



**Internal Academic Review 2007-2008
School of Urban and Regional Planning
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate**

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the School of Urban and Regional Planning (SURP) is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of SURP and respectfully submits the following report. The IARC Report to Senate is intended to supplement the findings of the attached Review Team Report and to provide a mechanism for the Director of the School and the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and Research to jointly report on the progress in addressing the Review Team recommendations (please see the “Outcomes” section of this report).

Summary of the Internal Academic Review of the School of Urban and Regional Planning (SURP)

The IARC is unanimous in its praise for SURP and recognizes the School for high-quality teaching, research and service. The faculty, staff and students are to be applauded for their deep commitment to the mission of the School and for the strong sense of community that exists. The IARC acknowledges the proactive action taken by SURP to address the IAR recommendations and to align them with the School’s strategic plan.

The IARC agrees with the view that the School’s professional outreach to other units across campus and in the Kingston community may act as catalyst for knowledge creation and research that will allow faculty and students the opportunity to work towards greater achievement in the discipline. The IARC commends the School for its focus on creative use of space, intensifying rather than expanding its programming. The efforts being made to achieve diversity goals and the internationalization of the curriculum are commendable.

The IARC supports the reviewers’ reports which suggest that SURP undertake a curriculum review in order to: balance resources between the three streams of programming; attempt to combine traditional methods with innovative methods of teaching and practical training opportunities; incorporate sustainable practices and develop methods to incorporate existing relationships across campus and the community into future curriculum planning. The IARC recognizes the quality of the academic program and agrees that the faculty complement and enrolment should be monitored and considered prior to any expansion within the program.

The IARC recognizes the School of Urban and Regional Planning as a dynamic department that demonstrates leadership and creative solutions. The IARC agrees with the reviewers’ recommendation that a solution be found to the academic location of SURP in Queen’s, and supports the suggestion that SURP be involved in such discussion

from the outset. The IARC fully supports the School in its efforts to remain competitive and successful while addressing the recommendations of the IAR Reports.

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the School of Urban and Regional Planning

*Joint response submitted by the Associate Vice-Principal &
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and
the Director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning*

The Associate Vice-Principal & Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and the Director of the School of Urban Planning pleased that the IARC commends the achievements of the School of Urban Planning in teaching, research and outreach. The IARC report has provided useful recommendations. Actions responding to these recommendations are summarized below.

Teaching and Curriculum

The recommendations to strengthen the Environmental and Human streams of the curriculum have been addressed by hires of additional faculty to cover these streams. In the Environmental stream new faculty include a QNS was jointly appointed with SES and a cross-appointment from Civil Engineering. One tenure-track and five adjunct faculty were added for the Housing and Human Services stream. Several new courses in these streams have been introduced within the School, as well as in other cognate departments. Addressing the recommendation that linkages to other units at Queen's need to be strengthened, the School has initiated relationships with Environmental Studies, Law, Geography, Policy Studies, Civil Engineering, the School of Business, and Public Health, in the form of cross-appointments, cross listing of courses, joint seminars and collaboration on research grants. There have also been preliminary discussions on the possibility of mounting joint programs, including a JD-MPL that has been recommended by the Faculty of Law and SURP for approval.

The recommendation to strengthen ties to local agencies, has been acted upon by recruiting senior staff from the City of Kingston, the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, the Kingston Social Planning Council, the Ottawa Airport Authority, and the City of Ottawa Planning Department, to participate as coaches for SURP project courses.

Equity

Recommendations to enhance faculty diversity have been acted upon through the recruitment two new tenure-track faculty who belong to under-represented groups. Among the adjuncts and cross appointments are five women and three persons who are members of a visible minority Student diversity is being strengthened by working toward a culture and climate that fosters inclusion. New advertising material, printed brochures, and on the web, feature diverse faculty and students. Courses focusing on international matters are being adopted, and a program for visiting students from China is in place.

Human, Physical and Financial Resources

SURP is implementing a five-year strategic plan “Building on Excellence” approved in 2005, to increase graduate enrolment from 48 to 66, increase the faculty complement from 5.0 to 6.3 FTE and stabilize its operating budget, and a new Director is in place. In the best urban planning tradition, the School has grown physically by intensification rather than outward expansion! Efficiencies were gained by using compact work stations consolidation of offices, and extensive use of recycled furniture. SURP is implementing a strategic plan to make its finances more sustainable, through tuition increases, increased enrolment, and the replacement of retiring senior faculty with hires at a junior level.

