2012-2013 Assessment Report
Program: Community Planning, MCP

College of Architecture, Design & Construction
School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape Arch.
Community Planning, MCP

Expected Outcome 1: Professional competence/planning knowledge
Graduating students will have the knowledge required to perform effectively as professional planners in the public and private sectors.

Assessment Method 1: Professional certification/comprehensive exam

Assessment Method Description
Based on the results of the mandatory comprehensive exam that is administered at the end of the second semester of the program, identify areas of disciplinary knowledge within the program curriculum that are strong, as well as areas that need to be improved and reinforced.

The organization of this exam is based on the professional AICP exam (American Institute of Certified Planners), and comprises 10 multiple choice questions for each of the eight areas of knowledge defined by Planning Accreditation Board standards (see below).

The exam is scored according to the percentage of correct answers in each of the above eight areas of knowledge; the final score is based on the total of correct answers in the test. In order to pass the test, students must achieve a final overall score of 70%. Students who fail to pass the exam are given one more opportunity to do so.

The grading format of the exam allows the detailed analysis of student performance in each of the eight areas of knowledge (question by question).

Findings
The mandatory comprehensive exam was administered to 9 students in May of 2013. For the first time urban design course material was included in the exam (a change from the 2012 exam). The results of the exam were tracked using AU SCANTRON.

Analysis of the results showed the following with regard to the number of questions answered correctly in each disciplinary area:

Introduction to Community Planning 93% (up from 68% in 2012)
Quantitative Methods  89% (up from 87% in 2012)
Urban Economics  87% (up from 78% in 2012)
Planning History and Theory  86% (down from 95% in 2012)
Digital Applications  82% (up from 69% in 2012)
Planning Law and Ethics  81% (down from 98% in 2012)
Urban Design  72% (first time included in exam)
History and Theory of Urban Form  67% (down 1% from 2012)

**How did you use findings for improvement?**

Based on the 2012 results of the comprehensive exam, the faculty held a peer review session of the following courses: Introduction to Community Planning, History and Theory of Urban Form and Planning History and Theory. Revisions were made to the content and delivery of those courses in order to gain increased clarity and effectiveness in desired knowledge-based learning outcomes.

The results of the 2013 comprehensive exam will be analyzed in comparison with the 2012 results in order to determine which courses require further modification. Two types of findings will be reviewed: courses where the exam results were below 80%, and courses where exam scores were lower than the 2012 results, regardless of whether or not the 2013 results were above 80%.

Specifically, in the faculty peer review session, the learning outcomes for the Introduction to Community Planning course were clarified and reduced to a manageable number. The course syllabus was modified to specifically relate the assessment of learning outcomes to specific assignments and exams. 2013 exam results indicate a marked improvement in this area (from 68% to 93% questions answered correctly).

In the same peer review session, faculty identified areas of redundancy and overlap in the content of the courses related to the knowledge areas of History and Theory of Urban Form, and Planning History and Theory. Both of these areas showed a decline in the number of correct answers in the 2013 exam results, which the faculty attributed to the above mentioned redundancy in the area of planning history, at the expense of content related to planning theory. The decision was made to modify the relevant courses by increasing the content related to planning theory in one course and the content related to planning history in the other course.

In addition, as a result of the 2013 exam, the format of the exam questions in the area of the History and Theory of Urban Form will be reviewed and, if
necessary, revised if found inappropriate.

Also as a result of the 2013 exam, the method for the assessment of material related to urban design, which is offered in studio format in the curriculum, will be reconsidered in order to ensure that the exam format is appropriate for the assessment of the related learning outcomes.

Additional Comments

**Expected Outcome 2: Professional competence/ planning skills**

Graduating students will have the research skills and written and oral expression-related skills necessary for the effective assembly, analysis, application and presentation of information and concepts from planning practice and practice-oriented scholarship.

