

Public Policy & Administration 500: Culminating Experience

Fall 2020

Thursdays 6:00pm – 8:50pm

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OVERVIEW

Welcome to the beginning of the end of your MPPA journey: the capstone.

This is not a rite of passage. It isn't one of the Labors of Hercules to test your stamina. It isn't a hazing ritual that you do simply because students before you had to. It isn't your *magnum opus* and it certainly isn't a personal manifesto about your favorite policy topic.

Instead, the capstone has three, closely related purposes:

1. Integrate, synthesize, and apply. Over the course of your graduate study, you've worked with a dizzying array of tools, frameworks, concepts, and ways of thinking from economics, political science, management and administration, behavioral science, ethics, quantitative methods, research design, public finance, institutions, and more. In the capstone, we weave these strands together, and you apply them to a real policy and administration problem.
2. Demonstrate learning objectives. Conferral of the MPPA degree represents the achievement by a student of 19 learning objectives in three general groups: critical and integrative thinking, practical application, and professional role (complete list of the 19 objectives is in Canvas).
3. Showcase your capabilities. While #2 is necessary for the faculty to confer a degree, the demonstration of your learning is just as important for professional employers, future education like doctoral study or fellowships, and, of course, yourself. The products of your culminating experience are an opportunity to showcase what you can do, in multiple ways and for varied audiences.

It may seem complicated because we offer structured alternatives for you to select based on your interests, prior work in the MPPA program, strengths, and professional objectives. But you are entering this class with a plan, an advisor, and a structure to complete the work. The hardest work is already done, as the *systematic study* of a topic required by the University for the capstone has already been largely completed, through your artifacts.

What can you do that you couldn't do before your graduate study? What are you capable of doing and contributing that distinguishes you in the world of policy and administration? During the semester, we'll reflect on this and your capstone products will demonstrate the answers.

COURSE INFORMATION

Prerequisites

1. Advancement to candidacy.
2. Completion of all but one of the core courses in the MPPA or MSULD curriculum, and at least one of the electives, with an overall grade-point average of 3.0 or better.
3. An agreement with a primary faculty advisor on a culminating option, a topic, and selection of artifacts constituting prior systematic study of the topic.

Format

We will meet as a class at our designated time of 6pm on Thursdays during 9 of the 15 weeks of Fall Semester instruction. In Week 14, we won't meet so that you have time to file all of your paperwork and principal capstone product with the Office of Graduate Studies. The remaining four weeks (Thanksgiving is the sixth week off as a holiday) are devoted to your writing; treat these not as vacation weeks but as precious protected time for intensive writing.

Most weeks, we will spend about 90 minutes together and in breakouts as a seminar and workshop. The next 80 minutes will be dedicated writing time and mandatory one-on-one-check-ins with me, where I'll provide individual feedback on your milestone presentations and writings. Presentations and milestones equal accountability.

This is a graduate seminar where we probe, explore, apply, and integrate theory and practice together, and individually. We'll also be joined occasionally (very occasionally) by guests to help sharpen and advance both the primary and secondary products you're working on.

Please share your feedback liberally throughout the semester, as we're learning together and experimenting with approaches for the new culminating options. I'll make mid-course corrections.

OPTION GROUPS

This is the first semester where students have three options for the culminating experience (see attachment). As of August 6, our groups for each option consist of the following students (those denoted with an asterisk do not yet have an approved PPA Enrollment Petition so the option is tentative):

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Erika	Michael	Josh*
Wendi*	Jesse*	
Baron	Leefong	
Chris*		

READINGS

There is no required textbook. I will post links to articles and other materials each week on Canvas. To access scholarly readings, be sure that you are logged into your MySacState account and the University Library in order to see the full-text version.

CANVAS

This course makes extensive use of Canvas. Most assignments will be submitted by you exclusively within Canvas, and I will not accept copies by email. Plan to sign into Canvas on a regular basis—in class and at least twice per week. I will communicate using Canvas and Sac State email (not the private email address you may have on file with Suzi Byrd).

