Megan Siehl: Hello! We are excited to chat with you tonight, and we're ready to answer any questions you may have.

n/a speainfo: Welcome! We're happy to have you join us this evening! My name is Michele and we are ready to answer any questions you have about the admissions process and building a competitive application!

Megan Siehl: Our staff will use a red font this evening to make it easier to see our responses.

Megan Siehl: Feel free to ask any questions you have!

Megan Siehl: Our priority application deadline is February 1 - applying by this date means you will automatically be considered for all merit-based financial opportunities that SPEA has to offer!

Rubea: What would you say is the most common mistake people make with their applications?

Michele Sassano: Hi Rubea!

Katie S.: What does SPEA look for in applicants for the MPA program?

Michele Sassano: Rubea- I would say that a common mistake that we see is that applicants may not provide their recommenders with ample time to submit their letters of recommendation. It's important to notify your recommenders early in the application process!

Michele Sassano: Hi Katie!

Megan Siehl: Hi Rubea, that's a great question! Some applicants forget to send us transcripts from all institutions they have attended. We require official transcripts from all institutions attended -- even if you did not receive a degree from that school.

sanjeev kotamraju: Is that deadline also for international students?

Michele Sassano: SPEA looks for applicants who show a commitment to service and a desire to implement positive change. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds which makes for a very diverse learning environment!

Anthony Serra: Are there any particular "buzz words" that SPEA likes to see in applicant's personal statement and/or resume?

Megan Siehl: Hi Anthony!

Megan Siehl: There are not necessarily any "buzz words" that we look for. Your personal statement is really a chance for our Admissions Committee members to get to know YOU...so they want to know who you are, why you're interested in pursuing this degree program, and really what you're all about.

Michele Sassano: Hi Sanjeev!
Megan Siehl: By the time the reviewer gets to your personal statement, they have seen your transcript, your test scores, and much more...but now they want to hear from you!

Michele Sassano: Yes, our priority deadline for all students to be considered for merit-based aid is February 1!

Katie S.: Thank you!

Michele Sassano: You're welcome!

Katie S.: I'm getting ready to take the GRE, but I am nervous that this will hurt my application. Is the GRE the most important thing the committee looks at?

Anthony Serra: What are some of the merit-based financial aid opportunities and how competitive are they?

Michele Sassano: Katie- Our Admissions Committee reviews applications for their overall merit. The GRE is important, but it is just one component of the application. There isn't a "make or break" section of the application!

Sanjeev Kotamraju: I had a look at the requirements for the application. Do I have to have three letters of recommendation? If so, I feel that two of my letters are going to be people that know me and are of positions that can give a better idea of how successful I could be in grad school.

Michele Sassano: Hi Anthony!

Megan Siehl: Hi Sanjeev!

Megan Siehl: Yes, three recommendation letters are required.

Megan Siehl: When possible, we recommend that at least one letter is from a professor. This is because our admissions committee is comprised of faculty members...so they want to know what you're going to bring to their classroom and what you are going to be like as a student.

Megan Siehl: But ultimately, you want to select the recommenders who will best represent you!

Michele Sassano: Most of our merit-based aid opportunities consist of a partial tuition remission and a work assignment as a graduate or teaching assistant paid at an hourly rate.

Cooper Tamayo: How important is post-undergrad work experience and how many years of experience do applicants typically have before applying?

Michele Sassano: Each year, we typically offer approximately 40% of our incoming class merit-based aid!

Michele Sassano: Hi Cooper!

Sanjeev Kotamraju: Are there any financial aid options for international students?
Megan Siehl: Sanjeev --

Michele Sassano: We don't have a prior work experience requirement, so some of our students will join us right after they complete their undergraduate degrees and others may have a few years of work experience.

Megan Siehl: International students are eligible for all of our merit-based awards if they apply by February 1. However, please note that as a professional degree program, we rarely offer full tuition awards. As such, we encourage you to also seek external opportunities for funding, as well.

Katherine R: Hi Megan and Michele. Thank you for your time this evening! How many (RPCV) Coverdell Fellows are chosen each year?

Megan Siehl: Hi Katherine! We're happy to chat with you tonight!

