

External Evaluation Report

Form 2D

The External Evaluation Report is an important component of a new academic program proposal. The external evaluator's task is to examine the program proposal and related materials, visit the campus to discuss the proposal with faculty and review related instructional resources and facilities, respond to the questions in this Report form, and submit to the institution a signed report that speaks to the quality of, and need for, the proposed program. The report should aim for completeness, accuracy and objectivity.

The institution is expected to review each External Evaluation Report it receives, prepare a single institutional response to all reports, and, as appropriate, make changes to its program proposal and plan. Each separate External Evaluation Report and the Institutional Response become part of the full program proposal that the institution submits to SUNY for approval. If an external evaluation of the proposed program is required by the State Education Department (SED), SUNY includes the External Evaluation Reports and Institutional Response in the full proposal that it submits to SED for registration.

Institution: *State University of New York, Albany*

Evaluator Name (Please print.): *Marijoan Bull, PhD, AICP*

Evaluator Title and Institution: *Associate Professor Geography & Regional Planning, Westfield State University, Westfield, Massachusetts*

Evaluator Signature:



Proposed Program Title: *Urban Studies and Planning*

Degree: *B.A. Urban Studies and Planning*

Date of evaluation: *February 26-28, 2014*

I. Program

1. Assess the program's **purpose, structure, and requirements** as well as formal mechanisms for program **administration and evaluation**. Address the program's academic rigor and intellectual coherence.

*The Geography and Planning Department (Department) has been offering the faculty-initiated interdisciplinary major, Urban Studies and Planning (USP), since 1995. This major provides a broad liberal arts foundation for exploring urban processes and introduces planning as a problem-solving approach. **It has an established track-record of meeting an interest of undergraduates, while preparing them for diverse graduate programs and employment.** Urbanization has been a major force in shaping the modern world and over half of the world's population (and rising) now lives in urban areas. **The topic of the USP degree is relevant to our future and the interdisciplinary approach well suited, as no one discipline can lay claim to all things urban.** It has been observed, "The world has problems, but universities have*

departments.”¹ This major combats this shortcoming as students examine settlement patterns, development, and human/environment interactions in a holistic manner. The course of study draws from two innately interdisciplinary fields (geography and planning) while also requiring students to seek a richer understanding by integrating the lens and knowledge of other disciplines.

The degree requirements are highly flexible allowing students to make choices governed by their interests. A core of four courses is the only aspect of the degree common to all USP majors. These four courses cover urban processes, American development patterns through history, global cities, and the basics of American urban planning. There may be some duplication within these four courses, yet students (especially early in their studies) can benefit from such resonance. Majors choose one methodology course from five offerings; one community engagement course from five offerings; four electives from 19 upper level geography and planning offerings; and two courses from an extensive list of offerings in cognate disciplines. Reviewing the listing, some themes possible for self-directed USP degrees are: community development and economics; pluralism and placemaking; history and heritage planning; the city of literature, film, and steel; and environmental policy and planning. Again, the emphasis is the choice of the student – and many more possibilities exist. **Students who define a focus area take on a high degree of personal responsibility for their education, and the accompanying task of presenting a case for the coherence of their choices.** Students must practice integrative thinking and synthesis of approaches as they articulate, and have approved, a sound course of study.

It appears that the methodology offerings are in fact more narrow than this listing due to natural course evolution, and Methods of Urban Analysis is a new course offering. One suggestion, of course with due consideration to the demands of teaching rotations, is to have all USP majors take the new Methods of Urban Analysis methodology course. By its description it would be appropriate for all majors, and further many of the students end up taking some of the other methodology courses to complete a GIS certificate. It does not appear this would be burdensome on the students, as after completing the requirements of general education, the major, and a minor, there is still room for electives. **Another specified requirement would also serve to strengthen the identity of the highly flexible degree.**

I commend the inclusion of a Community Engagement requirement in the USP degree. The 2012 AACU report, *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*, establishes how undergraduate education needs to set the stage for lifelong civic involvement.² **This type of course is considered a “high impact” learning activity³ and offers experiential learning that can challenge theory and enrich course discussions.** Such real world learning is vital for

¹ Gary D. Brewer, “The Challenges of Interdisciplinarity.” *Policy Sciences* 32 (1999): 328.

² The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*. (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012), http://www.aacu.org/civic_learning/crucible/documents/crucible_508F.pdf .

³ LEAP Campus Toolkit, “High Impact Educational Practices,” accessed March 3, 2014, http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/wp-content/files/mf/hips_list.pdf .

students interested in urban development issues and it is in such courses that students can be reflective about their positionality and test their theories of participation and change. **The Community Engagement courses also require working in a team – a skill highly valued by employers.**⁴

The program proposal (dated May 14, 2012) outlines eight learning outcomes for the major. These appear straight forward and addressed by the associated curriculum. **One area I would like to see more explicitly considered is that of ethics.** While no doubt the ethics of urban processes are integrated into the courses (and more specifically the courses meeting the General Education 21st Century Challenges designation), I believe it important enough to appear in a stipulated manner. This may also mean the Department considers how the course selections designed by students directly cover ethical considerations—something most appropriately handled by the existing faculty.

Overall the degree structure meets the objective of being a broad based liberal arts degree, exposing students to a range of epistemologies, forms of learning, and topic areas within the realm of urban studies and planning. Majors have considerable latitude in designing a focus area of interest to them, while being exposed to the Department's other courses of study. Graduates are prepared for a wide range of options in employment and further study from international development, to public administration, environmental policy, and sociology, to name a few.

The program is administered by a Director who advises all majors on course selection and sequencing, and considers course substitutions if students can provide a solid rationale. The mid-sized department has a cooperative working environment, so Directors of the other undergraduate majors (Geography and Globalization) coordinate with this degree program. The major has already benefited from the monitoring and evaluation of Departmental leadership. Changes have been made to overcome some logistical issues for students (timing and elimination of offerings outside the Department) and to maintain currency by adding new offerings within and outside the Department. The program is evaluated as part of the Department assessment, completed on a seven year cycle. Given the Department's extensive programming, this is an appropriate cycle. The last such review led to the USP major proposal. The next full Department review is scheduled for the 2014/15 academic year. Evaluation and assessment are also addressed in questions below.

2. Comment on the special focus of this program, if any, as it relates to the discipline.

As one of three bachelor degrees in the Department all of which in some manner deal with space and urbanization, I would argue the special focus of this major is its introduction to planning. Planning as a career path is not widely known, and training is most often offered as a professional Master's Degree. This undergraduate degree serves as an introduction to a

⁴ AAC&U, "Top Ten Things Employers Look for in New College Graduates," accessed on March 5, 2014, <http://www.aacu.org/leap/students/employerstopten.cfm>.

profession that many of the program's graduates enter—the Department reports that approximately 30% of the first-year Masters of Regional Planning candidates completed the USP major, and other USP majors go on to study planning elsewhere. The USP degree program benefits greatly from being located within a Department with an accredited Master's in Regional Planning program. USP students can register for shared-resources courses, and avail themselves of the many other opportunities—such as speakers and events—that originate with the Master's program. The special focus on planning also benefits USP majors who choose alternate careers, as they graduate educated in important civic processes. **Whether or not they become professional planners, they graduate with a deeper understanding of how to be involved in decisions determining the future of the places they live.**

3. Comment on the plans and expectations for self-assessment and continuous improvement.

*As outlined during our site visit, there are several institutional processes that ensure the Department of Geography and Planning engages in self-assessment followed by program and department modifications. In a meeting with Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Research Planning Dr. Bruce Szelest, it was explained that department chairs meet annually with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences to establish one-year MOUs on short term objectives. General Education courses (some of the USP courses fall in this category) are reviewed on a three year cycle by the General Education Committee. A comprehensive review of each department is undertaken every seven years (including an outside evaluation), with changes following. Again, as stated above, this proposal is implementation of a recommendation originating from a Department review. **In addition, the Department is clearly proactive in developing programs to serve students and the wider community.** The new Bachelor Degree in Globalization, Minor in Sustainability, and Masters in Environmental GIS, reflect a Department fully engaged in responding to the needs of tomorrow.*

4. Discuss the relationship of this program to other programs of the institution and collaboration with other institutions, and assess available support from related programs.

As noted previously, Geography and Planning are by their very nature interdisciplinary in outlook and methodologies. More specifically, the USP major requires each student to take courses in other disciplines in order to achieve a “multi-disciplinary understanding of urban issues.”⁵ This effectively links the degree to programs at the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, and to other departments within the College of Arts and Sciences including the Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Science, Department of Economics, Department of Women's Studies, Department of History, and more. The demands from this degree program are so modest as to not require any additional resources, and the degree has been redesigned to be flexible enough for students to adjust course selection around the scheduling constraints of other departments. In addition to these, Geography and Planning has a close link with the Department of Informatics, the Lewis Mumford Center, International Education, and the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis. Faculty with joint appointments include: Professor

⁵ Senate Bill 1112-10, May 14, 2012, “Creation of Urban Studies and Planning Major,” 8.

Bromley with Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and US Latino Studies and Vice Provost for International Education; Professor Huang with East Asian Studies; Professor Lapenas with Department of Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences, and Professor Kwadwo A. Sarfoh of Africana Studies with Geography and Planning. Graduate students interested in Transportation Planning or Architecture can register for courses with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. **All of these connections enrich the experience of undergraduates either through direct opportunities, or through the integration of faculty research in course explorations.** As home to the new interdisciplinary Minor in Sustainability, the Department coordinates across many departments including: Biology, Environmental Science, History, Philosophy, and Geography and Planning.

These connections are strong and support the USP major. I would argue the Minor in Sustainability is especially important to the USP degree program as students, who are unaware of planning, may come to the University with an interest in environmental issues and familiarity with this term. **This Minor can serve as the doorway for students into the USP degree, as they learn how, essentially, planning is sustainability in action.** The Department should find ways to increase awareness of the new minor and make the Department's connection to the Sustainability Minor well known. An alternative would be to try and integrate "environment or environmental" into the USP title, as this would also help interested students to find the major. **Urbanization is inherently an issue of environmental management, yet for those early in their studies the term may not denote the connection.** A more explicit acknowledgment could assist those students drawn to understanding and improving the outcomes of human/environment interactions in finding an academic home.

