

Community and Regional Planning, Undergraduate Bachelor of Science, Community and Regional Planning

I. Mission Statement

Graduates of the Community and Regional Planning program at Iowa State University will be skilled in understanding community problems and issues; applying appropriate planning processes; developing comprehensive plans for local governments, counties, or regions; and offering sound implementation strategies. Graduates will be able to practice in a public and democratic setting, to the standards of conduct outlined by the American Institute of Certified Planners.

1. Graduates will be able to critically examine community problems and issues, select and apply an appropriate planning process and collaborate in leading the development of a local comprehensive plan and public policies.
2. Graduates will be able to maintain a working knowledge of plan implementation techniques including the ability to understand and apply local zoning ordinances.
3. Graduates will be able to maintain a working knowledge of how the legal and policy context affects local and regional planning: state enabling legislation, state land use policy, and federal and state judicial systems.
4. Graduates will be able to develop and implement a citizen participation plan for existing program evaluation or plan development.
5. Graduates will understand the institutional framework of planning practice at the local, state and regional level, including how planning is organized at each level and how they interact.
6. Graduates will understand and practice to the ethical professional standards outlined by the American Institute of Certified Planners.

II. Assessment Goals, Measures, Results and Changes

A. Goals

Communication Skills

Graduates will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of settings using a variety of methods. Their communication skills will support the collaborative and public nature of their work. Graduates will design and make effective presentations verbally and visually. Graduates will write well-supported argumentative papers with a clear main idea using credible sources.

1. Graduates will demonstrate effective written communication skills
2. Graduates will demonstrate effective oral communication skills
3. Graduates will demonstrate effective visual communication skills
4. Graduates will demonstrate skills in team building, group dynamics and collaboration.

Life-Long Learning Outcomes

Graduates will have the resources, skills and character to learn in – and adapt to – the ever changing community environment. Graduates will continue to integrate formal, informal, experiential and research learning to be effective planners and citizens. Graduates will demonstrate leadership in their approach to new situations.

1. Graduates will be able to plan and assess their own learning
2. Graduates will be active rather than passive learners.
3. Graduates will be able to learn in both formal and informal settings.

Program Review

4. Graduates will be able to integrate knowledge from different subject areas, environments, etc when required.
5. Graduates will be able to use different learning strategies for different situations.
6. Graduates will be able to identify and utilize appropriate resources to explore solutions or solve problems.

Analysis Outcomes

1. Problem formulation: Graduates will have the ability to break down complex real world problems into research worthy questions and make them meaningful to stakeholders
2. Research skills and data gathering: Graduates will have the ability to use research and knowledge in planning effectively. Graduates will have the ability to assess quality and relevance of secondary data and gather it effectively.
3. Quantitative skills and Qualitative skills: Graduates will have the ability to use statistical and other techniques, skills, and tools of the planning profession to analyze planning problems, generate alternatives and evaluate their consequences.
4. Use of Computers: Graduates will be able to demonstrate competency in basic computer programs, including planning-related software and other modern computer-based tools of the planning profession, including an understanding of geospatial data structure and analysis.

Knowledge Outcomes (Core)

Graduates will be able to reason using knowledge from the following areas in order to accomplish planning tasks.

1. human settlements: structure, process and function
 2. history and theory of planning process and practice
 3. administrative/legal/political context
 4. knowledge of breadth in subfields of planning
- 1) human settlements: structure, process and function
 - a) knowledge of human settlements in their regional context
 - i) forces and influences shaping form, economics, demographics and governance
 - ii) political & socioeconomic structure, including cultural dimensions
 - iii) role of the city in shaping the region
 - iv) urban economics and politics, including cultural dimensions
 - b) land use
 - i) traditions of land use governance
 - ii) implications of land use structures
 - iii) interrelationships between land use and transportation, environment and social life
 - 2) history and theory of planning process and practice
 - a) history of the city
 - b) history of the profession of planning
 - c) ethics, politics and law of the process of planning
 - d) theories used to justify actions in planning, including ethics, distributive justice, and knowledge
 - 3) administrative/legal/political context
 - a) legal context:
 - i) enabling legislation, laws of process and substance, legal interpretation
 - ii) zoning, general plans, planning law
 - b) planning agencies: powers and obligations
 - c) administration: political and organizational behavior

B. Assessment results: Program Needs

Based upon the results of faculty survey, the learning outcomes process, the past accreditation report and the student focus groups, the faculty has agreed to modify the curriculum in next year's catalog to provide students with a logical sequence of class experiences to give them the opportunity to learn specific planning concepts and develop planning skills. Communication skills building should be addressed throughout the curriculum and students should also have opportunities to direct their own learning. The following program needs were identified:

1. Alignment of undergraduate curriculum with learning outcomes and identified gaps in the program.

Sequencing: Building Skills, Reinforcement and Integrating Material

- address sequencing of undergraduate core curriculum
- address prerequisites for undergraduate core courses and 400 level courses
- clarify content of CRP 270, CRP 253, and CRP 383
- clarify how CRP 270 and 253 will work with new college foundation courses
- **(and effectiveness, requirements)**
 - determine need for Stat 101 and Computer Science 103
 - address the CE 350 requirement
- address the demand for GIS skills earlier in the curriculum
 - have CRP section for GIS
- **Building skills in the curriculum:**
 - integrate sequence of writing (and other) skill development
 - develop learning rubrics for communication skills and recommended communication exercises for students at the 200, 300, and 400 levels of the program
 - consider study Huba cited about the study skills/habits of freshpersons

Outcomes: Integration and Problem-Solving

- provide more opportunities for students to apply their learning/more project/studio classes
- highlight connections between classes, discuss information from other classes
- provide more opportunities for students to work in inter-disciplinary courses, especially studios, with other students in the college

Outcomes: Problem-Framing and Using Research Methods

- better address problem-framing, application of research for planning in course work
- Need to provide students opportunities to review and use research skills in upper level classes; currently students do not have the opportunity to significantly draw on research skills in courses after their 1st or 2nd year.