Attachments:

Review Team Report

Review Team Report

**Internal Academic Review of the
School of Urban and Regional Planning
Queen's University**

September 2008

CONFIDENTIAL

September 5, 2008

Dr. Patrick Deane
Vice-Principal (Academic), and Chair
Internal Academic Review Committee
Queen's University

Dear Dr. Deane,

On behalf of the Review Team for the internal review of the School of Urban and Regional Planning, I am pleased to attach our review Report. The work of the Review Team was guided in its work by the Senate *Internal Academic Review* document.

We trust that the Report will prove beneficial in the work of the IARC in its review and assessment of the School of Urban and Regional Planning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Chaykowski', written in a cursive style.

Richard Chaykowski
Chair
Review Team

Executive Summary

The Review Team undertook to evaluate the overall quality of the SURP and its programs. The review considered the general dimensions of scholarship and research, teaching and the learning environment, and service to the University and broader academic community, the profession and the community.

The Review Team relied upon the Unit Self-Study Report, the Report of the external consultants, as well as consultations with stakeholders within the School of Urban and Regional Planning.

The overall findings of the Review Team are that the SURP has successfully achieved a high standard in each of the areas of teaching, research, and service. This conclusion is in accordance with the conclusions of the external consultants.

1. Introduction: Scope and Process of the Review

The Review Team (Appendix A) for the internal academic review of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University conducted its academic review in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Senate *Internal Academic Review* document.

The Review Team evaluated the overall quality of the SURP and its programs, including the specific dimensions of scholarship and research, teaching and the learning environment, and service to the University and broader academic community, the profession and the community.

The Review Team conducted its work in the late fall of 2007 and Winter academic term of 2008. In the course of its work, the Review Team undertook:

- Periodic meetings of the Review Team;
- A meeting with the External Consultants (Dr. Dandekar and Dr. Skelton; Appendix B) during the consultants’ site visit;
- A formal meeting with graduate students (approx. 15) in the SURP;
- A meeting with the Acting Director of the SURP, Dr. David Gordon.

In its analysis and in arriving at its conclusions, the Review Team relied upon:

- the SURP Self Study Report (USS Report);
- the Report of the External Consultants (November 25, 2007) (EC Report);
- the Comments on the SURP IAR Consultants’ report by Dean Deakin (February 1, 2008);
- an Update on SURP events and activities provided to the Review Team by the SURP; and
- the reflections of the External Consultants, SURP graduate students, and the SURP Director.

The Review Team did not receive any independent submissions.

The major documentary resource used in the review was the USS Report; a report that the external reviewers characterized as a strong and reliable document upon which to base assessment:

“We found the SURP report and its description of curriculum, faculty, teaching, service and resources to be thorough and complete, and helpful in describing a unit which is enthusiastic and committed to its mission.” (EC Report p. 1)

The Review Team concurs with this conclusion.

2. SURP Outcomes

(i) Overall Program Objectives and Outcomes

The SURP offers a two-year program leading to the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Degree (MPL). The overall objective of the SURP as articulated by the School is "... to produce competent and skilled planning professionals grounded in critical scholarship and learning." USS Report p. 9.

The SURP offers three areas of concentration in its degree, including: (i) Land Use and Real Estate Development; (ii) Housing and Human Services; and (iii) Environmental Services. The main objectives include relating knowledge and action through critical study of urban and regional planning theories, emphasizing multi-disciplinary approaches to study, and focusing on issues from the perspective of community interests (Chapter 2 of USS Report). The view of the students is that, among the three streams of study, "land use" is dominant.

In recent years, the SURP has undertaken two major new initiatives that have added considerably to the program, including a student internship program and student "International Experience Awards," which permit students to study planning activities at an international location. The students expressed the view that the Internship Program was a significant strength of the program.

