officially has two plans, Plan A: Thesis and Plan B: Thesis Quality Applied Research Project.

-   **Plan A: Thesis, (3 – 6 units): PADM 299**
    A thesis demonstrating competence in original research and acceptable to the Department must be submitted to the Department eight weeks before the date on which the degree is to be awarded. The thesis must conform to University standards, including approval by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, and then by the Graduate Studies Committee. These approvals generally take at least one semester after the paper is completed. **Most students do not choose this option, and the program encourages students to choose Plan B.**

-   **Plan B: Thesis Quality Applied Research Paper (3 Units): PADM 298**
    In lieu of a thesis (Plan A), a student may complete a thesis quality research project (Plan B). Because this is a practical project, most students will derive more benefit and gain more knowledge and experience applicable to a public administration career from this option.

    In PADM 298, the student will independently complete the substantial paper under the supervision of the adviser. A student must develop an original research question that lends itself to a project that fully demonstrates the breadth of his or her knowledge and skills, and for which reliable and timely data can be acquired or developed. Students who are working are encouraged to explore opportunities to complete projects of direct benefit to their employers, for example, an outcome analysis of an existing program. Students in internships are similarly encouraged to seek out a topic of use to the employing agency. In each case, the student's connection to the agency will make access to data easier.

To enroll in PADM 298 and begin the supervised research, a student must complete an approved prospectus consisting of a research question, a background, a literature review and a methodology design, regardless if they have taken PADM 297 or not.

Prior to taking PADM 298, students are strongly advised to enroll in PADM 297 for mentoring and peer advice on the research project, and for advising on the development of the prospectus. A prospectus is generally 12 to 15 pages, but may be longer depending on the research design and literature review. Alternatively, guidance documents are available from the program for students wishing to work independently.

PADM 298/299 registration is good for one semester. If the culminating experience is not completed for graduation within one semester, the student will have to register for PADM 1290R for every semester with an RP grade (report in progress). After 2 semesters, if the project is not finished, a one-year extension may be requested. The policy is located here.

Examples of high quality MPA final projects can be accessed at ScholarWorks under the Urban & Regional Planning and Political Science Departments.

Advancement to Candidacy

Most graduate students apply for candidacy at least a year before they intend to complete the program. The candidacy form is the contract between the student and SJSU for the program the student will complete to lead to the MPA degree. This form lists all the courses that you will take by semester for the rest of the MPA program. The Advancement to Candidacy form is available on the GAPE Forms website.

Before a student can apply for candidacy, the following requirements must already be met. Please be sure that you have met the following pre-requisites or your candidacy application will be denied.

- Be in graduate classified standing. Students who are still in conditionally classified standing must submit a change of classification form that is signed by the MPA Director. This form can be submitted at the same time as the candidacy petition.
- Completed a minimum of three courses/9 graded units (100 or 200 level courses).
- Have completed the Competency in Written English (GWAR) through PADM 210.
- Have a minimum cumulative grade point average of a 3.0 in all courses taken as a graduate student. Lower division prerequisite courses are not included in this calculation.
- All but 6 units listed for your graduate program must be from 200 level courses and no more than two (PADM 281 and PADM 298) may be CR/NC classes. All others must be letter graded courses.
- Courses which may not be used on the candidacy petition are basic skills courses (below 100 level), student teaching, 300 level residence and 400 level extended studies courses taken at SJSU.
- Had any planned transfer units already approved (See Transfer Credit below). Only three (3) of the courses listed may be from transfer credit work (Note: courses from other

departments at SJSU taken as a graduate student are *not* considered transfer work. They are accounted for in the Other Departments section of the form.) See Transfer Credit below for more information.

- All courses listed must <u>be less than seven years old at the time of graduation</u>.

Students may either complete the candidacy form for themselves and then meet with the Director or complete the form during an advising meeting with the Director.

The deadline to submit your candidacy will depend on when you plan on graduating. GAPE needs many months to properly evaluate your candidacy petition and notify you. Please review the current [SJSU candidacy deadlines](#) to determine the last possible date to submit the candidacy form, based on the graduation date goal.

You will be notified if your candidacy petition has been approved or denied by e-mail from the Program's GAPE evaluator. Once you have been approved for candidacy, you will need to submit a graduation application when you are ready to receive your degree. Please read <u>Applying for Graduation</u> below for further details. If your candidacy is denied, you will receive instructions from the GAPE evaluator detailing the exact steps you need to take to clear any deficiencies.

