

Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program Strategic Plan

**College of Architecture and Planning
Department of Planning and Design
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CONTENTS

PLAN INTRODUCTION	1
STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS	3
PROGRAM VISION	5
PROGRAM INITIATIVES AND FEATURES	8
PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	11
CURRICULUM	18
FACULTY	29
ACADEMIC CENTERS AND RESEARCH	31
STUDENTS	33
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT	34
INTERNSHIPS AND MENTORING	36
PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE	37
ALUMNI	38
MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS	39

PLAN INTRODUCTION

This document outlines a strategic vision and five-year plan for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program in the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Colorado Denver (UCD). This plan was prepared during 2012 by a project team comprised of full-time faculty from the College's Department of Planning and Design, the administrators of the MURP program.

When we began the planning process, we were encouraged by our students, alumni, and allies to “aim high” and “think big” and that is exactly what we have done. This plan envisions taking the MURP program—already successfully producing qualified graduates and respected scholarly research—and propelling it to a position of national acclaim and excellence on several fronts. Implementing this plan will not be easy. Nevertheless, we are eager to get started, excited by the journey ahead, and absolutely committed to implementing this strategic plan in full.

Impetus for the Plan:

What were the motivating factors that led us to prepare this plan? What made 2012 the right time to articulate a bold new image for our MURP program? In short, the convergence of a number of compelling reasons within a relatively short period of time opened a small but optimum window of opportunity to steer the program down a transformative path.

A main reason for creating a strategic plan for the MURP program was the lack of an existing plan. Simply, the creation of a guiding document that articulates our program's vision, mission, goals and strategies for success was long overdue.

Next, the College of Architecture and Planning underwent a major organizational restructuring in 2012, separating the operations of its Denver and Boulder campuses. The College's restructuring resulted in a significant reduction in the number of full-time faculty affiliated with the MURP program. With the concurrent retirement of several other planning faculty members, the end result was a small core group of planning faculty newly empowered to lead the program and redefine its future.

An additional motivating factor for preparing the MURP Strategic Plan in 2012 was the program's upcoming re-accreditation by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). In April 2012, the PAB adopted a new set of accreditation criteria that included, among other things, a

requirement for a program strategic plan. The PAB's requirements have informed the structure and contents of this strategic plan, and thus we are well-prepared for the re-accreditation process.

A number of external factors also prompted the preparation of this strategic plan. Prominent public issues such as alternative energy development, natural resource protection, climate change, increased demand for quality urbanism, and the link between public health and the built environment compelled us to review our curriculum and program goals to ensure we were addressing the challenges and opportunities facing the planning profession today.

Finally, the Denver area continues to prosper and expand its presence on the national and international stage. The Rocky Mountain West remains one of the nation's fastest growing regions, and Denver and Colorado continue to lead the country in pioneering new ideas relating to urban and natural environments. As part of Colorado's preeminent university system and as the only accredited graduate planning program in the state, we were obligated to ensure that, like our city, state, and region, our MURP program is also prospering, expanding its presence, and serving as a pioneer and innovator in planning education. This strategic plan gives us that assurance.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2012, planning faculty members Jeremy Németh, Jennifer Steffel Johnson, and Ken Schroepel (the MURP Strategic Plan Project Team) initiated the planning process by drafting a scope of work and schedule, and gaining support from the College to develop the MURP Strategic Plan.

Peer Program Research:

One of the first steps in developing this plan was gaining an understanding of our competition, the 73 other PAB-accredited graduate planning programs. In fall 2011, at the request of the Department of Planning and Design, a MURP planning student J. Wheeler Weber began an intensive six-month research project detailing numerous aspects of all 74 accredited graduate planning programs in the US (including UC Denver) as well as a more in-depth investigation of 11 programs identified as particularly relevant peers to our MURP program. The attributes explored included program philosophy and pedagogical approach, program features and mechanics, student body and faculty profiles, financial resources, curriculum, enrollment and graduation statistics, among many others. Mr. Weber concluded his research and presented his findings in March 2012, which greatly aided the project team in evaluating our program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, and in formulating our program's strategic positioning within planning academia.

Stakeholder Engagement:

A robust stakeholder engagement process was a critical component to our strategic plan effort. We identified our stakeholder groups as:

- Current MURP students
- Student APA leadership
- MURP alumni
- MURP adjunct faculty and lecturers
- Other College of Architecture and Planning faculty
- Other University of Colorado Denver faculty in allied programs
- Colorado APA members
- Locally prominent urbanists
- Locally prominent planning/design professionals
- Nationally prominent planning researchers/scholars

Our outreach to these various stakeholder groups occurred primarily during April and May 2012, and took many forms. We held several meetings that all MURP students were invited to attend, as well as additional meetings with a Student APA Working Group convened to assist us with input into the strategic plan. We conducted three online surveys, inviting hundreds of current MURP students, MURP alumni, and Colorado APA members to complete the survey. We received nearly 250 survey responses, which gave us a wealth of additional data and insight into the program's present and future.

We also held four focus group sessions, bringing together about 25 representatives from the stakeholder groups listed above for in-depth interviews and discussions about many of the key elements covered in this strategic plan. The feedback we received from these focus groups proved invaluable to our understanding of the important issues and priorities that are emphasized in this strategic plan.

Draft and Final Strategic Plan:

By late summer 2012, we completed the draft strategic plan and distributed copies of the draft plan to many of our stakeholders for their feedback. A final version of the plan was submitted to the Dean of the College and the Academic Affairs Committee for approval, and in fall 2012 the plan was adopted by the Department of Planning and Design faculty. Implementation of the plan will begin immediately, although several elements of the plan will take several years to be fully realized.

Plan Implementation and Future Updates:

To ensure we stay on track in our effort to fully implement this plan in five years, we will convene annually during the summer semester a Strategic Plan Implementation Working Group comprised of a mix of full- and part-time faculty and other allies to perform a "progress check" to identify the plan elements that have been completed and which plan elements will be implemented in the coming year.

At the end of five years, we will reestablish a MURP Strategic Plan Project Team to revisit the work accomplished in this document, clarify our vision, goals, curriculum, and other plan elements, and draft a full update to this plan to guide the program for another five years.

PROGRAM VISION

The section articulates who we are, what we believe in, and our vision for the future of the MURP program.

Our Vision:

To be a national leader in educating skilled, engaged planners and creating vibrant, sustainable communities.

Our Mission:

Inspired by our setting in the downtown of a thriving urban center in the dynamic Rocky Mountain region, we:

- Teach our students the knowledge, skills and values they need to be confident, principled, and visionary planners, using Colorado as our classroom to engage students in real-world, experiential learning.
- Advance the field of planning through insightful, relevant research that directly informs policy and improves our built, natural and social environments.
- Serve as a vital resource for communities and professionals and help develop sustainable solutions to our region's complex planning challenges.

Our Values:

Advocacy: We believe planners must be visionary in their work, politically engaged, and articulate proponents for positive change.

Engagement: We believe students should learn planning by interacting directly with professionals and the public to solve real-world planning challenges.

Interdependency: We believe cities are inextricably tied to each other and to their ecological, regional and global contexts.

Interdisciplinarity: We believe planners must understand and value the principles and perspectives of allied disciplines that participate in planning and city building.

Service: We believe our program should serve as a resource for planning professionals and the public by offering ideas, solutions, research, advocacy, and inspiration.

Sustainability: We believe planning must be based on the principles of economic viability, environmental resiliency, and social equity.

Urbanism: We believe in the potential of cities and towns to be the most efficient, equitable and inspiring forms of human settlement.

Our Geographic Context:

Our location in Downtown Denver and the Rocky Mountain West has significantly influenced the major elements of this strategic plan. Denver is the largest urban center in a 500-mile radius and serves as the region's cultural, intellectual, and economic capital. Its thriving, revitalized downtown and vibrant core of historic urban neighborhoods attract a diverse, physically active, highly educated population. Denver features virtually every form of urbanism, making it an ideal learning laboratory. The city's large and diverse community of planning and design professionals has contributed to Denver's reputation as a national model for innovation and experimentation. The Rocky Mountain West provides a backdrop of tremendous scenic beauty, valuable natural and strategic resources, and abundant recreational amenities, which present their own planning challenges and opportunities.

