

JUNE 9, 2021

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN URBAN AND  
REGIONAL PLANNING STRATEGIC PLAN

M.S. URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM



Department of Planning  
and Landscape Architecture  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

## MASTER OF SCIENCE IN URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING STRATEGIC PLAN

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### PROCESS

The MS URPL Strategic Plan outlines goals and actions to guide and direct program operation, administration, and policy for the next 3–5 years. The plan was developed through a phased process that engaged faculty, staff, students, alumni, and other professional planners to provide input on overarching goals for the program and to suggest implementation mechanisms and performance measures.

The plan is consistent with the strategic plan for the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture [\[link here\]](#) and reflects the mission and values of the University of Wisconsin–Madison [\[link here\]](#), and the College of Letters & Science [\[link here\]](#).

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### MISSION STATEMENT

As an accredited master’s degree program in Urban and Regional Planning program, we will:

1. Provide a student-focused learning environment that facilitates the education and professional development of future planners and the continuous refinement of the field of planning.
  2. Educate current and future practitioners in the knowledge, theories, and skills to be informed, effective, and reflective planners and leaders.
  3. Embrace the values of sustainability, equity, and justice and reflect these values in collaborations with communities in Wisconsin, and across the globe, to address the structure and function of the built environment within the evolving context of climatic, ecological, economic, and social change.
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### DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Diversity refers to demographic, social, and philosophical differences that people contribute to and learn about in the MS URPL program. We use UW–Madison’s working definition of diversity that includes: race and ethnicity; sex; gender and gender identity or expression; marital status; age; sexual orientation; country of origin; language; disability; socio-economic status; and affiliations that are based on cultural, political, religious, or other identities. Equity refers to the distribution of benefits and costs associated with the MS URPL program. We emphasize both access to learning and professional development, as well as the outcomes associated with learning and professional development, as the primary benefits the program will distribute with fairness and concern for justice. Inclusion refers to the subjective feelings of belonging, being valued and respected, and feeling safe, productive, and empowered in the MS URPL program’s physical and social environments.

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## STRATEGIC GOALS

### STRATEGIC GOAL 1

**Sustain an empowering organizational climate and culture that models and affirms a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.**

**Institutionalize.** Infuse DEI principles into all levels of program [and department] decision-making and planning through annual DEI activities for faculty, students, and staff (e.g., retreat, engagement at meetings) that highlight positive progress and identify areas for change with a priority list of actions and implementation timeline.

**Align.** Create a standing working group within the MS URPL program comprising students, faculty, the graduate advisor, a representative from the department's Curriculum Committee, and other partners that will annually critically review and develop more course content, as well as pedagogical methods, that elevate diversity, equity, and inclusion principles.

**Participate.** Participate in the DPLA Committee for Climate and Community as a forum for regular department-wide reflection and accountability for students, faculty, and staff.

**Share.** Enhance department communications and use of space to build community. Expand opportunities for students to provide honest feedback on their experiences of classroom teaching, advising, and other program elements.

### STRATEGIC GOAL 2

**Refine and expand how the MS UPRL program educates current and future planners who aspire to become leaders in their field.**

**Continuously improve.** Adopt a continuous improvement mindset to ensure the effectiveness of advising and teaching through ongoing faculty and staff professional development and innovation. Monitor this by documenting program innovations and participation by faculty, staff, and students.

**Focus.** Focus on student-centered outcomes of success, satisfaction, skills, professional development, and engagement in the planning profession, within the context of a positive departmental climate. Document these outcomes annually through student feedback (e.g., exit surveys) and other program assessment metrics (e.g., alumni surveys). Include improvements in infrastructure and capacity for student engagement in the planning curriculum.

**Align.** As a committee, review and update the content of at least one core curriculum course per semester to reflect: 1) changing local, national, and global socioeconomic and environmental conditions, and 2) the revised mission and goals of the MS URPL Strategic Plan. The review of all core plus structure and function courses, including those that faculty routinely update independently, will ensure that they: 1) reflect a broad range of communication, engagement, and analysis skills, including writing and pedagogical methods; 2) include content that elevates diversity, equity, and inclusion in planning; 3) recognize and reinforce

planning's social and environmental responsibility; 4) allow for exposure to and mastery of technology and tools for planning research and practice; 5) reflect PAB curriculum elements and standards.

