

**Report of the Academic Program Review (APR) Team  
Community and Regional Planning Program  
School of Architecture and Planning**

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**OVERALL PROGRAM STRENGTHS**

The Academic Program Review (APR) team was continually impressed by the high quality teaching, research (particularly community engaged research) and service generated by the relatively small number of faculty and limited set of resources within the Community and Regional Planning (CRP) program. The Master's program, in particular has a national – even North American – reputation as a leading center of education for planning professionals with foci on social justice, community engagement, and indigenous planning. This commitment, and the quality of professional education provided was recently recognized by the national Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) with the maximum accreditation time period – seven years.

Leadership within CRP and the School of Architecture + Planning is excellent. CRP has recently hired a new Director, Dr. Renia Ehrenfeucht. She has the respect of the faculty members, planning professionals, and community members. The process of her hiring and the fresh perspectives she has brought to the position appear to have focused the efforts of faculty members to strengthen the program, address various shortcomings that they had identified, and deepen the program's relationships with the broader communities within the university and beyond. The Dean's Office has been supportive of the program and its goals, working where possible to smooth over some the financial challenges that the University is facing. CRP also receives strong support and guidance from the office of the Associate Dean of Research as its faculty members strive to increase their research and outreach work.

Within the context of North American professional planning programs, CRP is well known for its knowledge about and engagement with issues of social justice. This work is grounded in meaningful community engagement and a long history of engaged scholarship among faculty with New Mexico communities. While many programs are expanding the scope of their explorations to include more distant/international projects, CRP's approach has been to increase its engagement within the New Mexico context, benefiting from the depth of inquiry that grows from working with the local peoples, regional communities and landscapes. This provides a rich learning experience for students, and also has the important benefit of serving New Mexico communities well, increasing their capacities to engage critically with planning processes.

CRP is also a clear leader in the emerging fields of indigenous planning and design. Dr. Ted Jojola has led the discussion in both the academic and professional planning realms within the United States and across North America. The Indigenous Design and Planning Institute (iD+Pi), under his guidance, has been steadily increasing its capacity to work with communities and contribute to the education of future planners. The program has hired more faculty and research associates to support this work and who are playing a leading role in defining the meaning and forms of indigenous planning both locally and internationally.

The Master's degree program has a clear mission that addresses both education and service, stressing the importance of working with communities. This mission is reflected in the concentrations that are offered to students: Community Development; Indigenous Planning; Natural Resources and Environmental Planning; and Physical Planning and Design. The organization and requirements of the concentrations within the program are well structured and well understood by both students and faculty.

Faculty members in CRP are committed to their teaching and research. The APR team was impressed with the diversity of the faculty members, both in terms of the demographics that they represented, and the breadth of expertise that they covered. The team was particularly impressed with the quality of the junior scholars that the program had recruited in recent years.

The quality of faculty members extends to the part-time faculty members. Mostly practitioners within the Albuquerque region, they play an important role connecting the program to the profession. Without exception, they appear to be well qualified and passionate about their involvement with the program.

Finally, the APR team was able to meet with practicing planners and representatives of local non-profit organizations. The community engaged projects of students, the research of faculty members, and the quality and commitment of the program graduates all served these stakeholders well. And many local leading planning professionals are alumni of the program.

## **REVIEW CRITERION**

In this section, we present comments that address the specific review criteria provided by the Office of the Provost. Some of our comments mirror material presented in our overall assessment. Nonetheless, we include them here as justification for our review criteria ratings.

### **Criterion 1: Program Goals**

*Overall Findings: Met*

#### *FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

The goals and educational objectives for the Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) program are clearly stated and consistent with the mission of the University and best practices for the discipline of planning. In particular, the focus of the program on planning and advocating with communities in the Southwest for their sustainable futures is well matched to UNM's mission of providing services that enhance New Mexicans' quality of life and promote economic development, as well as provide services directly to city and state. In particular, the CRP program's commitment to social justice – as expressed in its "Statement on Justice" – conforms closely to UNM's Mission and the needs of the state overall.

Beyond this, CRP has clearly articulated its learning goals for both the MCRP and the Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Planning and Design (BAEPD) programs, and communicates those goals through periodic self-assessments, mentoring processes, course content, as well as the "Statement on Justice."