Our University Context:

We are proud to be a core unit within the College of Architecture and Planning. Our program's vision, mission, initiatives and features described above were inspired by the College of Architecture and Planning's overall vision and communities of interest. Specifically, the College's vision of Integrated Design has two key elements:

- Engage design and planning challenges that are significant for our society
- Engage these challenges in partnerships among the disciplines and with our external communities.

Our strategic plan's emphasis on experiential learning and interdisciplinarity clearly reflects the College's vision as well. Additionally, the College also identifies four communities of interest:

Emerging Practices in Design: Exploring how the digital design revolution and sustainable design practices are reshaping the professions. These include sustainable design and design/build practices as well as digital visualization and Building Information Modeling (BIM) technologies

Sustainable Urbanism: Exploring new ideas about creating livable cities in the midst of intense pressures for growth and fragile ecosystems

Healthy Environments: Exploring how to build healthier buildings, cities and landscapes

Cultural Heritage: Understanding, interpreting and preserving our cultural heritage in design and planning, including historic buildings, landscapes and intellectual and cultural ideas

This strategic plan embraces these communities of interest, as is evident in our Program Initiatives and Features, discussed in the next section. As we implement this strategic plan over the next five years, we are excited by the opportunities to work collaboratively with our College of Architecture and Planning partners to provide all students in the College with an exceptional learning experience.

PROGRAM INITIATIVES AND FEATURES

We have structured our program around three Initiatives that reflect issues at the forefront of the planning profession today and that are particularly evident in our city and region. We organize our research, curriculum, faculty and student activities, and community partnerships around these Program Initiatives.

Healthy Communities: The link between human health and the built environment has become a key factor in planning cities and regions. Colorado is known for its physically fit and active adult population, but our vulnerable populations face significant challenges such as childhood obesity, disconnected neighborhoods, and lack of access to healthy food. Colorado has become a national leader in finding ways to plan and design healthier environments, and our Healthy Communities Initiative is part of that effort. We work with partners at the local, state and federal levels, as well as the non-profit, educational and private sectors, to provide students comprehensive and interdisciplinary training in the tools, innovations and policies necessary for creating physically, socially and economically healthy communities. Featured courses include:

- Community Development
- Green Real Estate Development
- Health and the Built Environment
- Healthy Community Assessments
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning
- Planning in the Developing World
- Planning Sustainable Suburbs
- Social Justice in Planning
- Transportation and Land Use
- Urban Housing

Urban Revitalization: After decades of suburbanization, segregated land uses, and automobile-dependent development, the US is now experiencing a resurgence of traditional urbanism and a reorientation toward central cities. Nowhere else is that phenomenon more evident than in Denver, where infill and transit-oriented development, historic preservation, adaptive reuse, and multi-modal transport have transformed the urban landscape. Our Urban Revitalization Initiative gives students opportunities to engage with local developers, planners, designers and

policymakers to help revive and enhance established cities, retrofit the suburbs, and plan sustainable new developments. Featured courses include:

- Analyzing the Built Environment
- Community Development
- Form and Formation of Cities
- Green Real Estate Development
- Parks and Public Spaces
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning
- Real Estate Development Process
- Sustainable Planning and Design
- Transit Planning
- Urban Economic Systems
- Urban Housing
- Urban Infrastructure
- Urban Redevelopment Strategies

Regional Sustainability: Climate change, environmental degradation, resource scarcity, and sprawling development present critical challenges to planners worldwide. In the Rocky Mountain West, the impacts are evident in habitat loss, wildfire risk, and conflicts over water and energy resources, among others. Our Regional Sustainability Initiative explores ways that Colorado and its neighbors can tackle these issues together. At the metropolitan level, Denver and its adjacent communities already serve as a model for regional planning and cooperation, exemplified by the visionary FasTracks transit program. Our Initiative draws on Denver’s success in regional land use, transportation, economic development and resource planning to help students understand how built and natural environments can co-exist more sustainably at various regional scales. Featured courses include:

- Comparative International Planning
- Energy and Natural Resource Planning
- Environmental Management
- Environmental Policy and Regulation
- Planning in the Developing World
- Planning Sustainable Suburbs
- Regional Economic Systems
- Regional Planning and Policy

- Small Town and Rural Planning
- Sustainable Planning and Design
- Tourism and Resort Planning
- Transit Planning
- Transportation and Land Use
- Transportation Planning and Policy

Our Program Features:

We integrate four key features across our program and curriculum that distinguish us from our peers and foster an exceptional learning environment.

Physical Planning and Design: We emphasize physical planning and design throughout our curriculum. Housed within the College of Architecture and Planning, we work closely with the College's Architecture, Urban Design, Landscape Architecture, and Historic Preservation programs to provide our students access to an expanded design-focused education.

Experiential Learning: We infuse throughout our program significant opportunities for our students to gain hands-on planning experience and have direct interaction with Colorado's planning professionals. We use Denver's diverse urban landscape as a real-world classroom for students to experience and analyze the built environment.

Innovative Planning Technologies: We integrate innovative planning technologies into many of our program's courses and activities. We capitalize on the Denver region's entrepreneurial spirit and tech-focused economy by providing access to state-of-the-art planning technologies and teaching students how these tools can support the planning process.

Self-Directed Curriculum: We offer our students the unique ability to craft an education suited to their career goals and personal interests. Students may choose any combination of courses from the Elective Curriculum, whether oriented towards one of our three Program Initiatives, a traditional specialization, or a generalist survey of the planning field.

PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are our goals and objectives for fully implementing this strategic plan:

1. Our program maintains full accreditation through the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB)
 - a. Meet all requirements for accreditation as defined by the PAB
 - b. Complete and submit the self-study report and documentation per the PAB's requirements
2. Our program demonstrates progress toward goal attainment
 - a. Institute a board made up of planners and allied professionals, alumni, and academics with the purpose of advising MURP leaders on strategic decisions
 - b. Revisit annually our strategic plan and update it as needed
 - c. Monitor student and alumni satisfaction, employment, professional certification, and service to the wider community and profession, and take steps to improve outcomes
3. Our program achieves national and local recognition and acclaim
 - a. Achieve *Planetizen* ranking of Top 25 program by 2015 and Top 15 program by 2020
 - b. Increased numbers of highly qualified students apply to the program
 - c. Increase the selectivity for admission into the program
 - d. Increase yield of accepted students
 - e. Implement a comprehensive public relations and marketing program that promotes the program's vision and faculty/student/alumni accomplishments
 - f. Receive local recognition about our program and our service to the community
4. Our program teaches effectively core planning knowledge, skills and values
 - a. Implement a comprehensive Learning Outcomes Assessment process for all courses in the program
 - b. Institute a comprehensive core curriculum that addresses all PAB-required learning outcomes
 - c. Receive survey responses from program alumni (2 to 5 years after graduation) that indicate a significant majority of alumni are satisfied with how the curriculum prepared them for careers in planning or related fields

- d. Receive survey responses from employers that our graduates are well-prepared for their professional responsibilities
 - e. Maintain or improve the pass rate by program alumni on the AICP exam
5. Our program provides students with real-world learning opportunities across the curriculum
 - a. Design coursework, studio projects, and other program activities to incorporate interaction with practicing professionals and the wider community
 - b. Institute a process by which our program leaders learn about real-world project opportunities and connect teachers and students to these opportunities
 - c. Expand the internship program by actively seeking employers and strongly encouraging students to participate in an internship
 - d. Facilitate student, alumni, and faculty events and other activities that promote interaction and engagement with practicing professionals and the wider community
 6. Our program instills students with a sense of responsibility to be advocates for ethical planning and sound planning principles
 - a. Identify through the Learning Outcomes Assessment process the appropriate courses in which to incorporate topics relating to advocacy in planning
 - b. Encourage students and faculty to advocate for planning issues important to them through participation in relevant organizations and activities
 - c. Orient coursework, studio projects, and faculty research around city, state, and regional real-world planning issues that allow for academic findings/outcomes to be publicly announced in support of our position
 - d. Implement a comprehensive public relations and marketing program through which press releases and other communications are issued to reflect the program's views and accomplishments
 7. Our program emphasizes the importance of sustainability in planning
 - a. Identify through Learning Outcomes Assessment the appropriate courses in which to incorporate economically, ecologically and socially sustainability principles and practices
 - b. Exhibit local and regional leadership in defining and communicating what sustainable communities are and how to achieve them
 - c. Facilitate student, alumni, and faculty events and other activities that promote sustainability in planning
 - d. Orient faculty research around defining and communicating sustainability