ASSIGNMENTS & MILESTONES

Most written assignments are due at 8pm on the Tuesday prior to the class session associated with the particular milestone on the course schedule. Submit all assignments in a complete and professional manner via Canvas. Save your files in .doc format (not PDF) using the following naming convention:

Last Name, First Initial, Assignment Title, Date
Example: LanceBottomsK_LitReview_8-24-20.doc

This isn't an undergraduate paper where you are writing to a standard assignment which I've developed. You are discovering and applying knowledge in new ways, and in novel formats. I won't be marking up your drafts with hundreds of revisions and rewrites as though I know what your end product should be. Instead, I'll share my reactions and suggestions in our regular one-on-one check-ins, and we'll discuss progress and next steps. You'll also be sending certain milestone assignments to your secondary advisor for feedback.

If you're pursuing Option 3, your feedback and guidance will come from your primary and secondary advisors, with supplemental suggestions from me in our one-on-one check-ins.

We'll often refer to your Option by its primary product: Option 1 as the portfolio, Option 2 as the policy report, and Option 3 as the journal article. This is purely for shorthand, though. Remember that all three options require secondary products, as well. Refer to the attachment for the basic details. We'll get to the secondary products a bit further into the semester.

PPA 500 Schedule

Week	Workshop Topic	Option					
		1		2		3	
		<i>Class Presentation</i>	<i>Milestone Due</i>	<i>Class Presentation</i>	<i>Milestone Due</i>	<i>Class Presentation</i>	<i>Milestone Due</i>
1 9/3	Overview; What's Your Contribution?; MPPA Lenses	Topic, Artifacts, and Plan	Artifact Map	Topic, Artifacts, Client, and Plan	Detailed Outline	Topic, Artifacts, Journal, and Plan	Outline
2 9/10	Literature and What We Know; Writing	Literature		Literature		Literature	Chapter One
3 9/17	Synthesis, Reflection, Integration		Concept/Lens Map		Concept/Lens Map		
4 9/24			First Draft		First Draft		Literature Review
5 10/1	Methodology, Analysis, Data, Logic Model	Logic Model		Logic Model		Methodology and Data; Logic Model	
6 10/8	Synthesis, Reflection, Integration Part 2		Synthesis		Synthesis		Methodology and Data
7 10/15			Second Draft of Analysis		Wireframe Supplemental		Wireframe Supplemental
8 10/22	Editing & Revision; Synthesis & Integration, Revisited	Preliminary Analysis & Reflection		Findings & Recommendations		Results	
9 10/29	So What? Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations		Synthesis Revision		Synthesis Revision		Results
10 11/5							
11 11/12			Final Analysis		Final Report		Discussion & Conclusion
12 11/19	Professional Development	Profession Progression	Professional Development Plan	Profession Progression		Profession Progression	
13 11/26	THANKSGIVING						
14 12/3	No class. Turn in forms & docs to Grad Studies.				Supplemental		Supplemental
15 12/10		Capstone Showcase					

I adapt the course to you as we progress through the semester, which will sometimes mean changes in this schedule. Be sure to check for updates on Canvas, which will always have the most current, official schedule/plan/requirement for the class.

By Week One, a checklist

Group 1.

- Sketch a map or diagram of your artifacts and the ways in which they relate to one another. This is an overview of what you know about your topic based on the study leading to each of your three or more artifacts. Don't worry if your artifacts don't stack into a neat box with an ornamental ribbon—none of them will this semester. Where are the gaps? What did you learn from artifacts that didn't turn out the way you'd planned? Did the economics, political science, management, quantitative, and research design artifacts produce contradictory results? How did the course framework from each artifact relate to the other frameworks? Here we are beginning to formalize the *systematic study* of the topic using your artifacts.
- Prepare a lightning talk on your topic, artifacts, and plan. This is a five-minute presentation to the class on what you're doing. Your plan is in the early stages of development so don't worry about extensive detail or even coherence at this point. Don't present recommendations or conclusions. Focus more on the methods, concepts, frameworks, and tools you used in your artifacts. Present an overview of your artifact map. What questions, tensions, gaps, and new approaches might you pursue in your Option 1 analysis? To emphasize, this isn't a talk about policy recommendations or findings.

Group 2.

- Draft a detailed outline of your policy report. This may be in the form of a elaborated table of contents, or other format appropriate for your report. Include the topic and client at the top of the outline.
- Prepare a lightning talk on your topic, artifacts, intended client, and plan. This is a five-minute presentation to the class on what you're doing.

