

Master of Public Policy

Department of Political Science

College of Liberal Arts

California Polytechnic State University

Student Handbook

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**Master of Public Policy
Political Science Department
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA**

Dr. Ning Zhang
Department Chair

Dr. Nancy Arrington
MPP Program Director

Mailing Address

Department of Political Science
California Polytechnic State University
One Grand Avenue
Building 47, Room 14
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407-0328

Phone and Internet

Phone: 805.756.2984

Fax: 805.756.7168

E-mail: politicalscience@calpoly.edu

Web: <https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/mpp>

Contacts

For admissions and general information:

Political Science Office

Phone: 805.756.2984

Fax: 805.756.7168

For MPP program information:

Dr. Nancy Arrington, MPP Program Director

Phone: 805.756.2757

E-mail: mpp@calpoly.edu; naarring@calpoly.edu

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Welcome

Welcome to the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program at Cal Poly! The faculty, staff and current students of the MPP program and Political Science department welcome you to our program and university.

Our mission is to prepare future public policy leaders for the dynamic and complex world of the 21st century. International issues, such as poverty and terrorism, and domestic issues, such as education and health care, continue to present significant challenges to public policy analysts and to decision makers. In our ever-shrinking, increasingly interconnected world, you must be prepared to offer sound policy analyses on complex issues. The MPP degree from Cal Poly equips you with the tools necessary to have an impact on future policy decisions. Our faculty members combine professional and academic experience to train you in the skills of policy-oriented research and practice.

Core courses in our program cover public policy, economic policy, policy analysis, and applied quantitative and qualitative methodologies. One-third of the required units are drawn from electives, allowing you to customize your course of study according to specific areas of interest and expertise. Numerous departments offer elective courses to fulfill elective requirements, including City and Regional Planning, Business, Agribusiness, Economics, Forestry and Natural Resources, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Statistics.

Cal Poly is a great place to pursue graduate studies. According to U.S. News & World Report's 2019 Best Colleges List, Cal Poly is recognized as the "the No. 1 master's-level public university in the West" for the 26th straight year. Forbes.com ranked Cal Poly 13th nationally for the highest alumni earnings. Cal Poly's Learn by Doing philosophy is an integral component of our program. Our accomplished faculty work closely with you on real world problems and practical issues. You also receive experiential training through field research and internship experiences. Located halfway between San Francisco and Sacramento to the north and Los Angeles to the south, Cal Poly provides numerous opportunities for professional internships within California. Further, you can pursue internships in Washington, D.C., and internationally, depending on your interests. As a core aspect of the MPP program, the internship provides you with valuable opportunities to further focus your career goals and to enhance your understanding of policy analysis techniques.

The MPP program supports student presentations and participation at professional and academic conferences across the nation. Through these conferences, you have the opportunity to present your original research to expert audiences as well as to network with policy professionals. Our

program has a tremendous track record in both conference acceptances and presentations by graduate students.

Financial support for graduate students in our program may include scholarships, fellowships, tuition waivers, non-resident tuition waivers, and student loans available through Cal Poly and outside organizations. The MPP program at Cal Poly is among the least expensive in the state, making it an excellent value.

Cal Poly is located on the beautiful California Central Coast in the “happiest city in the United States, San Luis Obispo.” The city is about 10 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The surrounding community provides a variety of outdoor activities to help you enjoy the beautiful natural environment surrounding the city. Faculty, students, and community members enjoy the weekly Farmers’ Market, green spaces, and outdoor cafes and coffee shops.

The skill and knowledge bases provided by a MPP degree allow you flexibility to shape your degree to align with your career interests. Public policy analysts can work for governments to help design, implement, and evaluate policy programs. Analysts can work for think tanks, idea factories, and research centers to predict the effects of policy changes and to plan for future policy decisions from a more theoretical approach. You can also work to help persuade decision makers and the public about different policy options. Because of this flexibility and variation in types of work and across fields of specialty, salaries can vary. However, the demand for such skills and knowledge bases is growing as the world faces increasingly complex problems.

Transition to Graduate Life

Graduate work is different than the type of undergraduate and professional work you may have previously done. In your undergraduate work, you likely spent a fair amount of time learning how to answer questions posed by your professors. In your professional work, you may have spent quite a bit of time doing directed work on particular projects and tasks. One of the aims of the MPP program at Cal Poly is to teach you how to ask interesting questions and be able to design and implement a process to answer them. The transition from answering to asking questions can sometimes be difficult and uncomfortable.

The Cal Poly MPP program is designed to provide you with the skills, knowledge, and competencies to create a fulfilling public policy career. Core courses in the program cover public policy, economic policy, policy analysis, leadership, and applied quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Further, you have the flexibility to choose a set of electives that will allow you to develop specific content knowledge designed around your interests and future career plans. This combination of required and elective courses encourages your growth and professional practice to support your search for interesting questions and important answers.

Responsibility of the Student

Students come into the MPP program with a wide variety of professional and academic experiences. You will each be well-prepared for some aspects of graduate study and not as well-prepared for others. While the Cal Poly faculty and staff will support you through this process, you are ultimately responsible for your own development and learning. Such development is intentional. As such, you must take responsibility for it.

Graduate school is a professional experience, and you should treat it as such. You should anticipate spending between 20-35 hours per week preparing for class – completing assignments, researching, writing, preparing for presentations, discussing material, and reading. The amount of time you spend per week may vary depending on the courses in which you are enrolled and the particular time of the quarter. The type of work you do will also vary by course and assignment. You will work alone, in small teams, and sometimes in large teams. These are the sorts of experiences you will find in your professional career, and you should take the opportunity here to develop both individual and group skills.

Thinking of graduate school as a professional experience also means that you should conduct yourself professionally. This includes treating university staff, faculty, and other students with

respect. Such norms of respect and professional behavior mean that you should make appointments with faculty members to meet outside office hours and that you should remember that you are a representative of the MPP program when you work with other departments, offices, and programs on and off campus. Your behavior reflects on the program and can make it more or less difficult for us to provide such experiences and opportunities for you and other students in the future. Unprofessional behavior also includes incidents of cheating or plagiarism as outlined in the Academic Integrity Policy in the appendix of this handbook. Continued or extreme incidents of unprofessional behavior are grounds for being placed on Administrative Academic Probation or being disqualified and/or expelled from the MPP program and/or the university.

You will learn both from the content presented in courses and from the process of figuring things out. While faculty members will support your learning by designing assignments, setting performance standards, and determining guidelines, they will rarely provide step-by-step instructions or tell you exactly what to remember from readings. Readings, assignments, and activities are intended to develop your critical thinking and processing skills in an environment that is both supportive and demanding.

The university and the faculty provide the resources for your success at Cal Poly. You have the responsibility and the opportunity to take full advantage of those resources in the pursuit of a fulfilling graduate experience and career.

The Role of the Faculty

Cal Poly Faculty are an important component in the support of your education and graduate degree. Each faculty member is responsible for developing relevant course content, including readings, in-class activities, and assessment methods and rubrics.