With regard to the quality of the SURP unit, the consultants concluded:

"The consultants find that SURP is a small but high quality program that delivers a professional, graduate degree, the Master of Urban and Regional Planning, with a sound, solid reputation. It is one of the strongest programs in Canada."
(EC Report p. 2)

and

"... that SURP is a small, high quality program that has configured itself to deliver a strong, professional, graduate degree, the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (M.PL.) ... [and is] pragmatic, solid, and provides a planning education of high quality with examples predominantly grounded in practice at the local and urban scale and including policy and environmental processes of the regional scale." (EC Report p. 3)

(ii) Student Progress and Achievement

Student admissions have increased over the past decade from about 25 to 30 students annually). The strategic plan calls for further expansion of program enrollment.

A majority of the students admitted to the program have at least an A- average. Students have diverse academic backgrounds; the program admits some mature and international students.

Over the period from 1997/98 to 2002/03, the program graduated approximately 20-25 students per year; this typically represents a completion rate (i.e., completion / enrollment ratio) of about 83-89%. The median completion time is about 6 terms. The program is recognized by the main professional organization, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), thereby assisting students on the path toward formal membership in both the OPPI and the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP).

Placement of graduates has been primarily in the broader public sector. Reported placement rates are in the range of 60-70%; although data on *initial* job placement over time for a given cohort of student graduates are not available (see USS Report Table 6-6 and 6-8).

The SURP has a variety of mechanisms in place to facilitate student participation in the School, especially committees that determine such activities as personnel decisions, speakers, and so forth. Student satisfaction, as reflected in qualitative indicators, including the USAT scores and participation of alumnae in SURP activities, appears to be very high.

(iii) Research Achievement

The Review Team notes that the SURP faculty has been quite successful in their respective research programs in terms of both securing funding and in publishing. The faculty publishes in a variety of venues appropriate to a professional school – including peer-reviewed academic journals, academic books and monographs, and technical books. In addition, the faculty publishes in conference proceedings and in newspapers and magazines – venues that we expect to be aimed at the broader professional planning community. In addition, there appears to be a positive connection between the research conducted by the faculty and teaching. The Review Team concurs with the overall conclusion of the EC Report that:

“Research accomplishments of faculty in terms of publications and funding are as high or higher than at many comparable schools. Overall, SURP is a highly productive unit.” (EC Report p. 8).

3. Teaching and Curriculum of the SURP Program

SURP is to be commended for employing innovative teaching strategies such as modules in courses, case studies, and other applied learning opportunities. The students appear satisfied with the teaching of most courses, and USAT scores are high. Students also perceive the links between faculty research and teaching, as well as expressed strong satisfaction with the support for student research by teachers.

Several major program strengths were identified by students including:

(i) The Faculty. Accessibility of the professors was rated as high; the relatively small number of faculty was viewed as facilitating interaction; and collegiality among students and professors rated as strong. This view was supported by the external consultants who noted: "... it was apparent that the SURP faculty is, by and large, collegial, supportive, deeply committed to its students and takes the teaching component of its mission seriously." (EC Report pp. 3-4).

(ii) The Internship Program; this was viewed as a very significant strength of the program.

(iii) The opportunity for students to publish. The opportunity to publish is viewed as high, especially relative to other schools. Students have been encouraged to publish individually, although this is not seen as a major departmental focus.

Overall, students acknowledged that there was a good suite of program components and courses. Courses made good use of guest presentations – important in a professional degree program, collegiality among students and among students and professors rated as strong, with good diversity in the student body. Some students expressed the typical types of concerns over pass/fail rates and workload quantity; but there was no objective sense that such concerns were indicative of significant substantive problems.

Several challenges were also identified by students including:

(i) Some concern expressed over what is perceived as an emphasis on "traditional" approaches (e.g., focus on older, established cases). The result is the suggestion to encourage greater emphasis on contemporary or critical approaches; the counterpoint was made, however, that the program does attempt to emphasize foundational material, which can be viewed by some as "traditional." This emphasis is seen to be to some extent a function of the nature of the size and orientation of the faculty core.¹

¹ Some students expressed the view that the program would benefit from a comprehensive curriculum review and updating. As examples, some expressed the view that greater attention could be devoted to statistics and, especially, research methods; others expressed interest in a "planning methods" course; others expressed interest in strengthening the course modules.

(ii) There was some concern expressed by students that all three streams of the program are not equally supported by the teaching staff. The view was that the environmental and housing and human services streams both need more Faculty to offer adequate teaching and supervision to students. Students are “diverted” to the land use and real estate stream because of the lack of faculty resources for the other two streams. The idea of having champions or leads for each stream was seen as having merit. For the human resources stream, the School is building linkages to other associated programs in order to strengthen the course offerings available to the SURP students (especially Policy Studies).

