University of Massachusetts Boston

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Public Policy PhD program large-format brochure

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PhD Program in Public Policy
Learning to Build a More Equitable Society

McCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY STUDIES
The Public Policy PhD Program is a full-time day program for the first two years of study. The program combines a focus on applied research, an interdisciplinary curriculum, and a commitment to multicultural perspectives and social justice. Typically, students complete their coursework and dissertation research in five to eight years. The program offers students a solid grounding in a wide range of political and economic philosophies and theories of public policy, and emphasizes a commitment to multicultural perspectives. In addition, students receive extensive experience in a range of research methods and in both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. Through elective coursework, internship, and practicum opportunities, students specialize in their own areas of interest.

Under the direction of a distinguished faculty, students examine contemporary policy issues such as education, economic development, labor markets, health, housing, family, and the environment. The social, economic, and political intersections of these issues with age, race and ethnicity, gender, and class are a particular strength of our faculty in both scholarship and service activities. Faculty mentors partner with students for ongoing policy research projects, help them publish scholarly articles and prepare reports for community organizations, and support graduates seeking leadership positions in policy research, analysis, and implementation.

Some other unique aspects of the program:
- challenging courses that provide a solid grounding in political theory, economics, policy analysis, and research methods
- appropriate attention to theory, applied principles, and technical skills
- interdisciplinary study drawing on diverse academic fields and faculty expertise
- connection to real-world issues through on-campus research and policy projects and internship and practicum opportunities
- multicultural approaches to public policy
- opportunities for personal and intellectual growth
- small classes and supportive academic environment
- generous financial aid and affordable tuition and fees
MESSAGE FROM THE GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

I am delighted you are considering the PhD Program in Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston. I am always pleased to welcome new students who bring intellectual curiosity, commitment to social change, and an experience-rich background to their academic pursuits. Here at UMass Boston, you will be among a diverse group of committed and accomplished faculty and students who are passionate about developing public policies that promote inclusion and equality across all sectors of society.

Our program enjoys a reputation for providing a collegial and supportive learning environment. In core courses, students explore theories, think critically about actual and hypothetical approaches to policy formation, and apply their findings to real-world situations. Throughout their first year, students participate in monthly advising sessions, attend guest lectures and seminars that complement classroom instruction, and meet with alumni to explore internship and career opportunities.

As they move on in the program, students participate in post-residency seminars that keep them connected to the campus and focused on dissertation research and writing. On and off campus, they engage in applied policy research—training that in many cases leads to rewarding employment in the public policy field. After receiving their degrees, many go on to hold tenure-track teaching appointments or leadership positions in policy research centers, think tanks, and community and advocacy organizations.

I invite you to look closely at what UMass Boston’s PhD Program in Public Policy has to offer. As a student in the program, you will appreciate its rigorous conceptual framework, its multicultural focus, and its interdisciplinary curriculum. You will be challenged by a distinguished faculty who are in step with the university’s mission to address the socioeconomic, educational, and other developmental needs of greater Boston and the nation. And you will benefit from program staff who are experienced at helping students secure opportunities for graduate-level financial assistance.

As you embark on your pursuit of a doctoral degree, I wish you every success in your studies and in meeting your professional goals.

— Michael Johnson, PhD
Graduate Program Director, PhD Program in Public Policy

“Simply stated, the faculty is outstanding. I am confident that they are as dedicated to my learning as I am.”

— Jennifer Shea, PhD, Assistant Professor of Public Administration, San Francisco University
“The most distinctive thing about the UMass Boston Public Policy PhD Program is its multidisciplinary nature. The program equips one with an understanding of political theories, economics, and research methods—all of which are critical to understand and analyze public policies.”

—Charles Ndungu, post-residency student

Is there a typical career path for graduates of the program?

