

Are you interested in our PhD program?

Students Offer Advice

Enter the program if you:

- Enjoy studying, reading (a lot) and understand *how* to study, have good organizational skills and know how to manage time well.
- Are willing to listen to and learn from others' ideas
- Possess a keen desire to pursue research
- Are interested in the "applied" perspective
- Have multidisciplinary interests
- Are a non-traditional (adult, mid-career) student
- Are a self-starter who takes responsibility for learning
- Are a self-directed, critical reader
- Are interested in political, economic and social events and keep up to date.

At the same time, people without the *commitment and time to invest* – both in terms of days and years of dedicated, high-level study - are unlikely to find the program a good fit.

What Doctoral Students Say Regarding Prior Background for Doctoral-Level Work

- You will need to write and edit effectively
- You will need to be able to read a lot of detail and be able to summarize and integrate it
- The ability to assess your own knowledge base, especially areas of deficiency.
- A substantial knowledge base in American government is critical.
- A solid background in economics and statistics helps enormously. If not, a commitment to acquire a knowledge base in those areas during the program is essential.

Doctoral students report other conclusions they've learned during their program experience. Some lessons concern the extra reading, association memberships, conference participation and other experience which helps to develop the potential of the future PhD in Public Policy and Administration. The successful student should know that:

- If your premier desire is to earn a high salary, the PhD program will not necessarily assist you in reaching that goal.
- Those uninterested in research should search elsewhere. This is a scholarly, research degree. This degree may help you become a better administrator, but the primary mission of a Ph.D. degree is to develop scholars with advanced research skills.
- You can make it on your own and pursue your own research interest.
- Early involvement and participation in conferences pays off
- Local or regional conferences are available and offer supportive environments to test your (academic) wings

Students planning study strategies for benchmark exams should:

- Prepare a study guide, preferably while progressing through courses. Use matrices, outlines, concept maps, thumbnail sketches, etc. to refer to your layout of the field. You may find mind-mapping tools helpful in conceptualizing the relationship between strands in the literature, and consider a cumulative, searchable approach to building your notes such as Evernote or OneNote.
- You may want to invest in a citation manager software like EndNote to manage your personal PDF/citation library. The earlier you do this the sooner you can build your library. Your aim is to improve recall of a wide variety of references and documents.
- Purchase books, never rent them! You will need your books, course materials and notes throughout your studies and beyond -- you are developing your professional library.
- Thoroughly familiarize yourself with public administration and policy journals
- Be aware that no matter how rigorous or substantial a course is, no course can be expected to exhaust the knowledge base in that topic. *Coursework only introduces you to each subject.* While each course is in progress, maintain a continuing list of books, articles, reports, authors which need to be mastered later. When instructors advise that a certain work is a “classic” or suggest supplementary reading, take advantage of the guidance.
- Study with carefully selected partners or groups throughout the program, not only in preparation for comprehensive exams. Remember that some students may support you through one course but not another. Still others may assist you in learning course material but not help with studying for “prelims.”
- Remember that while courses are arranged by topic in compartmentalized portions, these subjects do not stand alone either in academia or as applied in the professional world. Concepts, models, authors, works in public policy may inform public management, organization studies and/or government budgeting. As a result, your task is to integrate what you learn in each course - synthesize, compare, develop a personal view of the field as a whole.