

Part 1: Overview

A. Degree Programs by Level

Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning

Bachelor of Urban Design

Master of Urban and Regional Planning

B. Mission and Purpose

The School of Urban and Regional Planning is committed to conducting the education, research, training, and community engagement needed to prepare planning professionals to address the urban, environmental, and economic challenges of the 21st century. This includes a focus on three specific areas: 1) Creating vibrant, livable, healthy, and equitable communities; 2) Ensuring that our communities and ecosystems are sustainable and resilient, and; 3) Developing interdisciplinary solutions, bridging the public and private sectors, that are able to overcome the policy, fiscal, and regulatory barriers to sustainable, economically-viable development.

C. Major Changes Since the Last Program Review

For SURP, the great recession has bought about a fundamental re-thinking of how the role of planning in contemporary society. Rather than relying on regulatory mechanisms and federal funding to direct the development of our cities and regions, the future will be oriented towards the creation and capture of economic value, and the most successful cities and regions will be those that have been able to develop and leverage their economic assets. We have positioned the School as a national leader in developing solutions to urban and regional challenges of the 21st century. This has entailed:

- The **replacement of nearly all of the School's former faculty** members. The School's new faculty members have all distinguished themselves in both research and professional practice, and have expertise in the three areas that we believe will be most important to our cities and regions in the upcoming century:
 - Public/private partnerships, housing finance, and land development
 - Transportation, livability, and community engagement
 - Environmental planning and community resilience
- Maintaining an extraordinary level of research productivity, one that is comparable to any of the best planning programs in the country. Since 2007, our **5 tenure-track faculty** have 1) conducted more than **\$1.7 million in externally-funded research**; 2) published **74 scholarly articles** and research monographs and **96 conference presentations** and invited lectures, and; 3) received **scholarly awards from the profession's most prestigious organizations**, including best paper awards from the *Journal of the American Planning Association* (the profession's premier journal) and the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies.
- Developing an **urban intervention program** focused on engaging local stakeholders in the planning and design of their communities. We have conducted 6 highly-publicized interventions projects in the tri-county area, including *C'est La Via* in West Palm Beach and *Purple Line* in Miami.

- **Reactivating the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES).** CUES was created in 1972 under the leadership of growth management pioneer John DeGrove, and has a distinguished history of being a non-partisan, apolitical source of technical expertise for stakeholders in the planning and development of the South Florida region. While the Center went dormant in 2008, the School's current faculty members have sought to re-activate this important resource for the South Florida region.
- **The relocation of the School from its historic home in Fort Lauderdale to Boca Raton.** While this relocation was suddenly forced on the School by the university's former administration in a manner neither thoughtful nor strategic, it nonetheless has provided us with the opportunity to leverage the resources of the main campus to strengthen and enhance the program.

Part 2: Findings

A. Strengths

The School has an exceptionally strong faculty, many of whom are internationally-recognized as leaders in the areas of transportation, housing, development, and civic engagement. We have further begun developing expertise in areas essential for planning success in the post-recession era, including public-private partnerships, low-cost, high-impact urban interventions, and new methods of placemaking and civic engagement. **We have one of only two undergraduate programs in urban design in the country**, and this ***program is the fastest-growing STEM program at FAU***. SURP is also an innovator in the use of technology in planning. SURP houses the Visual Planning Technology (VPT) Lab and Production Studio, which provides students with access to state-of-the-practice computing facilities and software applications and has a full-time coordinator committed to ensuring students have access to the data and technology needed to be at the leading edge of planning practice. **Like the planning program at FAU's peer institution Portland State University, SURP is leveraging local opportunities to develop an internationally-recognized planning program.**

B. Weaknesses

The school has a small faculty—8 persons at full capacity, though due to ongoing faculty departures, we have had only 7 faculty members active for the last several years. Ongoing budget cuts, the lack of faculty raises, and growing administrative demands have made it difficult to maintain a standard of faculty excellence. While our faculty's productivity is impressive, it must be noted that the majority of this work *occurred while the School's faculty held positions at other universities*. Faculty need to be provided with the support systems needed to sustain these levels of productivity. Since the last program review, FAU has increased the teaching and service loads of its tenure-track faculty members, while providing only a single (and nominal) increase in pay. **FAU's current policies encourage our most productive faculty members to seek out positions at other universities** to leverage the offer for pay increases and reductions in teaching loads. For productive faculty, job hunting is (at best) a major inconvenience, and reflects faculty disillusionment with their career prospects at FAU. Course assignments, salaries, and administrative requirements need to be at least comparable to those of our peers, and preferably those of our aspirational programs.

C. Recommendations

1. *Provide adequate support for the research activities of the School's faculty.* As discussed above, the current teaching and administrative demands placed on faculty, combined with lagging pay increases make it difficult to maintain high levels of scholarly productivity and encourages productive faculty members to pursue job opportunities at other universities.
2. *Dedicate a classroom to studio use and increase the use of studio classes.* SURP had a dedicated studio space in Fort Lauderdale. While we were assured by the dean and provost that we would receive studio space upon its arrival in Boca, we are still working to identify it.
3. *Students need to adhere to course sequencing.* Much of this problem stems from the lack of reliable data on our majors; students enroll in SURP without contacting faculty or academic advisors. We are in the process of updating the curriculum in our academic programs to take advantage of the expertise of our new faculty. Advising and course sequencing will be topics for consideration.
4. *Junior faculty members have been inadequately mentored.* We have replaced all of the faculty members of the school who were formerly responsible for mentoring junior faculty. Their replacements uniformly have experience with the promotion and tenure activities at Research I Universities, and we have revised our mentoring policies accordingly. We further need to provide better financial support for participation at conferences and professional meetings in order to develop young faculty into leading scholars.