Although many programs in public policy were created solely to provide professional training for government officials, today the field encompasses a wide variety of careers. Graduates of UMass Boston’s PhD Program in Public Policy find employment in very different organizational settings—at all levels of government, in the private and nonprofit sectors, and in academia, here in the United States and abroad. Because the program provides a set of research, analytical, and management skills that are highly transferable, many of our graduates move among the public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors, or between international and domestic appointments. Some graduates focus on specific issue areas, while others apply their knowledge and skills more broadly. Others teach, conduct policy research, or help implement policy programs. Still others work to advocate positions on certain issues or lobby for specific legislation. About the only career objective common to all of our graduates is the desire to build effective policies that make a real difference in the lives of their fellow citizens.
The greatest strength of our interdisciplinary department is the different perspectives we all bring to the table. This provides fertile ground for debate, which leads to new ideas.

—Amy E. Smith, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Policy and Public Affairs

A L U M N I  P R O F I L E

Heike Boeltzig, PhD
Senior Research Associate, Institute for Community Inclusion, UMass Boston

Heike Boeltzig’s statement of interest in the PhD Program in Public Policy described a young woman who was born behind the Berlin Wall, was educated in Germany, Great Britain, and Japan, served as a volunteer at a kindergarten for children with disabilities, and is a self-directed and dedicated advocate/researcher. At her admissions interview, we saw—behind a contagious smile and a lively demeanor—strength of character, enthusiasm, and an unwavering commitment to work and learning.

Heike recently graduated from the program, completing it in only four years and receiving the program’s 2010 Academic Excellence in Public Policy Award. She entered the program with a bachelor’s degree in sociology and Japanese, and a master of science degree in applied social research—both from the University of Stirling in Scotland. As a senior research associate at the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI), she was eligible for the part-time program for state employees.

Says Heike of the PhD Program in Public Policy, “It has exceeded my expectations. Students develop a toolbox...then apply these tools outside the classroom.” She commends the program’s part-time option, its interdisciplinary nature, the quality of the teaching, and the allowances made for adult students with families and other obligations. “Above all, this program was a nice complement to my work at the ICI. Since I was already in the field, I could immediately apply and build on the skills I learned in class.”

Heike’s dissertation is a natural outgrowth of her past and present scholarship, her primary academic interests being disability, employment, technology, and comparative policy studies. Her dissertation research explored adoption and utilization of information and communication technology, such as the Internet, by counselors at state vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies for people with disabilities. Before joining ICI, Heike conducted cross-national research on disability and employment policy at the University of Stirling’s Center for Comparative Research in Social Welfare.

At ICI, Heike coordinates the VR research activities of the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center and is a lead staff member at the Rehabilitation and Technical Assistance Center. Her other projects include a multiyear comparative policy study of one-stops and workforce investment boards identified as providing exemplary service to customers, including those with disabilities, and a systematic review of research on the public employment service system in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Now that she has completed her degree, Dr. Boeltzig can set out with her new toolbox to change the face of public policy by improving services for individuals with disabilities and their families, promoting cross-national policy research, and developing tools and best practices for future policy analysts.

Heike commends the program’s interdisciplinary nature, the quality of the teaching, and the allowances made for adult students.
“I came to the PhD program at UMass Boston looking for a firm grounding in applied social science research techniques, policy analysis, and economics. Mission accomplished—that’s exactly what I received.”

—Tiffany Manuel, PhD Research Director, Frameworks Institute, Washington, D.C.

Alix Cantave, PhD

Associate Director, William Trotter Institute, UMass Boston

When Alix Cantave applied to the Public Policy Program in 1989, the admissions committee did not have a difficult decision on their hands. Alix had an educational background in city and regional planning (MS, Pratt Institute in New York) and environmental design (BA, SUNY Buffalo), and years of experience as a demographer and economic development planner. Alix also held a leadership position in the Boston Chapter of TransAfrica, an African-American lobby for Africa and the Caribbean working closely with policy makers in Washington, D.C.

"From 1983 to 1986," Alix recalls, "my professional, intellectual, and extracurricular activities were focused on urban economic development policy, poverty, and urban decay. On February 7, 1986, Jean-Claude Duvalier, President-for-Life of Haiti, was deposed by a popular uprising. That event brought hope to many Haitian expatriates, and promises of social and economic justice in Haiti. Like many young Haitian-Americans, I got involved in the pro-democracy movement in the Haitian Diaspora."

