

A Process Of Learning

Planning Education At East Carolina University

What was the planning profession like a quarter century ago? For one thing, old timers may recall that a substantial number of planners did not hold planning degrees while those with degrees were mainly graduates of master's level programs. Within the Southeast Chapter of the American Institute of Planners (SEAIP) only Georgia Tech and the University of North Carolina were granting planning degrees at that time. As the demand for planners grew in the late 1950s and 1960s, planning schools were hard pressed to produce enough graduates, and planning agencies sometimes recruited entry-level personnel from disciplines such as architecture, engineering, geography, and political science. These developments set the stage for the establishment of an undergraduate planning curriculum at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

In this article the authors trace the evolution of undergraduate planning education at East Carolina University (ECU) with emphasis on curriculum development.

Early Years of the Program

Dr. Robert E. Cramer was instrumental in the formation of East Carolina University's planning program. In 1956 he taught a new course, Urban Geography, which introduced students to planning issues. The class became involved in data collection and map preparation for Greenville. With visiting planners generating enthusiasm among students, faculty, and community leaders, this course became the catalyst for an embryonic planning program. By 1960, Cramer had developed another course, Urban and Regional Planning, that was one of the first undergraduate planning courses in the SEAIP chapter area.

In 1962 Cramer became Chairman of the Department of Geography and Geology. That fall Richard A. Stephenson, a geographer/geologist with planning experience was hired to develop an undergraduate planning program.

That same fall, planners and educators in North Carolina and adjoining states were consulted regarding the potential for an undergraduate planning curriculum at ECU. Generally, support was received for a curriculum that would supply graduates for sub-professional entry-level planning positions. By spring of 1963 a pre-planning minor of 42 quarter hours was

offered to all Geography majors. The 1963-64 East Carolina College Catalogue description read:

"The pre-planning minor curriculum will give the student preparation for a position with a planning agency at a sub-professional level, and/or adequate preparation for graduate study in planning."

Requirements for the minor included two courses in government, a course in both economics and statistics, four geography courses, site design, and urban and regional planning. By 1964-65 the minor was available to sociology and



political science majors. Professors Cramer, Stephenson, and James Dunigan provided guidance to planning students. The latter two left East Carolina University in 1967 and 1968, respectively.

In the fall of 1968 Wes Hankins joined the ECU faculty to direct the planning program. He held a master's degree in planning and had worked briefly as a community planner. Six new courses were proposed as part of a revised minor in planning, in the following subject areas: urban and regional planning, techniques, urban form, and planning legislation. These six courses comprised the "planning core" of the revised 41 quarter hour minor. Courses in state and local government, statistics, and minorities made up the remaining 16 hours.

Wes Hankins, Associate Professor, and Richard Stephenson, Professor, are faculty members in the Department of Geography and Planning at East Carolina University.

From 1968 to 1970, Hankins involved students in the planning techniques classes in practical applications of classroom knowledge, which proved invaluable to many planning alumni in applying for planning positions.

The Student Planning Association was formed in 1970 to increase the dialogue between students, faculty, and planning practitioners. In addition, the two techniques courses were revised and two new courses were developed.

From a handful of graduates with the pre-planning minor in the mid-1960s, the planning program produced 13 graduates with a planning minor in 1968-69 and 26 graduates in 1971-72. By September 1972, 65 students were enrolled in planning classes.

Development of the B.S. in Planning

The University of North Carolina Board of Governors approved a proposal for a B.S. in Urban and Regional Planning in early 1974, which had been submitted by Cramer and Hankins two years before. The B.A. planning minor remained unchanged.

The 52 quarter hour major leading to the B.S. in Planning included 19 hours of core curriculum in urban and regional planning, techniques, and legislation; 17 hours of cognates in cartography, aerial photography, statistics, state and local government, and minorities; plus 16 hours of restricted electives. Students could develop a specialization within the planning major through the careful selection of these electives. Each planning major also had to complete a minor in one of the following fields: geography, political science, psychology, social welfare, sociology, or parks, recreation, and conservation.

During the years 1975 to 1979, ECU converted to the semester system and graduates with a major in planning increased from 27 in 1975 to 35 in 1979.

At the same time Dr. Ennis Chestang replaced Cramer as Chairman of the Department of Geography. Dr. Richard Stephenson, who had rejoined the ECU faculty in 1971, resumed his involvement with the planning program on a limited basis, and in 1975 developed a new course in coastal area planning.

