

Strategic Plan 2013-18
Urban and Regional Planning
Michigan State University

Preamble/ Process Used

The overall vision/ mission of the program is “to create a sustainable built and natural environment that enriches communities through leadership, entrepreneurial creativity, social responsibility, and environmentally sustainable planning and policy.”

More specific mission:

1. Teaching: To provide future practitioners the knowledge, practical skills, and values to enable them to become effective planners, and to improve the quality of urban places and regions;
2. Research: To conduct and disseminate research on the “theory and practice” of urban society to plan for more equitable and sustainable communities, and
3. Outreach: To address community problems by linking knowledge and practice, and facilitating mutual learning between community and university.

This MSU URP strategic plan meets the spirit of the criteria set forth by PAB, namely:

“The strategic plan must address the program’s vision; its definition of mission fulfillment; the elements identified as necessary to carry out the plan (including financial resources); the process by which the strategic plan is developed, refreshed, and disseminated; and a method for evaluating progress and making improvements.” PAB, *The Accreditation Document*, p. 9.

We developed an expanded version of five-year GOALS in collaboration among 19 faculty, students, and alumni during a facilitated session held on April 23, 2013. We considered the need to develop a plan guided by the following passages:

“Goals must be meaningful in the sense that they aim toward excellence beyond that which may already exist, while taking into account the particular characteristics of a program, including its opportunities and constraints. Goals must be inclusively developed with participation of members of the program’s community.” (PAB, *The Accreditation Document*, page 6)

“[Rationale] Program goals should reflect its long-range aspirations and must be stated in terms that are sufficiently clear and concrete for use in generating shorter-range objectives and in assessing the success of the program.” (PAB Self-Study template, p. 5)

Strategic Plan

NOTE: Goals cover five to seven years; objectives cover 2013-14 and will need to be updated periodically thereafter.

Goal #1: Provide excellent instruction which prepares students to be professional planners through a curriculum emphasizing general and specialized knowledge, practice, technical skills, and core values of the planning profession.

Objective 1: Consult PAB list of required core knowledge, skills, and values

Objective 2: Conduct gap analysis between existing core list and PAB list

Objective 3: Develop pre/post test (201/494 and 801/894) to assess student learning

Measures: take excerpt of AICP exam and test knowledge, skills, and values; conduct focus groups to talk about “what is planning” to get individual assessments; interview/oral exam to measure verbal skills, critical thinking skills, etc.; technically written essay

Goal #2: Enhance the curriculum in technical and practical skills applicable in the planning job market.

Objective 1: Assess standards and input received regarding curriculum needs

Activity 1: Field alumni survey and compile responses

Input from Strategic Retreat: technical skills (autocad, SPSS/SASS, urban design), knowledge (site plan review, coding, master plan review/audit, technical and opinion memo, public administration), soft skills (personality tests, facilitation, conflict resolution, negotiation, leadership)

Objective 2: Consider where suggestions can be incorporated into current curriculum

Activity 1: Revise current courses to include new content. Ensure that skills taught in lower level classes are reinforced in upper classes

Activity 2: Consider external sources to address content that doesn't go into curriculum (e.g. MAP, Great Lakes Leadership Academy, Certificate program, student competition)

Activity 3: Consider new course to address content that doesn't go into curriculum

Measures: survey instrument, survey responses, notes from strategic retreat; matrix showing suggested content against existing courses, updated syllabi and course descriptions; list of gap content and matrix showing potential external sources, conversations with external sources

Goal #3: Promote URP faculty research to advance planning for more equitable and sustainable communities.

Objective 1: Assess faculty productivity

Objective 2: Consider mechanisms to increase productivity

Objective 3: Define specific research themes that leverage assets (e.g. focus on positioning Michigan globally, involve more outreach faculty on grants, look for cross-unit collaboration on research and grants)

Objective 4: Build research-related ties with other universities

Measures: productivity (grants, papers), productivity boosting plan, clearly communicated research themes that are publicly available, collaborations

Goal #4: Enhance and systematize addressing community problems by partnering knowledge and practice, facilitating mutual learning of university and community.

Objective 1: Develop a formalized mentoring program, in both traditional public and non-profit or private sector, and for both domestic and international students

Objective 2: Improve service learning by ensuring that students are mastering it before reaching practicum offering a variety of mechanisms to practice it (e.g. internships, guided studies where students are teamed with a community to read a master plan, identify a problem, and then bring solutions to the community)

Objective 3: Link URPSA with identification of internship/ job shadowing opportunities

Objective 4: Host a research forum, such as with IPPSR

Measures: participation within the program and in the community, evidence (narrative) of enhanced systematization

Goal #5: Foster a sense of community among students, alumni, and faculty.

Objective 1: Improve alumni and stakeholder engagement through Facebook, LinkedIn, local events

Activity 1: Send postcard saying we've started a LinkedIn and Facebook presence

Objective 2: Increase communication with students

Activity 1: Develop comprehensive orientation

Activity 2: Develop curriculum guide that includes sequencing

Activity 3: Faculty attend URPSA meetings each semester to discuss issues

Objective 3: Engage a UP alumni advisory group, and a key-leader (shaping the built environment) advisory group

Objective 4: Identify alumni for school board

Objective 5: Develop a comprehensive communications plan

Activity 1: Develop alumni profiles

Activity 2: Develop regular communication between alumni and President and Deans that highlights the importance of planners in changing communities and attracting and retaining talent, and their role in economic development and place-making.

Activity 3: Update website based on communication plan

Measures: increased participation on social media sites; institutionalized student orientation; curriculum guide; increased student and alumni awareness of programmatic information; increased support from School, Dean, President; UP advisory group meets each semester; SPDC board has alumni representatives; communications plan and products; updated website