Group 3.

- Draft a detailed outline of your journal article. This may be in the form of a elaborated table of contents, or other format appropriate for your article. Include the topic and intended journal at the top of the outline.
- Prepare a lightning talk on your topic, artifacts, journal, and plan. This is a five-minute presentation to the class on what you're doing.

GRADING

This is a Credit/No Credit course. Grading is simple: if you finish all elements of your culminating option and earn the approval of your primary and secondary advisor, and present your showcase, you earn a Credit grade. If you do not, you will earn a No Credit grade and will need to retake the course in order to complete the MPPA or MSULD.

You can earn a grade of “reasonable progress” (and sign up for continuous enrollment in the course again in Spring 2021) *if and only if* you have: (1) completed the course milestones (presentation and written, see below) along the way; (2) completed all but one of the products required for your culminating option; (3) participated in all of our class sessions, and (4) secured the concurrence of your primary advisor and me that you can reasonably be expected to complete all remaining components of the culminating experience over the winter intersession or early in the following semester. Note: this is stricter than in the past, since we understood that some students couldn’t feasibly complete the systematic study of their topic and then write up the traditional thesis in a single semester. With the new culminating experience, that systematic study is to have been completed prior to the semester, and all students are expected to complete the products within the semester just as in any other course. Bottom line: don’t fall behind on the milestones.

I understand that you have other personal and professional obligations...because I do, too. The schedule is a shared contract allowing both of us to plan our work in that context. Late work will not be accepted or count toward “completed the course milestones” for purpose of determining reasonable progress eligibility. If you’re anxious about other stressors and life demands interrupting your class work, my advice is to take every opportunity to complete milestones *ahead* of schedule.

We are meeting as a class for less than half of the scheduled semester hours. It is important to your success that you attend and participate in the sessions when we do meet. If you have an immutable schedule conflict on one night for any reason, contact me in advance and we can shift your scheduled presentation, if applicable, to an *earlier* week. I’m also more than happy to advance one or more of your presentations or written assignments to an earlier date on the calendar at your request in order to help you accelerate your progress toward completion. We won’t do makeup presentations after the scheduled date, though, so don’t fall behind.

CONDUCT & DISCOURSE

Our course will cover policy and political topics, so we expect controversy and argument about things that matter. Learning happens when our current knowledge, assumptions, and boundaries are challenged—and it can be uncomfortable or even stressful. Assume positive intent, challenge ideas with civility and respect, and be both brave and humble.

Ours is a stance of inquiry, exploration, and application. Our focus is on concepts, constraints, and ideas, not personal opinion or national and global political ideology. Public policy professionals have enormous influence on policy and politics, but we earn that influence by adhering to professional standards of evidence, integrity, inquiry, role, and ethics.

1. Step up and step back. Engage frequently and concisely.
2. Focus on inquiry, curiosity, humility, not your opinion or declarations.
3. PPA exists within a democratic representative government. Avoid snap judgments and cynicism about politics, politicians, or the public.
4. When you refer to “the public”, thoughtfully consider what you mean, precisely. Might referring to another unit of analysis or dimension of “the public” change what you say?
5. Avoid phrases like this:
 - “I just think...”
 - “Its obvious that what’s needed is....”
 - “What we should do is...”
 - “I saw a study somewhere that said that...”
 - “People are stupid and we just need to listen to the experts.”
 - “That’s just their cognitive bias showing.”
 - “Why bother because all ___ are in the pocket of the ___ anyway.”
 - “It is imperative that we call out systemic inequality and look at this through the lens of racial justice.”
6. Engage like this:
 - “Applying a lens of racial justice to this case might involve [collecting/disaggregating a data source/examining the decision process or forum/looking at the composition and content of public testimony/comparing to places or programs with different demographics/etc]”
 - “Perhaps we might think of ___’s observation just now as an example of [a key concept from an earlier course].”
 - “It seems as though we might be ignoring the fact that this issue didn’t just emerge out of nowhere, and could have its roots in [historical antecedent/cognitive load/urban economics/etc].”
 - “I worked on a project where this phenomenon seemed to be at play, but I’d add that...”
 - “Could that be an example of [framework/model/concept]?”
 - “That sounds reasonable for state-level decisionmaking. I wonder if it applies at the city level or not, given that...”

