

Date: April 10, 2018

To: David Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Graduate School

From: Christopher Campbell, Chair, Department of Urban Design and Planning

Re: Departmental Response to 10 Year Review Committee Report

Introduction:

The Department received the report from the Review Committee on February 26, 2018. The report was distributed by the department chair to all faculty and staff and made available to students and the MUP program Professionals Council. The chair requested feedback from these groups over the month of March, and the faculty discussed the report in the March Faculty meeting. The responses below reflect the views expressed by members of the department as well as the views of the chair.

Overall Response:

The Department found the overall evaluation provided by the Review Committee to be fair and accurate and would like to thank the Review Committee for its careful analysis and thoughtful suggestions. We find that the report confirms our own internal assessments, endorses the strategies and goals for improvement that we have embarked upon, and suggests some promising new directions.

In particular, we concur with the Report's overall assessment of the department's strengths. The report highlights the following:

- A robust and well-supported undergraduate program, *Community, Environment and Planning (CEP)*, which the Report calls a clearly "unique program, enthusiastically supported by students, alumni, and associated staff";
- An "exceptional group of faculty" with a "deep commitment to and passion for the department" and who are "nationally and internationally known for their high quality scholarship". The faculty was also praised for their "sense of community and collegiality";
- An "exceptionally capable staff", who ensure that the department and its programs run smoothly and successfully;
- A commitment to cross-disciplinary partnerships. Indeed, though not specifically mentioned by the Review Committee, nearly all departmental faculty have on-going research projects with individuals and units from across the campus.
- The MUP program's Professionals Council, made up of 40+ professional planners committed to mentoring our Masters students and supporting our MUP curriculum. The Review Committee rightly called this an "extraordinary resource" and highlighted its uniqueness among planning programs;

- An impressive level of collaboration among students, faculty, staff and leadership around managing and planning the Department's future;
- The Department *Diversity Plan*, adopted in 2018, which "reflects best practices for addressing diversity and equity issues.

To this list, we would like to add three more. Though these were not part of the Review Committee's mandate, we believe they are critical to the department's overall health and future:

- The Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Urban Planning. This program, which will celebrate its 50th year in spring, 2019, was the first of its kind in the nation and continues to enjoy an outstanding reputation nationally and internationally;
- The *Master of Infrastructure Planning and Management (MIPM)* program, an online, fee-based degree program. This program has been transformed over the last four years from a deficit program to a fiscal growth program and has seen its enrollments more than triple;
- The *Livable City Year* program. Now in its third year, this program pairs local governments with UW faculty and students for one academic year to work on city-defined projects that promote local sustainability and livability goals. This program has expanded to include all three UW campuses and has generated more than \$2 million supporting UW students and faculty.

On a less positive note, we also concur with the Review Committee's findings regarding the department's ongoing shortage of fiscal resources. As the report notes, the department **"clearly lacks adequate resources" and has faced a "decline in faculty FTEs of at least 20% over the past few years" while "faculty responsibilities have increased substantially"**. Indeed, the department is currently in a budget-neutral position, which means that revenues are able to meet current needs and are growing at a rate that is projected to keep up with future costs (including salary adjustments). But this balance is tenuous and, more frustrating, does not allow us to grow much beyond our current strength or add replacement faculty. This means that while we continue to innovate and evolve, we cannot do so at the pace we desire. It also means that to meet many of the recommendations suggested by the Review Committee, even those that are designed to increase the financial strength of the department, we would require start-up or bridge funding until the new efforts are self-sustaining or profitable.

Responses to Specific Recommendations:

The Review Committee provided recommendations in eight areas: the MUP Core Curriculum; Faculty; Student Recruitment; Diversity Plan; Growth Areas; Relationship Between the Department and Seattle Region; Fund Raising and Costs; and Strategic Plan Updates. We provide brief responses to each of these areas in the pages below, but also note that in general the Committee's suggestions for improvement in each of these areas are relatively minor or are currently already underway.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the MUP Curriculum

The Review Committee conducted what it called a "brief review" of the MUP curriculum and identified four suggestions for improvement, including reducing the number of core requirements, offering more

advanced courses, offering more specialized courses in the first year, and reducing the use of faculty time in teaching generalized courses.

