Master of Public Administration

The School of Public Affairs and Administration seeks to improve the lives of people in West Michigan and beyond, one dedicated public service graduate at a time! We uniquely value the common good, democratic governance, ethical leadership, the intersection of theory and practice, and a plurality of ideas and perspectives while pursuing social justice and the efficient, effective, equitable, and transparent practice of public service.

The MPA program seeks to improve the quality of public service by developing leaders equipped with knowledge and skills in theories, methodology, and innovative practice in the interdisciplinary field of public administration. Our graduates lead and manage a diverse range of governmental, nonprofit, and health care organizations and make positive impacts on the lives of citizens locally, nationally, and globally.

The 30-39 credit hour program can be completed at your own pace.
Outstanding Careers

Our 2500+ alumni over the past 50 years are actively engaged in making West Michigan and the world a better place. Examples include:

- Chief Executive Officer, Tri-County Head Start, MI
- Chief Executive Officer, YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge
- Battle Creek City Manager; Vicksburg City Manager
- Community Investment Manager, Kalamazoo Community Foundation
- Contract Specialist, U.S. Department of Defense
- Coordinator, Shared Prosperity Kalamazoo
- Deputy Budget Director, Michigan State Senate
- Deputy Sheriff, Calhoun County Sheriff Department
- Foreign Service Officer (SES), U.S. Department of State
- Director of Human Resources, Kabul Municipality, Afghanistan
- Director of Operations and Communications, Southern Center for Human Rights
- Director of Program Operations, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research
- Director of Student Life, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- Director, Michigan Veteran’s Affairs - Calhoun County
- Executive Director, Battle Creek Health Systems
- Executive Director, Binda Foundation
- Manager of Development Finance, Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Manager of Quality Improvement, Community Behavioral Health, PA
- VP of Impact & Engagement, United Way of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region

New MPA Curriculum

The MPA requires 36 credit hours for in-career applicants and 39 credit hours for pre-career applicants, who are required to take PADM 7120, Professional Field Experience. Working professionals with significant public-sector experience may have up to 6 additional hours waived reducing the program to 30 credit hours. Each student will complete the core courses, an individualized area of emphasis, and the capstone portfolio.

Required Core (15 credit hours)
- Fundamentals and Ethics of Public Service
- Economic Principles for Public Service
- Public Policy and Politics
- Applied Research Methods
- Quantitative Data Analysis

Individualized Area of Emphasis (18 credit hours)
- This will usually consist of 1 management course, 1 finance/budgeting course, 1 human resources/leadership course, and 3 elective courses. Electives open the whole world of WMU graduate education ranging from organizational change and public health to GIS and environmental studies. The goal is to work with your advisor to develop depth that will help you with your current or planned career.

Capstone Portfolio I and II (3 credit hours)
- This two course-sequence is required of each MPA student: Capstone Portfolio I (1 hour, usually first semester) and Capstone Portfolio II (2 hours, usually final semester).