



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

The Graduate School

G-1 Communications

Box 353770

Seattle, Washington 98195-3770

Telephone: (206)543-5900

Fax: (206)685-3234

March 8, 2005

To: David Thorud
Acting Provost

From: Elizabeth L. Feetham
Acting Dean

Re: Interdisciplinary Urban Design and Planning Ph.D. Program Review

Summary and Recommended Action

At its meeting of February 3, 2005, the Graduate School Council met with two members of the team reviewing the Interdisciplinary Urban Design and Planning Ph.D. Program; with the Interim Director of the Program; and with the Dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning. The Council recommended that the Interdisciplinary Urban Design and Planning Ph.D. Program remain in its current location in the Graduate School, ending its provisional status, with the next review in the 2013-2014 academic year. The Program has responded effectively to the recommendations from the 1998 review, and has built a strong program with clearer intellectual focus. With a new round of strategic planning in the immediate future and support for interdisciplinary initiatives from the University, it is poised to become a top program nationally.

I concur with the Council's recommendations and comments.

Background

The Department of Urban Planning began its Ph.D. program in 1967, with its first doctorate in Urban Planning Studies awarded in 1970. In the mid-1980s, the Department of Urban Planning was merged with the Urban Design program in the College of Architecture and Urban Planning to form the Department of Urban Design and Planning, which offered a Ph.D. in Urban Design and Planning until 1989. At that point, a Graduate School program review found that the faculty in the Department had an unacceptable level of scholarly research and publication to offer the Ph.D. degree, and that there was a lack of support for the program on the part of the Dean of the College. However, it was believed that the program was of sufficient value to the University as a whole that it should be maintained in some form. In response, the Graduate School recommended creating an Interdisciplinary Urban Design and Planning Group to support research in the field and to offer the Ph.D. degree in Urban Design and Planning. The Group was created in 1991 with 4 participating faculty. There are currently 20 core faculty and 16 affiliate faculty in

the Group. Eleven have primary appointments in the Department of Urban Design and Planning; five in Geography; four each in the School of Public Affairs, College of Forest Resources, and the Department of Landscape Architecture; two in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering; and one in the School of Marine Affairs, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, College of Architecture and Urban Planning (college wide), and in the Departments of Architecture, Computer Science and Engineering, and Statistics.

Review Process

The review committee included five members, three internal and two from peer institutions. The committee was chaired by Gerald Baldasty, Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication, and included as the other internal members Melissa Austin, Professor of Epidemiology and Director of the Institute for Public Health Genetics, and Harry Bruce, Associate Professor and Associate Dean in the Information School. The external members of the committee were Elizabeth Deakin, Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning and Director of the UC Transportation Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and Ann Forsyth, Professor of Urban Design and Director of the Metropolitan Design Center at the University of Minnesota. The review committee carried out the review during summer and autumn quarters, 2004, which included a review of the self-study, followed by preliminary meetings with administrators, faculty, and staff by committee members Austin, Baldasty, and Bruce. A two-day site visit occurred on November 29-30, 2004, when the complete committee met with faculty, students, and staff.

Review Findings

The review team found an engaged and energetic Program leadership that has created and maintained a broad and truly interdisciplinary faculty and curriculum. The Program as a whole has responded effectively to the recommendations of the 1998 review and is now on the brink of becoming a top-tier program nationally. Since the previous review, the Group has significantly improved focus and intellectual sophistication, increased research activity, and has been very successful raising external funding. In addition, the Program's goals, student requirements, and general policies have been clarified; student funding has dramatically increased; core and affiliate faculty have been identified based on their level of involvement in the Program; and dedicated space has been found for the Program and students. Students now find clearer guidance during their first year, and a high level of collegiality exists among students at all levels.

The reviewers found that the Program's interdisciplinarity is its greatest strength, both for faculty and students. Program leadership and virtually all faculty interviewed endorsed the unit's current administrative location in the Graduate School. As the Program moves towards the future, the reviewers recommended the creation of an updated strategic plan that charts its intellectual trajectory and goals. The Program should also work to increase faculty engagement and to cultivate future leadership among junior faculty. The diversification and stabilization of funding represents an essential goal as the Program moves forward. In order to attain true national prominence, the reviewers recommended establishing a critical mass of faculty in a few key areas, either through the addition of faculty positions or more active engagement with other faculty at UW.

One general hindrance to faculty participation in the Program relates to its interdisciplinary nature: faculty outside of the Department of Urban Design and Planning often receive little or no credit for their work in the Program. This works most to the detriment of junior faculty, and in general leaves the Program overly dependent on the goodwill of faculty to volunteer their time.

Council Recommendations

The Council commends the trajectory of the Program since the last review and advises a new round of strategic planning be launched in the immediate future to build on recent accomplishments while engaging a wider range of faculty in charting a clear course for the future. One suggestion for improving the already positive student experience is to assure clear communication with potential students about where they are best located in the Program and the University. The Program should also work to clarify its relationship to the Ph.D. program in the Built Environment and to the Urban Ecology IGERT. The Council recommends that the Program remain in its current administrative location in the Graduate School.

The interdisciplinary profile of the Urban Design and Planning Ph.D. Program represents its unique strength nationally, but also poses a challenge to the Program and to the University at large. This Program can and should negotiate actively with other units to create incentives for ongoing faculty participation, especially with regard to the junior faculty who represent the Program's future leaders. But since this must be done in a manner that maintains recognition for faculty members in their home units, it needs support on a broader, University-wide level. Uniform incentives for participation in this and other interdisciplinary programs would allow them to create and maintain the unique advantage they offer on the national stage.

cc: Mark A. Emmert, President
 Gail L. Dubrow, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, The Graduate School
 Susan E. Jeffords, Vice Provost for Academic Planning
 Bob Mugerauer, Dean, College of Architecture and Urban Planning
 Robert C. Stacey, Divisional Dean for Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences
 William M. Zumeta, Associate Dean, Evans School of Public Affairs
 Marina Alberti, Acting Director, Urban Design and Planning Ph.D. Program
 Members of the Urban Design and Planning Ph.D. Review Committee
 Graduate School Council
 David Canfield-Budde, Assistant to the Dean, The Graduate School