- [View the Hornet Honor Code](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy from Sac State](#)

ZOOM CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE & EXPECTATIONS

1. For each class session, you should do your best to have open simultaneously Zoom and Canvas (split screen on your computer or using multiple devices).
2. Do not use Google or surf the web during class discussions. To optimize learning, your own brain—not the technology-enhanced extension—must be fully challenged.
3. Try to log online to our class meeting from a quiet, distraction-free environment (if possible). We have little time together; let’s try to maximize it. Keep your Audio on mute until you want to speak. We must work together to limit background noise.
4. Enable Video so that we can see you. This is important in a seminar discussion. We depend on visual cues to assess whether concepts are taking hold or whether you might be frustrated or curious. If you do not feel comfortable sharing your image on Video, of course, please turn it off. Remember, though, that many of us are in the Zoom classroom from home, with children and pets running by, unmade beds, a pizza box on the couch, a uniform from work still on, or a five months of uncut hair. Seeing one another isn’t a cause for embarrassment; our humanity is key to our journey of inquiry.
5. If your Internet connection is weak or Zoom says it is unstable, try these steps, most of which will be more effective than turning off your own video:
 - *Wired Connection.* If your Internet router has an option for a wired connection, join with a wired option versus a wireless connection.
 - *Proximity to Router/Hot Spot.* Bring your device closer to your router or hot spot.
 - *Disable HD Video in Zoom:* You can disable the HD video option by selecting video settings in a meeting and unchecking the HD video option.
 - *Mute Microphone When Not Talking:* When you aren't talking mute your audio (click on the microphone icon to mute or unmute).
 - *Close other Applications:* Zoom uses memory and processing from your computer and is not prioritized over other applications - closing applications you do not need will improve your Zoom experience Try to pause downloading updates, if you can.
 - *Avoid Crowding Your Router:* If there are multiple devices joined to your router or hotspot try to avoid video streaming which will affect bandwidth (e.g. Netflix, YouTube TV, etc.)
 - *Switch to Phone Audio:* If you have an unstable connection, you can join the meeting by phone. Be sure to use only one audio/mic source!
6. On the bottom of the Zoom window, click on “Participants” and “Chat.” Two pop-up windows will open on the right side of your screen.
7. When you want to speak, use the “Raise Hand” feature (on the bottom left of the Participants window). Be sure to unmute yourself to talk.
8. Use the Chat box to make a point or raise a question. This isn’t rude; it augments our discussion and keeps ideas flowing. But stay on topic and in the zone of inquiry.

9. Have a plan for taking notes (paper and pencil, digital notepad, Word/Pages doc). We may post recordings of Zoom sessions on Canvas, but you should also try to capture your thoughts and questions in the moment. The intentional act of capturing is essential to your brain encoding and cataloguing what you learn; a recording can't mimic that.
10. I plan to record all Zoom class sessions and may post excerpts on Canvas in case one of you is not able to attend class on that day.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a documented disability and require assistance or academic accommodation, please contact Services for Students with Disabilities immediately to discuss eligibility. The Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) is located on the Sacramento State Lassen Hall 1008, 916-278-6955 (Phone), 916-278-7239 (TDD). For a complete listing of services and current business hours visit <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/>

Sacramento State is committed to ensuring that our online learning tools are usable by all students and faculty including those with disabilities. If you encounter any accessibility issues with course or instructional content, please contact our SSWD office. They will assist you with resolving the issue or, where appropriate, connect you with appropriate staff.

GETTING HELP

Sacramento State offers a wide variety of online academic services. These include tutoring services, library services, advising services, and support for students experiencing hunger, homelessness, mental health, and other challenges. I've provided direct links to these services on Canvas.

If your writing does not meet expectations in the first few assignments, I may refer you to writing support through the campus. But no referral is necessary to access them, so be proactive in sharpening your professional writing based on feedback and grades in prior graduate coursework.