5. What is the evidence of **need** and **demand** for the program locally, in the State, and in the field at large? What is the extent of occupational demand for graduates? What is the evidence that demand will continue?

According to the American Planning Association, approximately 2/3 of planners work in the public sector.⁶ The Capital Region has a concentration of public sector planning related jobs. USP majors may be eligible for entry level positions with state agencies, local governments, regional authorities, and non-profit groups. Nationally, jobs in the field of planning are projected to experience average growth rates in the coming years. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

Employment of urban and regional planners is projected to grow 10 percent from 2012 to 2022, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Population growth, economic conditions, and environmental concerns will drive employment growth for planners in cities, suburbs, and other areas.⁷

⁶ APA, "Salary Survey Summary," accessed on March 9, 2014, <https://www.planning.org/salary/summary.htm> .

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2014-15 Edition, Urban and Regional Planners, accessed on March 9, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/urban-and-regional-planners.htm>.

Not all USP majors will enter planning. Others may use the degree to pursue careers in Real Estate, International Development, Business, and more. The flexibility of the USP degree means students can choose a focus area such as economics or even sustainability and then pursue related jobs. In addition, many USP majors will decide to go on to graduate programs in related fields such as Planning, International Relations, Environmental Policy, and Geographic Information Systems and Spatial Analysis.

Many USP majors will obtain the Certificate in GIS. This skill set is in demand in the work force with the Bureaus of Labor Statistics projecting growth for “geographers” at 29% from 2012-2022,⁸ in large part due to the advancements in, and wider application of, spatial analysis.

II. Faculty

6. Evaluate the faculty, individually and collectively, with regard to training, experience, research and publication, professional service, and recognition in the field.

*The USP degree of the Department of Geography and Planning is well served by the eleven full-time faculty members (inclusive of a Visiting Professor). Within the constraints of this review it would not be possible to fully narrate all the accomplishments of the faculty members, which are briefly documented in the proposal. Here I highlight selected aspects of interest to the USP degree and rely on the additional documentation, available in the proposal, to more fully address this question. **The faculty are trained both in planning and geography, and a few examples of their notable scholarship include the areas of transportation planning and modeling (Lawson), environmental restoration/business incubation (Lewis), international development (Bromley), urbanization in China (Huang), and housing/community development (Sally).** In addition, members of the faculty bring practical experience to the classroom and their scholarship. As an interdisciplinary degree, USP benefits from the brownfields policy background of Professor Lewis, the international development background of Professor Bromley, the municipal planning experience of Professor Lawson, and the real estate experience of Professor Sally. **Another strength of this group of faculty is that their training is from a variety of institutions, ensuring a wider view of the disciplines (e.g.—Rutgers, Cambridge, Portland State, UCLA, Northwestern, University of Michigan, State Hydrological Institute of St. Petersburg, and SUNY Buffalo).** The faculty are fully engaged in their disciplines, active in appropriate organizations (APA, AAG, ACSP/FWIG, Planners Network), serving as reviewers for peer-reviewed journals (Landscape Ecology (Buyantuev); Journal of Planning Education and Research (Sally); Journal of Community Practice (Bromley); and Journal of Urban Affairs (Sally)), and pursuing cutting edge research (e.g. Professor Lawson’s work on the visualization of truck traffic and Professor Huang’s work on migration in China). Their tendency to work across disciplines also adds to the richness of their work and their ability to be involved in state-of-the-art research and thinking (e.g. Professor Lawson’s work connecting transportation and public health). The international experience and expertise of Professor Bromley (Latin/South America); Professor Huang (China), and Professor Smith (Asia) are important for the USP degree exploration of global cities and development processes. Faculty have been awarded research*

⁸ Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2014-15 Edition, Geographers, accessed on March 9, 2014, <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social/geographers.htm> .

funding in a variety of areas including: transportation modeling (Lawson); Scenic Byway Creation (Lewis & Scally); and Transfer of Development Rights (Lewis). Many of these projects have opportunities for student participation. Faculty present at regional, national, and international conferences (e.g. Urban China Seminar 2013 and Urban Affairs Association 2013, (Huang); Transportation Research Board, 2006 (Lawson); and National Alliance of Community Economic Development Association, 2009 (Scally)) and publish regularly (e.g. Computers, Environment, and Urban Systems (Lawson 2013); Journal of Planning History (Pipkin 2008); Urban Affairs Review (Scally 2013); and Ecological Modeling (Buyantuya 2013)). Professor Bromley is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

*As this review focuses on the undergraduate USP major, **I would also draw attention to the recognized teaching excellence of the faculty.** Professor Bromley has received the President's Award for Excellence in Teaching and in Academic Service, and the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and Professor Pipkin is a Distinguished Service Professor. In 2012, Professor Scally's planning studios work in Albany's Arbor Hill, Sheridan Hollow and South End neighborhoods, were recognized with the President's Award for Exemplary Community Engagement.*

7. Assess the faculty in terms of number and qualifications and plans for future staffing. Evaluate **faculty responsibilities** for the proposed program, taking into account their other institutional and programmatic commitments. Evaluate faculty **activity in generating funds** for research, training, facilities, equipment, etc. Discuss any **critical gaps and plans for addressing them.**

*In a meeting with Dean Wulfert, it was explained that the entire University suffered through a major financial crisis in 2009. This led to an across-the-board reduction in faculty, and the Geography and Planning Department lost several lines. Since this time, the Department has been able to restore a full-time line, and has been awarded two lines for a new Master's of Environmental GIS. While not directly tied to the USP degree program, these positions will likely serve the USP students who choose to pursue a GIS Certificate. Current faculty can adequately service the USP degree program –as they have been. **Yet faculty report many courses are oversubscribed indicating a need for additional seats,** in particular it appears GIS courses are routinely at capacity. **This is a trend worth monitoring as GIS skills open doors to employment.** The more GIS training undergraduates can take, the more competitive they will be in the work place. If they must wait a few semesters to get into introductory courses they will not be able to complete more advanced spatial analysis courses within their time as an undergraduate.*

Although the major is small (approximately 60 total) several of the courses serve other programs including the B.A. in Geography, B.A. in Globalization, and the GIS Certificate. Certainly delivery of the USP program requires that any upcoming openings through retirement or departures, must be filled. In addition, the teaching load of faculty, combined with the administrative duties of Directing programs, ongoing research and scholarship, and service to the institution, mean faculty cannot take on any additional responsibilities without compromising the quality of their primary duties.

*In addition to the loss of faculty lines, the Department experienced a reduction in Teaching Assistantships for graduate students. This loss directly impacts the large enrollment courses faculty teach that are part of the USP degree. **Without TAs faculty undertake fewer field trips and assign reduced numbers of writing intensive assignments.** While smaller enrollment upper level courses can become places of community engagement and fieldtrips, it is worth considering how introductory courses can be a vehicle for exposing students to the types of real world problems the USP major explores. There is no substitute for students going to see physical features in the area as they learn about geological processes. In a world where our connections to nature are being reduced,⁹ such experiences are critical to opening the minds and improving the observation skills of undergraduates. In my personal experience, these are the types of activities students recall when they reflect on their learning. **Funding for field trips and TAs would be beneficial to the USP major.***

*It is also worth noting here how, to be successful, the scholarship of community engagement and the facilitating of field based courses demand greater time and require more logistical support than a typical lecture course. Working with outside partners adds a complicating, and unpredictable, element to these courses. Some of these factors include: the transportation of students; mobilization of equipment; attendance at evening and weekend events; adjusting timelines to the outcomes from community decision-making; and, in some cases, a changing project scope. **It is important that the additional burdens of community engaged coursework (and corresponding educational benefits) be recognized by the Department and the institution.** This is also applicable to the tenure and promotion process. While such scholarship is atypical from traditional academic pursuits, the value and importance has been well established, beginning with Boyer.¹⁰ Conversation with Dean Wulfert indicated such an understanding exists among the University leadership, yet given the inevitability of change, the encouragement and reward of multiple forms of scholarship must be institutionalized in procedures for faculty tenure and promotion actions. A related concern for faculty actions is financial support for conference attendance and presentations. Fiscal austerity measures have led to a paltry amount of funds to support these activities. The Department has appropriately prioritized funding for junior faculty, but clearly all faculty, the Department's reputation, and the student experience can be enhanced through faculty attendance at conferences. While faculty find alternative funding, or self-finance such attendance, with improved fiscal resources, support for conference attendance/presentation should be restored.*

8. Evaluate credentials and involvement of adjunct faculty and support personnel.

*According to four adjuncts present for a discussion, adjuncts are fully integrated into the Department. Several of those in attendance have been long term adjuncts (10 plus years) providing continuity and networking opportunities for students. **The adjuncts bring connections to state offices and local organizations and the ability to integrate real world projects into the classroom. They are practitioners with responsible positions and a great depth of experience.***

⁹ Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*, (Chapel Hill, NC Algonquin Books, 2005).

¹⁰ Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, (New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990).

They are also rooted in the community. It was noted that students have been able to pursue internship and employment opportunities through the adjuncts. Further, several of the adjuncts are alumni of the Department so they serve as role models for students. Students can see potential positions and the nature of a career path as they interact with adjuncts. Some examples of the expertise and experience of adjunct faculty include: international planning and design (S. Thyagarajan, planning consultant/Master Planner in Asia, United Kingdom, and USA); heritage planning (M. Kees, former Coordinator of NY State Heritage Program); regional planning (R. Ferraro, AICP, Director, Capital District Regional Planning Commission) and GIS applications and systems integration (T. Fabozzi, Capital District Regional Planning Commission and member of the NY Geospatial Advisory Council). It is also worth noting Rocco Ferraro was awarded the President's Excellence Award for Teaching in 2010.

The Department noted in the past few years they have initiated a more critical review of adjunct teaching and this led to decisions to not renew several contracts. This action was taken, in part, as a response to student comments, and during a conversation with a small sample of undergraduates this was raised as an area for improvement. One student noted an adjunct led course was sub-par in terms of enthusiasm and access. **Clearly there are many exceptional adjuncts teaching in the Department but a high level of attention to adjunct teaching is critical to maintain quality programs for undergraduates.**

The Department runs three undergraduate degree programs, two Master's degree programs (a third coming), and two certificate programs. It was noted that in the past five years, administrative staff was increased to provide the Department Chair with a full-time administrative assistant and a part-time Department secretary. Given the wide range of programs and activities connected to the Department, such administrative support is essential for Department coordination and the timely completion of paperwork.

