



**Western Michigan University  
School of Public Affairs and Administration**

**Ph.D. in Public Administration  
Student Handbook  
August 2008**

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**This Student Handbook should be used in conjunction with the Western Michigan University Graduate Catalog that describes policies and procedures for graduate study. Doctoral students are encouraged to pay particular attention to the sections on student rights and responsibilities and doctoral degree general requirements.**

**Updated 3-6-08**

# **Ph.D. in Public Administration Student Handbook (August 2008)**

## **Table of Contents**

Introduction .....	2
Ph.D. Program Mission and Outcomes .....	2
Our Mission (box) .....	2
Program Objectives.....	2
Student Audience .....	3
Achieving Success in the Program .....	3
Admission Requirements .....	4
Four Admissions Essays (box).....	4
Doctoral Director (box) .....	5
Program Requirements.....	5
Program Location .....	7
Research Experiences .....	8
Research Tools.....	8
Comprehensive Examination.....	8
Annual Review Process.....	9
Dismissal from the Program.....	10
Candidacy Requirements .....	10
Doctoral Dissertation.....	10
Final Graduation Requirements .....	12
Library Resources .....	13
Financial Support for Students .....	13
Paperwork in Final Stages of Ph.D. Program .....	14
Professional Associations.....	14

## Introduction

The School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA) is a freestanding academic unit within Western Michigan University's College of Arts and Sciences.

SPAA offers Michigan's only doctoral education program specifically in public administration, and this program has been graduating students for nearly three decades. This started with a Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) degree in 1997 and in June 1999 the Board of Trustees approved changing this to a Ph.D. degree.

Those who complete the program earn the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration degree. The program is unique in that it seeks to bring doctoral education to part-time students working in full-time careers. To accommodate those students, most courses are offered in the evening at WMU's Battle Creek campus. To complete the program students will also need to take 4 to 6 courses from other departments at the main campus in Kalamazoo.

An emphasis on the production of original research exists in the Ph.D. degree program. We graduate not only practitioners who, as intelligent consumers, will apply the management theory and policy research that they have learned to make their agencies more effective, but also students who will function as producers of new public management and public policy initiatives. Our graduates also contribute as full-fledged authors, researchers, and scholars by participating in conferences and publishing articles in journals that address the problems of the public, nonprofit, and healthcare sectors.

### Ph.D. Program Mission and Outcomes

To fulfill our mission, the curriculum incorporates a diversity of viewpoints gathered from readings in the great books of the discipline, examination of the contributions of its seminal thinkers, analysis of the institutions

and processes of governance, exploration of emerging theories and trends, and investigation of the challenges of leadership and public management in a democracy. Integral to the program is a focus on the development and refinement of the skills required to conduct both qualitative and quantitative research. These skills are developed through course work in affiliated programs and a Research Seminar designed to help students connect their research skills back to the field of public administration. Completion of the degree will provide doctoral graduates with the background to perform independent research on theoretical public administration concerns and substantive issues, to analyze a wide range of alternative public policies, and to weigh competing choices in the decision-making process.

### Our Mission

*The mission of the Ph.D. program is to give students a deep and pervasive knowledge of the history, theory, practice, and future of the field of Public Administration. This inter-disciplinary program is designed to encourage broad intellectual inquiry with a scholarly perspective.*

### Program Objectives

The primary objectives of the Ph.D. in Public Administration are to provide doctoral students with the philosophical, theoretical, and substantive material necessary to acquire an advanced understanding of the field of public administration; to provide opportunities to conduct research in each of the courses offered; to assist doctoral students in acquiring the methodological skills needed to complete a major independent research project; and to develop researchers proficient in undertaking major research projects in public-serving organizations.

The mission and program objectives are met by delivering a theoretically and intellectually stimulating program in a manner that encourages integration of course materials and

promotes reflection on them. A variety of pedagogical methods will be used to challenge the thinking and facilitate the continued development of mid-career students.

### **Student Audience**

The program is designed for individuals who have a strong commitment to intellectual development and a desire to obtain facility in the critical examination of public policies. They seek to conduct research in areas of significant public interest and intend to give high priority to the time and effort required to complete doctoral study.

The Ph.D. program is intended for:

- Those who have administrative or managerial experience in government, health care, or a nonprofit agency.
- Those who wish to teach public administration in a college or university setting.
- Individuals with a broad range of intellectual interests.

The program is structured to provide decision makers in government with public executives who possess excellent skills in leadership, public management, and research. It will provide future professors with a more sophisticated understanding of the governing process as it functions today and as it has functioned in earlier historical periods.