8. Emphasize Regional Sustainability as a key program Initiative

- a. Identify through the Learning Outcomes Assessment process the appropriate courses in which to incorporate topics that reflect regional sustainability
- b. Facilitate student, alumni, and faculty events and other activities that promote regional sustainability
- c. Hire a tenured/tenure-track faculty member with expertise in regional sustainability to lead this Initiative
- d. Develop new courses that comprehensively address regional sustainability
- e. Develop new courses that address planning issues specific to the Rocky Mountain region
- f. Receive survey responses from program alumni (2 to 5 years after graduation) that reflect their satisfaction with how the program prepared them for understanding regional sustainability

9. Emphasize Healthy Communities as a key program Initiative

- a. Identify through the Learning Outcomes Assessment process the appropriate courses in which to incorporate topics relating to planning for healthy communities
- b. Facilitate student, alumni, and faculty events and other activities that promote planning for healthy communities
- c. Hire a tenured/tenure-track faculty member with expertise in healthy communities to lead this Initiative
- d. Develop new courses that comprehensively address planning for healthy communities
- e. Receive survey responses from program alumni (2 to 5 years after graduation) that reflect their satisfaction with how the program prepared them for understanding healthy communities

10. Emphasize Urban Revitalization as a key program Initiative

- a. Identify through the Learning Outcomes Assessment process the appropriate courses in which to incorporate topics relating to urban revitalization
- b. Facilitate student, alumni, and faculty events and other activities that promote Urban Revitalization
- c. Hire a tenured/tenure-track faculty member with expertise in healthy communities to lead this Initiative
- d. Develop new courses that comprehensively address planning for urban revitalization

- e. Receive survey responses from program alumni (2 to 5 years after graduation) that reflect their satisfaction with how the program prepared them for understanding urban revitalization

11. Our program forges strategic, interdisciplinary academic partnerships

- a. Maintain and seek opportunities to expand the program’s dual degrees and study abroad opportunities with allied programs, colleges, and universities
- b. Fully participate in all committees and other forums within the College of Architecture and Planning and the University of Colorado Denver related to interdisciplinary instruction, coursework, and research
- c. Seek additional interdisciplinary teaching, research, and service opportunities with departments, programs and colleges within the University of Colorado
- d. Encourage faculty to work collaboratively with scholars and practitioners from allied programs and disciplines
- e. Identify through the Learning Outcomes Assessment process the appropriate courses in which to incorporate topics from allied disciplines
- f. Design coursework, studio projects, and other program activities to incorporate collaboration with professionals, faculty, and students from allied disciplines
- g. Coordinate with highly regarded, related undergraduate programs in the University of Colorado system and other academic institutions to recruit quality students

12. Our program embraces our downtown location

- a. Promote our location in Downtown Denver as a competitive advantage for the program
- b. Design coursework, studio projects, and other program activities to utilize our location in an intensive urban center as a learning opportunity
- c. Engage in various ways with our neighboring downtown businesses, organizations, and residents

13. Our program embraces our location in the principal city of the Rocky Mountain region

- a. Promote our location in Colorado and the Rocky Mountains as a competitive advantage for the program over our peers
- b. Design coursework, studio projects, and other program activities to utilize our location in the Rocky Mountain West as a learning opportunity
- c. Engage in various ways with businesses, organizations, and communities throughout Colorado and the region

14. Our program is utilized by planning professionals and the wider community as a valuable resource
 - a. Create a faculty position of Director of Professional Engagement to market the program as a resource to practicing professionals and the community in general
 - b. Institute a process by which our program leaders learn about real-world project opportunities and connect faculty and students to these opportunities
 - c. Expand the internship program by actively seeking employers and strongly encouraging students to participate in an internship
 - d. Implement a comprehensive public relations and marketing program through which the program can be presented to practicing professionals and the wider community as a valuable resource

15. Our program engages with planning professionals and the community in many ways
 - a. Orient coursework, studio projects, and other program activities around opportunities for engagement with practicing professionals in planning and allied professions as well as the wider community
 - b. Develop a part-time faculty position of Director of Professional Engagement to initiate, foster, and strengthen strategic contacts between the program and practicing professionals
 - c. Encourage all faculty to be active in the community external to the program to foster goodwill and personal relationships with professional and community leaders
 - d. Maintain a robust alumni communication and engagement program
 - e. Facilitate student, alumni, and faculty events and other activities that promote public participation in planning
 - f. Receive survey responses from program alumni (2 to 5 years after graduation) demonstrating their contribution of service to the profession and the wider community

16. Our program assists our students' professional development
 - a. Orient coursework, studio projects, and other program activities around opportunities for engaging with practicing professionals and the wider community
 - b. Maintain robust internship and professional mentoring programs
 - c. Help students prepare for and find career positions

- d. Encourage and facilitate student participation in Student APA; planning-related conferences, committees and events; and other student-initiated activities aimed at increasing their professional training
 - e. Receive survey responses from program alumni (2 to 5 years after graduation) that indicate a significant majority of alumni are satisfied with how the program prepared them for careers in planning or related fields
 - f. Receive survey responses from program alumni (1 year after graduation) that indicate a significant majority of alumni have secured employment in their chosen profession
 - g. Maintain or improve the pass rate by program alumni on the AICP exam
 - h. Our faculty serve as advisors to students to help them transition from academia to professional practice in planning or an allied profession
 - i. Create a part-time faculty position of Director of Professional Engagement to initiate, foster, and strengthen strategic contacts between our students and practicing professionals
 - j. Encourage students with an interest in and aptitude for research to pursue doctoral studies or other advanced education opportunities
17. Our program enables students to effectively learn about planning topics of interest to them
- a. Receive survey responses from current students and recent program alumni (1 to 2 years after graduation) that reflect satisfaction with the topical content of our curriculum
 - b. Analyze FCQs to identify areas where topical content is not meeting student expectations and address those deficiencies
 - c. Provide flexibility within the curriculum to allow students to craft their own path towards a graduate degree in planning
 - d. Facilitate student completion of self-directed capstone or thesis projects
18. Our faculty advance the planning profession through research and practice
- a. Facilitate the publication of faculty research in the top peer-reviewed venues
 - b. Encourage robust faculty participation and leadership in academic and professional conferences both domestically and internationally
 - c. Facilitate program faculty's efforts to receive grants and contracts
 - d. Encourage program faculty to serve as principal researchers on major projects of importance to the region and to the broader urban planning profession

- e. Encourage faculty to focus on both theoretical and applied research as well as public scholarship in non-traditional research outlets

19. Our faculty excel in providing instruction to students

- a. Facilitate continuing education and training for faculty in innovative and effective teaching methods, including course websites and online instruction
- b. Evaluate faculty performance through FCQs and peer evaluations, and institute performance standards and improvement assistance protocols
- c. Maintain and expand the pool of qualified professionals that bring their expertise into the classroom as lecturers

20. Our faculty are actively engaged in their community and profession

- a. Encourage faculty to participate in activities and organizations that promote the MURP program
- b. Encourage faculty to promote, strengthen and prioritize our three program Initiatives
- c. Encourage faculty to participate in professional and practice-based planning organizations and events

21. Our alumni are knowledgeable about, proud of, and engaged with the MURP program

- a. Develop a comprehensive alumni contact database
- b. Facilitate student and faculty activities that promote interaction and engagement with alumni, such as mentorships, internships, professional networking
- c. Maintain a robust alumni communication program that includes a departmental newsletter, event notices, alumni accomplishments and updates, etc.
- d. Facilitate the development of an active alumni organization
- e. Institute an alumni scholarship fund and fundraising for other departmental initiatives
- f. Invite alumni to be guest lecturers and jurors and clients for studios
- g. Survey alumni regularly to ascertain their professional progress, satisfaction with our program, and service to the wider community
- h. Create a Distinguished Alumni Award
- i. Create an Alumni Coordinator position to facilitate the above

CURRICULUM

As part of the strategic planning process, we evaluated our entire curriculum from the perspective of our new vision, mission, values, and geographic context, our three program initiatives, and our four program features. The result is a completely redesigned curriculum based on these guiding factors as well as the significant input we received from our students, alumni, faculty allies, local planning professionals and urbanists, and national planning scholars.