#### *FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS*

While the national Planning Accreditation Board's (PAB) process for the MCRP program has prompted successive iterations of programmatic review and refinement, there does not appear to have been a parallel process for the undergraduate BAEPD program. The overall mission and purpose of the BAEPD could be more clearly articulated and differentiated from the MCRP program. Over the course of the review, there was ambiguity and inconsistency over the main focus and mission of the BAEPD, with varying emphases on:

- a. Technical planning skills;
- b. Community engagement and organizing for work as community organizers, employees of NGO's and/or social advocates; and
- c. Theoretical and conceptual understanding of environmental planning, sociology of planning, and the politics of planning.

Greater consensus over the main vision and emphasis of the program would help to guide its development into the future, better distinguish the BAEP from the MCRP, and create a clearer pathway from the BAEP to the MCRP.

### **Criterion 2: Teaching and Learning Curriculum Strengths and Weaknesses**

*Overall Findings: Met with Concerns*

*FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

***The MCRP:***

The MCRP is structured around four core areas of concentration:

- Community Development,
- Indigenous Planning,
- Natural Resources and Environmental Planning, and
- Physical Planning and Design.

The program offers adequate coverage of curricular components for all four areas of concentration. In particular, CRP offers a unique and innovative curricular approach to Indigenous planning that complements other programmatic strengths within the School such as the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute (iD+Pi) and the Resource Center for Raza Planning (RCRP), both of which make substantial contributions to teaching and the creation of student planning projects.

Reflecting CRP's broad commitment to meeting the needs of a broad range of students and career goals, the MCRP offers four options for exit requirements:

- Master's Thesis
- Professional project
- Capstone Planning Studio
- iTown Studio.

This curriculum is augmented by the availability of a number of dual degree programs accommodating a broad range of student interests and backgrounds including the MCRP and Master of Arts in Latin American Studies (MALAS), the MCRP and Master of Public Administration (MPA), and the MCRP and Master of Water Resources (MWR) .

We were also impressed to learn about the active Master's student participation in the UNM American Planning Association Student Chapter.

***BAEPD***

The curriculum for the BAEPD offers a very broad exposure to a wide range of planning topics and issues, both theoretical and skills based. For students who are not interested in such an exhaustive set of competencies, a Minor in Community and Regional Planning is available.

*FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS*

The breadth of the BAEPD program combined with other challenges described below, has created several curricular and teaching challenges. The most obvious of these is that the program relies heavily on part-time instructors for the BAEPD program and there is a general lack of full-time faculty members teaching core courses. As part-time instructors are the

backbone of the BAEPD, some of them expressed a need for more guidance from full-time faculty regarding the expectations and learning goals for the courses they teach.

There is also concern about the high proportion of curricular offerings that are dual-listed at the 400 and 500 level, giving rise to several challenges:

- For theory based courses, some graduate students believe that the dual listing of courses compromises the level of intellectual discourse. This seems to be less of an issue for skills based courses.
- For BAEPD students continuing on in the MCRP program, there can be challenges in finding enough non-duplicative courses.
- Some faculty feel overburdened by trying to meet the requirements of both BAEPD and MCRP students.

Beyond these concerns, there are various opportunities that the program has yet to leverage but has expressed interest in. For example, CRP offers an undergraduate minor and a nationally accredited professional graduate degree, but a lack of resources for more aggressive marketing has limited its reach. Also, there are opportunities to better inform MCRP students about available internship positions, with both students and stakeholders acknowledging the importance of publicizing such opportunities. Similarly, there is a strong desire from both students and stakeholders for more community engagement and service learning opportunities earlier in the MCRP program.

Finally, given its clear relevance to the State, its communities, and the University at large, there are concerns that the profile of the RCRP and the resources devoted to it are not sufficient given its current and potential contributions.

### **Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning: Continuous Improvement**

*Overall Findings: Met*

#### **FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS**

We were pleased to observe that, as a unit, CRP reviews, evaluates, and reflects on its programs on a regular a basis and with a rigor that is laudable. The MCRP program is an accredited professional program, so it undergoes review on a regular basis by outside evaluators. But it has also employed additional evaluation tools in efforts to improve the programs that it delivers and enhance the research potential of its faculty members. The reflection process was further augmented by the recent successful search for a new program director. The process itself required discussion about the direction that the program wanted to take, and the hiring of Dr. Ehrenfeucht to the position has energized the program and brought a new perspective to the discussions.

