

URPL 6805- MURP Internship: Experiential Education

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Course Description:

Real-world, hands-on learning—also known as Experiential Education—is a cornerstone of the MURP program. We believe that the best way for students to understand the complexities, challenges, and potentials of the planning profession is to actually experience it.

The purpose of doing an internship is to have the opportunity to merge your academic, classroom-based education with a professional workplace experience. You earn three elective credits for participating in this internship course, but more importantly, the coursework will enable you to maximize the personal and professional development your internship affords. Through participation in your internship and this course, you should gain a clearer understanding of the art and science of urban and regional planning, the planning profession, and your own career and personal development path.

Course Objectives:

- Integration: To integrate learning from your internship with information about a specific issue(s) in urban and regional planning of interest to you; to broaden and challenge your classroom knowledge base
- Growth: To consciously challenge yourself to develop personally during your internship by engaging in self-appraisal and identifying growth opportunities; to consciously own your learning experience by setting individual goals and pursuing them
- Professional Success: To develop the skills demanded of an urban and regional planning professional; to expand your urban and regional planning career awareness, including knowledge of various career positions and the qualities and skills required; to gain experience interacting with professional colleagues and supervisors; and to become more marketable to future employers

PAB Learning Outcomes:

The Department of Planning and Design has incorporated the Planning Accreditation Board's (PAB) standards for teaching planning knowledge, skills and values into the curricula of our courses. The following PAB Learning Outcomes will be assessed for planning students in this course:

- Leadership: tools for attention, formation, strategic decision-making, team building, and organizational/ community motivation.
- Professional Ethics and Responsibility: appreciation of key issues of planning ethics and related questions of the ethics of public decision-making, research and client representation (including principles of the AICP Code of Ethics).

Course Format:

URPL 6805 primarily consists of on-site employment for a planning-related organization. However, the difference between an internship and a part-time job is that an internship is specifically intended to be a *learning experience*. To facilitate this learning, your work experience is supplemented with required academic assignments.

This syllabus assumes that you have been hired for an internship and followed the process for enrolling in the internship course (URPL 6805) described in the MURP Internship Guide.

To begin the internship and the course, you will complete a personalized Learning Agreement. This agreement will be included in your Internship Contract, which must be signed by your employer, the internship course instructor, and yourself in order for the internship to officially begin.

Each week during the semester, you will be completing a brief assignment and submitting it electronically, via Canvas. Some weeks there will be brief assigned readings as well. The assignments are intended to help you maximize the professional and personal development opportunities presented by your internship.

At the end of the semester, you will write and turn in a self-assessment paper, documenting the progress you made toward achieving the goals of your Learning Agreement during your internship. Additionally, you will make a brief presentation to the other students in the Internship Course (as well as anyone else who wants to attend) about your internship experience.

Also, at the end of the semester, your employer will complete an evaluation of your work, including your professional development, during the internship. This evaluation will comprise 35% of your grade for the internship course.

Recommended Reading:

All assigned readings for the course, as well as additional resources, will be provided on Canvas. Several readings come from these two books, which include many useful references:

Sandberg, Sheryl (2014). *Lean In for Graduates*. Knopf.

Sweitzer, H. Frederick and Mary King (2004). *The Successful Internship: Transformation and Empowerment in Experiential Learning*, 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

University and Course Policies

Internship Expectations: Even though an internship is probably a part-time position, and probably is low-paid or unpaid work, you still are expected to treat the position seriously and professionally. While you likely already know how to professionally conduct yourself in a workplace, here are a few expectations:

- Arrive on time for all assigned work hours.
- Adhere to all organizational policies (e.g., regarding dress code, personal use of equipment, breaks, etc.)
- If you must miss work or be late to work due to illness or emergency, you must contact your supervisor as promptly as possible.
- Be respectful of your work environment and colleagues.
- Be attentive and polite to your supervisor, colleagues and clients.
- Keep your work area neat.
- Do not conduct personal business during work hours.
- Communicate professionally and articulately with your supervisor and colleagues.
- You are responsible for clarifying any tasks you are assigned. If you don't understand something or are unsure of how to proceed, ASK.
- Remember that you are there to learn, so take responsibility for your learning.

Academic Honesty: Students are required to know, understand, and comply with the CU Denver Academic Dishonesty Policy as detailed in the Catalog (available [here](#)). Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and falsification, multiple submission of the same work, misuse of academic materials, and complicity in academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, and dismissal from the University.