Total Credit Hours:

Previously, the total number of credit hours needed to complete the MURP degree was 51, comprised of 27 credit hours of required courses and 24 credit hours of elective courses. In the revised MURP program curriculum, which will commence with the Fall 2013 incoming class, the total number of credit hours needed to complete the MURP degree is 54, comprised of 36 credit hours of required courses and 18 credit hours of elective courses.

An important issue we considered during our curriculum evaluation was the ability for a student to complete the program in two years, if desired. Our surveys showed that under the previous program requirements, approximately 48% of alumni completed the program in two years and 52% took longer than two years. In part this was due to the fact that few, if any, summer semester courses were offered, forcing students to complete the entire program during only the fall and spring semesters. Our surveys showed that an overwhelming majority of alumni (73%) wanted to take summer semester courses to help them complete the program as quickly as possible. Although the increase from 51 to 54 total credit hours might appear to make it more difficult for students to complete the program in two years, this plan includes an expansion of the courses offered during the summer semester. This should help offset the added time needed to complete the 3 credit hour increase in the total credit hours needed.

Required and Elective Courses:

Another important factor we considered was the credit-hour balance between the Required Curriculum and the Elective Curriculum. Although the number of Required Curriculum credit hours has increased from 27 to 36 and the number of Elective Curriculum credit hours has decreased from 24 to 18, it should be noted that six of the 36 Required Curriculum credit hours represent a self-directed studio/project/thesis, which essentially functions as an elective course since each student determines the topic to be studied. Additionally, the previous curriculum constrained students' "elective" courses, requiring that two to three of those courses satisfy

prescribed concentration requirements. By removing these limitations and adding a capstone experience, the new curriculum actually expands students' ability to choose their own path through the curriculum.

Required Curriculum:

The new Required Curriculum includes 10 courses totaling 36 credit hours. It represents a comprehensive survey of the planning field and coverage of the 17 learning outcomes required by the PAB. The table below shows the 10 courses, the program year in which the course should be taken, the credit hours granted, and a list of the major topics covered in each course.

Required Curriculum Courses

Required Curriculum Courses	Course Topics / General Description
Natural and Built Environments 3 Credits Year 1 – Fall Semester	Natural systems and ecology; environmental policies and regulations; history of cities and urbanization; urban growth and development; land use and transportation; sustainability; regional planning; global planning issues.
Planning History and Theory 3 Credits Year 1 – Fall Semester	Purpose and meaning of planning; planning history; planning theory; planning processes; public participation and engagement; social justice; planning leadership and advocacy; future of planning.
Planning Law and Institutions 3 Credits Year 1 – Fall Semester	Planning law and legal precedents; government powers and responsibilities; types of governments; inter-governmental agreements and relationships; government regulations and policies.
The Planning Profession 3 Credits Year 1 – Fall Semester	Scales and dimensions of planning; planning careers; planning academia; planning ethics; business aspects of planning; professional development; business development; portfolio/resume development.
Urban Development 3 Credits Year 1 – Spring Semester	Real estate development process; land division and entitlement; plan implementation and regulation; site planning and development review; development finance/pro formas; public infrastructure and finance.
Planning Methods 3 Credits Year 1 – Spring Semester	Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and techniques; data organization and management; data analysis; descriptive statistics; data presentation and graphics.
Planning Skills Workshop 3 Credits Year 1 – Spring Semester	Physical planning/design/planning process fundamentals; planning data; planning contexts; plan making/planning projects, collaborative planning. (Course coordinated with Planning Technologies Workshop).
Planning Technologies Workshop 3 Credits Year 1 – Spring Semester	Planning technologies overview; geographic information systems; graphics and photo-imaging; 3D/visualization; mobile/social media; emerging planning technologies. (Course coordinated with Planning Skills Workshop).
Planning Project Studio 6 Credits Year 2	Instructor-directed, client-based, project-oriented studio. (Five options: Healthy Communities, Urban Revitalization, Regional Sustainability, International Experience, or Summer in Colorado).
Planning Capstone Experience 6 Credits Year 2	Student-directed, independent study/thesis/small-group project option requiring an intensive planning research or project experience. Course spans two semesters and requires faculty approval and oversight.

Required Curriculum Highlights:

The new Required Curriculum provides a broad and robust survey of the most critical topics in the planning field. This section provides a comparison between the former and the new Required Curriculum.

Natural and Built Environments covers the fundamentals of physical planning, the history and evolution of cities and urbanization, and regional and global perspectives in planning. The course also focuses on sustainability, natural systems, ecology, environmental regulation and policies, and the relationships between the natural and built environments.

Planning History and Theory offers a comprehensive review of the major historical and theoretical developments in the planning field, with a particular emphasis on the human aspects of planning and how planning exists as a social, political, and community-oriented process. The course is similar to the former *Planning Issues and Processes*, but with a clearer focus on people rather than physical planning.

Planning Law and Institutions is similar to the former *Planning Law* course, but with a slightly expanded mission. The legal basis and evolution of planning law will continue to be the primary topic examined, but the course will also cover the types and hierarchies of local governments, their powers and relationships, and how planning operates within those institutional contexts.

The Planning Profession is a new addition to the Required Curriculum. It offers students a comprehensive survey of the breadth and depth of the planning profession, what different types of planners do, who they work for, the business aspects of planning, planning ethics, and professional/career development.

Urban Development provides a comprehensive overview of how cities get built. The course incorporates elements from the former *Urban Spatial Analysis* course and others into a new Required Curriculum course that explores the players, processes, politics and policies of city building and real estate development, and how planners must successfully operate in a multi-disciplinary environment.

Planning Methods combines topics from the former *Planning Methods I* and *Planning Methods II* courses into a single class focused on the most commonly applied quantitative and qualitative methods used in planning and how planners can effectively collect, organize, analyze, and communicate data.

Planning Skills Workshop and *Planning Technologies Workshop* represent a reformatted version of the former *Planning Studio I*. These two 3-credit courses share common syllabus elements and are intended to be taken concurrently. *Planning Skills Workshop* covers most of the same topics as the former *Planning Studio I* (e.g. physical planning and design, plan making, the planning process, and team collaboration). *Planning Technologies Workshop* introduces a technology component to the Required Curriculum, focusing on GIS, Adobe Creative Suite, and other commonly used computer applications. Assignments for both workshops are coordinated, so students can work with technology in *Planning Skills Workshop* and have planning projects to practice on in *Planning Technologies Workshop*.

Planning Project Studio is essentially the same as the former *Planning Studio II*, where students work in teams to complete a substantial project that requires a broad range of planning knowledge and skills for a real-world client. Five different sections of *Planning Project Studio* are offered annually. Three sections are offered every fall and spring semester: one section each focusing on a Healthy Communities, Urban Revitalization, or Regional Sustainability topic; and two intensive sections during the summer semester: the *International Studio* held outside of the United States, and the *Summer in Colorado Studio* focused on a local project.

Planning Capstone Experience is the culminating educational event in a student's MURP career. Although a Required Curriculum course, the planning topic to be studied is entirely student directed; therefore, it functions much like an elective course. The *Planning Capstone Experience* is a 6-credit hour course that can take one of three forms: an independent project or a thesis for an individual student, or a small-group project for a team of two or three students. Regardless of which form is chosen, the course spans two semesters and is divided into a two-part "1 + 5" credit hour format. The semester before the project/study/thesis is conducted, students enroll in the 1-credit *Planning Capstone–Part A* that requires students to identify their project/study/thesis topic and to develop and refine over the course of the semester a detailed scope of work and schedule. During this time, students receive faculty consultation and, by the end of the semester, the project/study/thesis topic, scope of work, and schedule must be approved by the faculty advisor. Upon faculty approval, students may then enroll the following semester in the 5-credit *Planning Capstone–Part B*, where they complete and present their project/study/thesis work and receive a final grade from their faculty advisor.