As an accredited professional planning program, the Master of City and Regional Planning undergoes a rigorous periodic review that is conducted by the national Planning Accreditation Board (<http://www.planningaccreditationboard.org/>). The PAB not only accredits programs, but also acts to mentor programs in their efforts to improve, and collects data about the success of programs across the country. The MCP program underwent an accreditation review in 2014 and was reaccredited for the maximum possible period – seven years.

CRP employs student self-assessment in both the MCRP and the BAEPD programs. In both cases, the assessments are implemented twice. The first one, early in the program, helps students to understand the expectations of the program, but also helps faculty determine work that may be required to meet the program goals. The second assessment is implanted towards the end of the program, allowing students to understand the knowledge they have developed, and for faculty members and instructors to determine if changes are necessary in the delivery of curriculum.

In the MCRP program, student self-assessments also inform the Graduate Review, which takes place at the end of the first year. This process, conducted by each student's academic advisor and one other faculty member, provides a venue for discussing strategies to improve the students experience, to ensure that educational objectives are being met. It also serves as a foundation for thinking about how they might engage in continues professional learning after graduation.

As with most academic programs, CRP administers course evaluations to assess teaching effectiveness in each course. However, this process has been augmented by curriculum surveys in 2006 and 2013, as well as an exit survey of students in 2016. Information gathered though all of these instruments are used to frame discussion about the programs at annual retreats. Recent changes to the graduate program (e.g. the implementation of the Capstone Studio) have been results of this process.

Finally, CRP has a Strategic Development Plan for (2013-2018). Faculty members are aware that a review of this Plan will be necessary within the coming year. It will address new University constraints as well as consider the success of new initiatives.

#### FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS:

N/A

## **Criterion 4: Students**

*Overall Assessment: Met*

### *FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

In line with the emphasis on learning in the unique context of New Mexico, there are a significant number of students who are residents of the state with a good mix from other parts of the US. There is a limited number of project assistantship available for incoming students in need of financial aid. The student body is fairly diverse with 35% people of color, including many Native American and Latino students. The limited size of enrollment has ensured a healthy ratio of students to faculty, which is important for a professional program.

There are clear policies for accepting new and transfer students into the BAEPD and MCRP programs. For the MCRP, this includes an undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0 in the last two years of study, evidence of preparation for high-quality graduate study, and recommendations from those familiar with their academic and professional work, and a clear letter of intent. There are written criteria to assess the letter of intent. While many Master's degree programs in planning have seen a marked decrease in enrollment, it is notable that UNM's MCRP program has had a relatively stable number of enrollees from 2011 to 2015 for which data were provided.

One of the strengths of the program is the outstanding quality of student advising at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Gratitude was expressed towards the professional advisors by students, faculty, and alumni alike who commented on both the quality of academic advising as well as the 'whole person' approach that the advisors exhibited. Students and alumni also commented on the high quality of academic advising they received from many of their faculty advisors. Students are assigned a faculty advisor upon admission to design their initial course of study and with whom they meet with at least once per semester. The professional advisors and faculty track and assess student progress. These strengths are reflected in the high rates of graduation, especially given the high number of students with outside responsibilities.

There is an active SA+P alumni association with CRP alumni in many leadership positions. There is a good tracking of alumni by the department with a strong interest from alumni to return to the department to support various programs and courses. This takes various forms from teaching as part time faculty to serving as mentors, guest speakers, and participants in program activities.

### *FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS*

There is one minor shortcoming worth noting. There were some who expressed a desire for more systematic recruitment of students into the MCRP and the BAEPD, especially among Native American students. In the case of undergraduate students, conducting more active recruitment of students to minor in Environmental Planning and Design was mentioned as a

viable option, since all undergraduates at UNM must declare a minor field of study. This may also help to enhance the applicant pool for the MCRP program.