**Hold ourselves accountable.** If/when we fall short of expectations for instruction in individual courses, the MS URPL program and DPLA will document and implement changes in teaching assignments and take additional corrective actions to address deficiencies; this could include requiring use of campus instructional resources (e.g., course observation, participation in teaching and learning training) to improve teaching, learning, and classroom climate outcomes.

**Connect with alumni and planning professionals.** Ensure that students are exposed to critical issues directly related to planning practice through internships, professional development, projects, etc. Facilitate internship, leadership, and project opportunities by improving tracking systems with employers (and alumni) and expanding connections with alumni for assistance with professional projects and for professional mentoring and advice; annually review opportunities with each student cohort.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3**

**Strengthen and expand connections to the many opportunities across DPLA, on campus, and beyond, that directly enrich students' learning and professional development.**

**Encourage student participation.** Proactively promote and encourage student engagement in departmental, campus, and other organizational leadership positions (locally to globally) by regularly sharing information about opportunities and organizations via multiple communication approaches, including at department events such as student orientation.

**Create experiences and opportunities.** Sponsor and organize at least one off-campus field trip per year addressing contemporary issues in planning in Wisconsin. These could be local, regional, state, national, or even international field trips. Use department resources to build internal capacity to maintain networks of professional relationships to provide students with opportunities for planning experience.

**Nurture collaborations.** Drawing upon faculty, staff, and alumni, help students make connections for collaborative experiences with professional planning organizations, First Nations, youth, and community-based organizations.

**Foster joint degrees and certificates.** Continue to support, foster, and leverage joint degree programs, graduate certificates, and relationships with Extension and other campus units by annually reviewing these opportunities with each student cohort.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 4**

**Engage in the Wisconsin Idea through professional planning activities and service to enable community-based learning experiences for students and faculty.**

**Apply best practices.** Use informed practices for community-engaged scholarship and pedagogy, such as carefully considering the project history, dimensions of DEI, capacity of students and faculty to engage, the appropriate deliverable specifications, and ability to meet community expectations. Clearly articulate this expectation and ensure that this action is continuous and applies to every community interaction.

**Encourage breadth of community experiences.** Throughout the year when advising and sharing opportunities for learning and applied projects, remain mindful of the breadth and diversity of community engagement opportunities across the urban-rural continuum, including an emphasis on engagement with underserved communities.

**Provide resources.** Each semester, discuss needs and opportunities with students, faculty, and staff and share resources to include: 1) mini-grants for student-led initiatives; 2) connections to established UW programs (e.g., UniverCity Alliance, Morgridge Center for Public Service, Division of Extension) to develop partnerships and identify project opportunities; 3) identification of opportunities for collaboration with DPLA Research and Outreach programs (Earth Partnership, Kaufman Lab, Health and Built Environment Lab, Environmental Design Lab) in courses, professional development, and projects.

**Engage alumni and professionals.** Ensure alumni and professional planning networks are involved in opportunities for community engagement related to the MS URPL program.

**Institutionalize and hold ourselves accountable.** Annually, engage with other DPLA degree programs to evaluate and review completed projects to identify successes and opportunities for improvement and change.

## **STRATEGIC GOAL 5**

**Recruit and support a diversity of students and faculty who have a passion for urban and regional planning.**

**Enhance program diversity.** Implement the department's cross-program recruitment plan emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Communicate the value of our program.** Clarify and articulate the Wisconsin brand/reputation for the MS URPL program and integrate into program communication and recruitment materials. Support efforts such as a revitalized PLA lecture series and other seminars and workshops/events that build community with and across the five DPLA academic programs.

**Support outreach.** As a program (and with students where feasible), participate in educational programming and professional development targeting primary, secondary, and higher education (including community colleges).

**Strengthen our alumni community.** Cultivate a base of vibrant and engaged alumni as a resource for professional development, mentoring, and recruitment of new students into the program and of graduates into employment through communications and engagement with the Alumni Relations Council.

**Develop resources for student support.** Help students identify and find financial support for their education.