Elective Curriculum:

The Elective Curriculum supplements the Required Curriculum's 36 credit hours to allow students to reach the total 54 credits required for graduation. To support our intention of

allowing students to craft a self-directed educational path, we offer a broad selection of elective courses. While these courses fall into clusters aligned to our three Program Initiatives, students may choose any combination of courses, whether oriented towards one of the Initiatives, a traditional specialization, or a generalist survey of the planning field. The table below shows our Elective Curriculum courses and the Program Initiative(s) to which each course most closely relates. Abbreviations used in the table below:

HC – Healthy Communities

UR – Urban Revitalization

RS – Regional Sustainability

GE – General Elective (complements any Program Initiative or Specialization)

Elective Curriculum Courses and Initiatives

Elective Curriculum Courses	Course Topics/General Description	Initiatives			
Advanced GIS for Planners 3 Credits	Advanced studies in GIS applications; cartography; and geographic planning analysis with an emphasis on urban and regional planning applications.				GE
Advanced Planning Research 3 Credits	Survey design; sampling; probability distributions; hypothesis testing; inferential statistics; other topics associated with scholarly research.				GE
Analyzing the Built Environment 3 Credits	Land division and development measures; spatial analyses techniques; urban morphology; spatial attributes of cities and regions.		UR		
Community Development 3 Credits	Neighborhood planning; gentrification; asset-based development; organizing; community-based organizations; CDCs; community benefits agreements.	HC	UR		
Comparative International Planning 3 Credits	Global dimensions of planning; global planning issues; comparative planning techniques; international planning coordination/organizations.			RS	
Emerging Planning Technologies 3 Credits	Web-based applications; mobile technologies; virtual participation; data visualization; social media; crowdsourcing, public engagement/surveying.				GE
Energy and Natural Resource Planning 3 Credits	Energy policy; alternative energy development; water resources; extraction/mining; resource protection and regulation; technologies; allocations.			RS	
Environmental Management 3 Credits	Natural hazards and disasters; ecosystems; air/water quality; natural area management; conservation; habitat protection; organizations and policies.			RS	
Environmental Policy and Regulation 3 Credits	NEPA; environmental justice; environmental law; land use conflicts; contamination/remediation; environmental regulators and regulatory policies; enforcement.			RS	
Form and Formation of Cities 3 Credits	History of cities and urbanization; origins of urban growth; urban morphology; urban form/urban form theory; types of urbanisms.		UR		

Elective Curriculum Courses	Course Topics/General Description	Initiatives			
Green Real Estate Development 3 Credits	Infill development; transit-oriented development; LEED-ND; green buildings; universal design; mixed-income; net-zero developments.	HC	UR		
Health and the Built Environment 3 Credits	Health/built environment relationships; fitness; food access; walkability; environmental quality; active transportation; public policies; partnerships.	HC			
Healthy Community Assessments 3 Credits	Planning for Healthy Communities; Health Impact Assessments, other health measures; policy impacts, best practices.	HC			
Land Development Regulations 3 Credits	Entitlements; plats; general/final development plans; zoning; PUDs; variances; site plan/development review; land use regulators; regulatory processes.				GE
Parks and Public Spaces 3 Credits	Park/plaza/open space design; activation/programming; security; diverse users; socio-economic significance; natural systems; recreation; urban place making.	HC	UR		
Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning 3 Credits	Active transportation; pedestrian/bicycle planning fundamentals; routes and systems; facilities and design requirements; policies; best practices.	HC	UR		
Plan Making 3 Credits	Plan types and processes; comprehensive plans; rural/small town planning; corridor planning; small area planning; campus/ institutional planning; special plans.				GE
Planning in the Developing World 3 Credits	Challenges and solutions for complex development; health/community issues; social justice; environmental justice; funding; development organizations.	HC		RS	
Planning Politics and Engagement 3 Credits	Controversial planning topics; planning advocacy; public meetings; public engagement techniques; diverse publics; mediation; negotiation.				GE
Planning Sustainable Suburbs 3 Credits	Suburban patterns and forms; suburban land use and transportation issues; sustainable greenfield development; retrofitting suburbia.	HC		RS	
Real Estate Development Process 3 Credits	Real estate developer/planner interface; development types; developer's pro-forma; project finance/funding; market supply/demand analysis; public policy impacts.		UR		
Regional Economic Systems 3 Credits	Regional/metropolitan economies; regional economic development; regional market assessment; job generation; taxes/spending; fiscal/economic policies and impacts.			RS	
Regional Planning and Policy 3 Credits	Regional planning fundamentals; land use/transportation; environmental constraints; regional cooperation; regional institutions/COGs/MPOs; demographics.			RS	
Small Town and Rural Planning 3 Credits	Planning in small communities; rural/agriculture issues; growth management; conservation; rural economic development.			RS	
Social Justice in Planning 3 Credits	Conflict resolution; environmental justice; social equity; culture; disadvantaged populations; public engagement; affordability; equal access; policies and impacts.	HC			
Sustainable Planning and Design 3 Credits	Sustainability defined; measuring sustainability; sustainable planning/practices; sustainable design; LEED; environmental quality; sustainability advocacy.		UR	RS	

Elective Curriculum Courses	Course Topics/General Description	Initiatives			
Tourism and Resort Planning 3 Credits	Eco-tourism; historic tourism; urban tourism; regional tourism planning; recreation planning; resort planning and development.			RS	
Transit Planning 3 Credits	Transit planning fundamentals; routes and systems; modes and technologies; ridership; scheduling; operations; relationship to land use; facilities/design requirements.		UR	RS	
Transportation and Land Use 3 Credits	Transportation planning fundamentals; transportation and land use relationship; local and regional networks; traffic demand/modeling; accessibility/mobility.	HC		RS	
Transportation Planning and Policy 3 Credits	Transportation policies and impacts; funding; politics and institutions; role in economic development; planning processes; regulatory/environmental/NEPA.			RS	
Urban Economic Systems 3 Credits	Urban economies; urban economic development; urban market assessment; job generation; taxes/spending, sustainability; fiscal/economic policies and impacts.		UR		
Urban Housing 3 Credits	Housing types; affordability; housing policies; mixed-income housing; HUD/Fair Housing; housing sustainability; NIMBYism; homelessness; segregation.	HC	UR		
Urban Infrastructure 3 Credits	Civil engineering basics for planners; infrastructure planning/funding; public rights-of-way; bridges/structures; storm water; water quality; wet/dry utilities; soils.		UR		
Urban Redevelopment Strategies 3 Credits	Urban infill; TOD; adaptive reuse; historic preservation; design review; parking; public spaces/realm; brownfields; grayfields; culture/tourism; funding/policies.		UR		

The Elective Curriculum courses listed in the table above are those that are housed within the MURP program and taught primarily by Department of Planning and Design faculty. However, in addition to these courses, numerous other elective courses applicable for MURP credit are available through our allied programs within the College (Architecture, Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Landscape Architecture) and through cross-listed courses offered by other UC Denver programs, such as Public Affairs, Geography, and Business.

Potential Specializations:

As noted earlier, the Elective Curriculum courses are organized around our three Program Initiatives. We believe this gives students the opportunity to view their planning education through a fresh perspective aimed at a planning goal or agenda. However, we also recognize that some students may want to obtain a MURP degree focused along a traditional specialization, such as Transportation Planning or Economic Development. To ensure our students have those opportunities as well, we designed our Elective Curriculum to also provide exceptional coverage across many traditional specialization topics. The following table lists our Elective Curriculum courses and which courses could apply to several potential specializations.

