

University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) Doctoral Program in Public Administration: Personal

Statement

My parents have always been a proponent for education because they knew it would provide me opportunities they did not have. As an [REDACTED] native, certain academic and professional opportunities are scarce, making education extremely paramount for success. Education was innate to me and something I excelled at; I loved learning and enhancing my skill-set even at a young age. This placed education at the forefront of my priority list, hence the reason why I am pursuing a doctoral degree in Public Administration in Fall 2020. I am expected to graduate with my Master of Public Administration (MPA) in April 2020, from [REDACTED]. While pursuing my MPA, I have served as the Director of Aircraft Dispatch, a Lecturer, and a Graduate Assistant within [REDACTED] Aviation Department.

This degree aligns with my professional background and enables the unification of my aviation and MPA degrees. I plan to use it to enhance my knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), become a stronger leader, and advocate for those with a suppressed voice. I also yearn to better educate those I am teaching while uplifting my community and those individuals disadvantaged within it to achieve higher intellectual and economic status. I am confident this degree will teach me how to create surveys and measurement tools to effectively ascertain where the deficiencies are that contribute to the disadvantages individuals experience, especially as it pertains to aviation and public administration issues.

With that knowledge, I can use other aspects of my degree, my education, and public administration background to identify the best approach to redress those deficiencies. Consequently, I can be in a more advantageous position to support a myriad of students from different backgrounds. For instance, if a survey reveals individuals feel there are not enough networking or mentorship opportunities within their program or area, then they will be placed at a disadvantage when it comes time to obtain internships and/or post-graduate employment. However, being cognizant of these important gaps via specific mediums will enable me to know how to best utilize my resources to assist and support those disadvantaged individuals to enhance their employment success.

Throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, my long-term career and educational goals have evolved, becoming more focused and clearer. With a background oriented in aviation and the public sector, my

interests have always been centered around aircraft, empowering others, and uplifting my community. My time as a graduate student in the MPA program at [REDACTED] has been spent honing my KSAs while ascertaining how I could capitalize upon them for the betterment of my community and those who view me as a role model. In January 2018, only five months after earning my bachelor's from [REDACTED], I joined the [REDACTED] Aviation Faculty as a Part-Time Lecturer where I taught Aircraft Dispatch II. Teaching was outside of my comfort zone; however, I knew it would provide phenomenal opportunities for growth and employment. Since then, I have served in this same capacity, but was promoted to the Director of the Aircraft Dispatch Program in September 2018. This promotion assisted immensely in the aforementioned change of my academic and professional goals, unifying my aviation and public sector interests.

As the Director, I teach both Aircraft Dispatch I/II and coordinate with the Federal Aviation Administration to ensure [REDACTED] remains in compliance with the Federal Aviation Regulations. Being in the MPA program while serving as the Director of the Aircraft Dispatch Program showed me that public education was a latent passion of mine. As I learned more about public education and how it is intertwined within the various levels of government, I became enthralled with the field because I was able to apply the concepts I was learning in class to my job in real time. This helped solidify my niche for public education, which formulated my goal to teach in higher education. This yearn to teach was further strengthened by my experiences and time as a Lecturer, however, this goal is only attainable if I obtain a doctoral degree, hence my pursuance and application to UNO.

Albeit I never envisioned myself as an educator during my undergraduate studies, the various leadership and mentor roles I assumed in professional organizations coupled with my academic coursework prepared me to educate others all along unbeknownst to me. These core KSAs were further strengthened by my graduate coursework, position as a Lecturer, and continued involvement as an adviser for the professional aviation fraternity on [REDACTED] campus. Therefore, my academic preparation has allowed for my educational and career goal to essentially 'meet in the middle'. Thus, my current (educational) goal is to utilize the KSAs I have accumulated, successes and failures, and education to nurture those I have the privilege to teach so they can make informed decisions and achieve their goals. The intrinsic satisfaction obtained from assisting students in enhancing their knowledge and achieving their goals is the greatest compensation teaching can

furnish. Accomplishing my own personal, professional, and academic goals while continuing to assist students as they venture through college and onto their career paths are the primary reasons why I want to further my education. Furthermore, a doctoral degree in Public Administration would grant me the versatility to assist students in their academic endeavors internal and external to public administration and aviation.