Transfer Credit

Before applying for Candidacy, a student may petition for transfer credit for work that was completed earlier. Transfer credit may be obtained for courses taken at another University (in graduate standing only), through Open University at SJSU, or courses that were taken as an undergraduate senior (final semester) but were not applied to the undergraduate degree. Transfer work must be from institutions that were listed on the initial application to SJSU and must be from an accredited institution. Petitions must be signed by the MPA Program Director before submitting them to GAPE for approval. A maximum of only 30% of your program can be transfer credit units, so the MPA program accepts only **three transfer courses or a maximum of nine credits. These cannot be core courses.**

The Request for Validation of Transfer Credit is available on the GAPE Forms [website](#), which provides additional information about supporting documentation required for transfer units.

Course Substitutions

After receiving your candidacy approval, any future course changes from the original candidacy program *must* be approved by the MPA Director and GAPE. You will need to complete a Request for Course Substitution form on the GAPE Forms [website](#) and have the MPA Director sign it for approval by GAPE prior to your expected date of graduation. Please note that completed/graded courses cannot be removed from an approved candidacy petition.

<u>Graduation and Completing Your Degree</u>

Your final semester at SJSU will be very busy because in addition to taking your final courses, you will be in the process of completing your final project. There will be several university and department deadlines and requirements that you will also have to be aware of and complete.

Here are several steps that you need to be sure that you have completed so that your degree is not delayed.

- Make sure you have applied to graduate in your intended graduation semester by the proper deadline. See below for further details. Remember, if you do not complete your graduation requirements, you will need to submit a change of date form to apply for graduation during a later semester.

- Clear up any incomplete grades that you may have, as your degree cannot be granted until you have grades in all courses listed on your candidacy program.

- If you did not take a course that was listed on your candidacy, you need to submit a course substitution form to replace that course with a course you did take. See Advancement to Candidacy for more information.

- If you received an unsatisfactory grade (below a C) on any course listed on your candidacy, you need to add another course to your candidacy program. See Academic Standing for more information.

- Complete all department requirements. After you have completed your final project (Plan B) or thesis (Plan A), and submitted your final project to the MPA Director, your department will notify the graduate school that you have completed all of the department requirements by submitting a Verification of Culminating Experience Memo. While students are not responsible for submitting this form, they should make sure that the advisor has sent a memo to the MPA Program Director stating that they have completed PADM 298, and that the final electronic copy of the project has been given to the MPA Director. The MPA Director will then send the Verification memo to GAPE. You cannot get a diploma without this memo. Make sure that your PADM 298 adviser has also submitted a grade or change of grade for you for PADM 298.

- Finally, make sure to have your current mailing address and email listed on MySJSU so GAPE can send the diploma and email you important graduation notifications.

Applying for Graduation
When a student is ready to graduate, they must submit an application for graduation (Application for Award of Master's Degree) on the GAPE Forms website. An approved Candidacy form is required before students can apply to graduate or the application will be denied. Deadlines for filing these forms are located here.

The deadline dates to submit graduation applications are early in the semester of your intended graduation, so be sure to plan accordingly. GAPE will be sending email reminders, so also be sure to look for those emails.

There is no fee for the initial application for graduation, but students who fail to graduate in their intended semester must file a graduation date change form on the GAPE Forms website and pay $10 to the Bursar's Office. The deadline to submit the change of date form is the same as the dates to submit the initial graduation application.

You will be notified when your application for graduation has been received by the Graduate Studies office through e-mail and under 'Other Indicators' on MySJSU.

Notification of Degree Posting

At the end of each semester and after grades have been posted, GAPE begins clearing your graduation. They will verify that you have met all of the candidacy and graduation requirements. If you clear graduation, they will then post your degree on your transcript and mail your diploma. They will also notify you via mail, email, and under "Other Indicators" on MySJSU. If for any reason you do not clear graduation, Graduate Studies will also notify you via mail and detail the exact steps you need to take to clear your deficiencies. Due to the lengthy process involved, and the large number of applications for graduation that GAPE receives, the process for clearing graduation can take up to three months after your graduation semester is over.

Commencement & Department Ceremony

The SJSU Commencement ceremony is held in December and in the last week of May. Students who have applied for graduation in the Spring semester participate in the May graduation. Students who have graduated in the most recent Summer (August) or Fall (December) semesters are eligible to participate in the December graduation. A few months in advance, all eligible students are mailed a commencement guide that details this event and how to participate in the ceremony. For more information please visit the [SJSU Commencement](#) website.

