*DePaul University ⯁ School for New Learning ⯁ Graduate Programs*

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**Information for Prospective Professional Advisors**

***(MA Program in Applied Professional Studies/MAAPS)***

Thank you for considering the possibility of serving as a Professional Advisor (PA) for one of our graduate students. To assist you in making this decision, please find below some “Frequently Asked Questions” about the role:

1. **What is a Professional Advisor (PA)?**

Within the *MA Program in Applied Professional Studies*, each graduate student designs and pursues learning and demonstrates competence in relation to a professional area of focus. In so doing, he/she identifies and nominates a “master practitioner” in that area (or a closely related area) to join with his/her Faculty Mentor (from DePaul’s resident faculty) to help guide the program of study. Together, these three individuals (Student, Faculty Mentor and Professional Advisor) form the student’s Academic Committee and work to help the student identify long-range professional goals and crucial professional competencies and provide the student with ongoing challenge and support throughout the Program in accomplishment of those competencies.

**(2) What are the qualifications & responsibilities associated with the PA role?**

**•** Possessing an advanced academic degree appropriate to the student’s Graduate Focus Area (typically a minimum of a Master’s degree) and/or evidence of an equivalent record of distinguished involvement and practice (teaching, publication, service) relevant to the Focus Area. *[Note: To avoid conflicts-of-interest, relatives and/or individuals currently serving in direct reporting relationships to students are not eligible to serve as Professional Advisors.]*

**•** Serving as the student’s primary advisor regarding the Graduate Focus Area. (This function includes interacting with the student regularly as he/she moves through the program.)

**•** Assisting the student in refining his/her ***Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan*** and identifying appropriate Professional Competencies (sought outcomes), Learning Activities (the means to achieve them) and Learning Products (demonstrations).

**•** Participating in the student’s Academic Committee Meeting and, if possible, his/her initial Assessment & Integration Session. Both of these meetings include further orientation to the PA role as well as the MA Program in Applied Professional Studies in general.

**•** Reviewing and approving all proposals for work in the Focus Area (as presented in the ***Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan*** or amended learning agreements).

**•** Assessing no more than 75% of the student’s Learning Products completed in the Focus Area—providing substantive feedback within two weeks of receipt of products.

**•** Assisting in the identification of additional assessors for the remaining Learning Products completed in the Focus Area.

**•** Serving as assessor and primary advisor for the culmination phase of the student’s program, i.e., Supplemental Competencies or Integrating Project Proposal/Final Project.

**•** Participating (if possible) in the student’s Graduation Review session at program’s end.

**(3) What are the typical time commitments associated with the PA role?**

**•** Design/Brainstorming Stage: A few hours interspersed through this stage to brainstorm the Focus Area with the student and review his/her initial plan for exploring such.

**•** Academic Committee Meeting: A meeting (with the student and Faculty Mentor) of approximately two hours to offer final and official review/refinement of the student’s ***Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan***, i.e., when it is ready for such review.

**•** Periodic Coaching: Periodic exchanges (via email, phone or in-person) with the student as mutually determined by both the student and the PA. The Program recommends that these interactions transpire at least once a quarter and address progress in the Program to date, learning in the Focus Area, new developments, etc.

**•** Assessment of Learning: Review and assessment of Learning Products developed by the student. As soon as the student’s ***Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan*** is approved, the student is free to engage the Learning Activities and produce the Learning Products. Typically, the numbers of products range between 9 and 13. Upon completion, each product is: (a) self-assessed by the student; (b) assessed by either the PA or some other relevant “practitioner” depending on the focus of the particular project; and then, (c) assessed by the Faculty Mentor. For items involving the PA, the assessment process typically takes 45-60 minutes per product and may involve an iterative process of coaching the student on advance drafts prior to considering the product for final assessment.

**•** Culmination Coaching & Review: Possible consultation and assessment regarding a final Integrating Project. At the end of the program, the student may choose to complete an “integrating project.” If he/she chooses this option, the student will prepare a proposal for the PAs and Faculty Mentor’s review, and once approved, complete the project and submit it for PA and Faculty Mentor assessment. At this stage of the student’s program, the PAs role might involve a few hours of consultation about possible Integrating Projects, review of the Project proposal, and assessment of the Final Product.

**(4) What remuneration is available to the PA?**

Full payment for a PA’s professional services is not possible. However, the Program hopes that the opportunity to work with a committed graduate student and, through such, to contribute to and invest in the future of one’s field offer some deep and generative “return” to the PA. In addition, as an expression of appreciation, the University offers a modest honorarium to the PA at the beginning of the student’s program when his/her ***Graduate Focus Area Learning Plan*** is officially approved. In addition, PAs receive an honorarium for each Learning Product (including the Integrating Project, if applicable) that they assess within the student’s Focus Area. *[Note: DePaul resident faculty serving as PAs are exempt from receiving honoraria.]*

**(5) One Final Thought…**

The comments above are general and are obviously subject to being shaped by the unique relationship between each student and his/her PA. Fundamentally, however, the hallmark of this graduate program is “**self-directed/self-managed learning**” …and, all of its students are “seasoned professionals” to one degree or another. Hence, the PA and Faculty Mentor roles are more akin to “coaching…and providing feedback” than “leading/motivating” *per se*. In short, the large majority of the program’s graduate students pride themselves on their initiative, follow-through, dependability, and thoroughness, i.e., they are working in, and through, this graduate program to deepen and broaden their competencies as worthy and dynamic colleague-professionals—Not as “high-maintenance” functionaries.

**(6) How do we proceed?**

Each student nominates his/her potential PA to the Faculty Mentor by submitting: (1) a brief rationale for the nomination; and, (2) a copy of the PA’s current resume. The Faculty Mentor then contacts the PA-nominee to discuss the role in greater detail and to determine, on behalf of the MAAPS Program, if the fit is appropriate. If the PA-nominee is acceptable, the Faculty Mentor informs the Graduate Programs Office which, in turn, sends the PA a Letter of Agreement. The PA confirms by email.

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