NEW OPTIONS FOR THE PPA CULMINATING (CAPSTONE) EXPERIENCE

January 31, 2020

Effective Fall 2020, the Department of Public Policy and Administration (PPA) will replace the traditional thesis requirement with a set of culminating experience options. Students will have three options, each with a principal (primary) and supplemental element. The purpose of having principal and supplemental elements is to weave in the learning objectives from across the program, attuned to students' individual interests. The options are:

1. Developing a career-oriented portfolio;
2. Completing a project or policy report;
3. Drafting the equivalent of an academic journal article

Regardless of the option you choose, the *systematic study* that you will undertake to be prepared to complete one of the options (the main data collection, research, analysis, or applied work) is largely to be done prior to enrolling in PPA 500, based on your work on significant assignments or projects in the rest of the curriculum. See page 6 to see how the CSU defines systematic study.

The purpose of the new approach is threefold:

1. Offer alternatives to support diverse academic and professional objectives among our students, with greater emphasis on creating applied, career-relevant products. We received a written proposal for a comprehensive curriculum redesign from a group of students last summer. It noted that the thesis is a barrier to completion of the degree, especially for working professionals, and that not every student's degree goal is to prepare for academic scholarship. The proposal suggested that students identify their research topic and question in the first year and produce as much of the culminating project as possible in the coursework *prior* to PPA 500.
2. Improve the integration and synthesis of concepts and tools from across the PPA curriculum in the culminating experience. This will help enhance the value of the entire program for you by creating an intentional phase of reflection. Toolkits from the various courses might be useful for this phase of work.
3. Accelerate completion by reducing the overall workload of the culminating experience, shifting the systematic study portion of the work to earlier points in the curriculum, and accommodating the needs of working professional students by incorporating more work-relevant options.

Please note that changing the curriculum to fully align with this plan is a work in progress. We are trying to ensure that students who are currently enrolled have enough supports and information to complete the new options in the intended ways. Since the curricular reform will be occurring over the next 1-2 years, please ask questions of us if you hit a stumbling block when trying to use class assignments and projects to complete a culminating option.

TRANSITION & IMPLEMENTATION

Relatively few students are anticipated to advance to candidacy and enroll in PPA 500 in Fall 2020. This offers us the opportunity to carefully and iteratively build out these three options in consultation with students, employers, alumni, and others. This document provides the basic structure and approach. Initial details, definitions, standards, and procedures will be developed as we learn, test, and collaborate over the coming months. We welcome your feedback.

Option	Principal Product	Systematic Study (to be completed prior to PPA 500)	Supplemental Product Alternatives					Synthesis
			Op-Ed	Prof Publication	Podcast	Brief	Oral Presentation	
1	Portfolio & synthetic policy/admin brief	≥ 3 artifacts from multiple courses						•
2	Applied project or policy report	Major artifact(s) from any PPA course (e.g. 207, 210, 220AB, 240AB, 272, 296M)	•	•	•	•	•	•
3	Draft article in the style of an academic journal	Major artifact(s) from any PPA course (e.g. 207, 240B)	•		•	•	•	

PPA 500 AND CULMINATING EXPERIENCE ADVISORS

Students will continue to enroll in PPA 500 (which will continue to be taught by a PPA faculty member) and continue to have a main and secondary culminating experience advisor. The table below summarizes the general pattern we expect students to use in choosing advisors. Note that in addition to the secondary readers mentioned in the table we will consider a second reader from the practitioner community on a case by case basis.

Typical Advisor/ Reader for Each Option		
Option	Advisor	Secondary
	PPP 500 Instructor	Any faculty member
2	PPA 500 or original artifact instructor	Either original artifact or 500 instructor
3	Original artifact instructor	Any faculty member

In consultation with the advisor, the student prepares a project proposal. The proposal should be 1-2 pages in length and must include the option selected, a brief description of the topic or problem to be addressed, a basic outline, and the specific supplemental option you intend to complete. The prior assignment(s) which represent the *systematic study* must be attached or linked.

The advisor reviews the proposal and either returns it for revision or approves it. When approved, the advisor transmits the proposal to the department chair and the faculty member who will be the instructor of PPA 500. The PPA 500 instructor reviews the proposal to ensure its completeness, and if deemed acceptable, authorizes enrollment in PPA 500 if you have advanced to candidacy.