Student Code of Conduct: As members of the University community, students are expected to uphold university standards, which include abiding by state civil and criminal laws and all University policies and standards of conduct (available [here](#)).

Disability Accommodations: I invite students with special needs to contact me to discuss any concerns or preferences. Please notify me if you require accommodation for any type of physical or learning disability. To be eligible for formal accommodations, students **must** be registered with the UC Denver Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), (303) 556-3450. The DRS staff office will work with the student and faculty member to determine and coordinate reasonable accommodations for the course.

Course Communication: A requirement for this course is that you maintain a university email address, check it regularly for messages and be sure it is working. Additionally, as all assignments will be given and submitted via Canvas, you are responsible for knowing how to access and use it. You are responsible for any messages, including assignments and schedule changes, I send you via email. You may contact me via email (Jennifer.steffeljohnson@ucdenver.edu), meet with me in my office (320P), or call me (303-315-0061).

Campus Support Services

The University of Colorado Denver has made available several academic, professional, and social networks and support services. Please do not hesitate to reach out to receive any support or assistance you need.

[Academic Success and Advising Center](#)

[American Indian Student Educational Programs and Outreach](#)

[Asian American Student Educational Programs and Outreach](#)

[Black Student Educational Programs and Outreach](#)

[CU Denver Food Pantry](#)

[Disability Resources and Services Office](#)

[Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans Student Services \(GLBTSS\) at Auraria](#)

[Hispanic Student Educational Programs and Outreach](#)

[International Student and Scholar Services](#)

[Learning Resource Center](#)

[Office of Student Life](#)

[Women's Resource Center](#)

[Writing Center](#)

Schedule of Course Assignments

All *weekly* assignments in this course are due on Sundays by 11pm. All assignments will be turned via uploading to Canvas. (Note that the Learning Agreement, final presentation, and employer evaluation have atypical deadlines.)

I highly recommend that you read through all the assignments at the start of the semester, and review each week's assignment on Mondays so you can be thinking about examples to write about (and more importantly, to learn from!) during the week. See Canvas for the full text of each assignment.

All students must complete all assignments, even if you add the class after the first day of the semester. For all students, the first assignment is the completion of the Learning Agreement, which must be signed and submitted as part of your Internship Contract in order for your internship to officially begin.

Learning Agreement - Due NO LATER THAN Friday, February 1

Your first task in this course is to develop your Internship Learning Agreement. The goal of the agreement is to articulate in detail what you will be learning from your internship and how you will go about learning it. Spelling out these objectives and strategies is essential for making sure that you learn as much as possible from your internship experience. The job description for your internship outlines what you are expected to *do*; your Learning Agreement spells out what you expect to *learn*.

Week 1. Anxieties - Due January 24

Optional Reading: [The Successful Internship, Chapter 5- "The Anticipation Stage"](#) 

While you're probably looking forward to your internship—getting out there and putting your knowledge to work, making a contribution, and seeing what a career in planning might be like—it is natural to have some concerns as you begin a new experience. The purpose of this assignment is to help you articulate any anxieties you may be feeling, consider the expectations you have that might be contributing to those anxieties, and identify possible solutions or resources you can turn to if you need them.

Week 2. Organization Description - Due January 31

Recommended Reading: [The Successful Internship, Chapter 8- "Getting to Know the Placement Site"](#)

Part of your orientation and adjustment to your internship is learning how the organization you work for operates and why it works that way. Having a clear idea of the organizational

dynamics—the structure, relationships, and culture of the organization—will give you insight into your internship’s work environment and help you make sense of others’ decisions and actions.

Week 3. Mindset - Due February 7

Assigned Reading: “[Demonstrating a Growth Mindset Will Contribute to Your Professional Development.](#)” Planet Expat, January 15, 2018 

Carol Dweck’s research about mindsets tells us that if we have a “fixed” mindset—that is, if we believe that we are smart and have to prove it, or are dumb and have to hide it—challenges can be debilitating. Dweck explains that the fixed mindset is based in the belief that people have a given amount of intelligence, talent, or ability and that we can’t really change that. Alternatively, a “growth” mindset is the belief that we can continually improve, and that experiencing a challenge or setback is a sign that we need to try a different strategy or work harder to achieve our full potential. Consider these ideas and write a brief (approx. 2-page) paper about how fixed and growth mindsets may be impacting your (work)life.