MPP faculty take their role as educators very seriously and believe strongly that education continues outside the classroom. Your faculty members are dedicated to their research and professional work outside of the classroom as evidenced by their work with governments, non-profits, and other research opportunities. Faculty members may ask you to participate on such projects as a way of further developing your professional commitment.

Faculty members share high academic standards and dedication to student learning. They have diverse approaches to the process of educating, in their experiences and interests in the professional and academic realms and opinions. Your education is only enhanced through working with and appreciating such differences.

MPP Program

Description

The MPP degree program is professionally oriented and open to students who wish to pursue analytic careers in government, nonprofit organizations, consulting, advocacy, and related policy occupations. The program is structured to prepare graduates with the competency and creativity to excel in careers in the ever-changing world of public policy. The core courses cover public policy, public policy analysis, economic and regulatory policy, research design, quantitative methods, and leadership. Policy internships and the graduate seminar round out the academic experience.

The MPP program is designed to meet the needs of those who have earned baccalaureate degrees in a variety of disciplines, including, but not limited to, economics, history, political science, social sciences, psychology, city and regional planning, business administration, education, environmental studies, and natural resource management.

The program is two years in duration for students taking 8 or more units per term. It consists of 50 approved units (not including courses necessary to compensate for deficiencies). Because of the sequencing of courses, students admitted to the program are expected to begin study in the fall quarter. In their second year, students undertake the development, presentation, and discussion of individual research projects in a two-term seminar (POLS 590). After the completion of POLS 590, students are required to pass a comprehensive exam as the culminating experience. The program offers students opportunities to develop close working relationships with faculty. Self-directed study, tailored to student interest and needs, is encouraged.

MPP Learning Objectives

By the end of the program, students will be able to

1. Think critically and creatively about public policy theory, analysis, and application including quantitative and qualitative analysis, argumentation, and the process and practice of research in general and as applied to a substantive policy area
2. Communicate ideas clearly, concisely, and effectively including the communication of evidence, analysis, and arguments via written, visual, and oral methods
3. Exhibit expertise in the field of public policy, including an appreciation of the connections between a particular substantive area and the social, political, economic, and technological context in which it exists

4. Work productively as individuals and in groups
5. Participate constructively in the process of creating, implementing and evaluating public policy
6. Recognize and reconcile diverse perspectives, and the tradeoffs they entail, in pursuit of the public interest
7. Utilize internship experiences and course knowledge to prepare them for dynamic and professional careers in the ever-changing field of public policy

MPP Courses

Semester Conversion

Starting in the fall of 2026, Cal Poly transitions from a quarter system to a semester system. This change has a few implications for the MPP program. There are slight shifts to the curricula—one required course (POLS 515) is replaced with an elective. The program shifts from 50 quarter units to 37 semester units. The main change is to the culminating experience. Students graduating prior to (or up to) Fall 2026 will take the comprehensive exam. The comprehensive exam prep course, POLS 595, will be offered for the last time in Spring of 2026. Students graduating in the Spring of 2027 or later will complete a Project via POLS 5590 as their culminating experience. Students in the Fall 2025-Spring 2027 cohort will work closely with the Program Director to ensure all requirements are met during the transition.

For students in the transition cohort (fall 2025-spring 2027), the program recommends completing the semester catalog. One detail to note, however, is that quarter units translate to semester units by being divided by 1.5. So, a 4-unit quarter course will translate to 2.67 semester units. Students on the semester catalog who follow the course progression listed below will be 1.7 semester units short of the 37-unit requirement. Graduate Education is pursuing a waiver for students in this situation so that degrees will still be conferred despite unit discrepancies due to transition. Regardless, strategic students might consider, for example, enrolling in as many units of POLS 5586 for which they qualify. If a student is still short less than 3 units, they can enroll in a 1-unit (or 2-unit) POLS 5500 independent study in the Spring of 2027 with the graduate coordinator. This independent study will address professionalization and job searching.

Courses, Quarters (up to Spring 2026)

Classes	Units
POLS 510 Research Design*	4
POLS 515 Public Policy	4
POLS 518 Public Policy Analysis	5
POLS 540 Leadership & Management	2
POLS 550 Regulatory and Economic Policy	4
POLS 560 Quantitative Methods*	5
POLS 586 Policy Internship	4
POLS 590 Graduate Seminar*	8
POLS 595 Directed Supervised Reading for MPP Comprehensive Exam	2
Advisor Approved Electives	12
Total Units	50

*There are some slight modifications for students in the blended 4+1 program. Please reach out to the program director for individual advising.

Standard Curriculum Flowchart, Quarters

	Year 1			Year 2		
	Fall	Winter	Spring	Fall	Winter	Spring
Core Courses	POLS 510 POLS 515	POLS 518 POLS 550*	POLS 560	POLS 590 POLS 586	POLS 590	POLS 540* POLS 595
Electives**			Elective		Elective	Elective
Total Units	8	9	9	8	8	8
Administrative Tasks	Working Formal Study Plan				Application for Graduation	-Final Formal Study Plan -Master's Exam Approval Form

* Classes may be offered in Year 1 or 2. Student is responsible for ensuring enrollment prior to graduation.

** Elective offerings determine quarter taken. Timing here is suggested.

Please be aware that MPP Policy requires that you take all core courses on your Formal Study Plan for a letter grade, unless otherwise specified in the course description.

Courses, Semesters (Starting Fall 2026)

Classes	Units
POLS 5510 Research Design*	3
POLS 5518 Public Policy and Analysis	3
POLS 5540 Leadership & Management	3
POLS 5550 Regulatory and Economic Policy	3
POLS 5560 Quantitative Methods*	4
POLS 5586 Policy Internship	3
POLS 5590 Graduate Seminar*	6
Electives	12
Total Units	37

Standard Curriculum Flowchart, Semesters

	Year 1		Year 2	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Core Courses	POLS 5510 POLS 5518	POLS 5560 POLS 5550	POLS 5590 POLS 5586	POLS 5540 POLS 5590
Electives**	Elective	Elective	Elective	Elective
Total Units	9	10	9	9
Administrative Tasks	-Working Formal Study Plan		-Application for Graduation	-Final Formal Study Plan -Culminating Exp. Approval Form

** Elective offerings determine quarter taken. Timing here is suggested.

Please be aware that MPP Policy requires that you take all core courses on your Formal Study Plan for a letter grade, unless otherwise specified in the course description.

MPP Elective Courses

Elective coursework in the MPP program should be used to develop an area of policy expertise. In order to develop an area of policy expertise, you are required to apply 12 elective units toward a specific policy specialization. You may develop policy expertise by choosing courses from a wide array of disciplines throughout the university.

