

## The Virginia Tech/VLGMA Local Government Management Certificate Program Online

### The Certificate Online

The Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA) in partnership with the faculty and administration of Virginia Tech is launching a new, online (asynchronous) version of its award winning, master's level program, the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management. The Certificate is designed to prepare the next generation of local government managers for top level executive positions as the "Baby Boomers" retire and leave a significant number of vacant positions at all levels of local government.

The Certificate was recognized by ICMA as the Sweeney Award winner in 2012. This is ICMA highest academic award.

Virginia Tech's Master of Public Administration program, the academic home of the Certificate, is accredited by NASPAA and is currently ranked 17th nationally among Public Management Administration programs by U.S. News and World Report.

Dr. John Nalbandian, a nationally recognized local government scholar at Kansas University's School of Public Administration, is a Courtesy Professor of Practice at Virginia Tech, an advisor to the Certificate and a guest lecturer.

**Former Student** "... most of all I have enjoyed the interaction with other local government employees and with the master's degree students in this course. The class has helped renew my spirit and my love for local government management, and I plan to continue to use many of the concepts learned during this semester in my future years as a manager."

### Goals of the Certificate

The Certificate has been designed with the following goals:

- The courses must be designed specifically to address "**local**" government management needs, not federal, state or not-for-profit.
- The courses must be taught by **practitioners**.
- The courses must be offered at places and times that give **convenient** access for full-time local government employees to participate.
- The courses must offer **interactive** opportunities among students and with instructors.

The online version of the program has been developed to support these overall program goals and will provide:

- The same core curriculum of **four courses**.
- All courses are offered online, **asynchronous**.
- Courses are **convenient** to practitioners who are balancing work and educational goals.
- Courses can be used to **supplement** other programs that lack a local government management focus. Students currently use the electives as a concentration for other Master degree programs at other Universities\*.

## **Student Snapshot:**

Over 150 students have enrolled and completed the Local Government Management Certificate through Virginia Tech. These students include career practitioners – those working in local government in a variety of departments and positions who are seeking a graduate level certificate program without the long-term commitment of a traditional master's degree. Traditional students enrolled in Master's programs through Virginia Tech or other Universities have completed the courses as well. In addition, many students have enrolled and completed the certificate that has served as the springboard for a Master's degree.

Further, students have benefitted from the knowledge gained in the classes and former students are now CEO's in their communities, including the Botetourt County Administrator, Richmond County Administrator, and the Pulaski Town Manager; all in Virginia and all graduates of the Certificate program.

**Former Student** *"To say that I have learned a lot in this class is an understatement. I have changed from a microscopic view as a social worker to a much broader perspective –the managers', residents' and employees'. This mind set was helped through the selection of reading material, cameos, assignments, role plays and guest speakers."*

## **Courses:**

### **Local Government and the Professional Manager**

Examines the history of the local government management profession, the evolution of the council-manager form of government, the core ethical and democratic values of the profession and through the case study method an examination of all local government management disciplines.

### **Advanced Topics in Public Organizations: The Context of Local Government Management**

Examines powers, structure, roles and responsibilities of the local government within the U.S. from the perspective of the local government manager. Explores the state/local government delivery system of public education, public safety, transportation, public health, social services, environmental quality, criminal justice, and public works and utilities, as well as other programs that are provided either partly or wholly by local governments.

### **Advanced Topics in Public Management: Human Resource, Financial, and Performance Management for Local Government Managers**

Focuses on human resource, financial management, information technology, and performance management processes that managers must use when working in local government organizations. Additionally, topics will review public procurement, risk management, safety management, franchise agreements and contracting for municipal services.

### **Local Economic Development Planning**

Examines the local government management processes that support community and economic development, including the local and regional planning process, growth management, urban design for creating livable communities, property law and local government tools and strategies for securing economic and community development.

These core courses offer a unique local government graduate level education that can be combined with other master's degree level courses to ensure local government employees have a master's degree that serves as a sound basis for their advancement to higher levels in local governments throughout the United States. The Certificate can also be a stand-alone credential for local government employees who do not wish to pursue a graduate degree.

### **Online Environment:**

The online courses include case studies, written, graded work, and required online discussion forums where students interact with the instructor. Students can do the work on days and times that suit their schedules.

Students will receive 3 credit hours at the master's level for each course completed and a hard copy certificate suitable for framing.

**Former Student** *"Taking this course has made me more aware of the challenges our City Manager faces... the awareness I have developed as a result of this course will better enable me to address issues under my span of control in a manner I hope will make the Manager's job a bit easier. The concepts I have learned in this course will better enable me to facilitate achieving the objectives both the Manager and Council have established for the City."*

### **How to Apply:**

Prospective students must file an online application with Virginia Tech and have an official transcript sent directly to Virginia Tech Graduate Admissions from the University where the student received their four-year degree.

An online application guide is provided on our web site at [www.cpap.vt.edu](http://www.cpap.vt.edu).

Students will be admitted to the program whether or not they are pursuing a master's degree. Applications for the Certificate program will be accepted and students will be admitted without the need for taking normal graduate school tests. Criteria for admission

include academic performance, commitment to public service values, and demonstrated leadership capacity. In addition, students must have a bachelor's degree.

The deadlines for submitting applications are as follows:

Fall	August 1
Spring	January 1
Summer	May 1

The first course, in the four course series, will be offered online on a national basis beginning January 2015. **The deadline for applications is January 26, 2015. Space is limited and students will be accepted, first come, first served.**

The tuition and fees for the spring semester will be approximately \$2,300 per course. Books are approximately \$100 per course.

Please contact Stephanie Davis, Professor of Practice and Online Program Coordinator at [sddavis@vt.edu](mailto:sddavis@vt.edu) or (804) 980.5549 with any questions or to enroll.

\*Acceptance of these classes at other Universities is at the discretion and approval of the student's sending University. It is the student's responsibility to have approval from their Institution prior to taking the courses.