III. Students

9. Comment on the **student population the program seeks to serve**, and assess plans and projections for student recruitment and enrollment.

The USP has been serving the undergraduate population with an interest in urban affairs and planning. This proposal is in part motivated by the Department's interest in being able to publicize the USP program throughout the SUNY system and in area high schools. As described by the USP Director, the Department will actively recruit from area high schools and community colleges with articulation agreements with SUNY Albany. This recruitment will include using current majors to describe their experiences and highlighting the real world applications of the USP degree. Both the Associate Vice Provost of Enrollment Management, Dr. Robert Andrea, and the Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education, Dr. Jeanette Altarriba, noted a willingness to integrate the USP degree materials of the Department in the annual recruitment events including: identification of students with an interest in the area through the National Student Clearing House; hosting of Open Houses on campus; interactions with high school counselors; video highlights of student achievements; and outreach to feeder community colleges. **Given the unfamiliarity of planning, efforts should be made to develop marketing materials**

translating the terminology into meaningful language and providing clear examples for the targeted population. The Department should also invest in educating High School Counselors who are as likely to be unfamiliar with what is addressed in a major titled “Urban Studies and Planning.” The USP program has grown over the past decade, and such recruitment could support its continued incremental growth.

10. What are the prospects that recruitment efforts and admissions criteria will supply a sufficient pool of highly qualified applicants and enrollees?

The USP degree has a track record in terms of undergraduate enrollment while operating within the SUNY Albany campus. This success can only be increased when the degree program can be marketed beyond the Albany campus, and its uncommon nature means it will not compete with other SUNY programs.

11. Comment on provisions for encouraging participation of persons from underrepresented groups. Is there adequate attention to the needs of part-time, minority, or disadvantaged students?

*The figures of current USP students indicate majors are 30% female and 12-16% diverse students. (The breakdown for faculty of the Department, combining full-time and part-time, reveals very similar ranges.) **These figures indicate underrepresentation of women and students of color in the USP major, and among the faculty.** From my experience, this is not an unusual disparity, yet clearly these figures need to be increased. College Board Search data on the expressed major interests of high school seniors (provided by Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment, Robert Andrea) reflects the same gender split (approximately 30% of those who express interest in the major are women) as the profile of the major—indicating any hurdles are not unique to the Department’s program. In Senate Bill 1112-10, Creation of Urban Studies and Planning Major, the Department recognizes the gender imbalance and writes of strengthening the connection with Women’s Studies.¹¹*

For some the USP degree serves as a gateway to the profession of Planning. The professional organization for planning, the American Planning Association (APA), has documented the underrepresentation of people of color in the field, while gender representation in the planning field is more representative. In 2005 an APA Task Force on Diversity issued a report with several major recommendations.¹² Two of the report’s recommendations are relevant to the Department’s recruitment of underrepresented groups, and reflect how the USP degree can serve as a gateway for underrepresented groups to graduate programs in planning:

2.1 Develop information packages for high school and college career counselors and encourage National APA and chapter involvement at high school and college career fairs.

¹¹ Senate Bill 1112-10 May 14, 2012, “Creation of Urban Studies and Planning Major,” 43.

¹² APA Diversity Task Force, “Increasing Diversity in the Planning Profession: A Report on the 2004 Minority Planning Summit and Recommendation for Future Action,” accessed on March 9, 2014, <http://www.planning.org/diversity/forum/2004/pdf/diversitytaskforcereport.pdf>

and

5.1. APA should conduct research and feature articles that deal with issues such as environmental justice and gentrification/displacement, and faith-based community development initiatives.¹³

*The Department intends to develop a high school recruitment strategy, so they will become an extension of APA's efforts to increase awareness of the profession among people of color. In addition, the Department is involved in community based research on equitable development, and affordable and accessible housing. These efforts should be highlighted, again as a means of increasing awareness of the domain of planning among underrepresented groups. The Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment, Robert Andrea, reported the current University first-year class is 43% students of color. As the campus as a whole increases the diversity in the student body, the Department should also be able to increase its diversity. **The Department should consider a specific set of actions to recruit women and students of color to the major.** Clearly the ability to market off-campus should result in increased recruitment among targeted groups.*

The Association of Colleges and Schools of Planning (ACSP) is also concerned about increasing diversity among students of planning, and among the faculty teaching planning.¹⁴ The work of the ACSP Subcommittee on Diversity can be a beneficial in designing a strategy. A diverse faculty can serve as role models for students of color, so the Department should look to increasing the diversity among faculty members, as a recruitment strategy for students, as well as, for the benefits such diversity brings to the Department in terms of experiences and world views.¹⁵

For state institutions an additional hurdle to getting diversity within the student body (racial, ethnic, and socio-economic) is making educational affordable. For students coming in with financial need, a gap in the financial aid package may make SUNY Albany an unaffordable choice. The institution should continue to work on ways to close this outstanding gap in order to increase accessibility.

¹³ APA Diversity Task Force, "Increasing Diversity in the Planning Profession: A Report on the 2004 Minority Planning Summit and Recommendation for Future Action," accessed on March 9, 2014, <http://www.planning.org/diversity/forum/2004/pdf/diversitytaskforcereport.pdf> .

¹⁴ Diversity Task Force Report, "Recruitment and Retention of Underrepresented Faculty of Color in ACSP Member Programs: Status and Recommendations," accessed on March 10, 2014, <http://www.acsp.org/sites/default/files/ACSP%20Diversity%20Task%20Force%20Report%20final.pdf> and Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Committee on Diversity Report, accessed on March 10, 2014, <http://www.acsp.org/sites/default/files/7%20%20%28VII%20%29%20Committee%20on%20Diversity%202013%20Report.pdf>

¹⁵ Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, *Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees*, (AACU 2002), accessed on March 10, 2014, <http://www.aacu.org/publications/divfacintro.cfm> .

12. Assess the system for monitoring students' progress and performance and for advising students regarding academic and career matters.

There are no documented problems with the graduation rate and performance of USP majors. The Department uses a variety of tools for assessing performance and learning. One metric is the evaluation of interns by work-place supervisors. USP students receive high marks and are considered to have strong skill sets.¹⁶ In addition, the program Director routinely reviews a sample of course assignments and exams to monitor performance and alignment with learning outcomes. The USP degree may also want to consider a capstone experience similar to that of Globalization majors. Such a degree requirement serves as an assessment as students synthesize the knowledge and skills developed through their studies into a focused area of study.

In discussion, a small group of USP majors praised the accessibility and responsiveness of faculty members. They noted the small size of upper level courses translates into quality interactions with faculty and were fervent in their expression of satisfaction with the program Director's flexibility and patience in supporting student direction. They also noted they would be in favor of additional advising and career assistance. It appears one of the trade-offs of the great latitude of choices in designing the major, can be students feeling overwhelmed, and they said, in hindsight, they might have made other choices of minors. The group of USP majors also noted they would welcome additional information on job opportunities and wished there was more support from career services in preparing for interviews and writing cover letters. Information on the career paths of alumni would also be helpful to current seniors. Some additional effort should be devoted to tracking USP alumni and highlighting their stories.

A final area students mentioned was that of extra-curricular activities. The USP undergraduates felt somewhat fragmented – they do not see the major as an identifiable group—and stated they were not always aware of speakers or events, in the same way the Master's students appear to be. For context, these comments were by way of things that could be improved and not an expression of major failings of the program.

*The Department could add additional career assistance, perhaps mock interviews or a session with an area alumni focusing on what they look for when hiring and what to expect at an entry-level interview. **An additional assessment recommendation is for the Department to consider e-portfolios for USP majors.** Portfolios are well suited to USP type programs as skills and knowledge necessary for majors are in visual production as well as written forms. Portfolios are also valuable as a tool for student reflection and seniors can utilize them to support graduate school and job applications.¹⁷*

¹⁶ Rocco Ferraro, AICP, Executive Director Capital District Regional Planning Commission, during program review discussion February 27, 2014.

¹⁷ Darren Cambridge, Barbara L. Cambridge and Katherine Blake Yancey, ed., *Electronic Portfolios 2.0: Emergent Research on Implementation and Impact*, (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2009).

13. Discuss prospects for graduates' post-completion success, whether **employment, job advancement, future study, or other outcomes related to the program's goals.**

As noted throughout this program review, as a major begun in 1995, the USP program has several hundred graduates. Graduates have gone on to graduate school in many fields and found placements in the workforce. The Department itself accepts several students each year into the Master's of Regional Planning program.

There is no one model for students as the interdisciplinary degree can be a launching point for a wide variety of career paths. The AACU employer study cited earlier notes "the ability to think clearly about complex problems" and "an understanding of global context" are within the top ten things employers look for in new college graduates.¹⁸ The USP degree focuses on these skills and thus graduates are aligned with employer expectations.

As noted above, an additional outcome of the program is preparing graduates to be more active members of their communities, and equipped for lifelong learning. Graduates leave with a realization of global connections, an increased understanding of land use decision making, and knowledge on what types of questions should be asked of development proposals.

IV. Resources

14. Comment on the adequacy of physical **resources and facilities**, e.g., library, computer, and laboratory facilities; practica and internship sites or other experiential learning opportunities, such as co-ops or service learning; and support services for the program, including use of resources outside the institution.

The social science library facilities at SUNY Albany provide solid support for the Department and the USP degree. Journal articles and books are easily available through interlibrary loan programs within the system, and with area private higher education institutions including Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The library has transitioned to the 21st century functions of being more meeting space than book depository. Students are able to reserve rooms for group projects and study groups, and there are approximately 500 study seats for students looking for a quiet space. Beyond books the library is also a place where students can borrow, and receive training on, equipment such as laptops, kindles, cameras, and video cameras. The Library staff have developed on-line tutorials to assist students with resource discovery and to further information literacy. Students learn to recognize how information is created, modified, disseminated, and accessed. Collection specialists are available for leading courses in search methodologies, and it was noted that some Department faculty routinely bring classes for this overview. The library also offers "Personalized Assistance with Searching" (PAWS), a service where students can book on-line or face-to-face appointments with a staff member to complete a search.