Elective Courses, Quarters

Elective units may be chosen from 400 or 500 level courses offered by various academic departments as appropriate. Please note that these electives are subject to change based on other departments' current course offerings. It is important to check with the instructor of the elective course to determine the current applicability the course has with the MPP degree. For a description of each course, see Cal Poly's online Catalog (<http://catalog.calpoly.edu/>). Courses not listed here may also be applicable; please contact the MPP Director for approval. Students may need to inquire with the professor of particular elective courses about prerequisites and availability. Please do so politely. Examples of elective classes include but are not limited to:

Agriculture

AG 450 Applied Holistic Management
AG 452 Issues Affecting California
Agriculture

Agribusiness

AGB 405 Agribusiness Marketing Research
Methods
AGB 409 California Agricultural Law
AGB 410 Agricultural Lending
AGB 412 Advanced Agricultural Policy
AGB 418 Seminar in US/World
Agricultural Trade Issues
AGB 433 Agribusiness Price Analysis
AGB 435 Linear Programming in
Agriculture
AGB 442 Agricultural Policy Resolution
AGB 444 Wine Compliance and Market
Analysis

AGB 452 Agriculture Market Structure and
Strategy

AGB 510 International Development and
Agribusiness

AGB 514 Managerial Leadership and
Communication

AGB 543 Agribusiness Policy and Program
Analysis

AGB 554 Food System Marketing

AGB 555 Technological and Economic
Change in Agribusiness

AGB 563 International Agribusiness and
Trade

Anthropology

ANT 402 Nutritional Anthropology

Biology

BIO 427 Wildlife Management

BIO 470 Selected Advanced Topics
BIO 472 Current Topics in Bio Research
BIO 590 California Environmental Policy
and Law

**Bioresource and Agricultural
Engineering**

BRAE 418 Agricultural Systems
Management I

Business

BUS 404 Government and Social Influences
on Business
BUS 410 The Legal Environment of
International Business
BUS 419 Strategic Marketing Management
BUS 422 Government and Not for Profit
Entities
BUS 433 International Business Finance
BUS 443 Case Studies in Finance
BUS 445 Ethics and Behavioral Finance
BUS 446 International Marketing
BUS 472 Labor Relations
BUS 473 Employment Law
BUS 477 Managing Change and
Development

Child Development

CD 401 Perspectives on Child and
Adolescent Development

Civil Engineering

CE 424 Public Transportation
CE 440 Hydraulic Systems Engineering
CE 527 Sustainable Mobility
CE 528 Transportation Analysis
CE 535 Water Resources Systems Planning
and Analysis

CE 538 Urban Water Systems

City and Regional Planning

CRP 404 Environmental Law
CRP 408 Water Resource Law and Policy
CRP 420 Land Use Law
CRP 427 Local Economic Development
Planning
CRP 430 Public Sector Planning Practice
CRP 435 Transportation Theory
CRP 436 Collaborative Planning
CRP 438 Pollution Prevention and Control
CRP 442 Housing and Planning
CRP 445 Planning and Urban Ecology
CRP 446 Development Review and
Entitlement
CRP 457 Planning Information Systems
CRP 458 Local Hazard Mitigation -
Planning and Design
CRP 470 Selected Advanced Topics
CRP 501 Foundations of Cities and
Planning
CRP 510 Planning Theory
CRP 512 Introduction to Visual
Communication and GIS
CRP 513 Planning Research Methods
CRP 516 Quantitative Methods in Planning
CRP 518 Public Policy Analysis
CRP 520 Feasibility Studies in Planning
CRP 530 Planning Agency Management
CRP 535 Land Use and Planning Law
CRP 545 Environmental Planning, Policies,
and Principles
CRP 548 Principles of Urban Development
and Design
CRP 554 Regional Planning and Analysis
CRP 597 Policy, Planning and Management

Communication Studies

COMS 413 Advanced Organizational
Communication
COMS 435 American Political Rhetoric

Crop Science

CRSC 445 Cropping Systems

Economics

ECON 403 Industrial Organization
ECON 404 International Trade Theory
ECON 405 International Monetary
Economics
ECON 406 Applied Forecasting
ECON 408 Mathematical Economics
ECON 409 Probability Models for
Economic Decisions
ECON 410 Public Finance and Cost-
Benefit Analysis
ECON 413 Labor Economics
ECON 417 Development of Economic
Analysis
ECON 413 Economics of Energy and
Resources
ECON 424 Monetary Economics
ECON 431 Environmental Economics
ECON 432 Economics of Energy and
Resources
ECON 433 Transportation Economics
ECON 434 Urban Economics
ECON 435 Economics of Land and Water
ECON 470 Selected Advanced Topics

Environmental Design

EDES 406 Sustainable Environments
EDES 408 Implementing Sustainable
Principles

EDES 410 Advanced Implementation of
Sustainable Principles

Environmental Engineering

ENVE 411 Air Pollution Control
ENVE 421 Mass Transfer Operations
ENVE 436 Hazardous Waste Management
ENVE 438 Water and Wastewater
Treatment Design
ENVE 439 Solid Waste Management
ENVE 450 Industrial Pollution Prevention
ENVE 537 Decentralized Wastewater
Management
ENVE 542 Sustainable Environmental
Engineering

Food Science and Nutrition

FSN 410 Nutritional Implications of Food
Industry Practices
FSN 415 Nutrition Education and
Communications
FSN 416 Community Nutrition
FSN 420 Critical Evaluation of Nutrition
Research
FSN 426 Food Systems Management
FSN 480 Policy Arguments in Food and
Nutrition

Geography

GEOG 408 Geography of Development
GEOG 414 Global and Regional
Climatology
GEOG 415 Applied Meteorology and
Climatology
GEOG 440 Geo-Social Applications of GIS
GEOG 470 Urban Geography

History

HIST 411 History of U.S. Foreign Relations
HIST 459 Imperialism and Postcolonial
Studies
HIST 507 The People's Republic of China
HIST 509 Modern Africa Historiography

Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering

IME 409 Economic Decisions Systems
IME 544 Advanced Topics in Engineering
Economy

Journalism

JOUR 413 Public Relations Campaigns

Kinesiology

KINE 434 Health Promotion Program
Planning
KINE 501 Evaluation of Current Studies
KINE 503 Current Health Issues
KINE 510 Health Behavior Change

Mathematics

MATH 437 Game Theory

Natural Resources

NR 402 Forest Health
NR 404 Environmental Law
NR 408 Water Resource Law and Policy
NR 414 Sustainable Forest Management
NR 416 Environmental Impact Analysis
and Management
NR 418 Applied GIS
NR 419 Watershed Management and
Restoration
NR 420 Advanced Watershed Hydrology
NR 421 Wetlands

NR 425 Applied Resource Analysis
NR 426 Food Systems Management
NR 435 Natural Resources Policy Analysis
NR 450 Community Forestry
NR 455 Wildland-Urban Interface Fire
Protection
NR 460 Advanced Applications of GIS
NR 464 Advanced GIS Practicum
NR 465 Ecosystem Management
NR 472 Leadership Practice
NR 502 Resource Conservation
NR 530 Social Systems in Natural
Resources Management
NR 532 Applications in Biometrics and
Econometrics

