Expected Outcome 1: Professional Competence/Planning Skills
Graduating students will have the research and presentation skills necessary for the effective assembly, analysis, application and presentation of information and concepts from planning practice and practice-oriented scholarship.

Assessment Method 1: Submission of student research and scholarship work (papers, oral and poster presentations) at regional and national peer-reviewed venues.

Assessment Method Description
This outcome is measured through the successful presentation of peer-reviewed student work at professional conferences.

Findings
After the success at presenting to the regional conference of the American Planners Association (APA) in AY 2012–2013, during AY 2013–2014 students were encouraged to make paper and poster presentations to the national conference of the APA, and also to submit entries to the student competition sponsored by the Alabama chapter of the APA. The rubric used for evaluating these results applied a higher multiplier to the national presentations than to the regional presentations, with the results presented in the below table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th></th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From AY 2012–2013 to AY 2013–2014, there was an overall increase in the number of student presentations accepted at professional
conferences (from 4 to 7), and an increase in the number of national presentations (from 0 – 5). Using the multipliers of 1 for regional presentations and 2 for national presentations, this brought the overall result for 2013 – 2014 to a total of 12, an increase of 300% from the 2012 – 2013 total of 4.

**How did you use findings for improvement?**
During faculty review of this outcome, it was determined that consistent faculty mentoring was the most important factor in the success rate for the presentation of student work at professional conferences. During the 2014 – 2015 assessment period, students will continue to be encouraged to present their work at these events, and will be assigned to specific faculty mentors (of their choosing, if possible). Faculty also discussed adding international venues to the strategy for the presentation of student work, and will help students identify these opportunities during the 2014 – 2015 assessment period.

**Additional Comments**

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**Expected Outcome 2: 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 that are strong, as well as areas that need to be improved and reinforced.

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

The exam is scored according to the percentage of correct answers in each of the eight areas; the final score is based on the total of correct answers given 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 in each of the eight areas of planning knowledge (question by question).

Findings
The mandatory comprehensive exam was administered to 9 students on May 5, 2014. The results of the exam were tracked using AU SCANTRON. Eight of the nine students passed the exam on the initial round; the ninth student retook the exam and also passed.

MCP Comprehensive Exam
Percent of questions correctly answered by area of knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area/ course</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>% +/- 2012 - 2014</th>
<th>% +/- 2013 to 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Community Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>+16%</td>
<td>-9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Methods</td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>-3%</td>
<td>-5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Economics</td>
<td></td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>+5%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning History and Theory</td>
<td></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>-7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Law and Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>+1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Applications in Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>+9%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Design</td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>+17%</td>
<td>+17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Theory of Urban Form</td>
<td></td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>-1%</td>
<td>+/-0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did you use findings for improvement?
For the 2012 – 2013 assessment period it was reported that the format of the exam questions in the area of the History and Theory of Urban Form would be reviewed and, if necessary, revised if found inappropriate. However, because of the unforeseen announcement of the retirement of the faculty member who teaches that course, modifications to the format of questions related to that area of competence were postponed until the 2014 – 2015 assessment period, in order to be discussed with the participation of the faculty member who will be assigned to the course in the future.

For the 2012 – 2013 assessment period it was also reported that the method for the assessment of material related to the area of urban design/studio would be reconsidered. As a result of this evaluation and reconsideration, the relation between studio projects and the principal text assigned to the course was strengthened and made more explicit.
The goal was to achieve greater integration between the theory and principles presented in the readings and the practical application of those principles in the studio projects. Questions for the exam were specifically based on the planning principles that were introduced in the course texts and discussed frequently in class. The 2014 comprehensive exam results show marked improvement in this area, from 72% in 2013 to 89% in 2014. This strategy for improving the results for the learning outcome in this area will continue to be implemented during AY 2014 – 2014.

An analysis of the 2014 comprehensive exam results show that, although many of the areas manifested a decline in the number of questions answered correctly from 2013 to 2014 (Introduction to Community Planning, Quantitative Methods, Urban Economics, Planning History and Theory and Digital Applications), only two areas have shown an accumulated decline of more than 15% in the period between 2012 and 2014: Planning History and Theory and Planning Law and Ethics. The questions asked on the exam in these two areas will be reviewed by the program faculty during the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters, as will the content and format of the related courses, in order to determine how the relation between the two has negatively affected performance on the comprehensive exam in these areas. Concrete suggestions for modification will be made and implemented during the Spring 2015 semester, and evaluated in the program review scheduled for May 2015.