Overall, the faculty agrees in principle with many of the Committee's recommendations and wishes to emphasize, as the Review Committee noted, that we are in the midst of a multi-year review and restructuring of the MUP curriculum. This review is driven by four goals: 1. Update the MUP core and specializations to better reflect current professional practices and urban needs; 2. Streamline the core content and provide clear steps from introductory to advanced knowledge and practice; 3. Incorporate issues of race and equity throughout the curriculum; 4. Increase the flexibility of the curriculum to respond to student interests and shifting professional practices. This work is advancing well. The faculty has developed a new curricular structure and set of learning goals for the Core. Faculty groups will next develop several new core courses, which we expect will be ready to enter the approval process by spring, 2019. Our curriculum committee will also begin researching alternatives to our current thesis model and will bring a series of recommendations to the full faculty for review by winter 2019. We will then begin reviewing our specializations, and anticipate completing that work by winter 2020. This work has been methodical and not without controversy, but it has also been creative and energizing. As Chair, I am particularly pleased that all members of the faculty are participating fully in the process, even those who have not traditionally participated in the MUP program.

In regards to the specific recommendations provided by the Review Committee, the faculty wishes to point out that some of them are already in place. For example, the Review Committee writes that "students would like to take at least one (if not two) GIS courses and a studio in their first year of the program." That is, in fact, our current first year curriculum, and will continue to be part of our revised core. The Review Committee also suggests that we provide "waivers for experienced students" so that they may take more advanced work. That is also a long standing practice, which, when appropriate, students are advised to pursue during their first year orientation, during one-on-one advising sessions, and through on-line materials that explain the waiver process.

The Review Committee also suggested we increase the enrollments of our MUP courses and MUP program overall with the broader goal of increasing revenues. In principle we agree with this proposal, although, we hasten to add, the relationship between enrollment growth and revenue growth is not at all clear or direct, despite the rhetoric of ABB budgeting. Nevertheless, we have, in fact, been working for the past several years to grow the MUP program. What we have found, however, is that while we can create space for more students, we have not been able to attract these students to the program. Nation-wide, enrollments in MUP programs has been in decline for several years, in part because of drops in the number of international applicants. We have worked hard at shifting our recruitment strategies and so have avoided the enrollment drops that many of our peer programs have suffered. However, while our numbers have not gone down, they also have not gone up. In response to this, we have begun a three-pronged strategy to boost our applicant pool: 1. *Strengthen and amplify our recruitment communications*. This has included a full-scale revision of our website, social media, and print materials; development of new outreach lists and strategies, including focused outreach to historically black colleges and other undergraduate programs with high percentages of students of color, and the establishment of "pipelines" from the UWT and UWB and other Washington State universities; and refining our departmental "brand" to capitalize on the Seattle and regional connections and the unique opportunities our program offers. 2. *Increase tuition support for students*. Out of state tuition is a significant barrier for many of our applicants. In response, we have established several new fellowships that provide limited financial relief. Typically we couple these with other resources offered by the UW, including Top Scholar Awards and Go-Map awards, both of which are critical to our ability to

attract highly qualified students to our program. We also draw on research positions through faculty grants to fund students, though these are usually better suited for second year students. 3. *Continue to develop new curricular options that respond to contemporary student demand.* Curricular and programmatic changes take time to put into place, but we recognize that they are critical to our long-term viability. To this end, we are making short-term changes to our current courses, including adding a greater focus on equity issues and adding new elective courses. Longer-term we are, as already mentioned, engaged in a wholesale reform of the MUP curriculum. We also continue to build upon our newest collaboration with Public Health, are exploring collaborations with the School of Social Work that we believe will appeal to students interested at the intersection of equity, planning, and community well-being, and exploring ways to add more focus on the intersection of planning and data science through smart city applications. We believe that all of these efforts have great potential and are pleased that the Review Committee also highlighted these as suggestions (See Recommendation 5: Identify Substantive Growth Areas). We wish to emphasize, however, that building these new opportunities will take time and more financial resources than we currently have – in particular for course development and new instructors – and concur with the Review Committee’s assessment that **“ideally, resources from the college or university should be found to seed work in these areas.”**

Finally, the Review Committee recommended that we “rethink” the urban design specialization, pointing out that the current sequence is better suited for creating “design managers” than fully developed urban designers. In response, the faculty point out, as does the report, that students wishing to pursue more robust design training may do so through the interdisciplinary design certificate. That said, there is room for better marketing and explanation around these design options.