The Department holds its own celebration ceremony at the end of Spring to celebrate the graduates from all of the graduate programs. Details of this event will be circulated several weeks in advance of the event.

<u>Academic Standing</u>

After being admitted to candidacy, students must maintain certain academic requirements to remain in good standing. These include:

- Completing all courses in your candidacy program with grades of A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, or CR. Unsatisfactory grades of C-, D+, D, D-, and F remain on the program and will continue to be computed in your grade point average, but the credits are not counted toward graduation. You must petition through the MPA Director to add another course to your program with a unit value equivalent to that course in which you received the unsatisfactory grade.

- Maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average of a 3.0 ("B") in completing the requirements for the master's degree listed in the candidacy form. If you fail to maintain this GPA, you may be put on academic probation by SJSU. Failure to raise your GPA to a 3.0 or above after being placed on academic probation for one semester may then result in being academically disqualified from SJSU. If you are disqualified from SJSU, please contact the MPA Director as there will be several procedures you need to complete, including taking undergraduate courses for no credit, if you plan on applying for Reinstatement.

Academic Integrity

The Public Administration Program at San José State University expects ethical and honest behavior in its students, faculty, and staff. The program maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards cheating, plagiarism, improper use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) software, or any other form of academic dishonesty. Additionally, the MPA Program strives to create an inclusive learning environment that promotes civil exchange and discourse. Students who create a disruptive or harmful environment for other students, faculty, and staff are also subject to possible disciplinary action. All these forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct threaten the supportive program culture we aim to nurture and the integrity of the assessment process to award grades and/or the degree, to the detriment of all other students and graduates of SJSU.

To avoid plagiarism, which is broadly defined as "the presentation of another's words and/or ideas as one's own without attributing the proper source" (Political Science Department, San Francisco State University, 2016), students must use appropriate citation methods. Citation strategies will be covered in PADM 210, and reiterated and enforced in other PADM courses. The Program uses APA style for citations. Guides for using APA citations are found [here](#).

If students are found engaging in any form of academic dishonesty or misconduct, the instructor of that course has the right to report students to the MPA Director, department, college dean, and any other university departments handling student conduct issues. Depending on the severity of the academic misconduct, students may be subject to disciplinary action, which includes expulsion, suspension, and/or probation.

Other Academic Policies

Time Limit for Degree Completion
All work on your graduate degree program must be completed within **seven years** preceding the award of your degree. If courses become outdated a student has the following options:

- Submit a course substitution form to replace the outdated course, provided it is not a core class

- Repeat the outdated course without credit

- Revalidate the outdated coursework by examination. This petition must be initiated by the MPA Director, and approved by the dean of the graduate school. **No more than 9 credits/3 courses may be revalidated.** All other expired courses must be repeated. The request for revalidation form is located on the GAPE Forms [website](#).

Leaves of Absences
San José State allows for several options if you need to take some time off from pursuing your graduate degree. The following are options that some graduate students may use if they plan on being away from SJSU.

- Missing One Semester: Students who have attended at least one semester as a graduate student and are in good standing may leave SJSU for one semester (Fall or Spring) without

applying for an official leave of absence. Students must return in the semester following the one semester leave or they will have to re-apply for admission. Summer and Winter registration is not required nor does it count as being in matriculation.

- Official Leave of Absence: Students may miss more than one semester by applying for an official leave of absence. The acceptable reasons for taking a leave of absence are health leaves, primary caregiver, military leaves, and student educational leaves. More information about applying for these leaves is located at the Office of the Registrar's website.

- International Students: International students **cannot take a leave** and must remain in the United States except for documented medical reasons. International students must be enrolled in a full course of study (minimum of 9 units) for two semesters annually. Winter and Summer registration is not required and do not count towards your enrollment status. For further support, we recommend that you contact the Office of International Scholars and Students.

RESOURCES

The following is a list of various resources that are available to you as SJSU and MPA students. This section is not comprehensive and should serve as a starting point for students to explore additional resources in and outside of the university.

Links to University Resources

San José State University and the College of Social Sciences have numerous resources available to support student success. The following is a select list (and links) to some of the more frequently used resources by students. Students with other needs not addressed through these resources can visit the Office of Student Affairs website or visit the Student Services Center at 9th and San Fernando Streets for additional guidance.

MPA Advising
- **Course Planner & Roadmap Document** can be downloaded for personal use to help plan your time during the program
- **GAPE Forms** is a repository for all the forms, both required and optional, that you will need to complete throughout your time in the program.

