To: MPA Students considering enrolling in PA 8990 (Capstone Project) for Summer 2020  
From: Dr. Carol Ebdon  
Subject: Enrollment Procedures for Capstone Course  
Date: February 21, 2019

I will be facilitating the PA 8990 Capstone Project this coming summer semester. MPA students are required to obtain permission of the Capstone instructor prior to enrolling in the Capstone Project course. To receive approval, students develop and submit the basic idea for their Capstone project before they are given permission to enroll in PA 8990.

As the instructor of record, I will review the proposed projects and give enrollment approval for those that meet course requirements. The review process may involve revisions of the proposal in keeping with my comments. It is possible that after several revisions, your proposal may not be accepted for the coming semester. If you are approved, I will notify you by e-mail, with a copy to Dr. Meagan Van Gelder. Meagan will then give you a permission number so that you can enroll in the course.

The syllabus for the summer 2019 Capstone course is also being sent with this note, for your information. To see more background information, please visit the School of Public Administration web page for Current MPA Students (http://www.mpa.unomaha.edu/). Click on “Capstone Project.” Included on this page are examples of previous capstone project papers.

Students must have completed all of their core courses and be in the last 9 hours of their MPA program in order to be eligible to enroll in this course.

Students who wish to enroll in PA 8990 for summer 2020 must prepare a brief statement of their proposed project and e-mail it to me at cebdon@unomaha.edu no later than April 20. I will provide feedback or suggest changes. If revisions are required, I will provide a deadline for the revised proposal. Proposed projects will be approved not only on substantive and methodological merits, but also on whether or not the proposed project can be reasonably completed by the end of the summer semester.

The presumption is that you have already given your topic some thought and have done some preliminary research on existing literature. A proposal based entirely on conjecture, with little/no thought given to the existing research or methodology will not fare well in the proposal review stage. My focus on the proposals is feasibility: did you offer a compelling proposal that I think you could complete within the given timeframe?

Your statement MUST follow the format provided below (address all information and items):
• Student Information: Your name and current e-mail address;

• Courses Completed: Number and names of MPA courses you have completed, including that you have completed the required research methods course;

• Project Title: Tentative title of your project;

• Problem Statement: Clear, concise statement of the issue, problem, and/or program to be examined, analyzed, and studied. What specific question are you seeking to address? If relevant to your research design, include the appropriate dependent and independent variables, as well as important expected causal relationships.

• Literature/Theoretical Framework: Discussion of the major area(s) of scholarly literature that you will review, and/or theoretical concepts that you might use as a basis for your project.

• Project Research Design: Discussion of the project’s likely research design and feasibility within the time limits of the semester session, including specific information addressing the following: What research design might be used? Is it expected the project might use quantitative or qualitative methods? Will the proposed project require collection of new data, or will it use existing data? How many organizations and participants (units of analysis) will be involved? Do you or will you have access to the persons or organizations you want to analyze or study? What approaches might be used to analyze your data?

Submit the proposal as a Word file. The length must not exceed 2 single-spaced, typewritten pages (12 point Times New Roman font, with 1” maximum left, right, top, and bottom margins). You must use the section titles provided in the bullet points above for organizing your proposal. Proposals not meeting these guidelines will be returned without being read.

Two mandatory meetings will take place during the summer 2020 session. You will each meet one-on-one with me midway through the semester (the week of June 22-26), either face-to-face or via phone or Zoom. In addition, all students are required to participate in the project presentations on August 13th (students in the online program will use Zoom).

If you have any questions about PA 8990 or about the proposal review and enrollment process, please contact me at cebdon@unomaha.edu. I encourage you to contact me before the proposal is due to discuss your idea. It might also be helpful for you to talk to another faculty member familiar with your area of interest.