



Item: AS: A-3

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS

Tuesday, November 16, 2021

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF PROGRAM REVIEW – CHARLES E. SCHMIDT
COLLEGE OF SCIENCE**

PROPOSED COMMITTEE ACTION

Request approval of program review for Urban and Regional Planning degree programs in the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Under Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6C-8.015 adopted March 29, 2007, all academic degree programs in State universities must be reviewed at least every seven years. Program reviews ensure that academic programs are administered and delivered effectively, efficiently, and consistent with FAU's mission and the Board of Governors' strategic priorities. The results of program reviews are expected to inform strategic planning, program development, and budgeting decisions at the university level, and, when appropriate, at the state level.

Academic Program Review at FAU includes a few additional steps:

- The self-study prepared by the program's department will be submitted to an independent review committee comprised of 2-5 individuals. The committee will include at least one external reviewer who will serve as a content expert in the discipline. Other members will include nominees of the head of the academic unit in consultation with the unit's faculty.
- The external reviewer will conduct a day and a half site-visit. A written report of the reviewer's findings was submitted to the program's review committee.
- In addition to self-studies and external reviewer reports, departmental responses and action plans were prepared.
- An executive summary will be submitted to the Board of Trustees for approval.

Urban and Regional Planning degree programs in the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science were reviewed this year.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN/DATE

Academic Program Review summaries will be submitted to the BOG in November 2021 pending full Board approval.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

Supporting Documentation: 2021 Academic Program Review Executive Summaries, PowerPoint presentation

Presented by: Dr. Bret Danilowicz, Vice President for Academic Affairs & Provost

Phone: 561.297.6350

**Charles E. Schmidt College of Science
Florida Atlantic University
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
Program Review Executive Summary**

Part 1: Overview

Mission and Purpose

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at Florida Atlantic University is committed to providing leadership in the field of planning through education, research, scholarship, and community engagement. DURP produces 32-68 bachelor's graduates and 6-13 master's level graduates annually with a mission of preparing planning practitioners and researchers for national and global practice by promoting the ideals of social responsibility, sustainability, equity, diversity, and public service. DURP also cultivates future leaders and is an innovator in the creation, design, and implementation of solutions to contemporary urban, environmental, and economic challenges.

Headcount Statistics Fall 2019-2020

- Undergraduate Students: 182
- MS students: 48
- Faculty: 6.0 FTE

Degree Programs by Level

- Bachelor of Urban Design (BUD)
- Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning (BURP)
- Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP), including an advanced standing program for top-performing students in the BURP, BUD, and BArch programs
- DURP also cooperates with Department of Geoscience on the Graduate Certificate Program in Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Research Centers

- Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES)
- Visual Planning Technology Laboratory (VPT Lab)
- Collaborative Sciences Center for Road Safety

DURP contributes mainly to the *Human Health and Disease Intervention* and *Ocean Science and Engineering/Environmental Sciences* Pillars at FAU in support and alignment with FAU's 2015-2025 Strategic Plan.

Major Changes Since the Last Program Review

Curriculum

- Substantial revisions for the MURP program to align with Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) standards
- Revision and changes for the two bachelor's degrees served to better differentiate the two programs: giving the BUD program a stronger design focus relative to the BURP program
- BURP and BUD honors programs were added with an emphasis on expanding undergraduate research opportunities per FL BOG *Strategic Plan*

Accreditation and Program Review follow-up

- MURP program was reviewed by the PAB in 2018 and reaccredited through the end of 2025. All 49 review criteria were met, except for one, which was faculty diversity and was partially met
- DURP faculty diversity has been enhanced since 2018 through hiring of diverse new adjunct instructors, since no new full-time faculty were hired
- All recommendations from the 2013-2014 Academic Program Review (APR) have been met except for one: the need for a dedicated studio space for urban design courses

Faculty

- DURP hired six new full-time faculty during the period since last program review
- One of these hires was joint appointment with the Institute for Human Health and Disease Intervention (I-Health)
- Another of the external recruits was for the department Chair position
- Five DURP faculty are credentialed by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP)

Relocation of DURP

- Effective July 1, 2020 DURP relocated from the College for Design and Social Inquiry (CDSI) to the College of Science (COS)

Diversity and Strategic Planning

- DURP developed a Diversity and Inclusion Plan that was subsequently highlighted by PAB as a best practice:
<http://science.fau.edu/departments/urban-regional-planning/about/mission/>
- DURP completed a three year strategic plan in 2017, and refined the plan in 2018 guided by comments from the PAB site visit, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*:
<http://science.fau.edu/departments/urban-regional-planning/about/mission/>
- In light of the move by DURP to COS the DURP *Strategic Plan* will be revised during 2021-2022 to optimize strategic opportunities offered by DURP's new administrative home