Recommendation 2: Faculty

The first recommendation provided by the Reviewers emphasizes the importance of raising faculty salaries and notes that **“Faulty salaries have fallen to the bottom of the levels of peer programs, which will threaten the retention and recruitment efforts of the department.”** We couldn’t agree more with this conclusion. We currently bench-mark our salaries to those of the University of Oregon and find that we are significantly below their levels, which are themselves at the bottom of our peer institutions. In other words, compared to our peers, we are below the bottom in faculty compensation. We also continue to suffer from compression problems and, to a much lesser degree, gender disparities. Over the past few years, the Chair has made addressing these needs a priority and has all but eliminated the gender gap. Compression within ranks has also been reduced but between ranks continues to be a problem. Additional funds from the University has helped close the gaps but has not significantly raised the overall salary floor. We will continue to address this problem but our success will be limited and incremental without additional resources.

The Review Committee also noted the need for more mentoring of Associate faculty to ensure that they progress in rank. We agree with this and are devising a new mentoring system that will go into effect in Autumn 2018 to augment the regular annual reviews with forward-looking planning around scholarship and publications. Part of this may also include developing faculty leadership. We currently have two members of the faculty (the Report is incorrect on this point) who are interested in leadership and are taking on increasingly complex leadership roles in the department.

Finally, the Review Committee emphasizes the need to value “activities in the field” in promotion and tenure decisions and suggests that the department establish an award for “contributions by a

practitioner-educator” to highlight the importance of this work. This is an interesting idea that the faculty will indeed consider.

Recommendation 3: Student Recruitment

Student recruitment efforts, particularly for the MUP program, were discussed earlier in this document (see pages 3-4). We concur with the Review Committee’s recommendations and note that most of them (outreach to UWT and UWB and Washington State universities, use of GO-MAP and other resources, etc.) are already practiced by the department. The Review Committee also recommends that we increase faculty diversity, which we again concur with and would certainly follow through with if we had any resources to hire new faculty. In the meantime, we do like the idea of recruiting more adjunct faculty who can add diversity to the department, though as a long term solution this is less than ideal. Again, we agree with the Report’s request that **“the university support the efforts of the department by providing the financial resources needed for recruitment and support of diverse students, faculty, and staff.”**

Recommendation 4: Diversity Plan

This section of the Review Committee’s report mostly underscores points made on diversity elsewhere in their report, but does emphasize the importance of following through on the Department’s Diversity Plan. That is indeed underway, as other sections of this response articulate. The Review Committee does add the additional recommendation that we consider direct admissions as a way of diversifying our student body. The faculty do not support this particular recommendation. First, this would not impact our master’s program, where the need for more diversity is highest. Second, we believe that direct admission would impact the undergraduate CEP program by undermining the successful pedagogical model on which the program is based.

Recommendation 5: Identify Substantive Growth Areas

We are pleased that the Review Committee “heartily supports” our proposed expansion into health-related and data science fields and concur with the notion that **“resources from the college of university should be found to seed work in these areas.”** Indeed, the pace at which we are able to enter these growth areas will depend on our ability to identify the required start-up resources.