(iii) The USS Report notes the value of interdisciplinary studies for SURP, and points out linkages with Civil Engineering, Environmental Studies and Policy Studies. This is to be commended; however the Review Team concludes that more such linkages could be explored, especially to enhance the environmental and social streams.

(iv) Some students noted that there could be further strengthening of the linkages between the SURP and the City of Kingston (even beyond the successes it has enjoyed up until the present).

Overall, with regard to the teaching program, the external consultants characterized it as “high quality,” “sound,” and as “one of the strongest programs in Canada” (EC Report p. 2). Moreover, the curriculum was viewed as providing “a good grounding for professional planning work” (EC Report p. 6). Teaching was characterized as being “seriously executed” (p. 8) while the faculty was judged to be “collegial, supportive, deeply committed to its students and takes the teaching component of its mission seriously.” (p.4)

The Review Team concurs with this assessment and considers the teaching and curriculum of the SURP to be of high quality. The challenges noted above are manageable and addressing them would simply further strengthen the program.

4. Equity

As noted by the external consultants, up until recently, SURP enjoyed a reasonably diverse faculty complement. However, recent retirements and an extended sick leave have seriously undermined this. We agree with the external consultants that SURP should be strongly encouraged to devise a strategy to enhance the diversity of its faculty through the two scheduled hires that are anticipated. There may also be a further opportunity through the search for a new Director, who would be scheduled to start July 1, 2009.

While an equity strategy in regards to appointments is not evident in the USS Report, it was apparent through our discussion with the Acting Director, Prof. David Gordon, that SURP is well aware of the need to be pro-active on this issue. The Review Team also agrees with the point made by the external consultants, in discussion with them, about the desirability of faculty diversity as reflected in different innovative approaches to urban planning that attracted students in other comparable school.

In relation to equity and diversity among the student body, the external consultants suggest that more could be done to enhance ethnic and racial diversity. This is a positive suggestion that the Review Team supports.

The Review Team also notes that SURP has achieved a high degree of gender balance within the student body. It should also be noted that the students themselves expressed satisfaction with the fact that SURP attracts a diverse range of students, especially in relation to academic and professional backgrounds, a situation that promotes important types of learning and sharing both inside and outside of the classroom.

5. Human, Physical and Financial Resources

(i) Human Resources

The external consultants indicated several priority areas directly related to faculty. These are: (1) Leadership Succession; (2) Faculty Complement; and (3) Equity (a crucial and priority issue). The Review Team agrees that these three areas need to be addressed.

a. *Leadership Succession.* This important issue appears to be appreciated and understood by the faculty within the SURP. The University must take a major lead in ensuring that the succession process is successfully managed.

b. *Faculty Complement.* A major concern for SURP is the size of the faculty complement. The number of faculty is of concern for several reasons:

- First, any program expansion will require that the faculty complement be sufficient to constitute the “critical mass” necessary to maintain the strength of the program.
- Second, as noted above, there are three streams of study that form the core of the SURP program. Concern was expressed that, up until 2008, there has been a limited number of faculty available to cover the three streams; and the three streams appear to be unevenly resourced, in terms of faculty.
- Third, the scheduling of sabbatical leaves presents significant challenges for small units to deliver their programs.

In view of the expected SURP program expansion, maintaining an appropriately sized faculty complement should be a University priority.

c. *Equity.* Turnover/retirement amongst the small faculty complement is changing the degree of diversity within the faculty complement. The main issue is, therefore, how the unit will strive to diversify their faculty? The IAR Team came to similar conclusions as the external consultants on this important issue. The current absence of visible minority faculty within the SURP is a shortcoming and an area in need of serious consideration during the next round of faculty recruitment.

(ii) Physical Resources

The SURP occupies most of the fifth (top) floor of the Policy Studies Building. In addition to space for administrative offices and faculty offices, students share office space. There is a dedicated classroom that accommodates much of the instruction needs, as well as access to computer labs. SURP students also have access to facilities in departments with which SURP partners, such as Geography (e.g., the GIS lab). Study space and significant academic resources relevant to urban and regional planning are available to SURP through the main Queen's University library system, including books and monographs, reference materials, journals, and maps, government supported data, and government publications.