TRANSITION Q&A

- 1. I applied for the MPPA program because I wanted to produce a traditional thesis. I'm confident I can complete it in one semester as part of PPA 500. Is this still possible?**

The new Option 3 is a close cognate of the traditional thesis. Both involve a rigorous, in-depth academic study that pushes at the frontier of knowledge, and both are well-suited to students who may have interest in research, academic professions, or doctoral study. In this case, you would want to move your article toward publication in an academic journal. Current students who wish to pursue a traditional thesis may do so (this will no longer be an option for future entering classes), but we strongly recommend considering Option 3 with your advisor.

- 2. I'm interested in Option 1. But the best work in my portfolio here doesn't neatly converge on a single topic. After all, I couldn't have planned for Option 1 when I chose my topics in coursework prior to 2020.**

In future years, students will be expected to choose and shape their artifacts in order to contribute cohesively to the systematic study of a policy or administrative topic prior to submitting their PPA 500 proposal. If you're progressing to PPA 500 in 2020-21, you may need to revise or develop additional artifacts leading up to or during PPA 500.

- 3. There is a lot here. Will this really make it much more feasible for me to finish it in a single semester?**

Yes. All of the options significantly reduce the total amount of effort and time required to complete the culminating experience (Option 3 by producing a product that is significantly shorter than a typical thesis). First, you'll be adapting research, data, analysis, and/or applied work that you've already done as the main body of substantive work, rather than starting a big new project. Second, while you'll be demonstrating skills and competencies from across the curriculum in writing formats that can be more challenging than a thesis, the total amount of writing you'll be producing will shrink:

Comparison of Writing Expectations		
Option	Principal Product, page limit	Supplemental Product, page limit*
1	12	4 + 5 pg. prof. development plan
2	15	5
3	35	12
Old Thesis	50-100 (typically)	n/a
* Illustrative only. Some supplemental alternatives are not written products.		

CULMINATING PROJECT OPTION 1: DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATED CAREER-FOCUSED PPA PORTFOLIO

OVERVIEW

This document summarizes a new option for completing the PPA culminating experience requirement: developing a career-focused portfolio that documents evolving knowledge and competency related to a specific policy or administrative topic. This alternative may be especially appropriate for students who wish to refine and reflect on professional development goals and demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities to prospective employers.

GUIDELINES

Creating a PPA portfolio is a significant undertaking that will involve organized tracking of PPA coursework and relevant professional materials. You will need to identify a central public policy or administrative topic you wish to explore during the initial year of the program and begin to concentrate on this topic as you complete assignments in multiple PPA courses. Your academic work will be a major source of portfolio documents and you will need to complete a well-researched and compelling policy analysis on the topic you select. You will also need to develop, draw on, and/or refine key professional documents during your time in the program. These can come from current and prior work, internships, or public service activities. Finally, the PPA portfolio includes an element of reflection—you will be asked to assess your own professional development throughout the course of the program. You will have a chance to compile and refine your portfolio with periodic feedback in PPA 500, but you should pull together key course artifacts and professional documents prior to the start of PPA 500.

A completed PPA Portfolio must include the following components:

- a) A title page with a title, your name, and year submitted
- b) A table of contents that identifies the materials included in the portfolio
- c) A professional policy or administrative analysis (8-12 pages) that applies a framework or structured set of lenses to define and explore—but not attempt to solve—a current problem or opportunity from multiple PPA perspectives (i.e., with attention to relevant politics, policy, economics/financial, administrative, and/or ethical considerations). Your finished analysis might look something like an abbreviated and more professionally crafted PPA 200 policy issue paper. The audience includes stakeholders and potential decisionmaker(s) who have limited experience with this particular topic or problem. The analysis should use an analytical and not advocacy-based frame and it might focus on the issue at any relevant level/in any sector (for example: state, regional, county, city, agency, division, department, public, private, or nonprofit). It can address a topic in public policy, administration, or both. It should include a concise summary of a particular issue (introduction and context) with an explanation of why this issue is important (the “so what?” question). It should outline some of the stakeholders and interests associated with this topic and explore some preliminary options and decision-making criteria without assessing or making recommendations. This analysis does NOT need to include original data

collection. It must, however, include evidence from reputable sources to support your descriptive analysis.

