

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM ACCREDITATION REPORT
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report from the Graduate College's Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Programs at the University of Iowa.

Executive Summary: The Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Programs (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the domains defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The Program was accredited for the maximum period of seven years allowed by the accrediting body. This report addresses the Board's Strategic Plan objective to "offer high-quality programs through ongoing program improvement for undergraduate, graduate, professional, and non-degree students and special school students" (1.1.).

Background:

- ◇ **Description.** The Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Programs develop the theoretical and analytic skills to analyze social problems and evaluate public policies. Students develop an understanding of the institutions – social, economic, political, administrative, and legal systems – that provide the context for policy analysis and constrain public choices.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the Planning Accreditation Board.
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-study prepared by the Urban and Regional Planning Programs contained the responses to the appropriate criteria required by the accrediting body – goals and objectives; institutional relations; academic autonomy and governance; curriculum; faculty resources and composition; teaching, advising, and student services; research and scholarly activities; public and professional service; students; institutional resources; and administrative and fair practices.
- ◇ **On-Site Team Report.** In February 2006, the visiting team determined that the Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Programs met most of the criteria required by the accrediting body; six of the 95 criteria were only partially met.
- ◇ **Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.**
 - ☑ "Students expressed positive sentiments about the small class sizes, the accessibility of faculty members, and the deep personal relationships that they build with faculty and classmates while in the planning program."
 - ☑ "Graduates of the program have a reputation for not only strong analytical skills, but also for effective oral and written communication abilities."
 - ☑ "Faculty members are regarded as 'model citizens' in terms of their willingness to perform university and community service."
 - ☑ "There have been recent improvements to the website, alumni databases, and career placement efforts."
 - ☑ "The program seems well-managed and on solid footing for the years to come."

- ◇ Sample Concerns Identified by the Visiting Team.
 - ☑ “The department must make a concerted effort to discuss, debate, deliberate, and decide on what they want for their department, university, and community.”
 - ☑ “An area for possible improvement involves strengthening and updating the planning theory components of the History and Planning Theory core course.”
 - ☑ “Another area for improvement involves links to professional communities and continuing education for planners.”
 - ☑ “Recruitment, particularly of minority and disadvantaged students, might be improved.”
 - ☑ “The faculty could do a better job of assessing educational effectiveness. The program could be more focused, systematic, and sophisticated in terms of assessing and documenting educational effectiveness.”

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In November 2006, the Planning Accreditation Board awarded accreditation to the Urban and Regional Planning Graduate Programs for the maximum period of seven years.

Details about the accreditation report are available in the Board Office.