Potential Specializations within the Elective Curriculum

Elective Curriculum Courses	Potential Specializations										
	Community Development	Economic Development	Energy / Natural Resources	Environmental Planning	Land Use/Physical Planning	Real Estate Development	Rural/Small Town Planning	Social Justice	Suburban Planning	Transportation Planning	Urban Design/Placemaking
Advanced GIS for Planners											
Advanced Planning Research											
Analyzing the Built Environment								✓		✓	
Community Development	✓							✓			
Comparative International Planning					✓						
Emerging Planning Technologies											
Energy / Natural Resource Planning			✓	✓							
Environmental Management			✓	✓							
Environmental Policy and Regulation			✓	✓				✓			
Form and Formation of Cities											✓
Green Real Estate Development		✓				✓					
Health and the Built Environment	✓							✓			
Healthy Community Assessments											
Land Development Regulations					✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Parks and Public Spaces											✓
Pedestrian and Bicycle Planning										✓	
Plan Making					✓						✓
Planning in the Developing World			✓				✓				
Planning Politics and Engagement	✓							✓			
Planning Sustainable Suburbs											
Real Estate Development Process		✓			✓	✓					
Regional Economic Systems		✓					✓				
Regional Planning and Policy				✓			✓		✓		
Small Town and Rural Planning											
Social Justice in Planning	✓							✓			
Sustainable Planning and Design			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Tourism and Resort Planning		✓				✓	✓				
Transit Planning										✓	
Transportation and Land Use					✓				✓	✓	
Transportation Planning and Policy										✓	
Urban Economic Systems		✓									
Urban Housing	✓					✓					
Urban Infrastructure			✓	✓						✓	
Urban Redevelopment Strategies		✓				✓			✓		✓

Curriculum Learning Outcomes:

Our new curriculum has been designed with very clear learning outcomes in mind. The Planning Accreditation Board requires that their accredited programs sufficiently cover 17 different learning outcomes in three major categories (Knowledge, Skills, and Values). Consequently, we have ensured that all 17 PAB learning outcomes are sufficiently covered through our 10 Required Curriculum courses.

Additionally, the University of Colorado Denver requires its programs to provide learning outcome assessment reports to university administration on a regular basis, using whichever learning outcomes each program deems to be appropriate for their area of instruction. Since the PAB's learning outcomes are mandatory, it makes sense that we also use the same 17 learning outcomes for UCD reporting purposes. Consequently, all of our Required Curriculum and Elective Curriculum courses have been conceived with the PAB's 17 learning outcomes in mind, as described in PAB Accreditation Standards and Criteria, dated April 14, 2012:

Required knowledge, skills and values of the profession: The program shall offer a curriculum that teaches students the essential knowledge, skills, and values central to the planning profession. These required components will be taught in such a manner that it is possible to demonstrate that every graduate has studied them. Ordinarily, this means that they are included in core courses required of all students, although other approaches are possible. Specifically:

1. *General planning knowledge: The comprehension, representation, and use of ideas and information in the planning field, including appropriate perspectives from history, social science, and the design professions.*
 - a) *Purpose and Meaning of Planning: appreciation of why planning is undertaken by communities, cities, regions, and nations, and the impact planning is expected to have.*
 - b) *Planning Theory: appreciation of the behaviors and structures available to bring about sound planning outcomes.*
 - c) *Planning Law: appreciation of the legal and institutional contexts within which planning occurs.*
 - d) *Human Settlements and History of Planning: understanding of the growth and development of places over time and across space.*

- e) *The Future: understanding of the relationships between past, present, and future in planning domains, as well as the potential for methods of design, analysis, and intervention to influence the future.*
 - f) *Global Dimensions of Planning: appreciation of interactions, flows of people and materials, cultures, and differing approaches to planning across world regions.*
2. *Planning skills: The use and application of knowledge to perform specific tasks required in the practice of planning.*
- a) *Research: tools for assembling and analyzing ideas and information from prior practice and scholarship, and from primary and secondary sources.*
 - b) *Written, Oral and Graphic Communication: ability to prepare clear, accurate and compelling text, graphics and maps for use in documents and presentations.*
 - c) *Quantitative and Qualitative Methods: data collection, analysis and modeling tools for forecasting, policy analysis, and design of projects and plans.*
 - d) *Plan Creation and Implementation: integrative tools useful for sound plan formulation, adoption, and implementation and enforcement.*
 - e) *Planning Process Methods: tools for stakeholder involvement, community engagement, and working with diverse communities.*
 - f) *Leadership: tools for attention, formation, strategic decision-making, team-building, and organizational/community motivation.*
3. *Values and ethics: Values inform ethical and normative principles used to guide planning in a democratic society. The program shall appropriately incorporate issues of diversity and social justice into all required courses of the curriculum, including:*
- a) *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).*
 - b) *Governance and Participation: appreciation of the roles of officials, stakeholders, and community members in planned change.*
 - c) *Sustainability and Environmental Quality: appreciation of natural resource and pollution control factors in planning, and understanding of how to create sustainable futures.*
 - d) *Growth and Development: appreciation of economic, social, and cultural factors in urban and regional growth and change.*
 - e) *Social Justice: appreciation of equity concerns in planning.*

The following table identifies the specific learning outcomes that will be measured and assessed in each of our Required Curriculum courses:

Required Curriculum Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome		Required Curriculum Courses									
		Planning History and Theory	Planning Methods	Urban Development	Natural and Built Environments	Planning Law and Institutions	The Planning Profession	Planning Technologies Workshop	Planning Skills Workshop	Planning Project Studio	Planning Capstone Experience
Planning Knowledge	Purpose and Meaning of Planning	✓					✓				
	Planning Theory	✓									
	Planning Law			✓		✓					
	Human Settlements / Planning History	✓		✓	✓						
	The Future	✓			✓						
	Global Dimensions of Planning				✓		✓				
Planning Skills	Research		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
	Written, Oral, and Graphic Communication		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Qualitative and Quantitative Methods		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓
	Plan Creation and Implementation			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Planning Process Methods	✓	✓							✓	✓
	Leadership	✓					✓			✓	✓
Values and Ethics	Professional Ethics and Responsibility	✓					✓			✓	✓
	Governance and Participation	✓				✓					
	Sustainability and Environmental Quality			✓	✓					✓	
	Growth and Development			✓	✓						
	Social Justice	✓					✓			✓	

FACULTY

The Department of Planning and Design consists of a mix of full-time tenured/tenure-track (T/TT) and non-tenured/tenure-track (non-T/TT) faculty, as well as a diverse group of part-time adjuncts and lecturers. This faculty mix ensures that the MURP program and its students benefit from the permanence gained through full-time faculty, the flexibility achieved through part-time lecturers, the scholarly research accomplished by T/TT faculty, and the practice-oriented instruction provided by non-T/TT faculty.

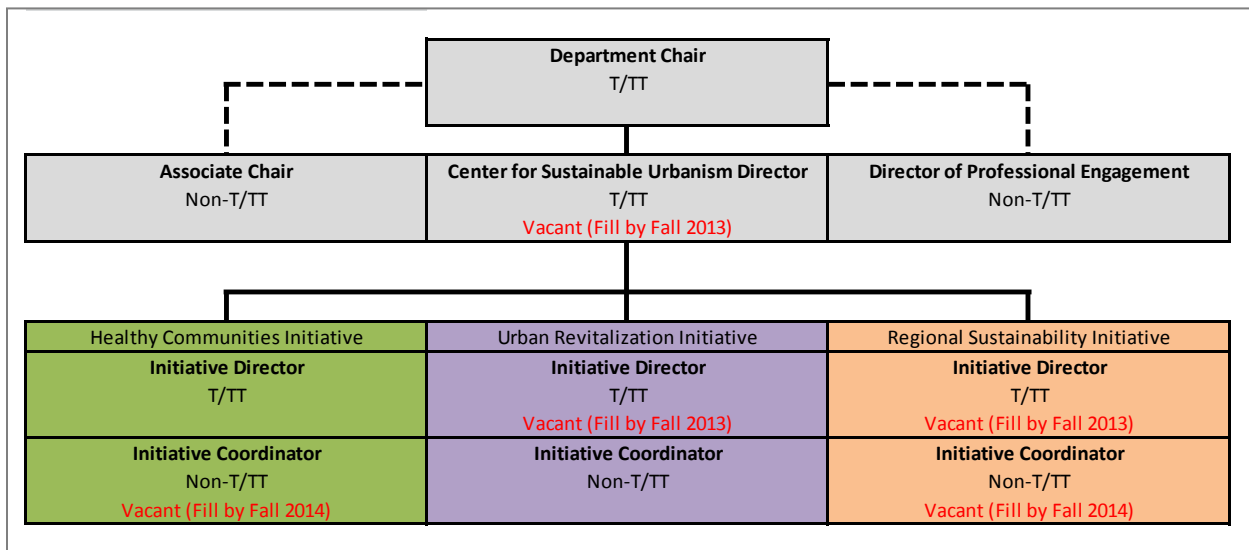
PAB Faculty Requirements:

The Planning Accreditation Board requires minimum numbers and types of faculty to maintain accreditation. For our MURP program, a minimum of five full-time T/TT faculty are required and, based on our student enrollment, a minimum of ten full-time faculty in total are required. Based on our Department’s belief in maintaining a balance between research-oriented T/TT faculty and practice-oriented non-T/TT faculty, the core full-time faculty for the Department of Planning and Design is five T/TT faculty and five non-T/TT faculty.