Outcomes: Lifelong Learning and Communication

- Need to teach students how to express and demonstrate what they can do
- Course work and advising task
- Need to think about ways to integrate life long learning concepts in curriculum (life long learning skills new to program-level assessment).
- evaluate student learning in group work and collaboration skills

2. Develop a unified approach to sequenced learning and student assessment.

- address any inconsistency between the description of courses in the course catalog and what is actually being taught
- develop measures to assess student work
- give effective and consistent feedback to students re: progress towards learning outcomes
- address program entry standards
- review and revise Program Learning Outcomes

3. Provide opportunities for students to broaden their perspective and develop a sense of community with each other and the planning profession.

- help students foster a sense of community Within the program (space within college for undergraduate students?)
- provide more opportunities for students to visit cities/sites that highlight a specific element of planning
- provide more opportunities for students (and faculty) to interact with professionals
- make it easier for students to pursue a related minor
- provide opportunities for students to develop life long learning skills

C. Results to Date: Curriculum alignment proposals

Based on the above program needs, a set of specific changes, additions and deletions in the undergraduate program are being implements.

Building Blocks of the new Curriculum

The major changes to the curriculum include the addition of a one new core course to address the need for more opportunity for integration and application of planning methods in a project-based setting (CRP 332). This course will be an intermediate step between the current methods sequence and the comprehensive planning studio (432). As well, two new one credit courses are being introduced to address assessment and demonstration of learning (498 Portfolio) and the development of diversity and community through exposure to other planning contexts (391 Field Travel). Below are the descriptions of the courses.

C R P 332. Community Planning Studio I. (2-4) Cr. 4. F. Prereq: 253, 274. Application of planning methods and skills to issue identification and investigation. Introduction to problem formulation, study, and analysis in a community setting.

C R P 391. Field Travel. Cr. 1 to 2, each time taken. F.S.SS. Prereq: CRP major and permission of advisor. Observation of professional practice and community/regional problems and issues. Offered on a satisfactory/fail basis only.

C R P 494. Senior Seminar in Planning. Cr. Var. F.S.SS. Prereq: senior classification, 332 should be taken prior to or concurrently. An advanced forum for seniors that focuses upon recent trends and important issues affecting planning today. Topics addressed will vary. A demonstration of understanding current issues and their affects upon planning application is expected.

CRP 498. Portfolio Development and Review. (1-0) Cr. 1. F.S. Should be taken in the final semester of the planning program. Preparation of a portfolio of student work that represents student learning throughout the entire planning program.

Eliminate Areas of Specialty for Undergraduates

The faculty also agreed to drop planning related specialties as a graduation requirement, and to help students to develop their skills and abilities in areas of interest. To this end, the department will offer a specific set of courses from which students must choose a subset. The intent of these courses is to introduce a breadth of planning practice to all CRP undergraduates. The course will also improve curriculum sequencing, the exposure of our students to the range of planning fields, and help to create and reinforce community in our undergraduate student body.

The courses include a set of new 400 required courses *in* 5-6 different areas of planning, of which students would be required to take 3-4. These would be ‘core electives’ that introduce a breadth of planning areas. These would replace some old ‘elective electives’. The idea here is that these courses introduce students to a significant areas within the field of planning, that they be aligned with faculty interest and current interest

Curricular Changes

The faculty also agreed to implement the following changes:

- Make CRP 253 a prerequisite for CRP 383
- Make CRP 383 a prerequisite for CRP 432
- CRP 492 may be taken prior to or concurrent with CRP 432 (both in Senior year)
- CRP 270 will remain true to title and cover the social, economic, and political forces shaping cities
- CRP 253 will be a broad introduction to the profession, but will spend sometime focused on land use planning tools
- CRP 383 will cover history and theory of planning and will let students know what to expect when writing upper-level papers in the program
- Switch CRP 272 and 274 so that 272 is offered in the Fall and 274 in the Spring
- Eliminate Computer Science 103 as a requirement—it is redundant with learning in CRP 272 and 274
- Eliminate Civil Engineering 350 as a requirement

III. Assessment Processes

The department’s student learning outcomes assessments efforts are led by the Department’s Curriculum Committee. Members include Professors Borich, Clapp, and Owusu, along with the department’s student adviser Dr. Ann Gansemer-Topf and lecturer Karen Jeske. All members of the Curriculum Committee signed up for a series of workshops titled “Assessing Student Outcomes” offered through Iowa State University’s Center for Teaching Excellence and featured Mary Huba, co-author of the book *Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus from Teaching to Learning*. The workshops provided training to participating faculty on methods for constructing learning- or student-centered outcomes at both the class and program level. Faculty attended the series of four workshops and then secured Dr. Huba for further consultation in developing curricular mission and goals, learning rubrics for each goal, and developing methods for a self-study of each class. Additionally, the Dean’s Office provided funds for Prof. Tara Clapp to attend additional student outcomes training at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

Program Review

In addition, a series of faculty retreats were held with the primary focus on student outcomes, program objectives, and curriculum development. Additionally, a \$1,000 grant was secured from the ISU Center for Teaching Excellence to help cover the costs of one retreat and provide funding for a graduate student to assist in report generation over this past summer.

Student involvement in the process has come through a series of focus groups conducted by the department's academic adviser, Dr. Ann Gansemer-Topf. Feedback through this process detailed a number of curricular needs, including the need for separate graduate and undergraduate capstone studios, elimination of redundancy among some courses, and a greater sense of articulation and programmatic purpose across the curriculum.