**NASPAA Election Administration Commons**

**Course Framework**

**Part I: Core Courses (or Modules)**

1. Survey of Election Administration: Comprehensive course on the general building blocks of election administration from voter registration to recounts to electoral integrity to the shifting relationships among local, state, and federal governments.

2. Election Law: Examination of election laws and legal issues surrounding officials and voters at the federal, state, and local level.

3. Election Administration Management and Policy Process: Introduction to American federalism and the intergovernmental system, including theory, historical developments, major themes, and emerging issues, the distinct phases and hurdles of the policy process, and skills for election officials to enact new policy.

**Part II: Elective Courses** (some of these are already offered by Humphrey, Auburn, etc., and some do not currently exist)

1. **Cybersecurity and Election Administration**: In light of recent reports surrounding Russian interference in our elections, cybersecurity certainly deserves new focus in the world of election administration. In educating the next generation of election administrators, our coursework must emphasize both technical and communicative aspects of election cybersecurity to keep our democratic process safe.

From a technical standpoint, a cybersecurity and election administration course should cover a few basic points. First, it should explain the history of computer technology in elections, and outline the election-related technologies existing today. Second, it should discuss potential security vulnerabilities that exist under current technological circumstances, how one could potentially “hack” an election by exploiting these weaknesses, how to effectively defend an election’s integrity against these types of efforts, and how to test for electoral intrusion or fraud if one suspects it has occurred.

A cybersecurity and election administration course could cover several topics from a communication perspective as well. Specifically, an election administrator functioning in today’s circumstances must be able to successfully navigate the frequently contentious political climate while effectively communicating cybersecurity concerns to those around them. One must be able to avoid partisan quarrels, and must be able to convey technical considerations in as clear and concise a manner as possible to ensure an election is administered capably and securely.

Ultimately, election administration will greatly benefit from attention toward cybersecurity, and programs training election administrators should include a course focused specifically on this topic. By anticipating and responding effectively to different forms of meddling—ranging from hacking and technological vulnerabilities to disinformation and fake news—our next generation of election administrators will be well-equipped to maintain the integrity of our democratic process in the 21st century.

**2. International Standards of Election Administration**: This course would outline the universal standards of administering elections, such as ensuring effective electoral management and safeguarding electoral integrity. By doing so, this course would highlight key elements of election administration that also apply outside of the United States.

**3. Election Design**: An innovative course on design principles and how they are used in election administration. Through small, weekly assignments you will learn and practice new skills in plain language, design, and usability with real election materials.

4. **Voter Outreach and Participation**: Why do some voters turnout while others don’t? This course investigates the patterns and history of voter participation and practical steps to increase voter turnout.

**5. Budgeting and Management for Election Administration**: Learn the basics of budgeting and fiscal analysis. This valuable course introduces students to the budget process at state capitols and the techniques of budget and program analysis. Administering elections requires skills and knowledge of management. This essential course familiarizes students with organizational management strategies for effective government performance.

**6. Communications for Election Administration**: Running an elections office often requires communications with the public and the press. This practical course prepares students to better handle public communications and media relations.

**7. Data Analysis for Election Administration**: This course will highlight the importance of evidence-based election administration, which focuses on collection and analysis of quantitative data to solve problems and identify opportunities for improvement. There will be an emphasis on pre-election forecasting for planning purposes as well as post-election auditing of election results.

**Related Courses**

* Administrative Law: General nature of administrative law; types of administrative action and enforcement; analysis of rule making and adjudication; administrative due process; judicial review.
* Theory and Practice of Mediation: Theoretical and comparative perspective on conflict resolution, with emphasis on the role of mediation in various societies.
* Nonprofit Management: Comprehensive overview of the complex and diverse nonprofit sector in the United States, including theory and practice of governance and key management functions.
* State Politics: Current and classical research on state government, politics, and policy. Students critique others' research and design their own for submission to a professional journal.
* Administrative Leadership, Responsibility, and Democratic Government: Problems and ethics, democratic theory and leadership as they relate to public administration.

**Part III: Internship and/or Capstone**

* Placement in an internship with a sister organization (e.g. NASS) and/or
* Participate in a campus-based or online capstone project.