Recommendation 6: Increase the Relationship Between the Department and the Seattle Region

As the primary planning program in the region, it is frustrating to be perceived as not well-connected to Seattle or the region more broadly. While we believe that there is always more to do, we wish to note that our impact as a small department is, we believe, quite impressive. For example, we can point to the Livable City Year program, which is about to begin its third year and third city relationship, and has produced, at this point, over 60 separate, city-defined projects for local municipalities. We can point to the work of our Hazard Mitigation Lab, which is working with Washington coastal communities on life-saving tsunami preparation plans, and with local tribes on sea-level rise mitigation. We can point to our Infrastructure Lab, which has worked with the City of Seattle to develop new regulations governing the use of big-data in the public sphere. And we can point to dozens of neighborhood-based studio projects, Master theses, and professional internships that have had transformative impacts on our local communities. There are also the hundreds of alumni who currently work in the region in planning or planning related capacities for cities, local firms, and non-profits, and we are connected to the

community through our Professional's Council, which currently has more than 50 active members. So our impact is quite large for such a small department, and are connections to the city run deep. What we must do a better job at, we believe, is publicizing these impacts and connections. As the Review Committee notes, "the visibility of the department" has declined. In response to this, we have hired a half-time communications director whose responsibility will be to "tell our story" through social media, a new newsletter, and local media outlets. We also have plans to launch a new lecture series in conjunction with our Professionals Council that will be aimed at the greater planning and urbanist audience (this will also help with recruitment and fund raising). And finally, we are working to build a more robust network of alumni who can continue to support our program and spread the word about our work.

Recommendation 7: Continue to raise funds and minimize costs (in conjunction with increased fundraising efforts by the College Advancement Team)

The Review Committee offers comparatively few suggestions on the matter of fund raising. It suggests modest growth in the degree programs (which is already happening in the CEP and MIPM programs and, for reasons noted above, not currently possible in the MUP program despite room for growth), endorses the goal of raising \$1.5 million as an "ambitious, yet feasible" goal, and suggests the enlistment of the Professionals Council and College Advancement office in these efforts.

Recommendation 8: Update the Department's Strategic Plan as a Two-Part Process

This section outlines a two-step process designed to redeploy current resources in a manner that will free up faculty to pursue new initiatives. At the heart of the proposal (step 1) are several steps designed to reduce the amount of teaching time ladder faculty devote to core course in the MUP program. These steps include: reducing the number of required courses; recruiting practitioners to voluntarily teach studios and classes; appealing to firms to underwrite certain studios; increase class sizes by combining courses; moving to group projects in place of theses; and providing credit to internships. The faculty finds merit in some of these suggestions (working with firms to support studios, bringing in more practitioners to teach "skills-based" courses), though not all (larger class sizes, group capstone projects), but will take all of them under advisement as it redesigns the MUP curriculum.

Some Thoughts on Recommendations to the Dean

The Review Committee ended with some recommendations to the Dean. While these are not directly departmental matters, the faculty has some views it would like to express.

Recommendation 1: Centralize some functions. The Review Committee notes that "a number of functions are fragmented and delegated to staff within each department" and suggests that some should be centralized. We would recommend that such centralization be pursued with caution. The centralization of payroll functions could be helpful, but many others – particularly advising and recruitment, curriculum management, and scheduling – work best at the department level. There may be slight administrative efficiencies gained through centralization, but these would be offset, we believe, by much greater reductions in our ability to respond to the particular needs of our students and programs, which would in turn weaken the student experience.

Recommendation 2: Greater Central Leadership Around Advancement and Communications. The Review Committee calls on the college and university to provide greater support for the department's

fundraising and communications efforts. While we welcome all the help we can get (particularly around advancement training and prospect identification), we note that the department has already developed advancement and communications plans and enjoys a healthy relationship with the college advancement office. After several years of effort, we now have an increasingly robust communications and advancement system in place at the departmental level and we look forward to putting our plans into action.

Recommendation 3: Develop a Full Service Career Center. The Review Committee recommends the establishment of a College-wide career center to help students from the five departments enter the job market. While the faculty are not opposed to this idea, and can see merit in it, especially from the perspective of raising the profile of the college as a whole, they also note that this is currently not a priority area. To the faculty's knowledge, students have not demonstrated difficulty finding internships or careers in planning or the other fields represented in the College, and departments currently seem capable of offering placement and preparation services tailored to their particular student bodies and professions. That said, if there was desire by the other departments to establish such a center, the faculty would be willing to consider supporting it as well.