Political Science

POLS 419 Social Movements and Political
Protest
POLS 420 Contemporary Foreign Policy
POLS 426 International Organizations and
Law
POLS 427 Politics of the Global Economy
POLS 428 Issues and Topics in
Comparative Politics
POLS 429 Issues and Topics in
International Relations
POLS 430 Advanced Topics in Political
Theory
POLS 431 Issues and Topics in American
Politics
POLS 451 Technology and Public Policy
POLS 457 The Politics of Reproductive
Policy
POLS 459 The Politics of Poverty
POLS 470 Selected Advanced Topics
POLS 471 Urban Politics
POLS 500 Independent Study

POLS 516 Public Finance
POLS 517 Administrative Theory and
Behavior
POLS 519 Public Personnel Policy
POLS 568 Topics and Issues in Public
Policy
POLS 570 Selected Advanced Topics

Psychology

PSY 405 Abnormal Psychology
PSY 413 Parent-Child Relationships
PSY 456 Behavioral Disorders in Children
PSY 460 Child Abuse and Neglect
PSY 465 Cross-Cultural Issues in
Psychology
PSY 472 Multicultural Psychology
PSY 494 Psychology of Technological
Change

Recreation, Parks and Tourism Administration

RPTA 413 Tourism and Protected Area
Management
RPTA 424 Financing Recreation, Parks and
Tourism Services
RPTA 460 Research in Recreation, Parks
and Tourism
RPTA 502 Current Issues in Recreation,
Parks and Tourism
RPTA 527 Leisure Behavior and Theory
RPTA Grad Seminar in RPT

Sociology

SOC 402 Crime and Violence
SOC 406 Juvenile Delinquency
SOC 412 Criminal Justice
SOC 413 Methods of Social Work

Elective Courses, Semesters

On semesters, students are still encouraged to take any course that best hones their substantive area of expertise. Any 4000 or 5000-level courses, from POLS, CRP, ECON, SOC, ANT, or GEOG will automatically count as an elective. Courses from other programs will need advisor approval and a course substitution form. This distinction between automatically approved and advisor approved electives is a function of bureaucratic hurdles and does NOT indicate faculty preferences in types of electives. Students should pursue the electives that are best for their intellectual and professional growth.

POLS 400/500 Independent Studies

In circumstances where regularly offered elective courses do not match your area of expertise, you can apply up to 4 units of POLS 400 (3 units 4400 on semesters) and 4 units of POLS 500 (3 units 5500 on semesters) as elective units toward your MPP degree. The workload for such independent study courses should be commensurate with the level of the course. Moreover, according to the academic catalog, graduate courses, including POLS 500, should “cope with more complex ideas, problems, techniques and materials than in undergraduate courses. Graduate study requires searching and exhaustive analysis; identification and investigation of theories and principles;

application of theory to new ideas, problems, and materials; extensive use of bibliographic and other resource materials, with emphasis on primary sources for data; and demonstration of competence in scholarly presentation of the results of independent study.”

The ultimate design of independent study courses is a negotiation between you and the faculty member in terms of content, readings, deliverables, and workload; the faculty member has the final say over what is appropriate. As a rough benchmark, you should anticipate approximately 120 hours of work for 4 units of independent study. If you are interested in an independent study, you should contact professors with related interests and talk with them about the potential for such study. If you are unsure about which professors might have matching interests, please contact the MPP Director for advice.

Course Descriptions

POLS 500/5500 Independent Study

Individual research, studies, or surveys under the supervision of the faculty. Prerequisite: Graduate standing with minimum of 12 units.

POLS 510/5510 Research Design

Approaches to policy research, question development, hypothesis framing, literature reviews, sampling, measurement and approaches to analysis. Prerequisite: Graduate standing or consent of instructor.

POLS 515 Public Policy

Theoretical and practical approaches to public policy making and contemporary policy issues, such as markets; regulation; criminal justice; housing; environment; poverty; health care and education. Prerequisite: Graduate standing, or consent of instructor.

POLS 518/5518 Public Policy Analysis

Contextual, problem-oriented analysis of the societal problems and possible solutions to them. Development and use of concepts and tools related to policy evaluation with particular emphasis on qualitative methods. Prerequisite: POLS 560 or consent of instructor.

POLS 540/5540 Leadership and Management in Public Policy (CR/NC)

An exploration of the changing notion of leadership in public policy. Focus on understanding and developing leadership capacity within the complex inter-organizational structure in which the student works. For graduate students. Prerequisite: POLS 515 or consent of instructor.

POLS 550/5550 Regulatory and Economic Policy

Theory, politics and applications of government regulatory and economic policy, and skills and experience necessary to use this knowledge in applied policy making situations. Prerequisite: POLS 515 or consent of instructor.

POLS 560/5560 Quantitative Methods

Social science methodology focusing on research design and quantitative methods used in policy and political research, such as multi-regression, non-linear techniques, diagnostics and time series. Advanced computer packages used to analyze challenging data sets. Prerequisite: Graduate standing or consent of instructor.

POLS 568/5568 Topics and Issues in Public Policy

Selected advanced topics applicable to public policy problems. The Schedule of Classes will list topic selected. Prerequisite: POLS 515 or consent of instructor.

POLS 570/5570 Selected Advanced Topics

Directed group study of selected topics for graduate students. Open to undergraduate and graduate students. The Schedule of Classes will list title selected. Prerequisite: Graduate standing or consent of instructor.

POLS 586/5586 Policy Internship (CR/NC)

Supervised work experience in a government or related public agency. Intern will function as an employee engaged in comparable work. Credit/No Credit grading only.

POLS 590/5590 Graduate Seminar

Seminar designed as a culminating component to the MPP Program. Individual research under the supervision of the faculty within a small discussion environment, leading to a graduate project or paper that demonstrates practical mastery of the MPP curriculum. Prerequisite: POLS 560 or consent of instructor. For students graduating spring 2027, the POLS 5590 project will be the culminating experience of the degree.

POLS 595 Directed Readings for MPP Comprehensive Exams (2) (CR/NC)

Directed readings and preparation for MPP comprehensive exams. Regular consultation between advisor and student. Credit/No Credit grading only. POLS 595 will be offered for the last time Spring 2026.

The 4+1 Blended Program

The 4+1 Blended program is an accelerated program available to Cal Poly Political Science students in which students can complete their MPP degree alongside their BA degree.

Blended Admissions

Applications for the blended program are due at the same time as traditional applications (4/1), although the blended program application process is more informal and thus a bit more flexible than the traditional application process. To apply students should send a letter of interest to the MPP Director and have a faculty member (who does not teach one of the core MPP courses) write a letter or recommendation. Students must have a 3.25 overall GPA and 3.5 POLS GPA. Students are strongly encouraged to complete POLS 351 prior to admission into the blended program (if scheduling of POLS 351 complicates this possibility, students should reach out to the program director). In addition, students must have received a C- or better in STATS 217 and have completed lower division requirements for their POLS major.

Blended Course Requirements

Course requirements differ slightly for blended students relative to traditionally admitted students. Blended students are strongly encouraged to meet with the MPP director regularly to ensure that they are meeting the requirements for both degrees.

Blended students are required to complete POLS 461/462 for their undergraduate degree; POLS 590 is not required for blended students on quarters and can be replaced with additional electives. If blended students choose to enroll in POLS 590, they must complete a project that is separate from their POLS 461/462 project.

