

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

AREAS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

City management
Disaster response
Education
Elected office
Emergency management
Financial administration
Grant writing
Budget analysis
General services
Community affairs
Housing
Parks & recreation
Public safety
Public works
Public policy
Social services
Urban planning

What can I do with this major?

EMPLOYERS

Counties
Municipalities
Townships
School districts
Special districts

STRATEGIES

Get involved in community organizations and events and develop a network of contacts.
Employment opportunities in local government tend to follow population trends in terms of growth and decline in availability of positions. Be prepared to relocate to find the most opportunities.
Gain relevant experience through internships and/or volunteer positions.
Conduct applicable research that could be useful to your community.
Research local government job application procedures and applicable public service exams.

STATE GOVERNMENT

Elected office
Executive Branch Functions:
Finance and administration
Human resource management
Environmental management
Public safety and criminal justice
Public policy
Risk management
Transportation
Emergency services management
Commerce and insurance
Purchasing and acquisitions
Budget analysis
Community services
Social services
Urban planning
Legislature
Judicial

Departments of state government (varies by state)
Legislative agencies including:
Legislative Reference Services, Bill Drafting Services, Legislative Councils and Budgeting and Auditing staffs
State Supreme Courts
Personal staff of legislators
Intermediate Appellate Courts
Trial Courts of General Jurisdiction
Trial Courts of Limited Jurisdiction

Research the organization of your state government.
Develop specialized skills and interests for particular populations or issues (e.g., disability, education, homelessness, etc.)
Develop strong research and writing skills.
Make political contacts through local legislators of both houses. Use referrals and informational interviews to build a network.
Volunteer to work on political campaigns.
Consider pursuing a relevant graduate degree for more opportunities and advancement.
Learn the state government employment procedures and utilize your campus career center for assistance with the application process.
Research applicable public service exams.

AREAS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Legislative Branch

Elected office
Public policy
Legislative agencies
Legislature
 Administrative staff
 Washington-based
 Home district
 Committee

Judicial Branch

Elected office
Federal judiciary
Supporting organizations

Executive Branch

Office of the President
Management and budget
Administration
Council of economic advisors
U.S. trade representatives
Executive departments

Independent Agencies

Finance and administration
Budget analysis
Purchasing
Human Resource management
Environmental management
Security and protection
Enforcement and compliance
Commerce and insurance
Purchasing and acquisitions
Program management
Risk management
Emergency services management
Social services
Legal

EMPLOYERS

Various agencies including:
 General Accounting Office, Library of Congress, Government Printing Office, Congressional Budget Office
Offices of senators and representatives

Supreme Court
U.S. Courts
Federal Judiciary
Supporting organizations

Office of the President
Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor

Independent Agencies include the following (not an exhaustive list):

 Coordination and Public Safety
 Emergency Response Policy
 Environmental Protection Agency
 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
 Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
 Federal Emergency Management Agency
 General Services Administration
 National Archives & Records Administration
 Nuclear Regulatory Commission
 Office of Personnel Management
 Securities & Exchange Commission
 Tennessee Valley Authority
 U.S. Information Agency
 U.S. International Development Cooperation

STRATEGIES

Research the structure of Congress and various opportunities available.
Develop excellent research, writing, communication, and organizational skills.
Build a strong personal network.
Explore districts other than your own.

Research the structure and functions of the federal judiciary system.
Some positions require a law degree and bar certification.

Research various agencies and departments to discover which ones may be the best fit for your major and experience.
Conduct informational interviews with government employees.

Apply for a government internship through the Pathways Program or other student programs to gain relevant experience.
Learn federal job application procedures and how to write a strong resume. Use your campus career center for help with the application process.

There are a large number of niche areas and specialized agencies within the federal government. Do extensive research in order to find the area that best matches your skills and interests.

Take courses or minor in applicable interest area(s).
Maintain a high grade point average to qualify for government employment.

Apply for a government internship through the Pathways Program or other student programs to gain relevant experience.

Research applicable public service exams and hiring procedures.
Earn a graduate degree to be more competitive for positions.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

POLITICAL SUPPORT/LOBBYING

Elected or appointed leadership
Campaign management
Staff administration
Special interest advocacy
Political advising
Lobbying
Party administration

Political Action Committees (PAC)
Industrial, educational, and public interest groups
Political parties
Campaigns: national, state, or local
Lobbying organizations
Large business firms

Get involved with a political party/group and develop a personal network. The ability to develop networks, coalitions, and alliances with other associations is highly valued.
Volunteer to work on political campaigns.
Gain experience with government agencies or departments to help build relationships. Develop excellent public relations, interpersonal, and communication skills.
Learn how to persuade and negotiate. Participate on a debate team.
Volunteer in organizations with similar interests and goals.

NONPROFIT

Administration
Management
Community engagement
Public relations
Fundraising
Program development
Strategic planning
Policy analysis
Research
Grant writing
Direct service

Local and national nonprofit agencies
Foundations
Charitable organizations
Trade or professional associations
Special interest groups
Labor unions
Libraries
Museums
Historic sites/historical societies
Research organizations and think tanks
Educational institutions

Gain experience through volunteering or completing an internship.
Supplement curriculum with courses in business, psychology, sociology, or social work.
Obtain leadership roles in relevant campus and community organizations.
Develop strong communication and research skills.
Learn how to write grants.
Demonstrate knowledge and experience in a specialty area (e.g., public health, environment, urban issues).
Research organizations' values to find a good fit with yours. It is critical that you are knowledgeable about and committed to the work you're going to do.
Investigate term of service or service corps positions as a way to gain entry into the field.
Consider earning a graduate degree for more job opportunities and advancement.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

BUSINESS

Human resources
Budget analysis
Management
Sales/Marketing
Purchasing
Management consulting
Occupational safety coordination
Public relations

Product and service organizations
Retail stores
Hotels
Restaurants
Manufacturers
Insurance companies
Print and electronic media
Consulting firms
Other business corporations
Association management firms

Develop strong analytical, communication, and technical skills.
Obtain related work experience in a business setting through internships and summer or part-time jobs.
Earn a minor in business.
Hone computer skills and learn software packages such as databases, spreadsheets, and presentations.
Get involved in student organizations and seek leadership roles.
Become knowledgeable about corporate social responsibility.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

See also What Can I Do With This Major in Global Studies?

