

PRESS RELEASE

909.537.5007

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Joe Gutierrez
Office of Strategic Communication
909-537-5007
joeg@csusb.edu

MPA program prepares government managers statewide for leadership roles

With a year under its belt, a unique virtual Master of Public Administration program at Cal State San Bernardino is midway through preparing a group of county managers and supervisors from throughout California for high-level county executive jobs.

The two-year CSUSB Executive MPA program, which is housed in the university's [Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration](#), is geared specifically toward existing managers and supervisors employed in county government throughout the state who are interested in becoming government executives, said Jonathan Anderson, chair and a professor in the [CSUSB Public Administration Department](#).

"We target the program toward those who are already in the field and looking to advance to leadership positions," Anderson said. "This isn't really for the entry-level people just trying to get a start ... This is about management and leadership."

The program is the result of a partnership with the CSUSB public administration program and the [California State Association of Counties \(CSAC\) Institute for Excellence in County Government](#), a professional, practical continuing education program for senior county staff and elected officials.

Bill Chiat, the dean of the CSAC Institute for Excellence in County Government, praised the CSUSB program for targeting a specific group of managers, elected officials and administrators and making it virtually available in all of California's counties.

"This is a great service the university is providing to local governments and why I believe in this program," said Chiat, who added it will be especially helpful to those government administrators who work in rural counties and may not have direct access to an MPA program.

Chiat said the program's emphasis on leadership would also help those who want to move into executive positions, but may not have the proper training.

"Many of these people have the technical expertise and training, but not the technical skills needed for leadership and management skills," Chiat said. The program will enable them "to earn a degree in public administration."

The cohort program is not new to CSUSB. The public administration department has cohorts made up of different

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5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

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employment groups and for years has had a San Bernardino County employee cohort, Anderson said.

But with the MPA program's success and the public administration department's growing exceptional reputation, interest in the program expanded to other counties across the state and with the help and direction of CSAC, the program was launched last September, Anderson said.

Chiat said another reason that stood out was Anderson's flexibility in developing options and adapting the program to help the students. "Remember, these are working professionals mostly in county services," he said.

The program's initial cohort of 20 students is made up mostly of county managers and executives. The classes were the same as classes offered to students at the university, but because the students were from throughout the state, the executive program was offered virtually through Zoom video conferencing along with hybrid and online activities.

The cohort's first meeting was actually face-to-face as Anderson and Montgomery Van Wart, a CSUSB professor of public administration who serves as the program academic coordinator, and the students all went to Sacramento on a Saturday in September for the initial gathering.

"Dr. Van Wart and I spent the Saturday with the students and got to know them. They got to know each other," Anderson said. "Cohorts traditionally do better if they have that initial face-to-face connection. Then they can go off their separate ways and engage and they know what they're engaging with."

A key element of the program is that within the classes, all the projects and presentations involve some aspect of their jobs or situations at work as managers and leaders, Anderson said.

"The group project things for the cohort people are with each other, so their focus is the benefit in relating to other county employees across the state," Anderson said. "So while the curriculum is essentially the same as we offer here, the application of it and the projects the students do are oriented toward their particular employment situation."

The cohort has a typical meeting schedule, twice a week during the evening at a specific time. Anderson said he also has guest speakers who work in county government, such as San Bernardino County Deputy Executive Officer Diana Alexander, who share their experiences and talk about leadership at the county executive level with the students.

The use of Zoom as an element of the classes was unique at the time it started, but use of that delivery format has increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Anderson noted, "Unlike many programs that have been heavily impacted by the coronavirus, the CSAC MPA cohort was already structured in this virtual format and we are looking for it to grow further."

The ultimate goal of the program is to deliver a high-quality online education with a public service focus to public managers across the state emphasizing principled public service, Anderson said.

"CSUSB has prided itself on emphasizing ethical public service," Anderson said.

With more than 250 students in the MPA program, its reputation continues to grow as it is accredited by [NASPAA – The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration](#) – the global standard in public service education. Interest in the program has also come from across state lines as the program has received inquiries from Arizona, Nevada and Oregon, Anderson said.

Also, visit the following websites for more information:

The [Cal State San Bernardino Public Administration program website](#); the [California State Association of Counties Institute for Excellence in County Government](#) website for more information about the program and the CSUSB College of Education; and the [Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration](#) website.

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About Cal State San Bernardino

[California State University, San Bernardino](#) is a preeminent center of intellectual and cultural activity in Inland Southern California. Opened in 1965 and set at the foothills of the beautiful San Bernardino Mountains, the university serves more than 20,000 students each year and graduates about 4,000 students annually. The university offers more than 70 traditional baccalaureate and master's degree programs, education credential and certificate programs, and a doctorate program in educational leadership. Every one of its academic programs that is eligible has earned national accreditation. CSUSB reflects the dynamic diversity of the region and has the most diverse student population of any university in the Inland Empire. More than 80 percent of those who graduate are the first in their families to do so.

For more information on Cal State San Bernardino, contact the university's [Office of Strategic Communication](#) at (909) 537-5007 and visit <https://www.csusb.edu/inside>.