However, for students graduating after Fall of 2026, the POLS 5590 course sequence comprises the culminating experience for the MPP degree. Blended students graduating Spring of 2027 or later must complete both POLS 5590 courses to satisfy degree requirements.

Blended Forms

Once you have been admitted to the program, complete the “**Blended Programs Application Approval (E-form)**” (<https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/forms.html>). Once you have completed 91% of your undergraduate degree, you can transition to graduate standing by filling out and submitting the “**Postbaccalaureate Change of Objective (E-form)**” (<https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/forms.html>). You must transition to graduate standing at least two quarters prior to degree completion/graduation. When deciding when to transition, you may consider the financial implications of transition on financial aid.

For more information about paperwork, deadlines, and university policy see the “Blended Programs” page through graduate education:
https://grad.calpoly.edu/program/blended_programs.html

Internships

You are required to complete an internship (POLS 586/5586) as preparation for professional practice. Faculty and staff assist in placing interns in a government, non-profit or private organization that uses the skills relevant to policy analysis and problem solving. Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on the organization.

Internships can serve a variety of functions, depending on your interest. The main objective is to provide you a professional experience using the skills and knowledge learned in the classroom. Beyond this, you can use the internship to springboard into a permanent job, to obtain specialized knowledge or some combination of the above.

Recent Internship Placements

Applied Behavior Analysis	County of San Luis Obispo, County
Association of California School	Administrative Office
Administrators	County of San Luis Obispo, County
The Becky Fund, Peru	Probation Department
California State Assembly Intern with	County of San Luis Obispo, Department of
Katcho Achadjian	Public Health
California State Senate Intern with Sam	U.S. Department of State
Blakeslee (Maddy Institute)	First 5, San Luis Obispo County
Cambria Community Services District,	Heritage Watch
Fiscalini Ranch	Gallo Coastal Winegrowing
City of Atascadero	Northwest Federation of Community
City of Guadalupe	Organization, Portland, OR
City of Mountain View	Port San Luis Harbor District
City of San Luis Obispo, Public Works	Port San Luis Lighthouse Keepers
Department	Public Policy Solutions
City of San Luis Obispo, Utilities	Santa Maria Valley Humane Society
Conservation Department	Shaw Power Group
Community Action Partnership of San Luis	SLO County Integrated Waste
Obispo County	The Sonoran Institute
Congressional Sportsmen Foundation,	Tobacco Control Program
Washington, DC	Vandenberg Village Community Services
Congresswoman Lois Capps, Washington,	District
DC	

If you have completed 12 units of graduate study, you are eligible for an internship. The faculty coordinator must approve of the internship prior to arranging for credit. By University policy, you must be enrolled in internship units via POLS 586 during internship work; this requirement includes internships completed over the summer. The course has credit/no credit grading based on successful completion of internship hours and appropriate documentation.

At the beginning of your internship, you must have the internship site supervisor submit a letter to your internship professor that details the hours, duration of position, type of work, responsibilities, and whether or not the internship is paid. Any special responsibility or project you negotiate may be stated in the letter, which serves as an informal contract for you, the organization and the university. At the end of your internship, you must have your internship site supervisor submit a letter to your internship professor that indicates successful completion of the internship hours and work. Additionally, at the end of the internship, you must submit a reflection paper that, at a minimum, discusses the work you completed, presents the lessons you learned, and compares those lessons to relevant coursework.

Arranging an Internship

The University serves as a clearinghouse for internship placement. Graduate policy internships are designed to fit each student's interest. While the University and the department identify and refer opportunities to you and will work with you to identify meaningful and relevant experiences, ultimately successful placement is your responsibility. Key strategies for identification include networking, referral and web-site announcements, frequently forwarded by the MPP Director. Often the most crucial key to successful placement is starting early.

The University has cooperative arrangements with the California State University at Sacramento, which operates an internship program in Sacramento. Additionally, the Washington Center provides internship placement in the Washington, DC area. Information sheets on internships are located in the 11 hallway of Building 47 and on the department website at: <https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/students/internships/internship-opportunities>. It should be noted that these opportunities are intended for our undergraduate students but many can be adapted for MPP students.

Support for Professional Conference Participation

The program encourages MPP students to attend professional conferences to present original research, typically POLS 590 projects, or research conducted with professors. These conferences are great opportunities to see professional policy analysis in practice, present your own research, receive critical feedback, network, and find potential employment.

The program regularly uses some of its allotted funds to help support travel and registration costs for conferences. The amount of funding per year varies based on the availability of funds and the number of students applying for funding each year. Students interested in potential presentation opportunities should talk with the MPP Director early to discuss such opportunities.

The Culminating Experience

Quarters: Comprehensive Examination

Students are required to successfully pass a Comprehensive Exam before completion of the degree. Students are eligible to take the exam once their core coursework (including POLS 590) and electives are completed by, or are expected to be completed during, the quarter the student intends to take the exam.

The intent of the comprehensive exam is to ensure that all students graduating from the MPP program have a fundamental understanding of the field that they are about to enter. The exam is designed as an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of the concepts and techniques developed in the core courses, as well as their ability to critically analyze public policy in an applied setting. Students are encouraged to form small study groups to review course material and prepare for the exam; however, the exam itself must be an individual effort.

The exam contains three questions covering the broad areas of the core courses (POLS 515, POLS 518, and Methodology (POLS 560, POLS 510, qualitative methods from 518)). Relevant material from POLS 550 will be integrated into the questions for POLS 515 and POLS 518. Students must be able to integrate all pertinent course work into their responses to the questions. Answers must have citations to relevant literature and all exams must only rely on materials with full citations that appear in their final reading list for the answers. Students must also demonstrate their ability to analyze and discuss quantitative data. In each question, students must relate the written answer to their identified field of substantive expertise where appropriate.

READING LIST: The purpose of the MPP Comprehensive Examination Reading List, which is prepared by each student in consultation with the Director and/or the professor of POLS 595, is to prepare students to take the examination by identifying the relevant body of literature necessary to respond to examination questions. Accordingly, the detailed MPP Comprehensive Examination Reading List must provide all of the references necessary to respond to questions on the examination, including those questions that require examples from the declared area of policy expertise. Citations on the reading list should cover all of the required and recommended readings in core and elective courses. In addition, the reading list should include important and relevant readings used in order to complete research projects and papers in those courses, and any other readings deemed important to your area of expertise. Only those readings included in each student's MPP Comprehensive Examination reading list may be used to respond to examination questions. Examination essays must be fully cited with detailed references to these readings. Students are required to submit their completed Reading List that includes all of the literature from their core courses, an identified area of policy expertise, and relevant literature pertaining to this policy area, by the date specified by the Director/Professor of POLS 595. Incomplete reading lists will not be reviewed. Students will receive approval or requests for revision of their reading lists within two weeks of submission. Reading lists must be fully approved prior to the examination date.

