How Might Exploring The Life Experiences of Diverse Students Support Them to Graduate from Urban Planning Programs

Jordan James
University Library and Learning Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/skc


This Event is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Shared Knowledge Conference by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.
Urban Planning is rarely an academic discipline that undergraduate students pursue outright. The vast majority become aware of the field after exposure in sister disciplines such as architecture, geography or general liberal arts courses. Upon survey, these students indicate an interest in urban planning academics as providing professional opportunities towards saving the environment, inhibiting climate change or repatriating prosperity back into the declining communities they call home. With such a variety of student diversity, both academic and ethnographic, we can no longer assume that the traditional pedagogical methods of urban planning education can continue to meet the needs of tomorrows urban planners. As the overarching ambition of education has always been to graduate students who can generate successful solutions to current and future challenges, the objective of my research is to use the life experiences of my students themselves to develop a meaningful relationship with the academic and professional demands of urban planning to support diverse students in persisting through to graduation. My theory is that such students will benefit from early identity development that builds from their personal experiences within the course curriculum.

This research is being conducted as Design-Based Research, were student work is collected and analyzed through a qualitative open coding process developed to consider the students identity development over a 16-week semester. Preliminary findings suggest that identity development across the curriculum supports students to incorporate both the ethical and aesthetical aspects of urban design when considering the needs of the city’s population which they are planning for. In other words, that community and personal identity is part of the professional planning practice and not a disconnected supplement. Overall the implications of my research show that the incorporation of identity development as part of the overall course design, supports students to consider the life experiences and perceptions that lead them to pursue a planning degree against the professional demands of the discipline. Additionally, by illustrating the removal of practical barriers to the incorporating of identity development into the course curriculum, researchers and educators alike will be able to build from such research.