¹⁸ AAC&U, "Top Ten Things Employers Look for in New College Graduates," accessed on March 5, 2014, <http://www.aacu.org/leap/students/employerstopten.cfm>.

There appears to be adequate funding for the equipment needs of the Department. Both GIS and Remote Sensing are costly technologies so ongoing support for the necessary upgrades to equipment and software are required for the program to meet the needs of students entering the workforce, and to support faculty research. The Department indicated the space devoted to these functions is adequate for the program's current needs. The bulk of the faculty office space is grouped together and appears adequate for current needs, as well the department office provides space for administrative staff and a copying machine.

A true strength of the program is its extensive internship program. Through its widespread alumni network, and links to state and regional agencies, the Department is able to place qualified students in substantive internships. In addition the Department has placed students with non-profit groups and private sector consulting firms. These placements cover a wide range of activities from GIS to traffic studies, zoning drafting, market analysis, and site analysis. No doubt these internship opportunities have been key to the success of graduates, and for some, instrumental in helping them determine a future path.

15. What is the **institution's commitment** to the program as demonstrated by the operating budget, faculty salaries, the number of faculty lines relative to student numbers and workload, and discussions about administrative support with faculty and administrators?

Many of these points have been made in response to previous questions. The Department has benefited from the restoration of a line from those phased out earlier, and is hiring for two lines in a new Master's program in Environmental GIS. Administrative assistance has increased and is now more in line with the demands of such a busy Department. Areas where additional funding could support the USP program are in conference funding; TAs; and student transportation. Certainly it would be difficult to maintain all the functions of the Department with any fewer faculty or administrative positions, and an increase in faculty for the areas with oversubscribed seats would strengthen the USP major.

IV. Summary Comments and Additional Observations

16. Summarize the **major strengths and weaknesses** of the program as proposed with particular attention to feasibility of implementation and appropriateness of objectives for the degree offered.

The strengths of the USP major include:

- ***An interdisciplinary approach to the topic of urbanization and planning.*** *This prepares students for a wide range of future paths and provides a richer understanding of complex problems. The integration of the epistemology and methodologies of geography, planning, and a third cognate discipline of the student's choice, leads to the ability to approach real world problems from multiple frameworks. Graduates engage in the exploration of major forces shaping the modern world including urbanization, globalization, development processes, and forms of public participation.*

- **Highly flexible degree requirements.** Students have wide latitude in designing a program of study that aligns with their interests. The foundational courses introduce students to the major issues of settlement patterns and human/environment interactions, but cognate and upper level courses can be chosen from a wide assortment of options. These choices permit students to follow their curiosity as they narrow in on an aspect of urbanization and planning.
- **A group of highly qualified and engaged faculty with diverse expertise.** The USP degree is served by a group of well-trained faculty pursuing critical research on pressing problems. Students have the opportunity to work with faculty on the creation of knowledge, integration of technologies, and the evaluation of policies and practices. Faculty represent a wide range of interests including brownfield redevelopment; housing and community development; urban history; international development; transportation modeling and freight systems; climate change and carbon sequestration; and more.
- **An established Capital District network of opportunities.** The Capital location provides support for the USP program in terms of internships, community-based planning projects, professional adjuncts, and alumni networks. All of these factors add to the experience of majors as they learn from world real experiences and develop practical skill sets. The Community Engagement requirement of the degree provides majors with a high impact learning experience, and opportunities for the institution to support change in the wider community.

The weaknesses of the USP major include:

- **Weak major identity.** The downside of the program flexibility is that students do not go through the program as a cohort, and there are no small courses comprised of only USP majors. This contributes to a lack of identity among the majors. Add to this the general unfamiliarity with the field and there is a need for activities to build cohesion and recognition.
- **High administrative burden on faculty.** While not unique to the USP program, the substantial demands for reporting and assessment mean time not spent in the classroom, undertaking research, or engaged in the community. While the program Director has a reduced teaching load, advising all majors and completing other administrative tasks takes up a considerable amount of time. Some of the recommendations within this review represent yet additional administrative tasks (e.g. recruitment materials, alumni tracking). Add to this the time commitment of community based research, and it is easy to see faculty getting spread thin.

17. If applicable, particularly for graduate programs, comment on the ways that this program will make a **unique contribution** to the field, and its likelihood of achieving State, regional and/or national **prominence**.

As noted earlier, this is an unusual undergraduate degree which introduces majors to a profession typically pursued at the graduate level, and somewhat invisible to the general population. The USP program contributes to SUNY Albany's Master's in Regional Planning program and to the education of future residents. As noted in the proposal the combination of Urban Studies and Planning in a Bachelor degree is unique in the region.¹⁹

18. Include any **further observations** important to the evaluation of this program proposal and provide any **recommendations** for the proposed program.

I highly recommend the approval of this proposal. Since 1995 the Department has been delivering an effective and robust program. The Department exhibits a commitment to quality education, and a willingness to take on the heavy load of administrative processes in order to develop programs germane to solving current problems. The recommendations below are a summary and grouping of those presented throughout this review. They are offered for consideration in refining the program and administration—none is significant enough to warrant holding up an approval:

- (1) Strengthen the identity of the major- develop marketing materials; increase recruitment activities; market the Sustainability Minor; and provide extra-curricular activities for USP majors.*
- (2) Stipulate how ethics is/can be covered through the USP curriculum.*
- (3) Consider adding an additional USP major required course – be it Methods of Urban Analysis, or perhaps a capstone class.*
- (4) Increase Career Services – use the alumni network to prepare students and track alumni to illustrate career paths.*
- (5) Develop strategic actions for recruiting women and students of color, and seeking increased diversity within the faculty.*
- (6) Ensure access to seats in GIS and other courses that may be oversubscribed.*
- (7) Investigate the use of e-portfolios as an assessment tool for majors.*

¹⁹ Senate Bill 1112-10, May 14, 2012, "Creation of Urban Studies and Planning Major," 31-32.



External Evaluation Report

Form 2D

The External Evaluation Report is an important component of a new academic program proposal. The external evaluator's task is to examine the program proposal and related materials, visit the campus to discuss the proposal with faculty and review related instructional resources and facilities, respond to the questions in this Report form, and submit to the institution a signed report that speaks to the quality of, and need for, the proposed program. The report should aim for completeness, accuracy and objectivity.

The institution is expected to review each External Evaluation Report it receives, prepare a single institutional response to all reports, and, as appropriate, make changes to its program proposal and plan. Each separate External Evaluation Report and the Institutional Response become part of the full program proposal that the institution submits to SUNY for approval. If an external evaluation of the proposed program is required by the State Education Department (SED), SUNY includes the External Evaluation Reports and Institutional Response in the full proposal that it submits to SED for registration.

Institution: *University at Albany, SUNY (State University of New York)*

Evaluator Name (Please print.): *Robert B. Kent*

Evaluator Title and Institution: *Professor and Chair, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, California State University, Northridge*

Evaluator Signature: *Robert B. Kent*

Robert B Kent - 17 March 2014

Proposed Program Title: *Urban Studies and Planning*

Degree: *Bachelor of Arts*

Date of evaluation: *Site visit on 26-28 February 2014, report submitted on 17 March 2014*

Executive Summary:

This reviewer recommends the implementation of the proposed Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies and Planning as an official department major to be housed in the Department of Geography and Planning, College of Arts and Sciences, at the University at Albany (Program Announcement 4 March 2013). The Department of Geography and Planning is an excellent home for this degree program. It is a department which is well-respected nationally for its programs in geography, planning, urban studies, and geographic information systems (GIS). Its faculty are active professionally, engaged in academic research and scholarly publication, committed team-players in the department, college, and university, and involved teachers and mentors to their students. This is a high quality department and faculty.

The proposed program offers a sound educational foundation for a social science and pre-professional degree focusing on both urban studies and planning. The curriculum strikes a fair balance between these complementary fields and also benefits from department's geographic and GIS expertise. As a "faculty-initiated interdisciplinary major", the department has offered the Bachelors of Arts in urban studies and planning quite successfully at the University at Albany for about 20 years. In 2013/14 approximately 65 students are enrolled in the major. Many

have continued on to graduate school in planning, geography, and other fields, while others have entered the workforce in allied fields in the Capitol District. Converting the existing faculty-initiated interdisciplinary degree to an official department major will enhance the visibility of the program in the SUNY system and beyond. It is anticipated that this change will boost enrollment in the major by as much as 30 percent.

I. Program

1. Assess the program's **purpose, structure, and requirements** as well as formal mechanisms for program **administration and evaluation**. Address the program's academic rigor and intellectual coherence.

The proposed degree (currently offered as a faculty-initiated interdisciplinary major) is intended to provide a broad-based social science degree focused on urban studies, planning, and a cognate discipline of the student's choice. While the degree program includes a strong dose of social science, it also provides pre-professional experience in planning through several required courses in methods and community engagement. Many of the program's graduates continue to graduate school in planning or other social science fields and others enter the workforce in a wide range of roles.

The structure of the degree program is straightforward. Students are required to take a total of 36 credits to complete the major. Four lower-division courses are required (totaling 12 credits) – the American City, Introductory Urban Geography, Introductory Urban Planning, and World Cities. All of these are also GE (general education classes) and usually enroll large numbers of non-majors in all classes. Students are then required to take one 3 cr. methodology class (City on Computer, Urban Analysis, Intermediate Cartography, GPS, Remote Sensing, or GIS) and one 3 cr. community engagement course (Planning Internship, Landscape Workshop, Site Planning, Urban Design, Independent Study in Planning). Student then can choose 12 credits from a range of upper division electives and also must select 6 credits from a cognate discipline (chosen from an approved list of disciplines).

The degree program is housed in the Department of Geography and Planning in the College of Arts and Sciences. The department includes approximately 13 FTEs full-time faculty members. This includes three new hires for 2014/15 as well as current tenured and probationary faculty. The faculty is well-qualified academically and is actively engaged professionally. The department currently offers three complementary bachelors of art's degrees -- geography, globalization studies, and urban studies and planning. In addition, the department offers a master's in geography and a master's in urban and regional planning.