Week 4. Informational Interview - Due February 14


Recommended Reading 1: “[Questions to Ask at the Informational Interview](#)” 

Recommended Reading 2: “[12 Informational Interview Questions to Ask and 2 Things You Should Never Ask](#)” 

Conduct an informational interview with an individual at your internship organization other than your immediate supervisor. (Alternatively, you may interview an individual in another organization whom you would like to learn more about.)

Week 5. Mentoring - Due February 21

Assigned Reading: [Lean In for Graduates, Chapter 5- "Are You My Mentor?"](#) 

Optional Reading: [Tammy D. Allen, et al. \(2004\). "Career Benefits Associated with Mentoring for Proteges: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89\(1\): 127-36.](#) 

Is there anyone at your internship organization you’d like to have as your mentor? Perhaps the person you interviewed last week? Or, is there a faculty member or another professional you would like to have as your mentor? Or perhaps you know the sort of person you’d like to have as a mentor, but you don’t know how to find them or connect with them. This week, you’ll write about what you’d like to get out of a mentoring relationship and the qualities—personal and professional—of the person you’d like to have as a mentor.

Week 6. D.I.E. to Learn – Due February 28

The combination of factual knowledge and first-hand experience is what makes experiential learning so powerful. The “D.I.E.” process (Describe – Interpret – Evaluate) is a technique that helps you consciously connect your academic knowledge to your internship experience.

Week 7. Feedback and Accepting Criticism - Due March 7

Assigned Reading: [Lean In for Graduates, p. 104-105.](#)

Receiving feedback on our work can be scary. Either we think we’ve done a great job and would be disappointed to hear otherwise, or we think we haven’t done very well and dread having our inadequacies pointed out. (Or, we can’t wait to hear the praises for our hard work or cleverness!) But learning to learn from feedback we receive—positive and negative—is an essential part of both personal and professional growth.

Week 8. Midterm Check-In – Due March 14

The middle of the semester, the middle of your internship, is an appropriate time to reflect back on your learning experience so far. In this assignment, you’re asked to consider both the professional and personal growth you’re gaining from your internship.

Week 9. Connecting Theory to Practice – Due March 21

True knowledge and understanding of any subject requires personal experience as well as factual information and abstract reflection—i.e., the theory and research you are taught about in the classroom. Your experience of the professional setting of your internship is enhanced by the theoretical understanding of the field you gained in class. Learning from an internship is “constructivist” learning: it’s a participatory process, not a passive one. This assignment is intended to help you connect the dots.

Week 10. Choose Your Own Adventure (Wild Card Essay) – Due April 4

This week, you are given a list of reflection prompts from which you can choose, including: work/life balance, networking, courage, values, and organizational culture. You are encouraged to pick a topic that challenges you to think deeply about an aspect of your internship or growth as a professional on which you haven’t reflected before.

Week 11. Career Success/ The Career Jungle Gym- Due April 11

Assigned Reading: [Lean in for Graduates, Chapter 4- "It's a Jungle Gym, Not a Ladder"](#)

Each of you has come to the MURP Program at a different point in your professional life. Some of you may have little professional experience; for others, planning is a second career that is building on top of many years of other experience. Whatever has led you to this point, as a professional program we assume that you intend to pursue a career in some aspect of urban and regional planning after you graduate. In order to move your career forward in the direction that's right for you, you need to be aware of both where you've been and where you want to go.

Week 12. Leadership- Due April 18

Assigned Reading: [Bill George, et al. \(2007\). "Discovering Your Authentic Leadership." Harvard Business Review, February: 129-138.](#)

You might feel more like a “lowly intern” than a leader, but the process of developing self-awareness that this internship has afforded you is a critical leadership skill. The Harvard Business School defines leadership as: “making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence.” In this assignment, you'll consider the leadership characteristics you've witnessed in yourself and others during your internship.

Week 13. Blog Post- Due April 25

Write a 200-300 word blog post for the MURP website about your internship. Include a photo. Write for an audience of fellow students—what should they know about doing an internship?

Week 14. Self-Promotion- Due May 2

To translate your current internship into a future job position, you need to create new marketing materials for yourself that reflect your new and improved professional experience and skills. For this week's assignment:

- Update/ revise your resume to include this internship experience
- Create/ update your LinkedIn profile to include this internship experience

Week 15. Internship Self-Assessment Paper- Due May 9

Congratulations on reaching the end of your internship semester! This final reflection assignment asks you to look back on what you've learned—in a few different ways.