- d) At least three artifacts from multiple PPA courses related to the systematic study of the policy or administrative topic you have elected to study. Examples of artifacts include cost-benefit analyses, stakeholder analyses, systematic literature reviews, relevant client project work (produced individually or with a team), interview or survey findings, CAM analyses, evidence-informed evaluations or plans, etc. If you completed artifacts that are not clearly associated with your policy or administrative topic during the course of the program, you may need to revise or develop additional artifacts leading up to or during PPA 500 to show how you would apply a particular theory or tool to better understand your topic.

- e) A 3-4 page reflective essay in which you describe your professional growth during the PPA program with a focus on what you have learned about your primary topic of focus. Your reflective essay must clearly reflect how you apply theory to practice, if/how your perspectives on your topic have evolved throughout the course of the program, and if/how you anticipate continuing to explore this topic in your career or via other forms of service.

- f) A professional development plan that includes a current resume, an example cover letter or professional bio statement/profile, and a brief description of professional development goals.

CULMINATING PROJECT OPTION 2: DEVELOPING AN APPLIED PROJECT OR POLICY REPORT

A second option is a policy report. The purpose of the policy report is to provide practical, clear, evidence-based analyses that will help a relevant audience(s) make a decision about an issue or problem. The audience is the decisionmaker(s) for the particular issue or problem. The report should be well-attuned to audience and should use an analytical and not advocacy-based frame. The policy report can address policy at any level/in any sector (for example: state, regional, county, city, agency, division, department, public, private, or nonprofit). It can address a policy issue in public policy, administration, or both. In that way, it can cross the historical divides of our discipline, but it does not need to. With regard to its structure, the policy report is a concise summary of a particular issue (introduction and context), it states why an issue is important (the “so what?” question), it explores options or alternatives to address the issue, it includes evidence and criteria used to make a determination about an optimal path(s) forward, and it ends with either recommendations or analyses of trade-offs and possible next steps. The report does not need to include original data collection and analyses of those data. It must include evidence from reputable sources that are relevant for your topic. Examples of such sources include the Legislative Analyst’s Office, the Department of Finance, and the Public Policy Institute of California. Your use of sources does not need to be exhaustive, but it should cover the topic well (with at least 5-10 documents). Newspaper stories are acceptable, but the reference list must be more expansive than that and can include other policy reports and briefs, presentations from relevant entities, journal articles, books, chapters, and other similar sources. You should use the reference/endnote option and not citations in the text. Be sure to cite all evidence that you include and all references to others’ writings.

It is important to be as concise and jargon-free as possible. The report can be no longer than 15 pages of text double spaced, including graphics and the reference list (excluding front/back pages and a table of contents). Your decisionmaker audience will not have time to wade through a long or complex report. Your analyses should be based on sound evidence, and you should focus on making meaning out of what you learned, not on describing the methods researchers used (decisionmakers are usually not interested in the methods). Graphical displays are not required, but should be considered, keeping in mind your topic and audience. It helps to have a catchy and pithy title that represents your content well and grabs your audience’s attention, but catchiness and pithiness are not required. A title is required.

A first draft of the policy report may be completed prior to enrollment in PPA 500 and it can be built off of a prior classroom assignment. During PPA 500, the instructor will support students in a) finalizing the draft and b) writing a short synthesis (fewer than 5 pages double spaced) that views the topic through the lenses stressed in the PPA program as applicable, such as economics, finance, and budgeting; politics; and organizational theory and administration. The instructor for 500 will be one of your readers; you can decide if the instructor is your first or second reader. You will need both.

Finally, you will follow all rules and deadlines the Office of Graduate Studies creates for theses and projects, including using the approved template, bringing it in for review/approval by that office, having your first and second reader sign your paperwork in time, and submitting it in time.

CULMINATING PROJECT OPTION 3: DEVELOPING A DRAFT JOURNAL ARTICLE

OVERVIEW

This portion of the document summarizes a new option for completing the PPA culminating experience requirement: developing a paper that potentially could be submitted to an academic journal. This alternative may be especially appropriate for students interested in positions oriented toward research and policy/administrative analysis, and/or who may be considering eventual pursuit of a doctoral degree.