2. Comment on the **special focus** of this program, if any, as it relates to the discipline.

The program in urban studies and planning has no "special" curricular focus. It is by design broadly conceived. Nevertheless, the program is housed in the Department of Geography and Planning which has expertise in community development, transportation, and geographic information sciences. It also offers both an undergraduate and graduate certificate in GIS. Students in the urban studies and planning program often enroll in these GIS and spatial methodology courses which are very useful in professional practice. Many students do take advantage of their availability and develop a specialization or at least some expertise in GIS.

3. Comment on the plans and expectations for **self-assessment and continuous improvement**.

Undergraduate and graduate degree programs are reviewed on a regular basis at the University at Albany (every seven years). The last review of the program appears to have occurred in Spring 2006 and the program review was supportive of the development of a full department major to replace the existing faculty-initiated major. Other formal assessment methods employed include online course evaluations for all courses which are administered by the university. Some faculty also report implementing self-assessment programs seeking student criticism and constructive suggestions.

4. Discuss the **relationship** of this program to other programs of the institution and collaboration with other institutions, and assess available support from related programs.

By virtue of being housed in the Department of Geography and Planning, the urban studies and planning program benefits from the department's solid and well subscribed academic program portfolio – BAs in geography and globalization studies, as well as MA in geography and MRP in urban and regional planning. The undergraduate and graduate certificate programs in GIS are also housed in the department and their accessibility to students enhances the urban studies and planning program. The university has recently approved a new program minor in sustainability (all students must take a minor to graduate or double major at the University at Albany). It is (or shortly will be) housed in the Department of Geography and Planning. This is a natural fit. Planning and geography are all about sustainability. Students in all the department's programs will benefit from this relationship.

Several other programs at the University at Albany are complementary directly or indirectly to the urban studies and planning program. Especially noteworthy in this regard is the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy which offers a range of programs at the university's downtown campus (public policy, political science, and public administration).

The department currently does have two collaborative academic programs in place. The first is a graduate certificate in urban policy which draws on many courses offered in the Rockefeller College at UAlbany. The second is a joint MRP/JD degree program with the Albany Law School, a private law school.

5. What is the evidence of **need** and **demand** for the program locally, in the State, and in the field at large? What is the extent of occupational demand for graduates? What is the evidence that demand will continue?

Perhaps the most telling evidence for both the need and the demand for this program, at least at the university level, has been its success as a faculty-initiated interdisciplinary major since it was first offered in 1995. Currently (AY 2013/14) there are approximately 65 majors in the urban studies and planning degree program, and about 17 students graduate each year. The Albany Capitol District offers a wide range of employment opportunities, especially with state government agencies and other related organizations, for graduates of the urban studies and planning program. In addition, a significant number of the program's graduates continue their education with graduate student and many of these continue as graduate students in the department's accredited master of urban and regional planning program.

II. Faculty

6. Evaluate the **faculty**, individually and collectively, with regard to training, experience, research and publication, professional service, and recognition in the field.

The Department of Geography and Planning is characterized by a strong group of well-trained and professionally accomplished full-time and adjunct faculty members (adjunct faculty credentials and involvement are reviewed below in #8). The department faculty are active professionally, engaged with their research and publication agendas, and well-respected in professional circles. In many "mixed discipline" departments like geography and planning at the University at Albany, faculty specializations and expertise often bridge both disciplines, and faculty contribute to both fields in various ways. This is clearly the case at Albany where nearly all department faculty have professional expertise in more than one discipline, e.g. urban studies, planning, and geography. At least four of the department's current faculty members, have terminal degrees in planning, strong professional planning experience, professional accreditation, and/or active research and community engagement programs in planning. These include Ray Bromley (AICP), Catherine Lawson, David Lewis, and Corianne Scally. Several

other faculty members, Christopher Smith, Youqin Huang, and John Pipkin, have strong academic credentials in urban studies, including expertise urban geography, urban design, and urban development in Asian (especially China). The department currently has one full-time faculty member, James Mower, with expertise in geographic information science (GIS). The department also has two full-time faculty, Andrei Lapenis and Alexander Buyantuev, with scholarly expertise and professional specializations broadly focused in environmental analysis and physical geography. Although not directly involved in urban studies and planning, several of the courses they teach do make direct contributions to the program, e.g. environmental change, the role of human agency, urban ecology, and remote sensing. The department plans to fill an additional three full-time faculty positions for the 2014-15 academic year (see #7 for details).

In terms of faculty experience and rank, the department is well-balanced. Currently there are three full professors, six associate professors (two recently promoted), and one assistant professor. Ongoing recruitments in the department will add three additional tenure track assistant professors in the 2014-15 academic year.

- 7. Assess the faculty in terms of number and qualifications and plans for future staffing. Evaluate faculty responsibilities** for the proposed program, taking into account their other institutional and programmatic commitments. Evaluate faculty **activity in generating funds** for research, training, facilities, equipment, etc. Discuss any **critical gaps and plans for addressing them**.

The department is staffed with 13 FTEs full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty and about 2.0 FTES of adjunct faculty (perhaps ten different individuals) who bring excellent professional credentials to the program. The department faculty are supported administratively by an office staff of two full-time employees, the assistant to the chair and the department administrator, as well as student assistants in the department office. There is very limited support for faculty instruction from graduate teaching assistants. Since the university eliminated graduate teaching assistant support for programs without terminal degrees several years ago, the department's allocation of graduate teaching assistants has been reduced to about 2.0 FTEs.

Faculty has considerable instructional and instructionally-related responsibilities. Instructional duties usually include five courses per year, e.g. a two and three load. Instructionally-related duties are significant. The department is home to about 150 undergraduate majors in three distinct degree programs (geography, globalization studies, and urban studies and planning) and each program requires a faculty program director whose responsibilities include advising all program majors. A master of urban and regional planning (MRP) degree program with about 60 graduate students is also housed in the department and is also overseen by a faculty program director. The department also offers an undergraduate and a graduate certificate in geographic information science which requires faculty advice and supervision as well. Finally, the department has just been identified as the academic home for the new minor in "Sustainability" which will also require faculty support.

The department faculty is busy, engaged, and productive. Besides their instructional duties (usually five courses per year, e.g. two and three) they have a wide range of responsibilities and are held to and meet high professional standards for research, publication, and professional service. While more full-time faculty would allow the department to be even more productive, given the financial realities of public-higher education and in comparison to other departments on campus (and the loss of 50 faculty from the Arts and Science College since the Great Recession), the department is adequately staffed to continue to excel and to successfully achieve its multiple missions. A review of department profiles posted by Institutional Research examining department workloads, e.g. student FTE per faculty FTE, showed geography and planning averages ranging from below 20 to mid-20s in recent semesters. These data are consistent with other similar departments in the College of Arts and Sciences. See "WORKLD stu FTE per fac FTE" in Departmental Profiles for details (http://www.albany.edu/ir/departamental_profiles.htm). In any case, the addition of three assistant professors to the department faculty in the next year will surely invigorate and energize the department.

- 8. Evaluate credentials and involvement of adjunct faculty and support personnel.**

The adjunct faculty plays an integral role in the education of students in the Department of Geography and Planning and more specifically in the major in urban studies and planning. These practicing professionals with solid academic backgrounds and rich career experience have much to offer students in the program. With its location in Albany and Capitol District, the department is in the enviable position of having access to many qualified individuals who can and do serve as adjunct faculty members. The department currently employs about ten individuals as adjunct faculty. These faculty teach a range of courses in the department which support the urban studies and planning program, e.g. – GIS (Fabozzi, Harland, Swartz, O'Conner) and also several who teach courses specific to urban studies and planning (Thyagarajan, Kees, and Rocco). Several of the adjunct faculty teaching the urban studies and planning courses have had distinguished careers in planning and are also still actively engaged in planning practice in the region. One of the program's adjunct faculty has just been awarded the university's distinguished teaching award (Rocco). Bottom line ... the department's existing adjunct faculty are an especially valuable resource and make tremendous contributions to the urban studies and planning degree program.

III. Students

9. Comment on the **student population the program seeks to serve**, and assess plans and projections for student recruitment and enrollment.

The faculty-initiated major in urban studies and planning currently serves the undergraduate population of the University at Albany. There are about 55-60 majors in the program, a number that has remained fairly constant over the last decade. The transition of the existing faculty-initiated major to the university recognized department major in urban studies and planning will permit the department to recruit for majors statewide, but especially across the SUNY system. Department faculty anticipate that this change will bring more students to the major, increasing the number of program majors to 80 or 90, and perhaps attracting even more qualified students.

10. What are the prospects that recruitment efforts and admissions criteria will supply a **sufficient pool of highly qualified applicants and enrollees**?

The urban studies and planning program has a demonstrated record of nearly 20 years of attracting a strong pool of undergraduate majors. The transition from the faculty-initiated interdisciplinary major to the departmental major in urban studies and planning and the consequent increase in visibility in New York State and in the SUNY system especially, should contribute to an increase the number of motivated and qualified applicants for this major from beyond the Albany campus.

11. Comment on provisions for encouraging participation of **persons from underrepresented groups**. Is there adequate attention to the needs of part-time, minority, or disadvantaged students?

In the proposal for the major to the University Senate (dated May 2012, p. 28), the department proposes to "improve gender and ethnic diversity by developing local area high school outreach programs which will be offered and staffed by Departmental faculty and a dedicated GA." This is laudable, but such programs require considerable ongoing commitment from the department and its faculty. It can be hard to get such programs going and hard to keep them going. But beyond the practical issues, there are likely much better ways for the members of the faculty of a "Research I" university to encourage and support these goals. In terms of "return on investment" it makes much more sense to focus these efforts on campus first and foremost and then perhaps subsequently on local community colleges and small regional SUNY campuses that generate transfer students.

Furthermore, the university's aggressive efforts to enroll students from underrepresented groups at UAlbany and support them once matriculated there help insures the department's ability to recruit them as well. The urban studies and planning degree program has broad exposure across campus because three of its core classes (Intro to

Urban Planning, The American City, The World City) are popular options in the General Education program enrolling hundreds of students from across campus. These represent a broad cross-section of students from underrepresented groups will be exposed to the major. Data for the 2013-14 year from the Office of Enrollment Management at Albany indicates that about 43 percent of the entering freshman class is from underrepresented groups and that the average for the Arts and Sciences College and the campus overall is about 28 percent.