Full-Time Faculty:

The organizational chart below shows the ten full-time faculty positions necessary to meet Planning Accreditation Board requirements and to implement this strategic plan:

Department Full-Time Faculty Organization



The Department Chair provides overall leadership and management of the Department. Assisting the Department Chair are the Associate Chair and the newly created position of Director of Professional Engagement. (For more information, see the Professional Engagement section in this plan.)

A new T/TT faculty member is to be hired by Fall 2013, in part to serve as the Director of the Center for Sustainable Urbanism, a vacant position as of Fall 2012. The Center for Sustainable Urbanism is a College of Architecture and Planning entity through which various research and project-based services relating to our three Program Initiatives are provided. For more information on the Center and its relationship to the Department and MURP program, see the Academic Centers and Research section of this plan.

Each of our three Program Initiatives is led by a two-person team consisting of a T/TT faculty member as the Initiative Director, and a non-T/TT faculty member as the Initiative Coordinator. Each pair will oversee and manage the research, instruction, curriculum, and other program activities related to that Initiative topic. Of these six Initiative Director and Initiative Coordinator positions, four are vacant as of Fall 2012. The two vacant T/TT Initiative Director positions are to be filled by Fall 2013, and the two vacant non-T/TT Initiative Coordinator positions are to be filled by Fall 2014.

Again, the ten full-time faculty positions shown on the chart above represent the minimum number and type of faculty necessary to meet the PAB's accreditation requirements as well as to ensure the full implementation of this strategic plan.

Part-Time Faculty:

The Department of Planning and Design and the MURP program is well served by an outstanding network of part-time adjunct instructors who complement the full-time faculty by providing instruction to students and a direct connection to the planning profession.

Continuing this strong relationship with our part-time faculty is an important element of this strategic plan, given our emphasis on providing students with hands-on experiential learning and direct exposure to practicing professionals.

ACADEMIC CENTERS AND RESEARCH

Faculty Research:

As part of our intention to gain national prominence for our department and program, the MURP faculty will engage in nationally visible research activities both as individuals and through one or more of the College of Architecture and Planning's research centers. The University of Colorado Denver is a Research I institution, and we aim to maintain the university's high-quality research standards and bring them to our areas of expertise, namely the built and social environment of our cities and regions.

More specifically, MURP research activities will be organized around our three Initiatives, each of which will be led by a T/TT faculty member. MURP faculty will pursue research that furthers the Department's national reputation for expertise in our three Initiative areas. This research will help build the prominence and excellence of the Department and the College as well as bring in significant funding to support student and faculty work on these subjects.

MURP faculty will also be encouraged to prioritize and emphasize applied research: that which has implications for policy, the built and social environments, and planning knowledge. In addition, although the Department explicitly acknowledges the importance of peer-reviewed research, our non-T/TT and T/TT faculty will also be encouraged to participate in public scholarship, weighing in on important issues through editorials, blogs, websites, and other popular media.

Academic Centers:

In line with our strategic plan, we will seek opportunities for interdisciplinary research that involves multiple parties, including students and faculty from allied fields in the College of Architecture and Planning, other units in the University of Colorado, other universities, professional organizations, and beyond. Projects that involve multiple researchers, significant grant monies, or interdisciplinary work will be managed through either the Colorado Center for Community Development (CCCD) or the Center for Sustainable Urbanism, which will help coordinate these efforts and provide a platform for this research.

Although the Center for Sustainable Urbanism has existed for several years, it has recently become inactive. We will revitalize the Center and make it a prominent feature of the College and the Department of Planning and Design, as well as the state of Colorado. We believe the

core mission of the Center is to be a vehicle for bringing in major research endeavors, manage them and become an active presence in the community.

We will help build the Center into an avenue that can support College-wide endeavors as well as research work in the three Departmental Initiatives. To that end, the Center should be led by, at least initially, a MURP T/TT faculty member: someone who is adept in the language and work of the College's other departments and has achieved success as an urban planning scholar. This will set the Center apart from CCCD but will help build on CCCD's successes with community engagement activities as well as fee-for-service work. Although the Center will remain a College-wide entity, we envision that MURP will provide the leadership of the Center as it is most closely aligned with the scale, scope and mission of this department.

More specifically, the Center for Sustainable Urbanism will increase the presence of the MURP and the Department in the community, provide assistance with research project management and identifying funding opportunities, become an avenue for fee-for-service work, and be dedicated to applied research and practical solutions for improving the built and social environments of the city and region. The Center will also provide opportunities for networking with professional and academic organizations, seed funding for budding research projects, grant monitoring and management, and will help aid in the release and dissemination of findings through a variety of avenues. Some avenues for the dissemination of findings will include:

- White papers, working papers, discussion papers and policy documents
- Peer-reviewed papers
- Public scholarship, editorials, blogs
- Public presentations
- Conference presentations
- Public education/discussion forums and symposia
- Online magazine/ journal/ newsletter published by the Center or Department

STUDENTS

Our first mission is to “teach our students the knowledge, skills and values they need to be confident, principled, and visionary planners.” Therefore, much of this strategic plan focuses on our students and how we ensure they receive the finest education and training in urban and regional planning.

Our commitment to our students extends across many areas: providing them with exceptional instruction and research-backed knowledge about planning; inspiring them to achieve great things in their personal and professional lives; exposing them to planning professionals, real-world planning situations, and state-of-the-art learning resources; and helping them choose their best academic and career paths through advising and mentoring.

What do we expect in our students? We seek students who...

- are highly qualified academically as defined by our admission requirements
- are passionate about planning and creating vibrant, sustainable communities
- advocate for sound planning ideals and excellence in the planning profession
- demonstrate the ability to conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner
- will enhance their MURP experience by actively participating in program activities
- will work hard and strive to do their best in their studies
- will actively engage with the faculty and their fellow classmates
- reflect a diverse population and represent many different perspectives and backgrounds

Student APA:

Another valuable asset of the MURP program is our UC Denver Student Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA-S). APA-S plays a critical role in enhancing the educational and social experience of all MURP students, and in developing leadership qualities for those students actively managing the organization. APA-S also serves as an important liaison between the student body, the faculty and university administration, and the input Student APA has provided into this strategic plan has been outstanding. We will ensure that APA-S continues to have meaningful input into many aspects of the MURP program, and we will rely on their enthusiasm, energy, and insight to help implement this strategic plan. We will also encourage the creation of other student groups, potentially oriented around our three Program Initiatives or students of color.

PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A cornerstone of this strategic plan is providing students with as many opportunities as possible to directly engage with the planning profession. Doing so offers students not only the chance to learn the craft from planners in the field, but also the opportunity to forge personal relationships that can lead to future job offers and professional collaborations. We are fortunate to have in the Denver region and throughout Colorado a substantial network of planning and design professionals, many of whom work within a few blocks of our location in Downtown Denver. Finding multiple ways for our students to engage with planning professionals from throughout the region is critical to our long-term success as a program.