### **Achieving Success in the Program**

Doctoral education is appropriate for a very small portion of the population. Extensive experience provides the School of Public Affairs and Administration the following predictors of success in the program:

Personal Goals: The ability to envision a personal career “payoff” at the end of the program is primary. There are a number of legitimate motivations for entering a doctoral program, but there must be at least one personal goal that impels the candidate

forward at particularly difficult junctures in the process.

Advanced computer skills: Skill in the use of computers — everything from word processing to statistical data input and analysis — is vital. Computer labs at five WMU campus locations (Kalamazoo, Lansing, Battle Creek, Grand Rapids, and Southwest) are available to supplement the student’s own hardware and software.

Dissertation topic selection: It is important to begin considering a dissertation topic as early in the course work as possible. Doing so will enable students to develop a depth of understanding about their topics. This is not meant to imply that students start out with a dissertation title and a detailed outline of the document in the early stages of course work. Rather, it means that it is important to select a general area of driving personal interest that can be refined and developed throughout the ongoing course work.

Interest in research: An uncommonly strong interest in the research process itself is necessary for successful doctoral study. One distinguishing characteristic of doctoral education generally is that it leads the candidate to produce new knowledge in his or her chosen field. To do so, however, requires strong research skills and a driving intellectual inquisitiveness. A natural curiosity about governance and the field of public administration is crucial to sustaining one’s interest in the program.

Critical thinking and synthesis: Written comprehensive examinations are administered after all core courses are completed. These examinations require doctoral candidates to integrate and synthesize data and ideas obtained from individual courses. Successful students become even more skilled in critical thinking and find it possible to draw facts and ideas from a broad variety of sources (texts, classroom lectures and discussions, supplemental readings, and independent research) in order to pass the “comps.”

Time management: Successful doctoral students manage their personal and work time effectively. Completing course requirements on schedule requires skillful time management. It also requires a strong commitment to the avoidance of schedule conflicts that might prevent candidates from attending class sessions or completing the independent reading and research.

Although breaks between semesters are helpful, everyone who enters the Ph.D. program should be prepared to devote the majority of their discretionary time during each semester to class participation, reading, research, and writing. Faculty members associated with the program are skilled in working with adults who have a variety of demanding professional, family, and financial commitments, which they must continue to honor, while enrolled in the doctoral program.

Personal Discipline: Once course work has ended, completing the dissertation demands a different set of personal management skills. Dissertation research can be a lonely process and requires a great deal of self-discipline because the candidate becomes the sole manager of his or her time; faculty members do not impose deadlines for completing dissertation segments. The student must always be alert to annual reviews of progress and the seven-year limit placed on the completion of this degree.

## **Admission Requirements**

Applicants should obtain a doctoral student information packet (electronic format) from the School of Public Affairs and Administration for complete details concerning admissions. The following criteria will be used to fill available spaces in the program with the best possible candidates. In order to be competitive, applicants must:

1. Have an undergraduate degree with at least a 3.00 grade point average.
2. Have a master's degree in public administration or a related academic discipline with at least a 3.25 grade point average in all graduate coursework.
3. Have at least four (4) years of experience in a supervisory or administrative position, preferably in public-serving organizations.
4. Provide three (3) letters of recommendation using the WMU graduate reference form, at least one of which should be from a person acquainted with the applicant's professional work and at least one of which should be from a person acquainted with the applicant's graduate-level academic work.

### **Four Admissions Essays**

1. How does our Ph.D. program relate to your career goals and aspirations?
2. In which ways have your educational and professional experiences prepared you to enter a research degree program in Public Administration? In what ways has it failed to prepare you for such a program?
3. Please describe at least two specific research interests you may decide to pursue when you reach the dissertation phase in the program.
4. Please identify a recent significant problem in your workplace. Explain the problem, identify 2-3 alternative solutions, analyze them, and recommend a course of action.

Please limit the first 3 responses to 2 pages and the 4<sup>th</sup> response to 6 double-spaced pages.

5. Submit a completed WMU Graduate Application Form and associated fees.
6. Submit a completed Departmental Application Form, including responses to the required essay questions.
7. Submit a complete and up-to-date professional resume.
8. Provide Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores for the verbal, quantitative, and analytical writing components of the examination.
9. All international students must work through WMU's Office of International Student Services in order to apply for any WMU graduate program.
10. All applicants who do not speak English as their native tongue must take the TOEFL examination.