Part 2: Findings

Reviewer Identified Strengths

- **Administrative governance** – new home in COS offers enhanced potential synergies and collaborations, and a stronger research focused culture
- **Faculty** – faculty to student ratio is healthy; productivity and scholarship overall is strong; good interdisciplinary research, and one faculty member to date is jointly hired with I-Health; adjunct faculty diversity and expertise depth is an asset to DURP
- **Strategic plan and curriculum revisions** – strong strategic plan; MURP curriculum well aligned with accreditation expectations; strong undergraduate curricula
- **Students** – diverse student body; high retention and graduation rates in keeping with national averages; students engaged with research with faculty; positive student feedback for coursework, and faculty
- **Local context and engagement** – coursework has strong connection to local planning and policy issues; *Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions* supports a robust community engagement program with positive impacts on DURP teaching and research missions

Reviewer Identified Weaknesses/Challenges

- **Heavy dependency on adjuncts and lack of dedicated funding** – BUD teaching load is heavily dependent on adjuncts while there is no dedicated funding allocated for this purpose in DURP; lack of formal/structured mechanism for hiring and evaluating adjuncts was noted; including adjuncts to a greater extent in program governance and identifying opportunities to better connect with adjunct faculty were recommended
- **Faculty diversity** – faculty diversity remains a challenge whereas the student body has extremely good diverse representation; faculty diversity challenge may be addressed through adjunct appointments
- **Lack of dedicated studio space** – BUD program continues to lack dedicated studio space for its majors
- **Inadequate support for grant administration at the college level** – DURP research active faculty perceive that upon the move to COS grant support has been deficient
- **MURP recruitment** – MURP recruitment challenges and potential lower graduation rate for Black or African American students were identified
- **Heavy teaching and service load** – heavy teaching and service loads for DURP faculty were identified and potentially increased support from teaching assistants suggested
- **Lack of a formal mentoring program for junior faculty** – considerable informal mentoring of junior faculty was acknowledged, lack of a formal mentoring program and guidelines were identified
- **Social interaction and outreach activities** – a reduction of social interactions between faculty, students, and alumni since DURPs move to the Boca Raton campus (from Fort Lauderdale) was identified, and re-engagement and social networking with alumni and local professionals recommended

Part 3: Program Review Response and Action Plan

As part of the response to the reviewer's recommendations and identification of challenges, the DURP faculty have taken the following initiatives/actions as a response to the review team's recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Recruitment

a) Better promotion of existing pathways, especially MURP degree, through college advisors, alumni, and current faculty and students. b) A more diverse faculty that mirrors the excellent diversity in the student body, could be another recruitment strategy. Diverse faculty are also likely to reach diverse target audiences. c) Networking and outreach are often the best recruitment strategies.

- a) DURP will update the MURP recruitment plan to make certain that it effectively addresses all the issues raised by the review team. The MURP Program Committee will also investigate elimination of GRE admissions requirement per review team suggestion.
- b) Please see Recommendation 2.
- c) DURP will review and update the department's networking and outreach strategy to include more intentional and increased outreach in the professional community in the region and with program alumni.

Recommendation 2: Faculty Diversity

Increase the diversity amongst the adjunct faculty, given that DURP is do heavily dependent on adjuncts to meet its teaching mission and transforming the diversity profile of the full-time faculty is a slow process especially in the current environment where many budgets are frozen or declining.

- DURP will formalize the process for increasing diversity amongst the adjunct faculty in its departmental Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

Recommendation 3: Mentoring

a) The Department should create a more formalized mentoring program for junior faculty and adjunct faculty. While a mentor is currently assigned to each new tenure track faculty, there are no guidelines or expectations for this mentor-mentee relationship. b) A clear path to student mentoring is recommended, e.g. connecting every MURP student to an area alum for advice on the profession and career pathways.

- DURP will develop formal guidelines for mentoring of junior faculty and student mentoring. An ad hoc faculty committee, consisting of junior and senior faculty, will be created to develop these guidelines.

Recommendation 4: Dedicated Funding

Lack of dedicated funding for continuous appointments for adjunct faculty, new faculty hires (these could be tenure stream, instructor or professors of practice), studio space, and students. For example, graders (at \$500-600 per course) could be hired to support faculty with large classes.

- DURP will continue to use salary release funds from faculty buy-outs for adjunct faculty.
- New DURP full-time research active faculty will be hired jointly with a pillar and align with FAU's strategic plan.
- DURP is currently in discussions with a potential donor to help fund the cost of outfitting a classroom for use as a dedicated studio space. DURP is working on identifying appropriate classroom space for this purpose at FAU, and will seek permission from the Dean and FAU's space committee to convert such space.
- Graders will be hired for faculty who request such teaching support from existing DURP funds.

Recommendation 5: Curricula Enhancements

Strategic planning for scheduling of low enrollment electives in all three DURP programs is recommended, e.g., offer fewer electives in any one semester by staggering elective courses (offered

once every alternate year) to successfully recruit students. Three new suggested electives are Landscape Design, Economic Development and Real Estate Development.

- DURP is offering fewer electives each year and staggering these offerings.
- Economic Development and Real Estate Development courses are already offered (the title of the latter course will be changed to better reflect its content).
- DURP's Undergraduate Programs Committee will review the Landscape Design course suggestion this year (to benefit BUD students aiming to study landscape architecture at master's level).

Recommendation 6: Partner with existing PhD programs

Partnering with existing PhD programs and creating a planning track would allow DURP faculty to supervise dissertations.

