

Community and Regional Planning, Undergraduate
Master 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, design an appropriate planning process and collaborate in leading the development and implementation of public plans and policies.
2. Graduates will be able to maintain a working knowledge of the organizations and institutional frameworks of planning practice, law and policy, at the local, state and regional level.
3. Graduates will be skilled in facilitating citizen involvement for plan development or for the evaluation of existing programs.
4. Graduates will demonstrate management and leadership skills, including well-developed people skills, an understanding of organizational behavior and context, and familiarity with public budgeting and finance.
5. Graduates will have the capacity to develop and answer research questions for policy application in their substantive area of planning practice.
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.

Management and Leadership Skills

Graduates will be able to assume leadership and management roles within the planning community. They will be trained in leadership and organizational skills and have a knowledge management practices frequently employed within planning environments. Furthermore, graduates will be able to employ skills related to fiscal management and policy, inter-organizational collaboration, team building, and data management necessary to develop collaborative planning efforts.

1. Graduates will have a working knowledge of group dynamics and team building.

Program Review

2. Graduates will have the ability to assess and evaluate competency in planning skills, and work with project-related budgets.
3. Graduates will know alternative methods of organizing and managing planning in both private and public settings.
4. Graduates will have an understanding of fiscal policy in the context of the implementation of plans and policy.

Management and Leadership Skills

Measures would include knowledge of public organization of planning systems (e.g. community development vs. planning office etc.) as well as the functions of planners in closed, open and natural systems of organizations. Example: how planners function in a hierarchical vs matrix systems.

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. Students will be active rather than passive learners.
3. Students will be able to learn in both formal and informal settings.
4. Students will be able to integrate knowledge from different subject areas, environments, etc when required.
5. Students will be able to use different learning strategies for different situations.
6. Students will be able to identify and utilize appropriate resources to explore solutions or solve problems.

Research 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 design and conduct various types of research, including case study methods, survey design, and primary data collection methods such as observation, open-ended interviewing and the design of questionnaires. 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. Graduates will also demonstrate competency in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Geospatial data.
5. Evaluate and critique research methodology: Graduates will be able to evaluate data quality and distinguish/identify quality research methodology.

Knowledge Outcomes (Core):

Students 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

Student Outcomes Assessment

4. an area of specialized knowledge developed through course work and thesis/professional report
- 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 multicultural and gender dimensions
 - iii) role of the city in shaping the region
 - b) urban finance and urban infrastructure
 - i) economic analysis
 - ii) political analysis, including multicultural and gender implications
 - c) 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 (including race, ethnicity, class and gender dimensions)
- 2) history and theory of planning process and practice
 - a) descriptive theory of planning
 - i) as related to 1), especially
 - ii) socio-economic theory and governance
 - iii) political theory and governance
 - b) normative theory of planning
 - i) theories of knowledge
 - ii) theories of ethics and distributive justice
 - iii) planning process theory: theories of planning/governance as allocation, as resolution of conflicts
 - c) history of the profession of planning
 - d) process of planning
- 3) administrative/legal/political context
 - a) legal context:
 - i) enabling legislation, laws of process and substance, legal interpretation
 - ii) zoning, general plans, planning law
 - iii) public finance
 - b) planning agencies: powers and obligations
 - c) administration: political and organizational behavior
- 4) an area of specialized knowledge demonstrated through course work and thesis or professional report

B. Results to Date: Curriculum alignment proposals

Based upon the results of faculty survey, the learning outcomes process, the past accreditation report and the student focus groups, the faculty decided to:

1. Clearly distinguish between our undergraduate and graduate programs
2. Clarify the difference between professional report and thesis
3. “Unslash” graduate courses
4. Strengthen the department’s Methods course offerings

To clearly distinguish between the undergraduate and graduate programs, faculty agreed on set of course outcomes for the graduate program. The first category of *policy planners* was modified to indicate a more creative and expanded role in policy formation through planning processes expected of a master’s-level graduate. Thus, this first category of program outcomes that integrates the others was titled *policy design*. The categories of *communication skills*, *life-long learning outcomes* and *knowledge outcomes* were retained but expanded to indicate higher expectations of learning and skill development at the graduate level. The *analysis outcomes* were dropped and a *research outcomes* category developed to highlight the research skills graduate students are expected to develop. Finally, a sixth category, *management and leadership skills*, was added. Specifically, the faculty saw the areas of leadership and research as two key areas that differentiate expected outcomes between graduate and undergraduate programs.

The faculty has also worked to clarify the expectations for Professional Report and Thesis. The faculty developed the Department’s Professional Report and Thesis guidelines that clearly lay out the learning outcomes of each. In addition, the total number of credits for thesis was dropped from 9 to 6 to make it comparable with the 4 credits for the professional report.

The department continues to work on the separation of the graduate program from “slash” courses. The capstone studio (CRP 532) is now offered independently of its undergraduate version (CRP 432). Of the graduate core, including thesis, only planning law is yet a joint undergraduate/graduate core course offering. Twenty-nine credits of graduate core course work are now being offered independently of dual-listed courses.

The department working to strengthen the course offerings in methods. Beginning next catalogue cycle, Stat 401 is required of all MCRP students. In addition, the method course (CRP 501), students are also required to take CRP 502 (see description below):

C R P 502. Methods II. (3-0) Cr. 3. S. Prereq: 501. Investigative and participatory methods for citizen involvement and planning research including public meetings and processes, consultation, case studies, and focus groups. Research design for planning practice, and thesis and professional report proposal development.

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.

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.