

MPA Senior Leadership Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Do I have to be working in the field of public administration to qualify for the program?

The MPA-Senior Leadership Program (MPA-SLP) is for ambitious individuals who have a minimum of 3 to 5 years of program or managerial experience in the public or non-profit sector. Our students/alumni include local, state, and federal government employees, elected officials, and non-profit professionals. Essentially if you are interested in elevating your career and learning how the public and non-profit sectors operate and interact with other stakeholders, our program would be valuable to you.

How much does the program cost?

The program cost is \$36,360 which includes tuition, all residency costs, such as food and board, materials, training, and books. There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$100 and a \$40 annual graduate school activity fee. (Travel expenses to the residency are paid by the student).

Is there financial aid available?

Clark University does award scholarships for all students enrolled in our MPA Senior Leadership Program. To learn about scholarship awards please contact the Senior Leadership Director Mary Pieciewicz mpiecewicz@clarku.edu. In addition, Clark offers access to several loan programs and tuition payment plans to help manage the cost of graduate education.

Are residency sessions mandatory?

Residency sessions are an integral part of the program and are mandatory. Keynote speakers and subject matter experts meet with students providing a unique opportunity to learn first-hand about emerging public policy issues. Professional development workshops are also a hallmark of the 2-day residency. Residencies are also an excellent way to engage with fellow students, faculty, and thought leaders for building your professional network.

How long is the program?

The program is two academic years long. For example, students who enroll in August 2024 will graduate in May 2026. *(There are no summer classes in the MPA Senior Leadership Program).*

How many courses are in the program?

The program consists of 8 graduate courses and 2 applied learning portfolio credits based on your work experience. Courses are Organizational Behavior & Leadership, Ethics and Governance, Policy Analysis, Nonprofit Management, Public Budgeting, and Labor Relations & Collective Bargaining. The first year of the program students focus on researching a chosen policy challenge relevant to their community or career. During the second year, students apply that research to address and solve that challenge head-on through a capstone project.

How do I qualify for the 2 prior learning experience credits?

The two prior learning credits waive two courses in the program and are based on previous work experience. The MPA SLP academic adviser assists with the prior learning credit portfolio process during the graduate program.

Is this an online or in-person program?

MPA-SLP is a hybrid program. Each of the 8 core courses begins with a residency, and the remainder of the course is online. The research and capstone courses are independently instructor-led.

I have never taken an online class before. What support is available to help new online learners?

Clark students use Canvas as their online platform. At the first residency session, we will have training from one of Clark's online training specialists to help students prepare for taking online classes. Clark offers both online and phone support for all online learners through its IT help desk. The IT help desk can be reached at 508-793-7745. In addition, Clark has an online learning portal to assist you. Most importantly, all our faculty are experienced in teaching online courses and will work with you as you become familiar with online learning.

I have never done a Capstone project and have heard they are pretty intensive - What can I expect?

The Capstone project is the culmination of this premier graduate degree program. The capstone project topic will be your choice – perhaps something related to your current job or addressing an issue that you are passionate about. You will work one-on-one with the Capstone advisor all through the Research and Capstone Modules. There is a Capstone standard process that you follow and your advisor will be there every step of the way with you. Many graduate students find the Capstone project is the most rewarding learning experience of the program.

When is the application deadline?

Our current application deadline is June 30th for the 2024-2026 cohort.

How flexible is the structure of the program?

Due to the unique design of the program, participants are expected to attend residencies and take classes in order with the rest of the cohort.

What happens if I need to drop out due to a family illness or emergency?

If you need to drop out, you will not be able to re-enter the Senior Leadership program as it is cohort-based. However, any courses you have completed in the Senior Leadership program can be applied to the traditional MPA program and you can complete that degree.

Will there be credit for previous graduate courses?

As the program is only 8 courses and you receive 2 credits for the prior learning experience, we are not able to waive credit for previous graduate courses.