- Some DURP faculty are affiliates with the Department of Geosciences, and one faculty is already supervising students/serving on student doctoral committees in that department.
- Discussions with Department of Geosciences about DURP's formal participation in their PhD program are planned for the near future.
- DURP continues discussions with others about a possible interdisciplinary program.

Recommendation 7: Long-term Suggestion - STEM designation for BURP and MURP programs

If the Department is interested in attracting a more international students, the STEM designation for BURP and MURP programs will allow international students to get an extra year of Optional Practical Training (OPT) in the US. This will require a change in CIP codes.

- DURP faculty have decided to pursue STEM designation for BURP and MURP programs.

Recommendation 8: Long-term Suggestion - Accreditation for the BURP program

Currently only the MURP program is accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). The Department could take another look at the possibility of accrediting its BURP as well. An accredited BURP degree is enough for students wanting entry level positions in the planning profession. There are many universities across the nation that have both an accredited undergraduate and graduate degree.

- The PAB is currently considering the possibility of implementing a new policy that would have different requirements for undergraduate and graduate programs, which would eliminate curriculum replication that was previously an issue. DURP awaits PAB decision prior to pursuing BURP accreditation.

CECOS 2020: Academic Program Review

Department of Urban and Regional Planning



Program Review: Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP)

DURP Program Review Committee:

Dr. Aaron Golub – Portland State University

Dr. Zenia Kotval – Michigan State University

Dr. Mihaela Cardei* – Florida Atlantic University, College of Engineering and Computer Science

* Denotes Committee Chair



DURP: Mission and Degree Programs

“Our mission is to prepare planning professionals and researchers for national and global practice by promoting the ideals of social responsibility, sustainability, equity, diversity, and public service.”

Three Degree Programs:

Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning (BURP)

Bachelor of Urban Design (BUD)

Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP)

Graduate Certificate in Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Ph.D. Programs in partnership with Geosciences



In 2019-2020 serving:

182 undergraduate majors

48 graduate students

2019-2020 Faculty:

10 fulltime

8 adjuncts



DURP Highlights: Distinctive Degree Programs



The **Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP)** is one of four accredited programs in Florida and the only one in the largest metropolitan area in Florida: Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach.

MURP students have won the **statewide Student Planner of the Year award six times** in the past seven years.

The Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning (BURP) and Bachelor of Urban Design (BUD) (a STEM program) are the **only undergraduate programs in those fields in Florida.**

The Graduate Pathways program gives qualified BArch, BUD, and BURP students **advanced standing in the MURP program.**



DURP Highlights: Research Strengths



Research strengths in key areas of direct relevance to the South Florida community:

Transportation planning, including accessibility and road safety

Environmental planning, including assessment of threats from sea level rise

Housing and community development, including analysis of local housing markets

Health and the built environment, including understanding how urban design affects healthy aging



DURP Highlights: Research on Health and the Built Environment

Collaborations with FAU's I-HEALTH Pillar for innovative initiatives on health aging and the built environment.

Researchers with experience as epidemiologist at the **Centers for Disease Control**.

Researchers received a **large five-year grant from the National Institute on Aging** to support studies on the relationships between aspects of neighborhood design, such as walkability and green space, and **healthy aging**.



DURP Highlights: Community Outreach on Planning Issues

Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions hosts a **regular series of continuing education events in collaboration with local organizations**, such as the Urban Land Institute and the American Planning Association.

Events across South Florida.

Event collaborations with leaders in the field: Leading urbanist Richard Florida: “The Key to Recovery: How Can South Florida Cities Thrive after COVID-19?”

Courses with **applied service-learning components**



DURP Highlights: Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion is integral to urban and regional planning's research, teaching, and internal practices.

The Urban and Regional Planning (URP) Diversity Committee's **"Diversity and Inclusion Plan"** was featured as a best practice by the **Planning Accreditation Board**, the accrediting agency for the MURP program.

The URP Diversity Committee is developing a series of **panel discussions on diversity and urban planning**.



DURP: Select Program Review Recommendations/Action Plans

- **Identify and outfit appropriate space for a dedicated studio for BUD program students.**

Action: DURP has identified a classroom for conversion and is working with a potential donor to help fund outfitting of this classroom for use as dedicated studio space.

- **Secure STEM designation for BURP and MURP programs.**

Action: DURP faculty have voted on this and decided to pursue STEM designation for BURP and MURP which will require a change in CIP codes. This designation will attract more international students to BURP and MURP programs.

- **Consider accreditation from the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) for the BURP program.**

Action: The PAB is considering the possibility of implementing a new policy that would have different requirements for undergraduate and graduate programs, which would eliminate curriculum replication that was previously an issue. DURP awaits PAB decision prior to pursuing BURP accreditation.

- **Implement a more formalized mentoring program for junior and adjunct faculty.**

Action: DURP will develop formal guidelines for mentoring of junior faculty and student mentoring. An ad hoc faculty committee, consisting of junior and senior faculty, will be created to develop these guidelines.

- **Increase faculty diversity.**

Action: DURP will formalize the process for increasing diversity amongst the adjunct faculty in its departmental Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