GUIDELINES

The default approach for someone pursuing this option would be to revise a major assignment for a previous class (e.g. the final research paper for PPA 207, 220B, 240B, 272, etc.) to be suitable as an academic journal article. To pursue this culminating experience option, the student should secure the approval of the instructor of the course for which the assignment was completed. If the faculty member agrees the previous work has the potential for a journal article, that instructor will serve as the student's primary thesis advisor and the instructor of PPA 500 will serve as the secondary advisor (unless these are the same person in which case another PPA instructor will serve as secondary advisor).

The student's work in PPA 500 at the culminating experience stage would involve the following:

1. **Editing and tightening.** Articles for journal submission need to be very tightly argued and oriented toward advancing knowledge in the field. They also face strict length limitations: while there is some variance across outlets, academic articles generally need to be no more than about 25-35 double spaced pages including tables, figures, references, etc. Additionally, journal articles are designed for an audience that is presumably very familiar with appropriate methods and much of the appropriate literature. By contrast, our major assignments for the PPA program commonly aim to demonstrate general student competence in a variety of areas and are more permissive with respect to length. *Accordingly, a major part of pursuing this option would involve careful revisions designed to include only material appropriate for the article venue* and zeroing in on things academics care much about, such as intellectual contribution. In consultation with the primary advisor, the student should also pick a particular academic journal to target, in part to gain a better understanding of what venues are appropriate for different types of research.
2. **Going beyond prior work.** Since this option is to meet a culminating experience requirement, we care about students' ability to show that they can synthesize ideas and approaches across courses, appropriate to different audiences. Anyone pursuing this option therefore needs to demonstrate the ability to go beyond producing a tightly argued academic type article. We anticipate that students could fill this option in multiple ways including but not necessarily limited to the following:

- a. Drafting an op-ed. This would involve developing an op-ed based on the research in the academic article that is potentially suitable for publication in a venue such as the *Los Angeles Times*, CalMatters, or “The Conversation.” Such a piece would be about 700 words in length and focus especially on implications interesting to a broader public.
- b. Developing a policy brief. This would entail a shorter summary of the work contained in the academic article that would be appropriate for a legislator or the like. It also might be similar to policy briefs developed by organizations such as the Public Policy Institute of California, Legislative Analyst’s Office, etc.
- c. Making an oral presentation to faculty. This would involve engaging in a discussion with the faculty in a way that can demonstrate a student can go beyond the material contained in the article, drawing on different aspects of the program. For example, if the article used analytical methods to determine a desirable approach to address a problem such as homeless, the discussion might involve whether the approach was politically feasible or capable of being implemented. The student would be expected to draw on ideas from PPA 210 and the public management series as well as the policy analysis classes.

EXPECTATIONS

Our expectation is that the students would be able to complete Option 1 and fulfill their culminating experience requirement in a single semester. The first required product would be the completion of the draft journal article that, in the judgment of two faculty readers, is of the quality that it could reasonably be considered for publication in an academic journal (note that there is no requirement that it actually be submitted although that may be highly desirable). The second requirement is completion of a method of going beyond the article itself, per the prior section of this document. The student’s advisor would have principal responsibility for determining if this latter requirement is fulfilled.

APPENDIX: UNIVERSITY CULMINATING EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

California State University regulations require a culminating (capstone) experience for completion of a master's degree, with minimum standards. In the case of Public Policy & Administration, there are two overarching conceptual alternatives for the culminating experience:

A thesis is the written product of the systematic study of a significant problem. It clearly identifies the problem; states the major assumptions; explains the significance of the undertaking; sets forth the sources for, and methods of gathering information; analyzes the data; and offers a conclusion or recommendation. The finished product must evidence originality, critical and independent thinking, appropriate organization and format, clarity of purpose, and accurate and thorough documentation. Normally an oral defense of the thesis will be required.

A project is a significant undertaking of a pursuit appropriate to the fine and applied arts or to professional fields. It must evidence originality and independent thinking, appropriate form and organization, and a rationale. It must be described and summarized in a written abstract that includes the project's significance, objectives, methodology, and a conclusion or recommendation. An oral defense of the project may be required.