Indeed, the overall numbers for the Department of Geography and Planning seem quite positive in this regard. In 2012/13, 31 percent of the department's 155 majors were from underrepresented groups. This varied appreciably between the department's three majors ... 41 percent for globalization studies, 13 percent for geography, and 23 percent for urban studies and planning. Gender balance is a different story. At the department level, about 45 percent of all majors are women. Again, this varies considerably among its three majors ... 59 percent for globalization studies, 22 percent for geography, and 29 percent in urban studies and planning.

Part-time enrollment in the urban studies and planning program is modest. Enrollment data for part-time students from 2001 to 2010 shows that part-time enrollment runs is 7-8 percent of all student majors. Given the regional service area of UAlbany and the residential nature of its student body, it seems unlikely there is appreciable unmet demand for part-time enrollment in urban studies and planning. The current program structure and scheduling of classes (a "traditional" residential campus pattern) is appropriate and serves students well.

The department's full and part-time faculty profile does include members of underrepresented groups and women. These individuals serve as powerful mentor-models. The department also is infused with a global vision and cultural consciousness manifested in its major in globalization studies and the strong international perspectives of many faculty members. This suggests the department offers an open and welcoming intellectual and social environment for all students.

12. Assess the system for monitoring students' progress and performance and for advising students regarding academic and career matters.

The department utilizes a "centralized" model of advising where the program director for each degree program is the principal advisor for nearly all students. Students may elect other faculty to advise them if they wish, but this seems to be uncommon. With over 50 majors in the urban studies and planning degree program, this places a fairly high level of demand for student contact on the program advisor. Students are advised each semester and must have their class schedules approved by the advisor and a permission number system is used allow registration. This helps move students toward graduation more effectively, but it does demand considerable faculty advising time. The program proposal for the major to the University Senate (dated May 2012, p. 12) addresses this issue at least in terms of equity, noting that in the future two faculty will share responsibility for advising the majors as part of the transition from the faculty-initiated multidisciplinary major to an official department major.

The reviewers met with a group of seven students from the urban studies and planning program for about an hour as part of the review process. Students were very positive about the department and the degree program. They had a great deal positive to say about the department faculty and their willingness to help them in many ways. They had a strong positive identification with the department and program and contrasted these with other departments and programs on campus that did not compare favorably.

13. Discuss prospects for graduates' post-completion success, whether employment, job advancement, future study, or other outcomes related to the program's goals.

Department research on alumni pathways and outcomes suggests positive results for many graduates of the urban studies and planning degree program. Nearly half of all program graduates go on to graduate school in planning and cognate fields. About 20 percent of program graduates continue at UAlbany in the department's master of

urban and regional planning degree program (MRP), while an additional 25 percent attend graduate school in planning and other fields at other institutions. For the remaining half of the program's graduates that enter the workforce, specific data on employers and jobs is sparse. Nevertheless, a list the department compiled of about 20 employers who employ program graduates suggests that most find employment in the public sector ... about 50 percent work in local government, 30 percent in state and federal employment, and about 20 percent in private businesses (consulting firms) and corporations.

Faculty members also noted another indirect measure of student and program success, participation by program graduates in the activities of the local and regional chapters of the American Planning Association (APA). Faculty stated that nearly 50 percent of the membership of the local APA Chapter (Capitol District) were department alumni and that a similar percentage of the APA Upstate Division were also departmental alumni.

IV. Resources

14. Comment on the adequacy of physical **resources** and **facilities**, e.g., library, computer, and laboratory facilities; practica and internship sites or other experiential learning opportunities, such as co-ops or service learning; and support services for the program, including use of resources outside the institution.

At the department level, the physical facilities to support the program in urban studies and planning (and the department's several other degree programs) are adequate. The Department of Geography and Planning occupies space on three floors in the Arts and Science Building on the UAlbany's uptown (suburban) campus. The department space on the second floor includes a small department office with desks for a full-time staff member and an assistant. There is a small seating area in the hallway in front of the office. Also across the hall from the department office is a department workroom with a photocopier, meeting table and chairs, and mailboxes for faculty. The offices of the department chair and the assistant to the department chair are not contiguously situated, but located elsewhere down the hall and around the corner from the department office. Full and part time faculty offices (it seems about three part time faculty share one office space) are located down the hall and around the corner on the same floor.

Other department and program space is found on the first floor and in the basement floor immediately below the department offices. On the first floor, these include well-light design lab (that doubles as a seminar room for faculty meetings and classes), a dedicated teaching/seminar room (seating perhaps 20), and a small work room for graduate students and faculty that has two computer workstations, color printers, and large format plotters for production work. A departmental instructional computer lab with a capacity for 24 students is housed in the basement as is a small digital cartography lab space and a larger space earmarked for remote sensing and physical geography work.

The university libraries provide strong support to the academic programs offered by the Department of Geography and Planning including the faculty-initiated interdisciplinary program in urban studies and planning. The university libraries at Albany are rated #115 among research libraries in the United States. As such the libraries offer a wide range of support in many areas including its book (over 2 million volumes) and serial (75,000) collections, online data bases, and digital access to many other resources. A subject bibliographer in the library provides support for the department (as well as four departments from the Arts and Science College). Beyond the campus, Interlibrary Loan provides access to bibliographic resources as does its membership in the regionally based Capital District Library Council (CSLC) which includes 47 other libraries in the Capital District.

The department has a strong record of assisting students in finding meaningful internships in geography, GIS, regional and city planning, urban studies, and a range of other areas throughout the Capital District. The department currently has about five formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOU's) with state agencies to provide them interns. In many other cases these internships are not formally institutionalized in an MOU, but rather are a product of long-standing relationships between the department and its faculty and local businesses, government

agencies, and individual professionals who are part of the department's alumni network (e.g. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Capital District Regional Planning Commission, City of Albany, New York Legislative Internships, Creighton Manning Engineering).

15. What is the institution's commitment to the program as demonstrated by the operating budget, faculty salaries, the number of faculty lines relative to student numbers and workload, and discussions about administrative support with faculty and administrators?

The institutional commitment to the Department of Geography and Planning and by extension to the BA program in urban studies and planning appears very solid. However, the department suffered, as did many departments, in the university during the last eight years as budgets were cut and some graduate assistant lines eliminated. The loss of most master's level teaching assistants at the department level (with the exception of about 2.0 FTES assigned to the MRP program) has had a negative impact on the department and instructional quality in introductory level courses with many students.

The College of Arts and Sciences has moved to replace the department's faculty retirements with tenure line faculty members. Three full time faculty members are now being hired for the AY 2014/15. This will bring the department's full-time tenured and tenure track faculty to 13 FTEs. In addition the department counts on the services of a number of well-qualified professionals, who serve as part-time faculty members, perhaps total 2.0 to 3.0 FTES. Given the department's academic programs (geography, urban studies, planning, GIS) and the number of majors served (about 160 total and 60 grad students), the faculty numbers seem appropriate.

IV. Summary Comments and Additional Observations

16. Summarize the major strengths and weaknesses of the program as proposed with particular attention to feasibility of implementation and appropriateness of objectives for the degree offered.

Strengths:

The proposed program has a proven record of success over nearly 20 years. The curriculum is intellectually sound and the program well structured. The department faculty is highly-qualified and clearly committed to the success of this program. The geographical location of UAlbany is strongly advantageous to the continued success and growth of the program. There are less than a handful of competing programs in up-state New York and fewer still at public institutions. As the seat of state government, Albany and the Capital District more generally, is a superb location for a program focused on urban issues and planning. Opportunities for a wide range of collaborations continually surface in this environment as do multiple opportunities for student internships and eventually jobs.

Student perspectives are hugely positive. The program reviewers had the opportunity to meet with current students in the urban studies and planning degree program as part of the review process. This reviewer was impressed with the strong regard the students held the program and its faculty. It is worth reiterating it here. In their appraisal of the department they mentioned the following strengths as being especially important: the program is flexible, the department is small, excellent advising, helpful professors, small classes, a variety of good classes focusing on geographic techniques, (GIS classes noted especially as a big asset), technical equipment is available for student use and checkout, and the introductory course on urban planning is super!

Opportunities and Challenges

In general terms, the department is doing an excellent job offering this major at the present time and faces no serious constraints in continuing to do so. Program expansion (adding more majors) is also quite possible with existing resources. Nevertheless, in the last few years as a result of budgetary decisions the department has faced

some inconveniences. For instance, many departments without terminal degree programs lost teaching assistants. Geography and Planning lost most of its teaching assistants and it has been a challenge for department faculty to adjust. Most have had to reduce the number of writing assignments or eliminate them entirely in introductory level courses with large enrollments. This is lamentable, but it is also part of a university wide adjustment to reduced funding. As part of this readjustment, the department also lost its vehicle – a van used for fieldtrips. The loss of this vehicle has made taking local fieldtrips considerably more challenging to organize and to fund.

The students also made constructive comments. Some mentioned that they felt that they were not necessarily “in the loop” as far as news of department events (e.g. special lectures). There did not seem to be a department email list serve, Facebook page, or Twitter account for announcements. Others mentioned that they would have appreciated more guidance on the selection of a minor that would complement their interests in urban studies and planning. Another comment noted there was no class or specific curriculum focused on jobs, employment, and career skills and the desire for more support in terms of career services and post-graduation career planning was noted. Students mentioned the need for direction and advice on assistance on the creation of portfolios (paper and electronic) as well.

17. If applicable, particularly for graduate programs, comment on the ways that this program will make a **unique contribution** to the field, and its likelihood of achieving State, regional and/or national **prominence**.

The urban studies and planning program is already making a special (unique) contribution to the upstate New York region. First, in the “up-state” region, there are only two other degree granting undergraduate urban studies programs – at Buffalo State and at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Similarly at the graduate level, only UBuffalo and UAlbany offer the masters of urban and regional planning in the upstate region. Over the last 20 years, through both its undergraduate and graduate program, UAlbany has produced a significant percentage of the planning professionals currently practicing in Upstate New York.

18. Include any **further observations** important to the evaluation of this program proposal and provide any **recommendations** for the proposed program.