## **Criterion 5: Faculty**

*Overall Findings: Met*

### *FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

Overall, CRP is graced with a complement of high caliber, dedicated, and talented faculty who work hard to provide good coverage for all major curricular areas. Full-time faculty members have appropriate qualifications to fulfil their teaching, research and service responsibilities, and part-time instructors have appropriate qualifications and experience to deliver courses they are assigned. It is clear that the faculty as a whole carries out a broad range of research and creative activities that includes innovative approaches to engaged scholarship. Moreover, the faculty reflects a diversity of interests, methodological approaches, theoretical specializations, and personal experiences that fit well with the goals of the program and the University mission.

### *FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS*

While the faculty as it stands offers a broad range of competencies and strengths, its composition in terms of career stage poses some challenges. The faculty is largely characterized by either highly experienced senior faculty, or promising and productive younger faculty. The lack of middle-career academics on faculty, however, raises concerns about the future of the program, particularly in light of likely future retirements. Projected budgetary constraints may pose a substantial challenge for succession planning, particularly as many programmatic foci and initiatives rest on combinations of junior and senior faculty and the loss of essential senior faculty could threaten the viability of those foci and initiatives. This imbalance also creates challenges around work load, including service, the need to enable junior faculty to advance their research agendas, and the fair and strategic distribution of teaching load and new course development.

Similarly, systematic budgetary difficulties across the University have limited needed resources for research, creative activities and professional development opportunities, including travel for conferences and field work.

## **Criterion 6: Resources and Planning**

*Overall Assessment: Met with Concerns*

### *FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

The CRP Program is allocated discretionary funds for its use and the CRP faculty engages in deliberations to decide on its allocation. Most of the discretionary funds are used to hire part time faculty and graduate and teaching assistants. A small sum is generated from an endowment and from return of indirect costs. At this time, there are adequate funds to cover the necessary activities.

The unit appears to have sufficient resources and institutional support to carry out its mission, though it is well-poised to expand and improve in several ways that are addressed in other sections if greater resources were available. The library resources are adequate, with holdings and collections pertinent to planning in New Mexico and the Southwestern US. The Fabrication Lab and Computer Lab are very adequate and well maintained.

One issue of concern at the time of the site visit was the search for a new administrative staff member. This one position handles a heavy workload with a wide range of responsibilities. Finding a replacement with the competencies to carry out these responsibilities is critical to the operations of the program. That said, the staff composition was improved with the addition of a half-time position in research support.

### *FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS*

There is a concern for the future that is not yet a shortcoming, but can become a serious one. The continued success of the program is highly dependent on the ability to hire faculty to replace upcoming retirements. The faculty is not large for a planning program of its enrollment size. The faculty are stretched thin across the subfields of planning, with little overlap. So the ability to fill upcoming vacancies in the respective planning subfields will significantly affect the scope, and thereby the quality, of the academic, research and outreach programs.

There are several areas where a relatively small amount of funding would go a long way in enhancing the learning experience. First, there are no regularly available funds for engaged learning activities in locales outside of the immediate geographic area. Since there is an emphasis on offering students the unique learning experiences that New Mexico has to offer, resources for learning opportunities across its geography could enhance the student experience and provide broader exposure of the program. Second, there appears to be few resources for students, especially graduate students, to travel to conferences related to the planning profession. And third, some resources for student recruitment in high schools and communities would help the program create a more robust pipeline for underrepresented populations.

## **Criterion 7: Facilities**

*Overall findings: Met with concerns*

### **FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS**

In general, the review team was very impressed with the facilities available to CRP. The building, Pearl Hall, is new and purpose-tailored, and it appears to support student learning, and research and scholarly activities for the faculty members.

Offices for faculty and staff are very good. They are of adequate size and most have natural light. An administrative cluster is located near the main entrance to the building, while other faculty offices are located at both ends of the shared open studio spaces.

iD+Pi occupies a dedicated space on the lower level accommodating its growing activities. Its visibility within the building reflects its importance to the CRP program and to the New Mexico context.

The building is also well equipped with an up-to-date fabrication lab that accommodates conventional wood and metal work, but also digital technologies (e.g. laser-cutters, 3-D printers). While many planning programs may not use these technologies, CPR takes advantage of them, particularly for design-build components in community-engaged studios.

### **FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS**

Faculty and students only had minor concerns about the facilities available.

The computer lab is currently adequate for the programs, however, it is rapidly reaching capacity. Because the use of digital technologies is increasing in most planning and design programs, this may become a limitation in the foreseeable future.