**COMPETENCIES FOR PROFESSIONAL ELECTION AMINISTRATION & LEADERSHIP**

**Part I: Core Competencies for the NASPAA Election Administration and Leadership Concentration**

* Plan, direct, lead, and evaluate elections, from voter registration to recounts to electoral integrity to managing intergovernmental relationships among a nation’s local, state/provincial, and federal governments.
* Apply Election Law accurately and appropriately to officials, voters, and situations at the federal, state, and local level.
* Know the structure of American federalism and the intergovernmental system, including theory, historical developments, major themes emerging issues, and the distinct phases and hurdles of the policy process. Be able to apply this knowledge to the implementation of new election laws and to the development and execution of electoral policies.

**Part II: Competencies for sub-specializations within Election Administration & Leadership**

**1. Cybersecurity and Election Administration**

* Identify the sources and technical aspects of security vulnerabilities, and how these vulnerabilities have been exploited by hackers.
* Assess risks to electoral integrity and apply resources and expertise to protect elections, showing proportionate attention to the highest risks.
* Plan systematically and proactively for electoral integrity.
* Measure electoral integrity and detect intrusion, fraud, and misrepresentation.
* Demonstrate knowledge of the policy environment by navigating the complex and contentious election climate and environment while effectively communicating cybersecurity concerns to those around you.
* Communicate technical considerations in as clear and concise a manner; draft public communications that are accessible and understandable by all citizens and that is credible and authoritative.
* Anticipate and respond effectively to different forms of meddling—ranging from hacking and technological vulnerabilities to disinformation and fake news.

**2. Global Election Administration and International Standards**

* Apply universal standards of administering elections to a specific locale, ensure effective management of the process, and measure integrity of the election. By doing so, this level of competence would be useful in any country, including the United States.
* Design election processes to maximize integrity, where no processes exist, or where flawed processes have de-legitimized previous elections.
* Design voting processes where none exist previously, demonstrating understanding of plain and simple language, navigability, and user interface.
* Measure and evaluate key outcomes, especially Voter Outreach and Participation: articulate why some voters turn out while others don’t. Propose evidence-based solutions to increasing voter participation.

**3. Budgeting and Management for Election Administration**

* Apply the basics of budgeting and fiscal analysis to an election process at the local or regional level. and the techniques of budget and program analysis. Identify fixed and variable costs, demonstrate accounting procedures for tracking revenues and expenditures, and identify ways to bring revenues and expenditures into balance.
* Manage the human resources of an election, including training and developing staff, devising a staffing plan and organizational chart, setting objectives and desired outcomes, and evaluating the organization’s performance.

**4. Communications for Election Administration**

* Integrate public communications and media relations into the work of an elections office.
* Identify the purpose of public communication regarding elections, and specific techniques for building credibility and serving the public good.
* Coordinate communications during crisis management to restore public trust.

**5. Data Analysis for Election Administration**

* Identify policy and management problems in election administration that are well-served by data collection and analysis.
* Apply data analysis to identifying opportunities for process and management improvement.
* Forecast pre-election variables (such as turnout) for planning purposes, and demonstrate how to apply the results to improve planning.
* Conduct data analyses for post-election auditing of election results, and identify inconsistencies and weakness in need of remedy.

**6. Related Competencies**

* Apply general administrative law to the election context, identifying points of administrative action and enforcement; analyze rule making and adjudication; apply admin due process.
* Apply Theoretical and comparative perspective on conflict resolution to work with stakeholder groups in election processes, emphasizing ability to provide mediation in different cultural contexts.
* Interface with volunteers in the electoral process, and demonstrate effective approaches while working with election commission officials, campaign volunteers, advocacy groups, protest groups, citizen groups and watchdog organizations, election nonprofits and voter registration organizations, poll watchers and other observers.
* Writing effectively for research and analysis purposes, advocacy, and credibility.
* Leadership and responsibility of public administrators and managers in democratic government, including problem identification and analysis, acting ethically, transparently and accountably.

**Part III: Competencies from a Capstone or Internship**

* From an internship, interpret experiences on the job with insights provided by coursework in the specialization.
* From participation in a campus-based or online capstone project, complete a summative written paper or report that serves the needs of an election-oriented client or addresses an election problem.