Getting Organized:

A key to achieving our professional engagement goals is the creation of a Director of Professional Engagement position. This faculty position will be responsible for serving as the point person between the program and planning and allied professionals throughout Colorado.

The Director will create and manage a database that documents the interactions between the program and allied professionals in the area. Examples of the types of activities that would be recorded in this database include:

- Studio/course projects that involved the participation of a planning or allied professional
- Guest lectures provided by a planning or allied professional in any program studio/course
- Presentations given by planning or allied professionals at any program activity

By recording the professional's contact information and other details of the engagement, we can build over time a database that becomes a tremendous resource for the program, and a way to maintain and nurture those relationships between our program and local professionals.

The Director of Professional Engagement, however, is not just a collector of information about professional engagements that have already occurred; rather, the Director's role also prioritizes actively soliciting opportunities for engagement between our program and professionals throughout the state. By regularly communicating with local planning departments, planning and design consulting firms, and others involved in the planning and city-building process, the Director can expand the network of professionals willing to work with our program, find clients

for studio/course projects, and identify good candidates for guest lecturers and presenters at program events. The Director will also ensure that the resources found in the professional engagement database are made available to MURP faculty, students, and staff so that all aspects of the program can benefit.

The Director of Professional Engagement and the professional engagement database can also help to achieve our goals in other aspects of the program:

- Assist the Internship Program Director with identifying leads for internships and mentorships for our students
- Assist the Alumni Coordinator in strengthening our relationships with MURP alumni who are working in Colorado
- Facilitate the targeting and winning of grants for our research faculty and identifying potential clients for the Center for Sustainable Urbanism
- Provide leads for program fundraising and recipients for program surveys and marketing materials
- Provide leads for expert panels, studio juries, advisory boards, and other program activities that benefit from participation by practicing professionals

Ultimately, having a robust professional engagement program will maximize the opportunities MURP students have to learn from practicing planners and to forge strong ties between our program and the thousands of planning and design professionals throughout Colorado.

INTERNSHIPS AND MENTORING

Internships and mentorships are key elements in the MURP program’s vision of providing students with hands-on, experiential learning. Internships give students the opportunity to see planning professionals in action, which helps students develop a clearer understanding of their own career goals, educational needs, and personal passions. Mentorships provide an opportunity for students to connect personally with a practicing professional for guidance, advice and inspiration.

While the PlanWork service currently provides a good forum for connecting students to internship opportunities, this strategic plan calls for a more active internship program, including significantly improving the integration of internships into students’ academic experiences.

Improved Organization:

The plan to develop the MURP internship and mentorship program has several aspects. First, we will institute a system to centralize and record internship and mentorship information. This process begins by appointing an Internship Program Director, who will create and maintain a database of past, current and future positions and participants. Second, internships embody a key pedagogical role in the MURP program. While the professional experience of an internship is in itself valuable, to receive academic credit for MURP internships, students will participate in regular colloquia, complete writing assignments in which they draw reflectively on their workplace experiences and connect them to their classroom work, and document their contributions to their employer.

Expanded Opportunities:

Finally, our strategic plan calls for expanding participation in the internship and mentorship programs by both students and employers. We will provide students with individualized advising, resume writing and job search skills, and positions will be actively advertised, both through PlanWork and via a dedicated bulletin board in the College. The Internship Director will work closely with the Director of Professional Engagement to increase employer participation in both the Internship and Mentorship programs.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

The MURP faculty will engage in strategic partnerships with allied programs in the College of Architecture and Planning and with UC Denver programs in Engineering, Geography, Public Affairs, Public Health and others, as well as with universities around the world. We will do so through research, teaching and community service partnerships that encourage our students to value interdisciplinary work and collaboration.

Research Partnerships:

Our faculty already participate in major research projects with allies in Landscape Architecture, Public Health, Geography and Engineering, to name a few. We will continue to nurture these partnerships by providing staff and institutional support to help manage these efforts.

Academic Partnerships:

We recognize that students learn best when viewing planning challenges from multiple perspectives. To that end, we will maintain and nurture our many Dual Degree programs including the MURP-MPH, MURP-MBA, MURP-JD, MURP-MPA, MURP-MArch, MURP-MLA, and MURP-MUD. We will also continue to cross-list many courses in Public Affairs, Geography, Business and others and encourage our students with interests in these areas to investigate elective courses or dual degrees with these other programs. We will reach out to allied programs to help attract their best and brightest undergraduates and build a more robust structure to help students advance seamlessly and successfully from their undergraduate programs directly into our MURP program. We will seek opportunities to co-teach core offerings in the MURP program, such as interdisciplinary studios and seminars.

Community Service:

In addition to fostering strong relationships with research and academic partners and with the broad network of planning professionals throughout the region, we will also reach out and establish working partnerships with the wider community: businesses, non-profit organizations, community groups, public-sector entities, and citizens throughout Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region. We view our program as a public resource available to be used for the public good. We offer to our community partners our collective knowledge, inspiration, and insight to help them achieve their goals and to build stronger communities.

ALUMNI

Our alumni are a critical and valuable asset to the MURP program, and maintaining a robust connection to our alumni greatly benefits Department faculty, current MURP students, and our MURP alumni themselves.

There is an active, broad community of planning and design professionals in Denver and Colorado, many of whom are alumni of the MURP program. Given our program's emphasis on providing students with hands-on experiential learning and engagement with professionals and the wider community, we would be remiss if we did not tap into our alumni network.

We received hundreds of responses to our alumni survey, demonstrating an active alumni interest in the health and success of the MURP program. Many respondents indicated they would embrace a more active role in the program, and would welcome opportunities to engage with students and faculty.

Strengthening Alumni Connections:

Our strategic plan to develop our connection to MURP alumni begins with the appointment of an Alumni Coordinator and the creation of a comprehensive database of our alumni, including contact and professional information. We will facilitate the development of an active alumni association and maintain a robust alumni communication program through which alumni can connect with each other and keep up with the program's activities and accomplishments. We will encourage alumni to engage with our students and faculty through social activities, professional opportunities such as internships and mentoring, guest lecturing, and serving as jurors and clients for class and capstone projects. Finally, we will seek alumni financial support for our program to expand our ability to provide scholarships, fund student travel and activities, and develop other enriching opportunities and departmental initiatives.

PAB requires that we survey alumni to ascertain their professional progress, satisfaction with our program, and their service to the wider community. Beyond these requirements, we intend to use regular surveys as a way to connect alumni to the program, learn from their experiences, hear what they think of our plans, and gather their ideas for future efforts.

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

An important aspect of this strategic plan is letting all potential stakeholders know about the exciting new ways our program is developing. Implementing our marketing and public relations plan will rely heavily on the expertise of staff colleagues in the College and the University.

Promoting Our Program:

We will be creating online and physical marketing materials describing elements of the strategic plan and the program's vision and goals, tailored for different audiences. These audiences include, among others, current and prospective students, alumni, University and College colleagues, the community of professional planners and allied professions, local community organizations, and other planning departments across the nation.

Additionally, the MURP program will institute an active public relations effort to keep these stakeholders aware of and interested in our ongoing progress and accomplishments. Elements of this plan include a new and frequently updated website, a monthly electronic newsletter, a well-publicized event calendar, and frequent highlighting of student and faculty work. In addition, we will implement targeted outreach efforts to actively recruit new faculty and students to our program, generate funding for student support and other departmental initiatives, attract potential employers and clients for student projects, and improve our national ranking among academic planning institutions.

Valuing Diversity:

Finally, we believe that the MURP program is substantially enriched by having students and faculty with a true diversity of backgrounds, viewpoints, experiences, and opinions about the nature and the role of planning. To that end, we will actively market our program to a widely diverse population of potential students and faculty members, for example by: advertising the program in non-traditional ways (e.g. newspapers, radio programs and other media that target underrepresented groups); reaching out to professional colleagues in relevant undergraduate programs to identify potential graduate students and to increase colleagues' awareness of our program; ensuring the program is represented at graduate school fairs at targeted undergraduate colleges/universities; sending marketing materials to relevant undergraduate programs with significant populations of underrepresented minority students; and ensuring that every aspect of our marketing materials reflect our commitment to and appreciation of broad diversity among our students and faculty.