All application materials should be submitted by April 30<sup>th</sup> to ensure consideration for the Fall semester. Late applications may be considered on a space-available basis while earlier applications may be required to meet university financial aid deadlines.

The School anticipates accepting 8-12 new students each Fall semester. The Ph.D. Committee, comprised of members of the School's faculty, makes admissions decisions and forwards them to WMU's Office of Graduate Admissions and/or the Office of International Student Support Services for final processing. A negative admissions decision may be appealed to the full faculty of the School of Public Affairs and Administration. The decision of the faculty is final.

## **PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

Qualified students are admitted for the Fall semester each year. Students should meet with the Doctoral Director after being accepted into the program and before the end of their first term of coursework to develop an initial Program of Study. Forty-eight semester hours of credit are required beyond the master's

degree, including the statistics requirement (3), the five courses in the public administration core (15), the methods

### **Doctoral Director**

SPAA's doctoral director communicates with prospective applicants and advises accepted students prior to completion of their course work and comprehensive examination. The doctoral director meets periodically with students, individually and in groups, to provide opportunities for them to discuss their progress in the program and to offer assistance requested by them. He/she also drives the doctoral student annual review process and facilitates paperwork required throughout the program. Students are encouraged to discuss their full range of concerns with the director.

requirement (9), the elective requirement (6), the dissertation seminar (3), and the minimum hours of dissertation credit (12). This may be reduced to forty-five (45) semester hours if the statistics requirement is deemed to have been met at the time of admission to the program. Successful performance on the comprehensive examination and article requirement is required of all students in order to continue in the program. Finally, successful annual reviews are required of students at all stages in the program.

### **Statistics Requirement (3 hours)**

Each student must take PADM 6070, Quantitative Data Analysis, or an equivalent statistics course. Students should be aware that many of the methods courses will require this so they are encouraged to meet this requirement early in the program. If this has been done within five years prior to program admission, this requirement may be waived and the credit hours required for the doctoral degree may be reduced by three (3) credit hours.

- PADM 6070 – Quantitative Data Analysis

## Public Administration Core (15 hours)

The following five courses are required components of the Ph.D. curriculum:

- PADM 6010 - Intellectual History of Public Administration
- PADM 6630 – Leading the Public Organization
- PADM 6650 – Public Policy, Theory, and Research
- PADM 6660 – Contemporary Issues in Public Management
- PADM 6840 – Management of Public Financial Resources

**Up-to-date course descriptions are available in the Graduate Catalog at [www.wmich.edu/registrar](http://www.wmich.edu/registrar)**

## Comprehensive Examination

After completing the “public administration core”, students will be eligible to take the written comprehensive examination. This exam will be offered once per year and will be prepared and graded by a group of the faculty who teach the public administration core courses. Outside readers may be used to assess the comprehensive exams as well.

Results will be honors, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. Students with a score of unsatisfactory have one opportunity to retake the comprehensive examination.

## Methods Requirement (9 hours)

Each student is required to successfully complete a three-course methodology sequence in a specific discipline, in addition to the general statistics requirement. This sequence must include components in research design, qualitative research, and quantitative research. This sequence will be different for different students and must be developed and approved by the Doctoral Director in the student’s Program of Study. Examples include, but are not limited to, the ones presented in the text box (below).

## Electives (6 hours)

Electives may come from within the public administration curriculum or may be linked to the disciplinary field that matches a student’s methodological core and/or proposed dissertation topic. These must be in the student’s approved Program of Study before the student takes the electives.

### Examples of Potential Methods Sequences

- a) SOC 6060 – Research Design and Data Collection I  
SOC 6070 – Logic and Analysis of Social Research I  
SOC 6210 – Logic and Analysis of Social Research II
- b) ECON 6220 – Economic Statistics  
ECON 6190 – Introduction to Econometrics  
ECON 6700 – Advanced Econometrics I
- c) IHS 6260 – Qualitative Concepts in IHS  
IHS 6280 – Quantitative Concepts in IHS  
IHS 6300 – Designing and Conducting HHS Research
- d) PSCI 6640 – The Nature of Political Inquiry and Analysis  
PSCI 6910 – Political Analysis I  
PSCI 6920 – Political Analysis II
- e) STAT 5610 – Applied Multivariate Statistical Methods  
STAT 5660 – Nonparametric Statistical Methods  
STAT 5670 – Statistical Design and Analysis of Experiments  
STAT 5680 – Regression Analysis
- f) EMR 6400 – Fundamentals of Evaluation, Measurement, and Research  
EMR 6410 – Fundamentals of Measurement in the Behavioral Sciences  
EMR 6480 – Program Evaluation

## **Article Submission Requirement**

Each student shall produce a substantive article and submit it to a recognized peer-reviewed journal before being designated "all but dissertation" (i.e., ABD). A tenured or tenure-track public administration faculty member will need to determine that this article submission is of high quality and meets departmental standards. "Substantive" is intended to exclude commentaries, book reviews, and general expository pieces. This requirement must be met within four years of starting coursework in the doctoral program in order to achieve satisfactory annual reviews. One purpose of this requirement is to allow each student to put his or her developing research and methodological tools to this real-world test.

