



Public Policy and Administration | Graduate Center | 1160 McDermott Drive
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Access to high quality public service education is a fundamental component of the West Chester University MPA mission. We are committed to recruiting and retaining students with diverse life experiences and public service orientations. In an effort to support these goals, students who do not meet the minimum undergraduate GPA requirement, but demonstrate potential in other ways, are admitted on a provisional basis. In addition to our *Foundations in Public Service* course, these students are required to take *Communication for Public Administrators* during their first semester. In order for provisionally admitted students to transition to degree-seeking status, they must earn a minimum grade of B+ in both courses and maintain a 3.00 GPA during their first semester in the program.

Communication for Public Administrators is a writing intensive course that provides guidance and practice in the development of effective written communication skills specific to public and nonprofit administration. Course assignments are designed to complement other work in our program's core courses. Large, and sometimes daunting, projects like literature reviews, research papers and policy briefs are broken down into more manageable components, including preliminary memos outlining purpose, scope and content, annotated bibliographies consisting of scholarly, professional and popular sources, detailed outlines, and multiple drafts. Students meet with the instructor for weekly individual progress meetings to discuss research approaches, technical writing skills, and necessary revisions. All assignments are revised until both the student and instructor are satisfied that all requirements, both technical and substantive, are met. *Communication for Public Administrators* also includes a peer-editing component. Students trade drafts of material they have written and provide each other with suggestions for improvement. Having others read and provide commentary on their work raises expectations, exposes students to alternative perspectives and provides opportunities to act expertly.

This combination of focused instruction and feedback has contributed significantly to the success of MPA students at West Chester University and has the potential to improve student-learning outcomes in other MPA programs. Not only have we experienced increased student retention and degree completion, but the achievement gap for underrepresented minority students has narrowed. Most importantly, our students are agents in a practice that epitomizes the values of New Public Service.