REQUIRED EXAM PREPARATION MEETING: Students must attend the Exam Preparation Meeting during the quarter in which they plan to take the exam. If the student is taking the exam during a Spring quarter, this meeting will take place as part of the POLS 595 course. POLS 595 will be offered for the last time in Spring 2026

EXAM SCHEDULE: The exam will be offered twice a year during the fall and spring quarters. The comprehensive examinations may not be taken prior to the last quarter of course work. Students must give notice to the graduate director by the end of the second week of classes during the quarter that the student plans to take the exam. The graduate director will notify students as to the date of the examination by the fifth week of classes. Students will be emailed the exam on a Friday (9:00 am) and must return a hard copy to the Political Science Office on the following Monday (by noon). Students have the weekend to complete the exams and late exams will not be accepted. If a student is either working or completing an international internship or an out of state/area internship the exam will either be faxed or emailed to the student. The student will have the same time restrictions and must either fax or email the exam back by the specified time.

EXAM GRADING: Exams will be graded anonymously (students will be identified by their student ID numbers). A committee of at least 2 professors will grade each exam, and the student's

answers will be assigned one of three grades: pass with distinction, pass, or fail. Students must receive passing grades on all three questions to successfully complete the exam. In cases of grading conflicts, the determination of pass or fail will be arrived at with a third tie-breaker. To pass with distinction, the student must receive a grade of pass with distinction on every question. A student will have one additional test opportunity to attempt to pass any question topics/content areas that received a failing grade. Second exams must be taken during a regularly scheduled examination period. The second exam must be taken within one year of the original exam.

Semesters: Culminating Project

Students graduating in or after Spring 2027 will complete a Project as their culminating experience via the two course POLS 5590 sequence. A Project is defined as

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

Topics and precise guidelines will be determined in collaboration with the POLS 5590 instructor.

Academic Honest and Inclusivity

INCLUSIVITY ACCOMMODATIONS: Cal Poly seeks to provide accommodations for individuals with otherly-abled needs. If you have a disability that may have some impact on work in this class and for which you might require accommodations, please see the MPP Director as soon as possible. These accommodations will be provided only to those students who have been certified through the university's Disability Resource Center (DRC). Disabilities covered by law include but are not limited to learning disabilities as well as hearing, sight, or mobility impairments. It is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Center (756-1395) and to contact the MPP Director ahead of time to arrange for appropriate accommodations if/when needed.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: The MPP Program, the Department of Political Science and the College of Liberal Arts do not tolerate academic dishonesty. Students are expected to complete their exams individually. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty (which includes but is not limited to plagiarism or receiving outside assistance from another person) will immediately be dealt with according to university policy. For more information pertaining to academic dishonesty

please consult and review Section 41301, Title V, California Code of Regulations, which can be accessed through the Cal Poly web page.

PLAGIARISM OR IMPROPER ASSISTANCE: Plagiarism, including reliance on documents without proper citations, citing materials not listed on the reading list, and/or relying on all or part of another's answers to this or previous examinations, is cause for dismissal from the program. Improper assistance, that is, any type of assistance from anyone except clarifications from the MPP Director, in answering these questions is cause for dismissal from the program.

- Use of Sources: Only the sources included in your approved reading list are appropriate for use in this examination. No sources of information outside your approved reading list are allowed; this includes internet sources like Wikipedia.
- Citing Sources: All essays and answers must FULLY CITE each source that you rely upon for information in the final version of your reading list. Failure to cite sources is cause for disqualification of the examination.

ACADEMIC PROBATION: Graduate students must have a 3.0 GPA in the courses taken in their formal study plan in order to earn the Master's degree. Therefore, students on academic probation will not be allowed to take the comprehensive exam until they have met the GPA requirements for the degree and are no longer on academic probation. If a student is put on academic probation at the end of the quarter in which the exam was taken, the degree will not be awarded until the GPA deficit is resolved. Note: Repeating a course does not remove a lower grade in the same course from the overall GPA calculation.

SELF-PLAGIARISM: Projects/Reports/Research Papers that are turned in for one course may not be a Project/Report/Research Paper that was turned in for another course at this university. To do so constitutes a form of plagiarism as defined by the Department of Political Science and the MPP program at Cal Poly. If it is determined that the content of both papers is substantially similar, the consequences of this form of plagiarism may include failure in one or both of the courses and the possibility of Academic Probation, Academic Disqualification and/or disciplinary action such as suspension or expulsion. Determination as to whether the papers are substantially similar and as to whether the student will fail one or both of the courses will be at the discretion of the faculty members involved.

"Substantially similar" includes using the same graphs, sections, paragraphs, or sentences in work submitted in two or more courses. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive. Ultimately, the instructor will determine whether the work that the student submitted for their course was "substantially similar" to that of another course and reserves the right to determine, in a given instance, what action(s) on the part of the student violates the academic honor code. If a student

has any questions about whether the work that they want to submit in one course is “substantially similar” to other work that they have submitted or plans to submit in another course, then they are obligated to consult the instructors of both courses.

AI USE: Instructors may choose to incorporate AI into coursework and assignments. Absent explicit instructions to use AI, AI use should be appropriately cited. To submit (either partially or fully) AI-written work as your own writing is plagiarism.

Graduation Requirements

The following is a summary of the most critical Cal Poly graduation requirements. Students are advised to examine the Graduate Education section of the Cal Poly Catalog for additional information and details about the requirements for graduation. When questions arise about these requirements, it is the responsibility of the student to discuss them first with the MPP Director.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

Under current policy, graduate students are required to maintain continuous enrollment from the time of first enrollment in a graduate program until completion of the degree. Continuous enrollment is defined as being enrolled during fall, winter and spring quarters each year. You can maintain continuous enrollment either by: 1) being enrolled as a regular student; 2) obtaining approval for an education or medical leave prior to the quarter when such a leave would begin; or 3) registering in a special course designated for this purpose, during quarters in which you are not regularly enrolled.

The special course, GS 597, is listed in the University catalog and is taken through Cal Poly Continuing Education. GS 597 is a variable-unit course, offered credit/no credit. Credits in GS 597 do not count toward meeting degree requirements.

Students who fail to fulfill this continuous enrollment requirement will be not be permitted to graduate even if all degree requirements have been completed until payment has been made for all quarters of non-enrollment. This requirement is not retroactive to terms prior to Fall 2009. In addition, you must be enrolled the quarter you graduate and complete all degree requirements, including Incompletes and independent studies.

For additional information on the requirement and enrolling in GS 597, please visit <http://www.grad.calpoly.edu/policies/continuous.html>.

Administrative Paperwork

The following is a summary of the paperwork required for graduation. After registration for your final quarter (typically spring quarter second year), you need to meet with the MPP Director to file necessary paperwork for graduation. It is your responsibility to make an appointment with the MPP Director and ensure all paperwork is complete and filed. To obtain a graduation checklist and download the forms, please visit: <http://www.grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/checklist.html>.

Application for Graduation (E-form)

One quarter prior to the quarter that you plan to graduate, you will need to submit the Application for Graduation form online. This form is completed using DocuSign and will be routed electronically for signatures.