**Assessment Method 1: Proposal and presentation of peer-reviewed research papers**

**Assessment Method Description**

This outcome is measured through the successful presentation of peer-reviewed student research papers at professional conferences. Specifically, during the 2012-2013 academic year, students were encouraged to present paper proposals to the American Planning Association (APA) Annual Conference that was held Columbus, GA in September 2012. For the first time, this annual conference opened a track for practice-oriented research papers written by graduate students in the planning field.

Paper proposals (abstracts) for the 2012 APA annual conference were peer-reviewed by the APA Student Planning Committee, which consisted of faculty representatives from five different regional academic institutions, a professional practitioner, and the Georgia APA Director of Programs. Students were asked to submit a paper abstract to this committee, and proposals were ranked based on criteria related to professionalism and academic rigor.

**Findings**

28 proposals were submitted by students from nine institutions; 21 paper proposals were accepted.

Auburn University was one of only two institutions out of the nine that submitted more than 5 student paper proposals.

Auburn planning students also achieved the second highest acceptance rate of papers submitted (4 out of 7 papers submitted were accepted = 57%). Only one school achieved a higher acceptance rate (6 out of 10 papers accepted = 60%).
How did you use findings for improvement?
Students who presented papers at the 2012 APA Annual Conference will present their papers to joint faculty and student review sessions, in order a) to help other students understand the research paper format, and b) provide students with a consistently more rigorous and professional method and structure for writing and presenting papers.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, with the goal of improving the acceptance rate, student papers being considered for submission to the 2013 APA Annual conference will be analyzed by faculty members to detect strengths and weaknesses. Based on these findings, students will be tutored by the Miller Writing Center before submitting paper proposals. This analysis will be conducted based on the rubric used by the APA Student Planning Committee as criteria for choosing papers. After the 2013 annual APA conference, further analysis will be conducted using this rubric, based on a comparison of the papers accepted for the 2012 and 2013 conferences.

Additional Comments

Expected Outcome 3: Professional outcomes/ planning knowledge, skills and values
Graduating students will understand and be able to effectively apply the planning knowledge, skills and values as defined by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB).

Assessment Method 1: Exit survey of graduating students
Assessment Method Description
An exit survey based on the required learning outcomes determined by the PAB in the document "Self-Study Report Manual & Template" was administered to graduating students.

Findings
4 students out of 9 responded to the survey, with the following results based on a rating scale of 5.0 being the highest and 1.0 being the lowest.

Planning knowledge learning outcomes / 4.17 average:
Purpose and meaning of planning (4.75)
Planning theory (4.25)
Planning law (4.0)
Human settlements (4.0)
The future (4.25)
Global dimensions of planning (3.75)

Planning skills learning outcomes/ 3.67 average:
Research (3.25)
Written, oral and graphic communication (3.5)
Quantitative and qualitative methods (3.75)
Plan creation and implementation (3.5)
Planning process methods (4.5)
Leadership (3.5)

Planning values learning outcomes/ 4.2 average:
Professional ethics and responsibility (4.0)
Governance and participation (3.5)
Sustainability and environmental quality (4.5)
Growth and development (4.5)
Social justice (4.5)

How did you use findings for improvement?
From the results of the 2013 exit survey the planning faculty concluded that learning outcomes in the area of professional competence/skills need to be clarified and improved. Therefore, in revising the program mission as part of the strategic planning process in 2013, special emphasis was placed on the delivery of course content through hands-on learning experiences and reiterative planning methods in order to provide students with numerous, consistent opportunities to develop and refine plan-making skills. These skills include developing processes for project synthesis; communication (written, oral and graphic); 2D and 3D representation and visualization; applied research; and participatory planning processes. For the 2013-2014 assessment process, analysis of these skills will be concentrated in the evaluation of studio courses and second-year seminars.

The same exit survey will be administered to students graduating from the
program in 2014, and

the results will be compared with the 2013 results during the annual faculty peer review session dedicated to the assessment of program learning outcomes, in order to detect areas which require further improvement.

Additional Comments