### **Doctoral Seminar (3 hours)**

Each student must take PADM 6970, Dissertation Seminar, which will focus specifically on developing a dissertation proposal and adapting their developing methodological expertise to the field of public administration.

- PADM 6970 – Doctoral Seminar

### **Dissertation (minimum 12 hours)**

- PADM 7300 – Doctoral Dissertation

## **Residency**

Each student is required to enroll each Fall and Spring semester until completion of the degree, and must also be enrolled in the term in which he or she will graduate. After all coursework is completed, students are required to maintain continuous enrollment in PADM 7300, Doctoral Dissertation, until graduation. During the first six semesters of PADM 7300 students must take at least two credit hours.

## **Annual Student Reviews**

Each student must submit the Doctoral Student Annual Activity Report (DSAAR) each year and will receive an official annual review letter from the faculty. In order to continue in the program, each student must receive a positive annual review. This may be "positive with conditions" in which case the student will have one academic year to meet the conditions. A 3.0 grade point average is required to graduate and is therefore also an ongoing condition for positive annual reviews.

## **Sequence of Courses**

The curriculum consists of twelve required courses and a minimum of 12 credit hours of PADM 7300, Doctoral Dissertation. The ten formal courses total 36 credit hours, and the 12 dissertation credits bring the total to a minimum of 48 credit hours. The required master's degree obtained prior to admission to doctoral studies must consist of a minimum of 24 credit hours. The student must, therefore, have a minimum of 72 credit hours beyond the bachelor's degree to graduate.

The program may not be completed purely during a normal academic year as some coursework may only be available in the Summer terms. The comprehensive examination will likely be scheduled in October.

## **Program Location**

The required PADM courses will generally be taught at WMU's Battle Creek campus, a.k.a. the Kendall Center. PADM 6070 is also regularly offered at the Kalamazoo and Lansing campuses. These courses are usually taught from 6-9 pm on 12 consecutive evenings. In contrast, many of the methods courses and electives will only be available at the main campus in Kalamazoo.

## **Research Experiences**

The Ph.D. curriculum requires the doctoral student to undertake research projects in many of the courses. Students will draw on the substantive area(s) of the course(s) in selecting their area of research, and will complete the research project as required by the course syllabus. Study of research design and methods will be integrated into the PADM core courses, so that research becomes an integral part of the student's doctoral experience. In addition, four courses that cover the most common research methods, techniques, and tools used in public administration and related fields are part of the program design. These courses are also intended to develop a familiarity with computer programs to analyze qualitative and quantitative data.

Each doctoral student will be exposed to the theoretical schools of thought, the conceptual models and the qualitative and quantitative research designs used by today's researchers in PADM 6070, PADM 6970, and in their chosen methods sequence.

A particular effort will also be made to integrate the work done by students in the research and substantive courses. Faculty will share their own research projects with students in class. For example, discussing the first draft of a book that is not yet ready for publication provides the students with a sense of the interim stages between the initial draft and subsequent revisions of a book-length manuscript. Discussing the critiques that peer-reviewers of journals send to faculty provide concrete examples of the stages involved in completing the dissertation.

The School of Public Affairs and Administration strongly recommends that doctoral students -- especially those who may be seeking academic careers -- submit the research undertaken in their classes to scholarly journals throughout their doctoral studies. Portions of the dissertation may also be prepared for journals even prior to the completion of the dissertation. Doctoral students are

encouraged to present papers at conferences in public administration, to interact with other scholars and doctoral students, and to form communities of scholarly researchers. Funding for student travel to present at academic conferences is available through the School of Public Affairs and Administration and The Graduate College.

## **Research Tools**

It is imperative that each doctoral student has access to a computer at home with e-mail and Internet capabilities. Through ongoing use of the Internet in each of the doctoral classes, students will acquire competency to conduct literature searches in their areas of research interest, and identify and use data sources available from both the federal and state government (such as documents from the Council of Economic Advisors, the Securities Exchange Commission, the Federal Budget support materials, data from state agencies, and so forth).