Support for data analysis software (e.g., Nvivo, Atlas, SPSS) may also get overshadowed by the more high-profile design and visualization software used in Architecture.

At present, there is no space clearly dedicated to Planning studios – spaces originally dedicated to this function have now become research spaces (e.g. iD+Pi). Studio space, when needed, is allocated in the main open studio spaces in the center of the building. While this appears to be adequate for now, sometimes work in groups requires acoustic separation that is difficult to achieve in open layouts. Additionally, work with communities, particularly Indigenous communities, may require confidentiality and more privacy than can be achieved in the open spaces.

## **Criterion 8: Program Comparisons**

*Overall Assessment: Met with Concerns*

### *FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

The institutional support for the CRP Program by the SA+P Dean and the UNM administration appears strong and sufficient to assure the quality and continuity of the program. The institutional services, financial support, and level of staffing are currently adequate to meet program needs. This should help the program continue to attract and retain a well-qualified faculty. The relatively new facilities are enviable and are among the most modern and well-appointed compared to similar programs in both public and private institutions.

One of the strengths of the program is its current leadership in the program director, which has allowed for greater communication and collaboration among the faculty and between the CRP Program and other units on campus and beyond. In addition, the program's ongoing strategic planning provides a clearer direction for the program as it moves forward. The recruitment of a dynamic group of junior faculty coupled with the experience and wisdom of senior faculty put it in an advantageous position. With a combination of mentoring by senior faculty and initiative among junior faculty to chart the program's future, the CRP can leverage the many opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

### *FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS*

A major shortcoming is the low pay and issues of pay equity that can undermine the CRP program's ability to attract and retain well-qualified faculty and provide for their professional development. Planning, like fields of law and medicine, is an interdisciplinary professional field. Planning programs often compete with a wide variety of disciplines in recruiting and retaining faculty. The ability to provide competitive salaries is critical. Also, professional development opportunities, especially for junior faculty, appears low compared to similar types of institutions that have more resources for seed grants, faculty travel, professional development activities, and non-salary incentives to recruit and retain well-qualified faculty.

## **Criterion 9: Future Directions**

*Overall Findings: Met with Concerns*

### *FINDINGS ON STRENGTHS*

As noted above in Criterion 3, CPR has engaged in strategic planning processes – the most recent in 2013. The current *Strategic Development Plan 2013-2019* outlines short and long-terms objects for: Curriculum; Scholarship and Research; Service to the Community, Profession and University; Faculty; Students; and Administration and Governance.

The Plan was created with the feedback and data generated by the variety of instruments used by CRP to reflect on its program and the work of the faculty members (surveys, evaluations, etc. – see above). The Plan also clearly demonstrates that the faculty in CRP reflect on the program's strengths and areas for improvement, their relationships with other units within the School and across the University, and relationships with the planning profession and the communities that they serve. It also integrates the research and service of faculty members and centers related to CRP.

Now halfway through the timeframe of the Plan, many of the objectives have already been achieved, although it may be too soon to evaluate if their implementation has had the desired impact.

There is one significant long term objective that is yet to be realized, and that was discussed frequently during the site team's visit, namely the PhD program. The Plan's specified objective is the development of an interdisciplinary PhD program within the School. During the site visit, the PhD program was often framed as a program based within the Indigenous Design and Planning Institute (iD+Pi), with the suggested title of Doctor of Philosophy in Indigenous Place-making. The rationale for an Indigenous focus was appreciated by the team, and by those interviewed. There are too few Indigenous scholars in planning and design, and UNM is well placed to address this issue.

However, the team also heard concerns about the proposed PhD program. Administration representatives raised issues about how the program would be funded, but also where it might best be accommodated. There was concern that the title "Indigenous Placemaking" was too narrow, and that the terminology itself might lack longevity (that placemaking is a time-limited catch phrase). There were also concerns that if the terminology was too narrow, it may prove problematic for graduates to find employment in academic programs. Some conversations suggested that the program may be more viable if more broadly pitched, either as a PhD in Planning that could then promote an Indigenous focus or a PhD in Indigenous Studies that addressed planning issues.

#### FINDINGS ON SHORTCOMINGS:

N/A