Due to my experience in aviation and the public sector, my research interests are primarily rooted in aviation. The unaffordability of flight training and its impact on commercial aviation diversity is one of my interests. This is because the immense cost associated with flight training is one of the most prominent factors contributing to diversity disparity. To fly professionally, the average cost to earn the necessary certificates and ratings is \$65k if completed at a traditional Fixed Base Operator whereas training conducted at a collegiate institution is typically upwards of \$100k. This type of financial commitment requires individuals to obtain a loan of at least \$50k. To acquire a loan of this size, good credit, high income, and assets are required at a minimum. These three economic requirements tend to be unobtainable for economically disadvantaged individuals who often times, are racial minorities. Consequently, these individuals are financially excluded from pursuing certain aviation endeavors.

Diversity in aviation recruitment is another research interest I am passionate about. Specifically, in how these recruitment strategies impact minority applicants entering the industry. This topic interests me because the lack of racial and gender diversity, especially in Commercial aviation, has been a major issue plaguing the industry. Aviation has historically been white-male dominated. With respect to race, 92% and 91% of professional pilots and flight engineers, respectively, are white. African-Americans account for less than 3% of commercial pilots in the U.S., less than 7% are Hispanic or Latino, and roughly 4% are Asian (Patterson, 2019). According to DataUSA (2018), roughly 93% of aircraft pilots and flight engineers are male, meaning only 7% are female. These statistics exemplify this historic trend despite increases in racial and gender diversity of the U.S. workforce. This implies that although the U.S. workforce is becoming more diverse, the air transportation industry is not experiencing this same diversity trend. This research topic interests me because it would allow me to explore and identify the potential reasons as to why racial and/or gender minorities are not enrolling in collegiate aviation programs. Consequently, recommendations on how to improve websites, online, and offline marketing strategies could be provided to collegiate programs in an

effort to improve the diversity within said programs across the country. I explored this research interest during the summer with the research article titled, [REDACTED]

Based upon my research interests, the faculty I would like to work with are [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] published two articles examining the aviation industry workforce shortage and why it exists. The article titled, [REDACTED] shared a similar purpose to my research. Our publications are akin in nature because they evaluated how certain organizations perform 'outreach' to recruit youth to enter the aviation industry, and how these strategies can be improved to recruit more gender and/or racial minorities. I am interested in working with [REDACTED] because of his research focus on transportation, specifically how it connects people to education and opportunity. Recently, in my Public Policy course, I conducted a semester-long policy analysis about the inadequacy of transportation options within [REDACTED]. This research bore some similarity to [REDACTED] article titled, [REDACTED] which intensified my interest and passion in (public) transportation.

The Public Aviation and Transportation specialization interests me because it directly correlates to my academic and professional experiences, especially since I hold several airmen certificates. This specialization possesses the opportunity for me to build upon my aviation degree while unifying my aviation experiences. The Non-Profit Management specialization also interests me because I have started two non-profit organizations within the past five years and am currently involved in three of them. This specialization possesses much research potential that will enable me to explore the non-profit realm to determine how such organizations can be used in bridging the 'exposure' gap that exists within specific racial and/or gender demographics. Consequently, improved outreach strategies can be implemented within various education levels (e.g., middle or high school) to provide students with STEM-related opportunities like aviation early-on. Additionally, this specialization will enhance my overall teaching ability as it pertains to non-profit material. Specifically, this specialization will provide the necessary tools for me to groom students to become better leaders so they can strengthen their organization, their community, and provide more mission to those who need it.

I would like to pursue a doctoral degree at UNO because this institution offers a doctoral degree that combines my academic interest and passion, which something I thought impossible until I learned about this program. This is accomplished through the offering of a Public Administration doctorate coupled with an

aviation component. Furthermore, this program offers various resources that aid in professional development such as the [REDACTED] program. This program seems to provide a great beneficence to its participants with respect to teaching ability, lesson delivery, and professional etiquette in academe. There are several opportunities for academic/research funding; knowing the university and its faculty are supportive of conference attendance and research is empowering, making UNO more appealing. I am confident this program will enhance my KSAs, and make me a more well-rounded student and educator because of the success and prestige encompassed within the university.

My experiences as a Graduate Assistant, Lecturer, and Director have tested and strengthened my ability to work in a dynamic and fast-paced environment with multiple deadlines. The dynamic environment encompassed within UNO and its doctoral program is something that I thrive in, which should allow for a seamless transition from [REDACTED]. The campuses were extremely beautiful and possessed a welcoming ambiance. The city's culture resembled my hometown of [REDACTED]. This resemblance made the visit feel much more familiar despite it being my first time in Nebraska and that far Midwest. I also meshed well with the faculty/staff comprising the School of Public Administration and [REDACTED], which enhanced this 'homey' feeling I experienced while visiting. Therefore, the fact UNO felt like 'home' is just one of the many reasons why I wish to pursue a degree there while explaining how I fit within the program and university.

References

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