Some Suggestions Concerning the Course Curriculum:

The structure and contents of the curriculum for the urban studies and planning degree program is broad-based, has few specific course requirements, allows students a great deal of flexibility in course selection, and requires students to take coursework in a cognate discipline. In terms of its flexibility, it is more characteristic of undergraduate social science degree programs than it is of undergraduate degree programs in planning which tend to be far more proscribed in terms of course content and progressions.

As currently offered and as reflected in the program proposal, the degree program is academically sound and serves students well. Nevertheless, in the opinion of this reviewer, it could be strengthened with a couple of modest changes.

1) The 12 cr. lower division requirement is a bit flat. It requires students take four introductory level courses on cities and urban issues (3 cr. each) – urban geography, introduction to urban planning, the American City, and World Cities. At least three of these courses are large enrollment general education courses where majors are mixed in with large numbers of non-majors. It seems in none of the required lower division classes focus exclusively on the majors in urban studies and planning (perhaps the introduction to urban planning might be the place for this to happen, but since it is a popular GE class it does not seem to fit that role). A gateway course into a major which students take after having taken a couple introductory level classes in the field can be extremely useful. If properly structured gateway courses build on the basic intellectual concepts offered in the introductory courses and set the stage for program majors on what to expect in the coming semesters. Besides laying a higher level intellectual framework than is possible in basic introductory-level courses, a gateway course only for majors

also allows for discussion of career and professional development and helps create and cement a strong identity among students for each other and the major. Thus in a “credit-neutral” change, one might modify the existing lower division requirements for the urban studies and planning degree as follows ... require all students take introduction to urban planning, require students to take two of the three other options – urban geography, American City, or World Cities, and then require all of majors to take a gateway course tailored to the major, e.g. “the big-picture in urban studies and planning” or something along those lines!

2) The current degree program requires students take one methodology course from a set of about five options – remote sensing, computer mapping, urban analysis, global positioning systems, and intermediate cartography. These are excellent course options. And this is an excellent requirement as many social science students are often woefully lacking in methodological skills. But I would recommend doubling down on the methodology requirement. Require students to take at least two methodology classes. This recommendation is not credit neutral and would require a reduction of 3 credits from the electives, reducing the number of elective credits from a total of 12 credits to 9.

3) The degree also requires students to complete a course that reflects some level of community engagement (working for a community client or in an internship). In this reviewer’s opinion, this too is an essential requirement for a degree program in urban studies and planning. All courses listed here seem appropriate to fulfilling this community engagement piece ... except “Independent Study in Planning”. This class should be removed from the list of options.

4) The degree program would benefit from the addition of a capstone course in the major required of all students. Capstone courses can be very valuable experiences for students as they complete their degree program. In most cases these courses help bring them full circle from the introductory courses and gateway course they took at the beginning of their career as a program major. It allows them, or perhaps forces them, to try to synthesize the broad range of knowledge they have learned and worked with over the past few semesters and to employ some of the research methodologies they have learned. Depending on course content and structure, issues relating to job searches, resumes and portfolios, and career and professional development can also be addressed in such courses. Finally, capstone courses (much like gateway courses too) also help to develop a sense of identity among the students in a particular cohort and help them lay the foundations of a professional network for years ahead.

5) Consider eliminating the requirement for 6 credits of course work in a cognate discipline. This would allow the addition of both an introductory gateway course for majors (3 cr.) and a capstone course (3 cr.) at the end of the program of study. It is worth noting here that urban studies and planning are inherently interdisciplinary and many of the courses and elective options for students in the major which are offered in Geography and Planning reflect that fact and perspective. In addition, all students at UAlbany are required to not only complete a major program of study, but also an academic minor in another field. This university level requirement makes the degree’s cognate discipline requirement seem a bit redundant.

Version 2013-10-15

SOURCES:

Meetings and Discussions:

(Accompanied at all meetings by second site reviewer, Dr. Marijoan Bull)

27 February 2014

9:30 am – Suzanne Freed, Asst. Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

10 -11:00 am – Geography and Planning and Urban Studies and Planning Program Leadership. Catherine Lawson, Ray Bromley, John Pipkin, and David Lewis.

11 – 12:00 noon – Geography and Planning Full-time Faculty and Adjunct Faculty in Urban Studies and Planning. Full-time faculty included Alex Buyantuev, Catherine Lawson, David Lewis, Andrei Lapenas, Corianne Scally, David Lewis, James Mower, and Youqin Huang . Adjunct faculty from urban studies and planning program included Todd Fabozzi, Rocco Ferraro, S. “Thyag” Thyagarajan, Chris O’Conner, Kurt Swartz, and Marcia Kees.

1:30-2:30 pm – University Library. Meeting with Lorrie Smith, Bibliographer and subject specialist for Department of Geography and Planning, and tour of university library.

2:30 – 3:00 pm – Department facilities tour with Corianne Scally and James Mower.

3 – 4:00 pm – Student majors and recent graduates of urban studies and planning at UAlbany. We met with seven students all of whom had or were majoring in urban studies and planning. Most knew the program well. There was just one junior, while four were seniors and two were recent graduates.

4 -5:00 pm – Dean of College of Arts and Sciences, Edelgard Wulfert, and Assistant Dean, Kathleen Gersowitz.

28 February 2014

9 – 10:00 am – Janette Altarriba, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Robert Andrea, Associate Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, and Bruce Szelest, Associate Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Resources.

10-11:00 am – Department of Geography and Planning. Urban Studies and Planning Program Director(s) – past, present, and future. John Pipkin and David Lewis.

Documents Consulted

An Evaluation of the Resources of the University at Albany Libraries in Support of an Urban Studies and Planning BA Program. by Lorrie Smith, Bibliographer UAlbany. February 2014. 4 pages.

UAlbany. Geography and Planning Faculty Biographies. February 2014. 19 pages.

UAlbany. Geography and Planning Homepage etc. http://www.albany.edu/gp/about_the_department.shtml

UAlbany. Geography and Planning. Syllabi of Active Required and Elective Courses for the Major in Urban Studies and Planning. February 2014. 155 pages.

UAlbany. Geography and Planning. Internship Agencies and Projects for Academic Credit, Spring 2003 – Fall 2005. 2 pages.

UAlbany. Geography and Planning. Table 1. Known Graduate Schools Attended by Urban Studies and Planning Alumni; and Table 2. Known Employers of Urban Studies and Planning Alumni. No dates given. One page each.

UAlbany. Geography and Planning. Undergraduate Enrollments by Gender and Plan Codes, as of 2/14/2013, by IRPE, Spring 2011 – Fall 2012.

UAlbany. Geography and Planning. Undergraduate International and Minority Enrollments by Plan Codes, as of 2/15/2013, by IRPE, Spring 2012 – Fall 2012.

UAlbany. Institutional Research. Department Profiles. Geography and Planning.
http://www.albany.edu/ir/departamental_profiles.htm.

Urban Studies and Planning Major Proposal to University Senate, May 2012. 62 pages.

Urban Studies and Planning Proposal – Transmittal to SUNY System Administration, 7 March 2013. 5 pages.

Urban Studies and Planning Proposal – Transmittal to SUNY System Administration, 7 March 2013. 5 pages.



March 31, 2014

**Department of Geography and Planning
Urban Studies and Planning BA Program**

Response to Reports of External Reviewers Dr. Marijoan Bull (Westfield State University) and Dr. Robert Kent (California State University, Northridge) Site Visit, February 26-28, 2014.

Department members were gratified by the strongly positive tone of the review. Urban Studies and Planning (USP) at Albany is not a new program; it has existed for roughly 20 years. We are glad that the reviewers concur that this is an appropriate time to convert the program from a faculty-initiated to a fully-fledged departmental major. Their reports were extremely perceptive, and their suggestions will be particularly useful in future revisions of the program's structure and mode of operation, as well as in future assessments.

Because of the general positivity of the reviewers' comments, this response will focus mainly on the weaknesses they note and the opportunities for improvement they suggest. The response is organized according to the numbered bullets on the External Evaluation Form.

1. Program, Structure and Requirements, Administration, Evaluation

The principal point that requires comment is that both reviewers, while approving of the high degree of flexibility and the wide range of choices open to students, imply that it may require more structure. As Dr. Bull notes, it is necessary for students to take "a high degree of personal responsibility for their education." She suggests that the program would benefit from another required course, perhaps in methodology. Elsewhere both she and Dr. Kent suggest gateway and capstone courses. We will react more fully to these curricular suggestions below.

Dr. Bull also suggests that *ethics* should be incorporated in the learning outcomes and curriculum of the USP program. She does not give more detailed suggestions, but certainly there are many ethical dimensions to urbanism and planning, ranging from environmental ethics to planning law, and from the "moralities" of public space to the norms of practice within the planning profession. More emphasis on this theme will be easy to achieve in several existing courses, just as a focus on ethics is made explicit in our MRP program.

2. Special Focus of the Program

Both reviewers find the focus of the program to be appropriate, and neither of them makes specific suggestions for improvement.

3. Self-Assessment and Continuous Improvement

Both reviewers note the variety of assessments that are conducted at present, and neither of them proposes any new ones. We will, of course, continue to improve our own picture of faculty performance and student learning. (The new assessment for adjunct faculty we began last year is a case in point.) We are, however, a very small program in a relatively small department. We feel that yet more large-scale mandatory assessments imposed from outside the department would be a serious impediment to more important tasks.

4. Relationship of the Program to Others

Dr. Kent notes the natural fit of the USP program with other the department programs including our two other baccalaureate degrees, and our two Masters and three certificate programs. Cross-listed courses, colocation, collaboration, informal encounters, and participation in department events are the most obvious ways in which USP majors benefit from this context. The same will be true of the University's new Sustainability Minor, which will also be administered by the department. Dr. Kent also notes strong thematic ties with the two departments in Rockefeller College and the accessibility of many graduate programs to our majors in the University at Albany, along with our own MRP/JD degree with Albany Law School. Dr. Bull makes similar remarks, and also underlines the strong connection with urban and policy related programs in the Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Computing and Information. Our cognate discipline requirement is one tangible way in which our students benefit from this context.