General Graduate Student Support
- **The College of Graduate Studies** is the one-stop resource for all graduate students in the university.
- **Graduate Admissions & Program Evaluations (GAPE)** is a division within the College of Graduate Studies which provides more specific information and resources to help with your towards your progress to your degree (including the forms you will have to fill out throughout your time during the program).
- **Financial Aid and Scholarships Office** provides the most updated information about tuition, fees, and financial assistance for all students.

Academic Support
- **The Martin Luther King Jr. Library** has traditional and online resources to assist you in conducting independent research for your classes. Classes and workshops are provided about using resources such as electronic databases, reference materials in the Library, and the computer and media laboratories within the Library, as well as books and periodicals. In PADM 210 you will be given an orientation to the library and all its online services, as well as inter-library loan systems.
- **Public Administration Resource Guide at the SJSU Library** is a program-specific resource set up by the Library to help students find research resources. The website also includes information for our subject librarian who can assist you with any specific questions.
- **The Writing Center** offers graduate student-specific mentors and tutors to help you improve your business English writing skills and capabilities. They can also coach on the segments of the final project, such as the literature review. Its many workshops include proofreading, citations, and writing coherent essays. Students challenged by writing

should use this service to become proficient, as writing is the primary skill required of all MPA graduates.

Accessibility

- **The Accessible Education Center** is a comprehensive center providing accommodations and services to enable equal access to all facilities, classrooms, and activities throughout the SJSU campus for all students and employees. The AEC can assist with special academic accommodations, assistive technologies, and counseling. Students needing academic accommodations must register with the AEC, which will then provide letters for the student's instructors listing the required accommodations. Students with undiagnosed access and functional needs may be tested through the center. A comprehensive list of services is available at their website.

Health & Well-Being

- **Student Health Center** provides medical care to students enrolled at SJSU. In addition to treating acute conditions, injuries, and illnesses. The Health Center provides a family planning program and maintains an in-house licensed pharmacy, a physical therapy department, a federally certified high complexity laboratory, and an x-ray department.
- **Student Counseling Center** offers counseling, life enrichment skills, groups and workshops, anonymous crime reporting, and crisis response. They also have special programs for students concerned about immigration status issues.
- **SJSU Cares** provides students access and referrals to basic needs resources and any emergency assistance.

Student Life & Community Building

- **MOSAIC Cross Cultural Center**: is a resource center for students that focuses on providing culturally specific support, resources, and services that center social justice and diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging frameworks for student engagement.
- **Military and Veterans Student Services** is designed as a one-stop resource that assists eligible student veterans, reservists, National Guard, active duty, and dependents with state/federal education benefits and certification, campus resources, and intentional student programs that aid in the transition from military to education to career.
- **Office of International Scholars and Students** is the official university office that provides advising and administrative support to international students.
- **UndocuSpartan Student Resource Center** is a resource center for all undocumented students in the university. They also offer graduate student-specific resources.

MPA Student Association

The MPA Student Association (MPASA) is a registered student association of the San José State University community. All currently registered MPA students are members. The MPASA strives to collaborate with faculty to support and advocate for university initiatives that enhance the program for all students, provides social opportunities to develop a network within the program, and facilitates in professional development and career advancement for our students.

The three goals of the Association are:
1. Provide opportunities for students to advocate for the MPA Program;
2. Provide educational opportunities that supplement in-class learning;
3. Provide mentorship/networking opportunities with faculty, student colleagues, alumni and current practitioners

Events organized by the MPASA are announced on the Association's Facebook page and on LinkedIn. Annual events include New Student Orientation (every Fall, and in Spring if there are admissions), a spring luncheon honoring the year's outstanding scholars, and the Spring Convocation honoring graduating MPA students. For more information, you may contact the MPA Student Association at sjsumpa@gmail.com.

New leaders and active members are always needed. Please contact the officers to see how you can become active in arranging events and serving on the Board of Directors. Get connected to the latest news through their Facebook page.

Pi Alpha Alpha
Pi Alpha Alpha (PAA) is the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. PAA recognizes excellence among graduate students in public administration, public affairs, and public policy programs. The department nominates students to be inducted to PAA every year. Eligible students, at minimum, must have maintained a minimum GPA of 3.7 and completed at least fifty percent (50%) of the required course work. More information is located here.

Scholarships and Financial Assistance
The MPA program has several scholarships that are awarded to students at different stages in the program. Students will be notified via email about the availability of scholarships and funding opportunities.