The Review Team considers the overall resources available to the SURP adequate. The major concern, however, is that future growth will require increased infrastructure support. A main issue will be the availability of physical space to accommodate the planned increase in enrolment.

(iii) Financial Resources

As a result of successive rounds of budget cuts that began in the 1990s, the financial situation of the SURP became somewhat precarious. This situation was addressed after 2000 through a combination of increased enrollment, increased tuition levels, and increased funding from the University to improve the physical assets of the SURP. In addition, it is noteworthy that the external activities of the SURP, including the China Projects, the National Executive Forum, and the Executive Seminars on Corporate and Investment Real Estate generate real resources that support SURP (e.g., International Experience Awards; small research projects; scholarships).

The SURP base budget appears to now be stabilized at a level that permits the program to function at a high level of quality. The main financial pressure on SURP arises in relation to the objective of increasing the faculty complement in order to support program expansion.

6. Societal Impact

The services provided by SURP to the broader community are extensive and have considerable positive impact. These service activities include:

- The National Executive Forum on Public Property;
- Executive Seminars on Corporate and Investment Real Estate;
- The China Projects;
- The Queen’s Fudan Collaboration;
- The Ambassador’s Forum;
- A strong and active working relationship with the OPPI and the CPI and with the broader planning profession;
- Creating linkages with local communities, through substantive activities such as class projects and faculty involvement in local planning issues;

The Review Team concludes that, taken together, these activities create a positive learning environment and constructive opportunities for SURP students, contribute financial support and stability to the School, and enhance the external profile of the SURP program and Queen’s. The Review Team therefore concurs with the overall conclusion of the ECC Report:

“SURP has invested heavily in four strategic entrepreneurial activities: the National executive Forum on Public Property; the executive Seminars on Corporate real estate; China projects; and the Ambassadors’ Program. These initiatives have undoubtedly raised the profile of the School and the University in several outside constituencies. They have yielded student internships and scholarships and have provided research opportunities and considerable amounts of funding.” (EC Report p. 9)

7. Overall School and Program Objectives and Achievements

The SURP seeks to maintain a balance between its core missions of offering an applied professional Master level degree in urban and regional planning that meets professional accreditation requirements, and conducting research and professional work in the field, thereby fulfilling its goal of producing academic as well as professional outputs. The vision of the SURP “...is to become a leading planning school in North America, with particular strength in specialized areas, to be recognized and competitive among the best” (USS Report p. 78).

The Review Team notes that the external consultants were particularly well situated to comparatively evaluate the performance of the SURP along the key dimensions of teaching and the curriculum, research and the professional status of the SURP.

As noted in the report above, the external consultants characterized the program as “high quality” and as “one of the strongest programs in Canada” and that the curriculum was provided “a good grounding for professional planning work” (EC Report p. 6). In summary, the external consultants concluded:

“...through the structuring of its core curriculum, and its entrepreneurial activities ... it [SURP]has established its reputation as a grounded and competent program which is attracting quality students and providing them planning training of high quality.” (ECC Report p. 3)

In addition, the faculty was judged to be collegial, supportive, and committed to the students.

Research achievement was characterized by the external consultants as being in the top tier of comparable Schools; and the service to the profession and broader planning community was highlighted by the external consultants as being both appropriate to the mission of the School and as being particularly successful.

These judgments about the teaching program, teaching, research and service were consistent with the observations and assessments of the Review Team. The Review Team concluded that the overall program and objectives of the SURP are appropriate and are largely being achieved.

Appendix A: SURP Review Team

Dr. Richard P. Chaykowski (Chair, SURP Review Team)
Professor and MIR Program Director
School of Policy Studies
Queen’s University

Dr. Allison Goebel
Associate Professor
Women’s Studies and Environmental Studies
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Susan Greaves
GIS/Map Librarian, MADGIC
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Joseph S. Stauffer Library
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Dr. John Holmes
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Cheryl Sutherland, MA Candidate
Department of Geography
Queen’s University

Colleen Sutton, MES
School of Environmental Studies
Kingston, Ontario

Appendix B: SURP IAR External Consultants

Hemalata C. Dandekar, Ph.D.
Professor School of Planning
Arizona State University

Ian Skelton, PhD, MCIP
Professor, Department of City Planning
University of Manitoba