Computer Competency. In lieu of a foreign language requirement, the School requires students to substitute competency in both SPSS, or a similar program for statistical data analysis, and Ethnograph, or a similar program for qualitative data analysis.

## **Comprehensive Examination**

The written comprehensive examination is offered on an annual basis, likely in October of each year after 2009. Students are permitted to sit for the comprehensive examination after satisfactorily completing the five PADM core courses. Each student must successfully complete the comprehensive examination, which is designed to test the student's substantive, integrative, and research capabilities acquired throughout the program. The individual is expected to demonstrate the breadth and depth of his/her knowledge of the field of Public Administration. Each examination usually consists of three to five questions, and the exams last an entire day. Students may proceed to the dissertation

proposal stage only after satisfactorily completing both examinations.

The Doctoral Director organizes the annual comprehensive examination committee by appointing at least three faculty members to it. The committee then prepares the comprehensive examination questions. The Doctoral Director designates the examination date and arranges its location. On exam day, each student completes his/her responses to the questions using a computer word processing system. To promote anonymity in grading the examinations, a unique random number is assigned to the student's response to each question. The random numbers that are assigned are maintained securely until the exams are graded and the committee members have reached consensus on each exam response.

The written comprehensive examination permits the School's faculty to assess each student's knowledge and comprehension of the literature germane to the field of public administration. It tests their capacity to analyze, to think critically, and to integrate the major theories, concepts, and research in the field. Additionally it evaluates the students' ability to present these perspectives in a well-documented, clear, and logical manner.

Examinations are judged as "honors", "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory." Students are informed in writing, by the examination committee chairperson, of the results of their performance within six weeks after the examination. If part or all of a student's examination is judged unsatisfactory, the student may retake the comprehensive only once. The date when the comprehensive may be retaken is usually set for December of the same year. The School's director and the doctoral director are also informed of the results of the comprehensive examination.

When re-takes are provided to the committee, it reassesses the examination as a whole to determine whether the responses represent satisfactory mastery and integrative ability. If the second attempt at the examination is still

judged to be unsatisfactory, the candidate will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program by the Doctoral Director. Such a decision is not taken lightly. The first step of an appeal is to the SPAA Director.

### **Annual Review Process**

The progress of each doctoral student will be reviewed annually by the faculty in conjunction with the student. These annual reviews will be conducted both during the time when a student is taking courses and when she or he is working on the dissertation. In March of each year, each student will submit a Doctoral Student Annual Activity Report (i.e., DSAAR) indicating what progress she or he has made during the year. This report and the student's progress during the preceding 12 months are reviewed by the faculty. The student will then receive a letter from the Doctoral Director evaluating his or her progress.

During the first two years of the program, this communication will take the form of a mentoring letter. The letter will also state the faculty's expectations for the coming year. At later stages, when a student is not making adequate progress on his or her dissertation during a particular year, he or she will receive a letter, identifying specific concerns. Inadequate dissertation progress may result in the student being placed on probation. Should a student subsequently fail to make significant progress, there is a high probability that she or he will be dismissed from the Ph.D. program by the Doctoral Director on the advice of the Doctoral Committee.

The intent of the annual review process is to help every student complete the doctoral program during the allowable 7-year time limit for degree completion. In the rare circumstances where an extension is warranted, the collective annual reviews should serve as support that extenuating circumstances existed for the specific student. For this reason, issues inhibiting the progress of a student should be noted by the student in his/her DSAAR.

## Dismissal from the Program

Ph.D. students may be dismissed from the doctoral program for the following reasons:

1. Failure to maintain the required cumulative grade point average of 3.00,
2. Failure to receive a grade of satisfactory on any portion of the comprehensive examination (after benefit of one retake),
3. Failure to maintain continuous registration in the program as specified in the program of study and in this *Student Handbook*,
4. Failure to make satisfactory progress in courses, the proposal or the dissertation, as determined through the annual review process, and/or
5. Violation of one of the University's established rules of conduct.

Dismissal takes place upon notification in writing by the Doctoral Director in the School of Public Affairs and Administration. Students may appeal dismissal by following procedures that are described in the *Graduate Catalog* (on line at [www.wmich.edu/registrar](http://www.wmich.edu/registrar)). The first step of an appeal is to the SPAA Director.

## Candidacy Requirements

To achieve candidacy status, the School requires students to satisfactorily complete all courses, the comprehensive examination, the article requirement, and the dissertation proposal. The dissertation committee remains informal (i.e., unofficial) until it accepts the dissertation proposal.