Alix relocated to Boston in January 1988. The following year, he founded the Haitian Studies Association, an organization that promotes scientific research on Haiti and Haitians, and applied to the McCormack School.

In June 2006, Alix defended his dissertation, "Non-Governmental Organizations and Local Economic Development in Haiti." He noted that "Haiti is a non-developmental state that lacks the necessary public policy and bureaucratic infrastructure to support and sustain local economic development and that NGOs function within that context and to a larger degree profit from it."

In concluding, Alix proposed systemic changes in the structure of the Haitian state, the manner in which NGOs operate, and the allocation of foreign aid to create a climate conducive to local economic development.

Professor Jemardi Kamara, a founding faculty member of the PhD Program in Public Policy and a member of Alix’s dissertation committee, says of Alix: "His dedication, leadership skills, and consistency distinguish him from many other young scholars. A concerned advocate for the Haitian plight, Alix is certainly a true pioneer in Haitian studies and affairs."

Alix was awarded a PhD in Public Policy in 2007. Since joining the William Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture at the University of Massachusetts Boston as its associate director, Dr. Cantave has been part of an interdisciplinary, intercultural panel of scholars researching the question of assimilation, as well as part of an international group of advocates assisting with the post-earthquake rebuilding efforts in his homeland of Haiti. Dr. Cantave is leading an effort on behalf of UMass to establish a consortium of colleges and universities to support the improvement and rebuilding of higher education in Haiti.
David Gonzalez Nieto hails from Spain, where he studied political science and foreign-language pedagogy before emigrating to the United States to pursue graduate study at UMass Boston. He says he has always been interested in “knowledge that has a reflection on everyday life,” and the dissertation he is preparing is just that—an examination of the impact of language policy on access to quality education among U.S. students who are in a linguistic minority. Thus far, David’s work has been well received. “David brims with intellectual curiosity coupled with a desire to make the world a better place,” says one of his professors, “and I have no doubt he possesses the courage, intellect, and commitment to do so.”

David has already seen several of his research projects published. His course paper on No Child Left Behind appeared in the peer-reviewed journal *Perspectives on Urban Education*. With Dr. Billie Gastic, his faculty mentor and assistantship supervisor, he published in the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* an empirical study on institutions that serve Hispanic communities. At the Gastón Institute for Latino Public Policy, he collaborated on an award-winning report on Latino student success in the Boston Public Schools.

Other honors and awards include doctoral fellowships from the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education and the American Educational Research Association, and the Beacon Leadership Student Organization Award as treasurer of the Public Policy Forum, a student organization. In November 2007, David had the honor of delivering the welcome address at the inauguration of UMass Boston chancellor J. Keith Motley.

David has fully embraced life as a UMass Boston student. He was a community advocate for the Office of Student Housing, organizing events for students living in nearby Harbor Point. As program coordinator and later president of the Graduate Student Assembly, he did similar work for the UMass Boston graduate student body. He has also been an instructor in Hispanic studies, a student representative on the McCormack Graduate School Strategic Planning Committee, treasurer of the student organization Public Policy Forum, and a research assistant at the Gastón Institute.

As he completes his dissertation research, David would like to further his involvement in the field of education policy. He recently accepted a position as Policy and Research Coordinator in the Office of English Language Acquisition and Academic Achievement at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Says David: “I remember when I started my graduate work someone said to me: ‘Learning is not preparation for living—it is living itself.’ I think they were right.” But even as he continues to invest in his own professional development, he knows it will be future students who benefit most from his research and advocacy.

“I was over forty when I started this program and thought I was settled in my way of thinking. However, I learned to look at issues through a different lens. I began to think about issues of race, gender, and ethnicity and began to come to different conclusions.”

—Kevin Murphy, PhD

**David Nieto**

*PhD Candidate, Language and Education Policy*

David brims with intellectual curiosity coupled with a desire to make the world a better place,” says one of his professors, “and I have no doubt he possesses the courage, intellect, and commitment to do so.”

**STUDENT PROFILE**
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