Formal Study Plans

You will submit two study plans: (1) the Working Formal Study plan is submitted during the first quarter of the degree program. This form outlines which courses you plan to take to fulfill the degree requirements. Students should meet with the MPP director during their first quarter to collaborate on a Working Formal Study Plan before submitting the form (form available at <https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/forms.html>).

(2) The Final Formal Study Plan is submitted in a student's last quarter, ideally early in the quarter. This plan is a final accounting of what classes you took to fulfill your degree requirements. Students should meet with the MPP Director prior to submitting the form for approval (form available at <https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/forms.html>).

Master's Exam/Project Approval Form

Once you have completed your culminating experience, you will need to submit the Master's Exam Approval Form. This must be submitted by the last day of the quarter in which you intend to graduate. There is a quarter deadlines schedule listed on the checklist website (<https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/steps-to-graduation.html>).

Amendments to Final Formal Study Plan and Petition for Special Consideration

If your actual course selection differs from the approved Final Formal Study Plan, you must file a new Formal Study Plan by the beginning of the intended quarter of graduation. This form should be routed for signatures as early as possible to allow enough time for processing.

In certain circumstances, you may also need to file a Petition for Special Consideration (<https://grad.calpoly.edu/checklist-forms/forms.html>). This form is required if you need an exception from the regulations of the program.



Congratulations, MPP Graduates!

Campus and Program Policies

In addition to the Academic Requirements and Responsibilities outlined in the Cal Poly Catalog, the MPP program maintains the following policies governing student behavior and performance. Failure to adhere to the policies below may result in Administrative Academic Probation or Administrative Disqualification.

Professional Behavior

The MPP program is both academically and professionally focused. As such, faculty expect that you maintain a professional behavior in academic, internship and other interactions with the University and community. This includes treating University staff, faculty, and other students with respect. Such norms of respect and professional behavior mean that you should make appointments with faculty members to meet outside office hours and that you should remember that you are a representative of the MPP program when you work with other departments, offices and programs on and off campus. Your behavior reflects on the program and can make it more or less difficult for us to provide such experiences and opportunities in the future. Unprofessional behavior may also include incidents of cheating or plagiarism as outlined in the University Policies section of this handbook. Continued or extreme incidents of unprofessional behavior are grounds for being placed on Administrative Academic Probation and/or disqualification from the program and/or University.

Adequate Progress toward Degree

While the MPP program is designed to be somewhat flexible to allow you to balance work, family, and academic obligations, you must show evidence of making adequate progress toward the completion of your degree. This includes enrolling in appropriate core and elective courses as well as minimizing the use of incompletes in courses. At the discretion of the Director and MPP faculty, students who repeatedly take Incompletes in coursework or who are not making adequate progress toward the degree may be put on Administrative Academic Probation until the Incompletes are completed or until degree progress is made. Students on Administrative Academic Probation for failure to progress towards degree objectives may also be subject to disqualification from the program and the university.

Academic Performance

By University policy, graduate students must maintain satisfactory scholarship. Specifically, this means you must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 or better in all courses used in the formal program of study for the degree. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from the program and the university.

E-mail and My Cal Poly Portal

You will automatically receive a calpoly.edu email address. As this is the official channel of communication at Cal Poly, the MPP program requires you to regularly access your Cal Poly email account or set the Cal Poly email account to forward to the account you regularly access (e.g., Gmail, Yahoo, etc.).

Your Cal Poly email address will also be added to the MPP listserve upon enrollment in first quarter courses. This listserve is an important source of information regarding courses, enrollment, program information, internship, and job opportunities.

My Cal Poly (<https://my.calpoly.edu>) is a web portal that features information and services in a customizable format. The portal is the main access point for email, PolyLearn web-based course information, class registration, campus announcements, etc. A step-by-step procedure for activating a Cal Poly Portal account for the first-time can be found here: <https://admissions.calpoly.edu/applicants/mycalpoly/access.html>.

Admissions

The following information concerns admission procedures for the MPP degree program.

Admission Deadlines

Quarter	Application Deadline
Fall	April 1
Winter	TBD on cohort space
Spring	No Admissions
Summer	No Admissions

At this time, the program only accepts applications for the traditional MPP for Fall quarter. Admissions to the 4+1 program are due on 4/1 as well, although there is more flexibility with the blended program application process. Please contact the MPP Director for questions.

Minimum Admission Requirements

1. Possession of a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university.
2. A grade point average of not less than 3.0 in all undergraduate course work.
3. Academic preparation or work experience demonstrating analytical and writing skills.
4. For applicants whose preparatory education is principally in a language other than English, a TOEFL score of 550 or higher is required (or 213 on the new conversation scale for the computer-based TOEFL exam). A score of 4.5 or higher on the essay portion of the TOEFL is also required.

How to Apply

1. Students can apply directly online via Cal State Apply (<http://www.calstate.edu/apply>). The Cal Poly Graduate Education (<http://grad.calpoly.edu/applicant/graduate-certificate.html>) website offers application information and FAQs to help answer questions applicants may have about the Cal State Apply application.
2. Applicants must submit official transcripts to Cal Poly Graduate Admissions (see address below).
3. When you apply via Cal State Apply, you will be asked for:

- Names and emails for three Evaluations (letters of recommendation). Cal Poly will send a link directly to the evaluator to complete the evaluation electronically. The evaluations must include at least one academic reference and at least one professional reference. The third can be either an academic or a professional reference. These must be written in English and ought to address relevant academic coursework, work experience and other preparation that make the applicant a strong candidate for the MPP program.
 - Personal statement detailing the applicant's understanding of, interest in and use for a public policy degree from the perspective of the applicant's career and educational goals. If you wish to upload a personal statement that is longer than 500 words, please upload a PDF in quadrant four on Cal State Apply as an unofficial transcript. If you chose this option, please put "see attachment" in the dedicated personal statement box when applying.
 - Resume/CV detailing relevant academic and professional information.
 - A scanned unofficial copy of your transcripts.
4. GRE scores, if submitted, may be sent electronically from the testing agency directly to Cal Poly Admissions. The MPP program recommends, but does not require, the GRE.

Address for Graduate Admissions

Graduate Admissions (transcripts)
 Cal Poly
 One Grand Ave.
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

Important Contacts

Cal Poly Admissions (on-line applications and transcripts):
 805.756.2311
admissions@calpoly.edu
<https://admissions.calpoly.edu/applicants/graduate>

Financial Aid Office (federal and state aid information):
 805.756.2927
 805.756.7243
financialaid@calpoly.edu
<https://financialaid.calpoly.edu/>

MPP specific information:

805.756.2984
mpp@calpoly.edu
<https://politicalscience.calpoly.edu/m>

Financial Aid

The main source of financial aid for graduate students at Cal Poly comes from Stafford loans. Some loans, but not all, are based on financial need. For more information on financial aid, please visit <http://financialaid.calpoly.edu/>. Also, there are scholarships available, both through Cal Poly and outside organizations. These scholarships have varying requirements that may be based on merit and/or need. For more information on available grants and fellowships for graduate students, please visit the Financial Resources section at <http://grad.calpoly.edu>.