## Doctoral Dissertation

The capstone experience of the doctoral program is the dissertation. The dissertation chair advises students from the time they begin working on the dissertation until they complete the doctoral degree. Currently, approximately five doctoral degrees are awarded each year in the School of Public Affairs and Administration.

More information on the dissertation proposal and process is available on line at: [www.wmich.edu/spaa/dissertation\\_process.pdf](http://www.wmich.edu/spaa/dissertation_process.pdf)

The faculty takes responsibility for preparing the student for dissertation work by means of a series of research experiences required throughout the entire program of study, to ensure that the student is prepared to do original research and make a contribution to the field.

The dissertation is a scholarly investigation of a limited topic, issue, or problem conducted by the candidate under the general guidance of a faculty committee. The dissertation committee chair (the first reader) plays a key role in guiding the candidate's proposal development, research, and writing. The candidate selects his/her committee in consultation with the committee chair on the basis of common intellectual interest in the dissertation topic and personal compatibility.

One of the most common points of discontinuity in doctoral studies occurs when a candidate has completed all of his/her doctoral coursework and comprehensive examinations and has not selected a topic for dissertation research. 'Dissertation block' or 'writer's block' can be averted if the candidates prepare themselves intellectually and psychologically for the tasks. It means that throughout the course of study, individuals should carefully develop the intellectual discipline necessary to seek out opportunities for dissertation topics that will engage them, and about which they can be passionate. For doctoral candidates to go through the dissertation process in a timely manner requires that substantial periods of time be set aside regularly each week, during which the focus is exclusively on the dissertation.

### ***Selection of the Dissertation Chair and Committee Members***

It is the responsibility of each doctoral student to identify a faculty member from the School of Public Affairs and Administration whom he/she wishes to chair the dissertation

committee. This is usually done prior to the completion of the required courses (toward the end of the second year of study). The student initiates the request to the faculty member, frequently by sending him/her a concept paper of the proposed study. If the person selected is unable to fulfill the request, the student seeks out another faculty member to assume the task.

The doctoral dissertation chair must be a faculty member at the School of Public Affairs and Administration. In consultation with the chairperson, the doctoral student identifies at least two additional members for the dissertation committee. At least one of these additional members must be a member of the WMU Graduate Faculty from outside SPAA, and both of them may be from outside of SPAA.

The doctoral student works with the chair of the dissertation committee to develop the dissertation proposal. Once the proposal is in draft phase, the student forwards the proposal to the other members of the dissertation committee. It is recommended that the student inform the committee members of the probable dates that the proposal will be forwarded to them. This allows the committee members time to plan for the review of the proposal and helps to insure that feedback will be provided in a timely fashion to the student and the chairperson.

### ***Formal Approval of the Dissertation Proposal***

Students are required to defend their proposal before their faculty committees. When the draft of the proposal is satisfactory to both the candidate and the committee members, four copies of the proposal must be submitted, one to each of the three committee members and a fourth copy to the dissertation chair for the doctoral file. The faculty committee determines whether the candidate is ready to defend the proposal. During the defense of the proposal, the committee members and the candidate discuss any problems with the proposal and make recommendations for steps to be followed in both the research process and in the writing of the dissertation.

### ***Conduct of the Research, Writing and Supervision of the Dissertation***

The candidate is expected to conduct the dissertation research independently. There is no specific and predictable pattern of consultation between candidates and dissertation committee members. It is important that there be a clear understanding of (1) what the committee expects from the candidate, (2) what intervals the candidate will report progress, (3) what stage the chapter drafts will be submitted, (4) when the candidate is ready for the oral defense, and (5) what steps are required for completion of all of the graduation requirements. Any assistance that is hired, paid or otherwise, to support the researcher at this stage must be discussed with the dissertation chair before the outside support is utilized.

### ***Human Subjects Research***

A Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) has been established at the University to review all research involving human beings, regardless of the source of funding, unless the research is exempted from review. Each Ph.D. candidate is required to submit his/her dissertation proposal to the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board for review, prior to beginning the data collection phase of the dissertation. Only the HSIRB decides what research is exempted. The HSIRB response or approval letter should be included in the dissertation as an appendix.

### ***Planning the Oral Defense of the Dissertation***

The chair of the student's dissertation committee, in consultation with the student, determines when the oral defense will take place. The chair completes a "Request to Publicize a Doctoral Oral Examination" form at least two weeks prior to the oral defense. Included with this form is an abstract of the dissertation that the student submits to the chair. The oral defense is announced to the entire university community.