In addition to these two areas, in accordance with the guidelines established for this outcome in the 2012 – 2013 assessment period, all of the areas where the exam results for 2014 were below 80% will be reviewed by the faculty (History and Theory of Urban Form and Digital Applications), as will all of the courses where exam scores were lower in 2014 than in 2013 (all of the courses, with the exception of Urban Design). These will be reviewed and evaluated as part of the program review scheduled for May 2015.

**Additional Comments**

**Assessment Method 2:** Professional Competence/ Planning Skills

**Expected Outcome 3: Professional competence/ 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 outcomes determined by the PAB in
the document “Self-Study Report Manual & Template” was administered to graduating students.

Findings
3 students out of 10 responded to the survey (please see note below), with the following results based on a rating of scale of 5.0 being the highest and 1.0 being the lowest.

**Planning knowledge learning outcomes** 3.94 average (down 0.23 from 2013)
- Purpose and meaning of planning: 4.67 (down 0.08 from 2013)
- Planning theory: 4.33 (up 0.08 from 2013)
- Planning law: 4.33 (up 0.33 from 2013)
- Human settlements: 4.33 (up 0.33 from 2013)
- The future: 4.00 (down 0.25 from 2013)
- Global dimensions of planning: 2.00 (down 1.75 from 2013)

**Planning skills learning outcomes** 3.88 average (up 0.22 from 2013)
- Research: 4.33 (up 1.08 from 2013)
- Written, oral and graphic communication: 4.00 (up 0.50 from 2013)
- Quantitative and qualitative methods: 3.67 (down 0.08 from 2013)
- Plan creation and implementation: 4.00 (up 0.50 from 2013)
- Planning process methods: 4.33 (down 0.17 from 2013)
- Leadership: 3.00 (down 0.50 from 2013)

**Planning values learning outcomes** 3.73 (down 0.47 from 2013)
- Professional ethics and responsibility: 3.67 (down 0.33 from 2013)
- Governance and participation: 4.00 (up 0.50 from 2013)
- Sustainability and environmental quality: 4.00 (down 0.50 from 2013)
- Growth and development: 4.33 (down 0.17 from 2013)
- Social justice: 2.67 (down 1.83 from 2013)

How did you use findings for improvement?
Although only 3 out of 10 graduating students responded to the survey (30%), the results did give us a limited basis for the evaluation of this learning outcome over the past academic year. The survey results indicate that the emphasis placed on planning skills during AY 2013 – 2014 was positive: this is the only outcome of the three (knowledge, skills and values) that showed improvement (average score up from 3.67 in 2013 to 3.88 in 2014). This improvement is slight, however, and based on limited data; it needs to be further verified over the 2014 – 2015 assessment period. Program faculty will continue to emphasize the delivery of course content through hands-on learning experiences and by providing students with numerous opportunities to develop and refine plan-making skills. For the 2014 – 2015 assessment process, analysis of planning skills outcomes will continue to be concentrated in the evaluation of studio courses and second-year seminars.

The lower scores in the outcomes related to planning knowledge and planning values appear to be directly related serious drops in the scores for the specific areas of global dimensions of planning (planning knowledge) and social justice (planning values). During the 2014 – 2015 assessment process, and specifically the program review in Spring 2015, the MCP faculty will focus on these two areas and will formulate a proposal for how they can be given a more integral and robust role in course content and delivery, and how results in these specific areas will be evaluated.

It was also determined by the MCP faculty that it is essential to achieve a higher response to the exit survey in order for this assessment method to be truly effective. Students will be asked to address specific issues directly related to these three areas (planning knowledge, skills and values) during midterm and final projects reviews for the Spring 2015 Synthesis Studio; this will heighten their awareness of these expected program outcomes and clarify the questions that they are asked on the survey. Starting Spring 2015, completing the exit survey will also be required for graduation from the program. The survey will also be administered at a somewhat earlier date so that the results can be evaluated as part of the Spring 2015 program review process.

*During the Spring 2014 semester, a decision was reached by the CADC and APLA leadership to voluntarily suspend PAB accreditation for the Master of Community Planning program. The 2013 – 2014 and 2014 – 2015 assessment reports will continue to be based on the criteria defined by the PAB as the basis for evaluating Expected Outcomes 1 and 3.