Governance
Policy making and analysis
Public sector reform
Poverty-reduction strategy
Ethics and anti-corruption
Human rights
Public law
Organization and management development
Resource development
Public/Private partnerships
Media/Communication policy and practice
Education

Intergovernmental agencies (e.g., World Bank, United Nations)
National governments
Non-profit agencies
Policy and research organizations
Private businesses
Contracting and consulting firms

Obtain internships or volunteer in order to gain valuable experience in areas of interest.
Participate in overseas mission trips or spend a Semester at Sea.
Become familiar with national or international application procedures.
Research the history and culture of countries or geographic areas of interest.
Take steps towards obtaining work or study visas for various locations.
Become proficient in at least one foreign language.
Spend time studying or working abroad, especially working to make and maintain contacts in foreign countries.
Earn a double major or minor in order to gain additional skills or knowledge needed for various positions (e.g., Africana studies, Asian studies, business, psychology, sociology, etc.).
For higher level positions an advanced degree is necessary. Research different programs and the concentrations they offer in order to find the best fit for your interests.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

HEALTHCARE

Health services administration:

- Operations
- Finance
- Program management
- Material management
- Human resources
- Medical staff relations
- Information technology
- Marketing
- Public relations
- Facilities
- Patient care
- Provider relations
- Government relations

Health policy:

- Research
- Policy analysis
- Policy development
- Legislative work
- Lobbying

- Hospitals, health systems, and clinics
- Medical groups
- Hospices
- Home health agencies
- Long-term care facilities
- Mental health facilities
- Managed care organizations
- Health finance organizations
- Insurance companies
- Pharmaceutical companies
- Academic medical centers
- Federal government agencies
- State government agencies
- Public health departments
- Advocacy groups
- Health foundations
- Nongovernmental agencies (e.g. Red Cross)
- Professional associations (e.g. American Medical Association)

- Supplement your curriculum with business courses. Gain experience through internships or jobs in a healthcare setting.
- Develop strong communication and technology skills. Learn how to use database and spreadsheet software.
- Get involved in student government or campus organizations related to health issues.
- Learn to work well on teams and develop strong leadership skills.
- Join related professional organizations and build a network of contacts.
- Stay abreast of news in the healthcare industry.
- Earn a master's degree in public health, health administration, public administration, business, or a related field.
- To prepare for positions in lobbying and legislation, some will earn a law degree.

LAW

See also What Can I Do With This Major in Law?

- Prosecution
- Defense
- Contractual
- Corporate
- Nonprofit/Public interest
- Government
- Mediation
- Other specialties
- Law assistance

- Law firms
- Federal, state, and local government
- Private practice
- Corporations
- Special interest groups
- Universities and colleges
- Legal aid societies
- Nonprofit and public interest organizations (e.g., ACLU, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Legal Services Corporation)
- Legal clinics
- Other private legal services

- Develop strong research skills and attention to detail. Participate in debate or forensic team to hone communication skills.
- Choose courses or a minor to specialize in a particular area of law (e.g., a minor in business for a career in corporate law).
- Find part-time or summer work in a law firm.
- Shadow an attorney to learn more about the field and various specialties.
- Get involved in pre-law organizations.
- Plan to attend law school and earn a law degree. Maintain a high grade point average and secure strong faculty recommendations. Prepare for the LSAT (Law School Admission Test).
- Obtain specialized certification for paralegal positions.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- An undergraduate degree in Public Administration, with the appropriate experience, is sufficient for entry-level positions in government and business.
- A graduate degree in public administration, public health administration, or business administration helps prepare students for management and upper-level positions. Research programs in order to choose specializations or concentrations of interest.
- Consider law school for careers in upper-level politics, administration, or management. Explore joint J.D. and M.P.A. programs to see if they meet your career goals.
- Obtain a broad liberal arts background including written and verbal communication, research, and language skills.
- Part-time, summer, internship, and volunteer experiences are extremely helpful to find positions in government affairs, nonprofit organizations or public service areas.
- Develop strong leadership skills; run for office in clubs and organizations in school or community. Volunteer to organize or lead an event or project.
- Get involved in Student Government. Assist with campus, local, or national campaigns to gain experience and build relationships.
- Demonstrate interest/involvement in community affairs and events.
- Join related professional organizations such as the American Society of for Public Administration (ASPA).
- Build a strong personal network through informal contacts. Political connections are helpful for appointed positions. Most agencies respond to professional connections.
- Expect keen competition for federal positions. Prepare yourself with a strong academic background and good experience. Seek the classes and experiences that will best prepare you.
- Develop patience, persistence, and drive in obtaining government positions.
- Explore application to government internship programs specifically for college students, such as the Pathways Program at the federal level.
- Research websites that address various government job opportunities, pay structure, and hiring processes.
- Consider military experience and training or the Peace Corps as an entryway into government jobs and public service.
- Plan on following a flexible career path to higher positions. Many people begin on the clerical or entry level in order to gain experience and network.