At the time of the oral defense, the candidate should distribute a brief synopsis of his/her dissertation to those attending the defense.

The synopsis might include the name of the dissertation, an outline of the research questions, and hypotheses (for quantitative studies), how the research was conducted, the primary findings, recommendations for public policy makers (if appropriate), and recommendations for future research. Attendees usually include other doctoral students, family and friends, and other faculty members. The defense is open to the entire University community and general public and any attendee may ask questions at the appropriate point during the defense.

### ***Conducting the Oral Defense***

The oral defense is a time when the well-prepared candidate demonstrates his/her mastery of the topic studied and the research process utilized. The candidate listens carefully to questions and comments and explains his/her actions during the research process to the audience. The oral defense is scheduled for two hours. If the candidate is not well prepared, the defense may become a committee advising session and the oral defense may be commenced at a future time. It is the intent and practice of the faculty of the School of Public Affairs and Administration not to conduct the oral defense until the doctoral candidate has exhibited mastery of the research and has submitted a substantially final draft of the entire dissertation.

The dissertation committee chair presides over the defense. The chair asks the candidate to make a 20-30 minute presentation that is usually based on the synopsis distributed earlier. The candidate frequently uses charts, slides, or videos for the oral presentation. After the presentation, the committee and other persons present at the defense may ask specific questions, make comments, and give recommendations.

After completion of the question and answer period, the faculty dissertation committee members go into executive session to assess the dissertation, the defense, its outcomes, and the next steps. These next steps may be for the candidate: (a) to make minor revisions and work with The Graduate College to assure

that the guidelines for submitting the completed dissertation are followed; (b) to continue to work with the chair or with members of the committee to complete the recommendations made by the committee, or (c) to undertake major revisions under the direction of the committee and return for another oral defense.

If the oral defense has been successful, all committee members sign a form notifying The Graduate College that the candidate has passed the oral defense. The candidate assumes responsibility for notifying the dissertation chair when the recommended actions/edits have been completed.

### ***Submission of the Dissertation to the Graduate College***

Each doctoral student assumes responsibility for preparing the final copies of the dissertation for submission to The Graduate College. The Calendar of Events in The Graduate College Bulletin identifies the deadlines for submitting the approved dissertation, the diploma application, and other graduation protocols. Once the dissertation receives final approval of The Graduate College, The Graduate College Dean signs the appropriate forms and the dissertation is sent out to be microfilmed. The original copy of the dissertation is maintained at WMU's Waldo Library.

## **Final Graduation Requirements**

Once the student has achieved candidacy status, the remaining graduation requirements are successful completion of the doctoral dissertation, the oral defense of the dissertation, continuous enrolment, and 12 hours of PADM 7300, Doctoral Dissertation. This usually requires a minimum of one-and-one-half to two years to complete and frequently takes 3-4 years. Students are expected to complete the Ph.D. within seven years of beginning their doctoral classes.

## Library Resources

Western Michigan University has one of the outstanding research library systems in the State of Michigan, and Waldo Library provides extensive on-line access to full-text journals as well as a "Direct Document Delivery Service" for off-campus students. Any book or journal article held by the University's libraries can be sent to registered off-campus students at their homes within a matter of 1-3 days. The system works very smoothly. Off-campus students may request the documents and books at the library's web site. There is also a dedicated librarian for distance education students as well as our School.

For those interested in policy issues confronting the State of Michigan, specialized reference services are provided by the Legislative Service Bureau, which is located in downtown Lansing. This resource is supplemented by the Library of Michigan's excellent research facilities and the state legislature's website.

Western Michigan University students who may be pursuing teaching careers after completion of the Ph.D. may also use the World Wide Web as a resource for *teaching materials*. One example of the outstanding teaching materials available on the Web for prospective public administration and public policy faculty is the "Electronic Hallway," which features excellent case studies and suggestions for effective teaching in the field of public administration.

## Financial Support for Students

Information and descriptions of the types of graduate student financial assistance are provided in the Western Michigan University Graduate Catalog and at SPAA's home page ([www.wmich.edu/spaa](http://www.wmich.edu/spaa)).

### ***Doctoral Associate Positions***

From time-to-time SPAA has doctoral associate research positions available, and the School is working hard to arrange funding for more such positions. These provide a monthly stipend as

well as payment of tuition and fees, in exchange for 20 hours of research and/or teaching service per week. Recipients must be registered for at least six credit hours of course work per semester, although this can be waived at the dissertation stage.