Most scholarships are only available to continuing students who will be studying full-time (9 or more units) the following year. This includes the following scholarships:

- *The Burton R. Brazil Scholarship* is funded by an endowment created by the family, friends and colleagues of Burt Brazil, a respected professor of political science who specialized in political theory and public administration and who served as Executive Vice President for SJSU. Applicants must be full-time students, either graduate or undergraduate, majoring in political science or public administration, with a strong academic record and a commitment to a career in public service or teaching. Applicants must submit a short statement on their career goals and how the scholarship will assist them in their studies.

- *Horace E. Knapp, Jr. Memorial Scholarship* honors the late Colonel Horace E. Knapp, Jr. USMC (Ret.), and commemorates his advocacy of professionalism in local government management, and his mentoring of aspiring local government leaders. Following a distinguished career in the USMC he was a city manager in New Jersey. Applicants must be MPA students with a commitment to service in city government, and must submit a

resume and a 500-word essay on their career aspirations and city government service. A minimum 3.0 GPA is required.

We also award one graduating student each year, the *Robert A. Smith Prize*. This recognition is for the student who submits the most outstanding final project for the year as determined by a faculty committee.

Further information about other scholarships and financial assistance may be found at the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office.

Transportation & Mobility

SmartPass Clipper Card for VTA

With the Associated Students SmartPass Clipper card and SJSU Tower Card, students and employees can have unlimited free rides on Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Local & Rapid buses, Limited routes, and Light Rail lines. To obtain one, visit the AS General Services Center located on the main level of the Student Union Building, Room 1800, open 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

Student Parking

Under California state law, parking on a California State University campus is subject to a specific fee. Employees and students may purchase either a semester parking permit or a single day permit to park at SJSU. Visitors may purchase a single day permit. More information is located on the Parking Services website.

There are three garages on campus for student parking.
- The South Garage is located on the corner of S. Seventh and E. San Salvador Streets.
- The West Garage is located on S. Fourth & E. San Carlos Streets.
- The North Garage is located on S. Tenth and E. San Fernando Streets. **Only the North Garage has an elevator**!

The City of San Jose parking garage at the northeast corner of 4th and San Fernando Streets offers reduced parking fees for SJSU students. Inquire at the garage office for the latest programs and costs. There is also limited metered street parking near campus.

Career and Internship Resources

Students are encouraged to independently search for internship placements and job opportunities in addition to the opportunities shared via the department listservs. A few resources include:
- City of San José Jobs and County of Santa Clara Jobs (via governmentjobs.com) job listings
- General Job and Internship Sites:
    - SJSU Career Center provides resources for students looking for internship and job placement opportunities
    - Publicservicecareers.org
    - California State Government job postings

- Federal Government job postings
- Silicon Valley Council of Non-Profits job board

Professional Associations

Membership in a professional association is important in the intellectual development of members of any field. The following are recommendations for some professional associations that may be of interest.

American Society for Public Administration

The primary professional association in public administration is the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA). Membership in ASPA includes subscriptions to the *Public Administration Review*, the major academic journal in the field, as well as the monthly *PA Times, The Bridge* newsletter and ASPA Smart Briefs daily, in addition to access to ASPA's website that includes a library of webinars. There are annual national conferences, regional conferences, and a San Francisco Bay Area chapter, which offers meetings and the chance to network with other professionals in the field. Discounted rates are available for students—take advantage of it!

International City/County Management Association

ICMA is the professional and educational organization for city and county executives, administrators, and assistants in cities, towns, counties, and regional entities throughout the world. They provide technical and management assistance, training, and information resources to its members and the local government community. ICMA is also an internationally recognized publisher of information resources ranging from textbooks and survey data to topic-specific newsletters, and e-publications. The San Jose State University chapter is currently provided as a free benefit to all SJSU MPA students.

Municipal Management Assistants of Northern California

MMANC offers opportunities to develop a network with people currently working in public agencies throughout Silicon Valley. Several times each year members of MMANC and SJSU MPA students gather for social networking and mentoring opportunities.

Silicon Valley of Non-Profits

SVNP is an umbrella organization that serves as a source and hub of information, resources, and connection for non-profit organizations across Silicon Valley. Their mission focuses on social justice, and they seek to facilitate collaboration among local non-profit organizations. They host events for non-profit professionals and those interested in pursuing a career in non-profits and regularly share job announcements.

The San José State University Master of Public Administration Graduate Student Handbook has been made possible through the combined efforts of several generations of MPA Directors, faculty, and student leaders of the MPA Student Association. MPA Student Association is a member of SJSU Associated Students.