Megan Siehl: It sounds like you are an RPCV! We love what Returned Peace Corps Volunteers bring to our student and academic communities. We do not have a set number of Coverdell Fellowships each year, but on average, there's usually 5-8 selected each year.

Anthony Serra: Does SPEA (or IU in general) offer to match AmeriCorps Segal Awards?

Megan Siehl: Anthony,

Megan Siehl: Our match of the AmeriCorps Segal Award comes in the form of a 3-credit hour reduction in recognition of a year of service (this benefit is maxed at 6 credits for two years of service). This means that, for example, the 48-credit hour MPA program becomes a 45-credit program...equating to cost savings of more than $1,400 for Indiana residents and more than $3,200 for non-residents.

Anthony Serra: Is it possible to become an Indiana resident while studying at IU?

Michele Sassano: Anthony --

Megan Siehl: Anthony - all residency determinations are managed by the Office of the Registrar. In general, my understanding is that students retain the residency status with which they enter the program.

Megan Siehl: Additional information about residency or associated petitions is available at http://registrar.indiana.edu/policies/residency.shtml.

Anthony Serra: About how many SPEA-Corps member are selected each year?

Michele Sassano: Anthony--

Michele Sassano: On average, we have about 24-27 Service Corps Fellows in each class. The number of open positions can vary from year to year depending on the number of community partners that have positions available.
Michele Sassano: The Service Corps program is a great way to get experience working in the public and nonprofit sectors while pursuing a master’s degree at SPEA!

Anthony Serra: Is there any additional application requirements for the Service Corps programs or are all applications received by Feb 1st considered?

Michele Sassano: Anthony,

Michele Sassano: Applicants specifically interested in Service Corps can indicate their interest on the Departmental Questions form. And yes, all applicants who apply by February 1 will be considered!

Anthony Serra: How big is the SPEA entering class typically?

Megan Siehl: We generally welcome approximately 200 new master's students each fall, across our master’s programs (with the largest being our MPA program).

Anthony Serra: What about the MPA/MSES dual degree program?

Megan Siehl: We do a lot to help make the program feel smaller. For example, first semester students are placed in cohorts, so you take your courses with the same group of students. It helps create a strong bond when you’re balancing the same work load and working on group projects together! Many students tell us that even as they venture into their respective elective courses, their closest friends are still the students from their first semester cohort!

Megan Siehl: We also have an array of professional student organizations that many of our students get involved with, both to socialize and to engage in professional development opportunities.

Megan Siehl: These types of experiences help our students have the best of both worlds - the benefits and resources that come with a large program with over 100 full-time faculty but also the benefits of a close-knit community.

Chloe Rittenhouse: Is it possible to take some of your MPA courses online or are the online courses exclusively available to the online MPA program?

Megan Siehl: Hi Chloe!

Megan Siehl: Our residential and online programs are, for the most part, separate and distinct, so they’re not really designed for students to move between them.

Megan Siehl: In unique circumstances, residential students may be permitted to take an online course, but generally, the online courses are for students admitted to the SPEA Connect online program (this audience tends to be experienced professionals with 10+ years of work experience).

Michele Sassano: Approximately 25-30 students begin as dual degree students each year. Students also have the opportunity to add the dual degree after beginning either the MPA or the MSES degree program, so we have additional dual degree students who pursue that option!
Michele Sassano: We are very glad that you could join us this evening! As we wrap up, we are happy to answer any final questions that you all may have!

Anton Yanchilin: Hello! I have one quick question, I saw, while looking through SPEA’s website, that Energy is offered as a concentration for people pursuing the Master in Public Affairs or the environmental science program. Is one able to pursue the dual track and focus on energy as well or does it have be one of the specified dual degree concentrations?

Michele Sassano: Hi Anton!

Michele Sassano: Dual degree students have the option of pursuing the specified dual degree concentrations as well as concentrations for the MPA or MSES degree programs.

Anton Yanchilin: Ok, thank you for the clarification!

Michele Sassano: You're welcome!

Rubea: Thank you!

Michele Sassano: Thank you all for chatting with us this evening! Please feel free to call us at 812-855-2840 or email us at speaapps@indiana.edu with any questions you have as you progress through the application process. We are happy to assist!