Faculty members in the Political Science Department can hire Research Assistants and Teaching Assistants based on need and available resources. These positions are part-time, non-benefitted positions. They provide valuable experience that can be used on your resume, for seeking an internship, or for continuing your studies at the graduate level. If you are interested in potential assistantships, you should provide a resume to the Director who will share it with appropriate departmental faculty. You should also seek out such positions with faculty members one on one.

Non-Resident Tuition Waivers

There are a limited number of non-resident tuition waivers available for graduate student applicants from outside the State of California. Waivers are allocated based on a candidate's merit as evidenced by scholastic achievement, other significant accomplishments, potential contribution to the program and significance of the waiver in the decision to enroll. Priority is given to waiver nominations made before May 1.

For more information about non-resident tuition waivers, please see <http://grad.calpoly.edu/financial-resources/non-resident.html>

Appendix

Academic Integrity at Cal Poly (CAP 681)

Cal Poly will not tolerate academic cheating or plagiarism in any form. Academic dishonesty is addressed both as an academic issue and as a disciplinary incident under the CSU Standards for Student Conduct. Cases of class cheating or plagiarism shall be handled by faculty members under established procedures that include written notice to the student of the incident and the consequent grade. This response is, by its nature, limited to the particular class incident. The faculty member shall then submit an online report to the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities. This office will consider the reported incident and the academic response in the broader context of the student's overall conduct.

Definition of Cheating

"Cheating" means to intentionally misrepresent a source, nature, or other condition of academic work so as to accrue undeserved credit, or to collaborate with someone else in such misrepresentation. Such misrepresentations may, but need not necessarily, involve the work of others. As defined, according to the American Psychological Association (APA) Manual 2009, cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Unauthorized obtaining or retaining partial or whole copies of examination, tests or quizzes before these are distributed for student use;
- Using notes, textbooks or other information in examinations, tests and quizzes, except as expressly permitted;
- Obtaining unauthorized confidential information about examinations, tests or quizzes other than that released by the instructor;
- Securing, giving or exchanging information during examinations;
- Presenting data or other material gathered by another person or group as one's own;
- Falsifying experimental data or information;
- Having another person take one's place for any academic performance without the specific knowledge and permission of the instructor;
- Unauthorized collaboration with another to do one or more of the above;

- Using a substantial portion of a piece of work previously submitted for another course or program to meet the requirements of the present course or program without notifying the instructor to whom the work is presented; and/or
- Presenting falsified information in order to postpone or avoid examinations, tests, quizzes, or other academic work.

Cheating is considered to be unethical by the University. However, overt cheating (e.g., looking off another student's test) is what is of consequence to the University.

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as the act of using intentionally or unintentionally the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own without giving proper credit to the source. Such an act is not plagiarism if it is ascertained that the ideas were arrived through independent reasoning or logic, or where the thought or idea is common knowledge. Acknowledgement of an original author or source must be made through appropriate references, i.e., quotation marks, footnotes, or commentary. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following: the submission of a work, either in part or in whole, completed by another; failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts or conclusions which rightfully belong to another; failure to use quotation marks (or other means of setting apart, such as the use of indentation or a different font size) when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or even a part thereof; close and lengthy paraphrasing of another's writing without credit or originality; and use of another's project or computer programs or part thereof without giving credit. Submitting the same project to multiple instructors as a unique creation may also be considered plagiarism. A project produced for another class must be cited just as when citing any other source. Prior to resubmitting work from a previous course, a student must receive explicit written permission from the instructor of the current course. A project produced for another class must also be cited just as when citing any other source.

Fairness Board

The Fairness Board is one of the primary campus groups concerned with providing "due process" of academically related matters for students and instructors at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, particularly in terms of student/faculty grading relationships. The Board hears grade appeals based on the grievant's belief that the instructor has made a mistake, shown bad faith or incompetence, or been unfair. Issues of cheating, dishonesty, and plagiarism are addressed by the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR). Grades received due to cheating, dishonesty, and/or plagiarism cannot be appealed to the Board.

In grade appeals, the Board operates under the presumption that the grade assigned was correct. The grievant must prove otherwise by a preponderance of the evidence; in other words, the grievant must show that her/his version of the events is more likely than not (equal or greater than 51 percent probability) to have occurred. Should the Board's members find in favor of the grievant, the chair will recommend to the Provost that the grade be changed. In all cases, the Board's authority is limited to actions consistent with campus and system policy.

A student who submits a grievance cannot receive a grade lower than the one originally assigned. In addition to grade grievances, the Board may hear grievances that do not involve grade appeals and are not covered by existing policies administered by other University offices. For additional information: <https://academicprograms.calpoly.edu/content/academicpolicies/fairness-board>.

Student Conduct Process

The student conduct process is about helping students navigating their way through difficult times as a student at an elite public University. Our process meets the highest standards of fundamental fairness and due process required by law. Our process conforms with Executive Order 1098.

The Process Explained

When the Office of Student Rights & Responsibilities (OSRR) receives a report of a possible infraction, the office notifies the student of the alleged misconduct and directs the student to schedule a meeting with the student conduct administrator. A student may confer with family members, advisors, or attorneys at any stage in the informal or formal process but attorneys are not permitted to participate in a hearing if the matter proceeds to that phase. If a student intends to bring an attorney to any meetings with the Coordinator, the student must provide the attorney's name to OSRR at least three days prior to the meeting.

Informal Disposition

At the initial meeting, the student is advised of their rights and informed of the evidence supporting the allegation. The student is encouraged to respond and participate in an open and honest discussion of the incident. Possible resolutions to the incident emphasizing the personal growth and development of the student are outlined and are usually determined at this time. In an informal disposition, the student must consent to any imposed sanction.

Formal Disposition

If an informal disposition cannot be achieved, formal procedures commence by providing the student with a written Notice of Hearing as required by CSU Executive Order 1098, Article V, C. The student receives a link to CSU Executive Order 1098, Student Conduct Procedures, describing the applicable procedures.

The formal hearing process provides a prompt, fair and impartial resolution of the incident. A Hearing Officer appointed by the OSRR conducts a closed, confidential proceeding. The student's attendance is not mandatory. Both the student and the student conduct administrator may offer evidence and question witnesses. The Hearing Officer may also question witnesses. An advisor may accompany the student and the student conduct administrator. Student disciplinary hearings are not courtroom proceedings and formal rules of evidence (e.g. hearsay exclusion) do not apply. Written minutes and/or audio recordings of the hearing are kept.

After the hearing, the Hearing Officer submits a written report to the University President or designee within ten days. This report contains factual findings and conclusions regarding whether or not the conduct constitutes a violation and, if so, recommendations regarding the sanction(s) to be imposed. A violation must be proved by a preponderance of the evidence: there is more evidence than not that the accused committed the violation. Any findings, conclusions, or recommendations must be based only upon evidence received at the hearing. The President or the designee then makes a final determination based on the report. The President's decision is final and may not be appealed.

For more information: <https://osrr.calpoly.edu/process>