### ***Dissertation Fellowships***

Dissertation fellowships are awarded by The Graduate College in an open competition and on the basis of superior scholarly achievement to assist full-time doctoral students with completion of their dissertations. An applicant must demonstrate a record of timely and steady progress toward degree completion and have completed all requirements for the degree except the dissertation. An accepted dissertation proposal is also required, as well as enrollment of at least six hours per semester. Applications are available from The Graduate College ([www.wmich.edu/grad](http://www.wmich.edu/grad)).

### ***Historically Underrepresented Groups***

Some of Western's doctoral students, who are members of minority groups, may apply for grants of tuition support under what is known as the "historically underrepresented groups program." Arrangements for these grants are made with The Graduate College's director of diversity recruitment and retention.

### ***Martin Luther King/Cesar Chavez/Rosa Parks Future Faculty Fellowships***

This fellowship requires applicants to have U.S. citizenship, regular admission to a doctoral program, and a desire to pursue a full-time teaching career in post-secondary education in Michigan or Illinois. While some do not require departmental service, students must meet other requirements and guidelines. KCP fellowships can be awarded in conjunction with other appointments. Applications are available through The Graduate College.

### ***Graduate Student Research and Travel Funds***

The Graduate College has established funds for graduate student research and travel to encourage independent research by graduate students and to assist them in presenting their findings to professional groups. The amount

will depend, in part, on the number of applications received, the budget available, and on the priority given the application by the selection committee. Preference is given to applications submitted before the research project or travel has been completed. Applications for these funds are available through The Graduate College.

### ***Financing Ph.D. Students' Participation in Academic Conferences***

The School of Public Affairs and Administration will consider applications and contribute up to \$500 annually to a doctoral student whose paper has been accepted for presentation at a regional or national academic conference. Application may be made to the SPAA Director, and evidence must be provided that the student has also applied for funding from The Graduate College Travel Fund.

The faculty encourages doctoral students to participate in the following conferences in which they will meet other doctoral students: The Public Administration Theory Network Conference, The Public Administration Teaching Conference, The Southeast Conference of Public Administration (SECOPA), the American Society of Public Administration (ASPA) Conference, the Michigan Political Science Association conference (MPSA), and the Midwest Political Science Association Conference. Travel support, however, may be provided to other academic conferences as approved by the SPAA Director.

### **Paperwork in Final Stages of Ph.D. Program**

The following forms will be needed during the Ph.D. program. Many of these forms are completed by the doctoral director or dissertation committee chair rather than the student. Some of this paperwork must be approved through the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and the Dean of The Graduate College, and so ample time should be allowed for this process.

Program of Study – to be prepared and submitted by the doctoral director.

"Permission to Elect" – must be submitted by the student before registration in PADM 7300, Doctoral Dissertation.

Request for Appointment of a Doctoral Committee – to be prepared by the Dissertation Committee chair and initialed by all members of the dissertation committee upon acceptance of the dissertation proposal.

Application for Graduation – to be completed by the student and sent to Graduation Auditing in the Registrar's Office at least one semester prior to the intended graduation. Warning: The deadline for this form always comes extremely early!

Notification of Defense – date, time and place of the Ph.D. oral examination are publicly announced, to be completed by the dissertation committee chair and submitted to The Graduate College a minimum of two weeks prior to a dissertation defense. An abstract must be attached.

Dissertation Approval – (four original copies) to be prepared by the dissertation committee chair and brought to the dissertation oral examination. Each copy must be signed by all members of the committee.

National Science Foundation Document – concerning microfilming and copyrighting, to be completed by the student and sent to The Graduate College.

### **Professional Associations**

#### ***American Society of Public Administration***

The SPAA faculty encourages all doctoral students to become student members of the American Society of Public Administration ([www.aspanet.org](http://www.aspanet.org)), and to become active members in the West Michigan, Capitol Area, or Detroit Area chapter.

Regardless of profession or income level you may be a student member of ASPA for up to three years before needing to pay annual dues at the professional member rate. Student members receive all the same membership benefits, including *PA Times* and *Public Administration Review*!

***Pi Alpha Alpha national honorary society***

Students who are consistently strong academic performers may also qualify and be invited to join Pi Alpha Alpha, the only national honor society for schools of public affairs and administration.

This is the national honor society for students in public administration. WMU's chapter was established in 1994. To be eligible, students must have completed at least twenty hours of course work and achieved a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.85 on a 4.0 scale in their WMU program. The School of Public Affairs and Administration issues invitations to eligible WMU candidates, usually at the beginning of each calendar year.