5. Evidence of Need and Demand for the Program, and Occupational Demand for Graduates

A public research university in the state capital of New York is the natural context for a USP program serving a regional audience. The area offers students a wealth of opportunities for internships, service learning activities, and potential employment when they graduate. The local demand for the program has long been clear during its long existence as a faculty initiated major. In fact the number of majors has remained fairly steady for more than a decade. Full formalization of the program promises to increase our enrollment and number of majors, because we will be able to publicize the program more widely, along with complementary programs such as the new Sustainability minor.

6, 7, & 8 Evaluation of the Faculty, Assess Staffing Plans, Evaluate Credentials and Involvement of Adjunct Faculty and Support Personnel

Both reviewers are complimentary about the qualifications and activities of both full-time and part-time faculty. In addition to their exposure to the wide-ranging research interests and teaching expertise of regular faculty, our majors benefit from an exceptionally strong and committed cadre of adjunct faculty, many of whom are active professionals in the area's planning, policy, non-profit, and public sector communities. The reviewers do not note any specific deficiencies in faculty coverage. They do observe, however, that we are spread relatively thin across a good deal of curriculum. This renders all the more important faculty

recruitment, and the reviewers' visited coincided with the most intense period of recruitment of full-time faculty the department has been through in several decades. This provides convincing evidence of support from the University administration and from the College of Arts and Sciences in particular.

We are presently recruiting two new lines in GIS to support our new Master's degree in Environmental Geographic Science along with one replacement line in Environmental and Land Use Planning (to replace the recently retired Dr. Gene Bunnell). In addition, our Chair has requested permission to conduct a search to replace Dr. Chris Smith who is in the process of retirement. The Dean has indicated her support for this hire, however, a final authorization will not be granted until mid-summer 2014. The latter two hires are clearly especially crucial to the continued success of the USP Program. At the same time, Professor Ray Bromley is completing his term as Vice Provost for International Education this semester, and will ultimately be returning full time to the department. Before this, though, he expects to be away from the University for one year or possibly three semesters on Fulbright or other leave. When he returns to the Department his work is likely to be spread across the MRP, USP, and Globalization Studies programs.

PLEASE NOTE: Shortly after the Site Visit, Professor Scally announced her desire for a new career path, and submitted her resignation, effective the end of Spring semester 2014. Our Chair immediately requested permission to hire a Visiting Assistant Professor as registration for Fall semester 2014, began in mid-March, and many students are dependent on the courses taught by Professor Scally. At the same time, our Chair requested permission to conduct a search for a replacement tenure-track assistant professor position in 2014, to be hired by Fall 2015, in time for the scheduled reaccreditation of the MRP Program. This position is responsible for teaching studios and developing extensive connections with local communities (e.g., using team-based learning and other techniques involving students in "real world" data collection and planning efforts). This position is also critical to the success of the USP Program, particularly with respect to the University's goal to encourage community engagement experiences for undergraduate students.

Both reviewers note the problems posed by the recent reduction of TA lines, because of the strategic emphasis of the University on terminal masters and doctoral programs. The number of TA lines is greatly diminished from what it was a few years ago; in fact we only receive 2 FTE TAs because the MRP is a terminal degree. This reduction has a big effect on the feasible size of our introductory courses. For example USP 125 used to enroll close to 500 students and be assigned four ten-hour TAs. Now it receives one ten-hour assistant. The feasible number of seats has halved, greatly reducing our ability to reach large student audiences with General Education content and also to recruit majors. Moreover, as Dr. Bull notes, it affects the type of assignments that can be given. In effect, multiple-choice tests are the only possible option in large courses, in which it was previously routine to give written assignments.

9 & 10 Student Population Served and Recruitment of Qualified Students

USP is an unrestricted major that draws mainly on students already matriculated at UAlbany. Typically they are attracted to the field in one of our introductory courses, which they are perhaps taking as a General Education course. When the major becomes an official registered major we will be able to recruit directly into the major from off campus. As the reviewers note, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education Altarriba already anticipates including USP in university level admissions outreach. This, together with improvements in “seamless transfer” from other SUNY schools, promises to bring a modest increase in the number of USP majors. The reviewers recognize these facts. Dr. Bull adds a useful recommendation about developing recruitment materials to clarify the field of planning for potential majors. She also advises us to communicate directly with high school guidance counselors in our major recruitment areas. We will act on these suggestions.

11. Provisions for Encouraging Participation from Underrepresented Groups

Dr. Kent gives an accurate summary of the diversity of student populations in the University as a whole and in our three undergraduate majors. Our original proposal suggested outreach to local high schools as a starting point for increasing diversity in our programs. In retrospect this could at best yield quite limited results because so many UAlbany students are non-local. Since the lower division undergraduate population here is more diverse than the USP major, Dr. Kent makes the very reasonable suggestion that we focus efforts on these groups first, and then extend them to community colleges and regional SUNY campuses. We will adopt this suggestion.

Dr. Bull also underlines the need to recruit more underrepresented groups to the USP major and provides information on some recommendations of the American Planning Association in this respect.

12. Monitoring of Student Progress and Advisement

Dr. Kent indicates that students have a positive impression of our advisement and approves of our plan to move from “centralized” advisement in which the Director advises all students to one involving at least two faculty.

Dr. Bull notes no problems in regular advisement in the USP program; in fact like Dr. Kent, she notes the accessibility and responsiveness of faculty to students. But she makes several useful suggestions growing, *inter alia*, from the reviewers’ session with a group of majors. These are: a possible capstone course; guidance in choosing minors; support in career choices, application letters and the like, including information on the placement record of graduates; more publicity on speakers and events; and a general need for a sense of cohesion, what could be called “cohort building” experiences both in course work and in extra-curricular activities. The issue of a capstone course is discussed below. The other suggestions can be addressed through advisement and providing more materials to students. Tracking alumni careers is rather difficult but we will certainly explore the matter. It would undoubtedly be a good idea to develop social and

extracurricular events exclusively for USP majors. A field trip every year or every semester is one possibility, perhaps to a local agency or a cultural or historic site.

13. Employment of Graduates

Dr. Kent correctly notes the high proportion of USP majors who go on to graduate study in our department or elsewhere, and the significant number engaged in professional work in local planning-oriented agencies. It is relatively easy to keep track of these students. He accurately observes that we don't have good data on other graduates. Tracking students after their e-mail and mailing addresses change is a difficult problem for us (as for other departments); contacts are typically sporadic and occur on the initiative of the graduates themselves. We will explore with colleagues how other departments address the problem.

14. Physical Resources and Facilities

The reviewers clearly gained a comprehensive and accurate view of facilities in the Department and the University as a whole (notably the Libraries), and their remarks seem to require no further comment.

15. Institutional Commitment to the Program

The reviewers accurately concluded that the USP program and the Department as a whole have been strongly supported by the University and by the College of Arts and Sciences in particular. As we noted above, we are engaged at this moment in more faculty recruitment (both new and replacement lines) that at any time in our history.

The reviewers both mention the problem we faced with the reduction of TA lines (which we discussed above), and correctly identify some of its negative effects for teaching. In addition, the lack of funds for conference travel is a problem, particularly for junior faculty, but it is not one that is unique to the USP program.

Dr. Kent (p. 9) notes that the department van has recently been decommissioned. A van would be useful for field trips, but the loss is of greater concern to our physical geographers. In recent years carpooling has worked well for local, class-related excursions for USP students.

16, 17 & 18 Summary and Additional Observations

We were very pleased by the generally positive tone of the reviewers' summaries and particularly by their remarks about the "hugely positive" student perspectives and the "highly qualified and clearly committed faculty." For brevity's sake here we will focus on the weaknesses noted and the specific recommendations the reviewers make.

Dr. Bull

18 (1) *Strengthen and market the identity of the major; and create new extracurricular activities.* We entirely agree. We will produce publicity materials and disseminate them on and off campus.

We will also explore extracurricular activities such as USP-only field trips, social gatherings, and talks.

18 (2) *Make ethics a more explicit learning objective in the USP curriculum.* Agreed. We have edited the USP learning objectives accordingly (see Appendix 2) and we will discuss how to embed this material in various courses.

18 (3) *Capstone course* (discussed separately below).

18 (4) *Enhance career services* Agreed although, as indicated above, tracking alumni is a challenge. We will discuss strategies with the University's alumni and career development offices.

18 (5) *Strategic recruitment of women and students of color.* Agreed. As indicated above we will begin with outreach to lower division students on campus. As for faculty diversity, our recruitment processes, which involve the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, already take this matter very seriously.

18 (6) *Access for USP students to high-enrollment courses, including GIS.* We already monitor the availability of seats, but certainly the anticipated increase in USP majors will require careful management.

18 (7) *Investigate e-portfolios as an assessment tool for majors.* We will do so.

Dr. Kent

(Top of p. 9) *Provide information about departmental events, assist students in their choice of minors, and provide more career guidance.* We will do so, primarily through regular advisement.

Curricular Recommendations (Dr. Kent pp. 9-10 and Dr. Bull 18.3)

- *“Flat” lower division curriculum and desirability of a gateway course for majors only.* This is a good recommendation. We will consider this proposal, perhaps making an appropriate methodology course (possibly USP 375) a gateway course.
- *Require an additional methodology course.* (See previous bullet).
- *Remove Independent Study in Planning [USP 497] as a community engagement course.* This is a desirable objective. At present the course is a useful failsafe for this new requirement, at least until we have a sense of whether students have sufficient access to the other listed courses. If they do, we will remove the requirement. An alternative would be to keep the course as an option while ensuring that the work has a genuine community engagement component.
- *Capstone course.* This is an excellent proposal. As a high priority for future curriculum revision of the USP program, we will consider designating a capstone course (possibly USP 475, or some other upper division course).

- *Consider elimination of the six credits required in a cognate discipline.* This recommendation is only made by Dr. Kent. We are ambivalent about it. It would certainly be appropriate and consistent with the formalization of the program as a freestanding major. But no department has a monopoly on the topic of urbanism. The cognate requirement sends a very useful message about the inclusive nature of the field to students (as well as to colleagues). It also allows students to access a variety of relevant perspectives and views that we could not possibly cover within the department but which are genuinely integral to urban studies. And, more practically, it slightly reduces the credit-delivery load on our own faculty. Nevertheless, we will seriously consider the recommendation.