A second full-time planning faculty member, Alicia Downes, was hired in 1975 and taught at ECU through 1976. In September 1977, Dr. Obi Achunine joined the faculty for a year. Dr. Mulu Wubneh replaced Achunine in September 1979. From 1975 to the present, the full-time faculty has been supplemented with planning practitioners as part-time faculty on a number of occasions.



Revision of the Planning Curriculum

In December 1980 the planning faculty made three major recommendations for the undergraduate planning program: revise the planning major, revise the planning minor, and to work toward the recognition of the undergraduate major by the American Planning Association. The objectives of the revisions were to: (1) offer students more flexibility in the planning major and minor by increasing the number of planning courses; (2) streamline the planning major by developing more clearly defined core, research skill, and cognate components; (3) provide for more choice by increasing the number of minors and offering the alternative of two concentrations in lieu of a minor; (4) make the planning minor available for both B.A. and B.S. degrees; and (5) increase the number of interdisciplinary course offerings. The revisions became effective in September, 1982, and working toward APA recognition is a continuing objective.

The revised B.S. in Urban and Regional Planning requires 20 semester hours of core courses (in urban and regional planning, techniques, theory, and legislation) plus 12 hours of planning electives. In addition, students must take 12 hours of required research skill courses (such as cartography or aerial photography, quantitative geography, site design or remote sensing; and a computer course or an additional quantitative methods course). Finally, each major must complete an additional 24 hours by selecting one of eleven minors or two of thirteen concentrations. Both the minors and concentrations included social science, natural science, and professional areas.

The revised minor consists entirely of planning courses. As a result of the revision, both B.A. and B.S. majors may pursue a planning minor.

Included in the 1980 revisions were six new and seven revised courses. These changes, combined with three new courses in 1982 and 1983, greatly increased the variety of planning courses offered. The additions reflected the diversity of the planning profession: land use and transportation planning studios, site design, environmental, neighborhood and housing planning, and historic preservation. In 1980 the Department of Geography was renamed the Department of Geography and Planning.

Program Evolution

Since 1963 the undergraduate planning curriculum has changed in several important ways. First, as the minor and major have evolved, the planning portion of the coursework has increased substantially. For example, the current major requires twice as many planning courses as its predecessor, and the current minor includes only planning courses. These changes have moved the planning curriculum away from its early sub-professional emphasis. The existing planning major is a professional degree designed to prepare students for entry-level positions. Se-

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cond, planning majors and minors may now choose from 17 planning courses whereas only two were offered in 1963. Third, in contrast to earlier versions, both the existing minor and major may be used with a larger number of disciplines. While the original major permitted a choice of six minors, students may now select from 11 minors or two of 13 concentrations. Finally, the new major is more rigorous than the 1974 version since it requires additional semester hours, places a heavier emphasis on research skills, and increase the degree requirements from 120 to 126 hours.



Although changes have occurred, several aspects of the planning curriculum have remained the same. For example, the revised planning major continues to be an interdisciplinary curriculum using 11 minors plus courses from 20 disciplines in the research skill and concentration sections of the major. This interdisciplinary emphasis is reinforced by the development in recent years of two planning courses which are offered on a team-taught basis with faculty from other disciplines. Furthermore, the undergraduate planning curriculum continues to enroll students usually during their junior and senior years. Finally, planning internships continue to be encouraged but not required.

Prospects

Until recently undergraduate planning education has been almost completely overshadowed by emphasis on the traditional graduate education in planning. With the exception of a handful of articles, the planning literature has avoided the subject of the undergraduate degree. Notable exceptions include Michael Brook's 1972 article "On the Utility of the B.U.R.P." (Planning, the ASPO Magazine, September 1972) and Bruce Dotson's 1982 article "Undergraduate Planning Education: Practices, Problems, and Potentials" (in the Winter 1982 issue of Journal of Planning Education and Research). In 1982 the Guide to Undergraduate Education in Urban and Regional Planning, edited by Wes Hankins, Mulu Wubneh, and Robert Reiman was published.

The data contained in the latter publication suggests that undergraduate education may receive greater attention in the future. For example, while the 1969-70 American Society of Planning Officials (ASPO) survey of planning schools reported 10 schools offering a bachelors degree in planning, the Guide to Undergraduate Education in Urban and Regional Planning included 28 schools with undergraduate planning degrees as of Fall 1980. In addition, the Guide lists 36 institutions offering non-degree planning curricula such as minors or concentrations. If this trend continues, prospects for the increased acceptance and growth of undergraduate planning education may be brighter than ever before.

The prospects for the undergraduate planning program at ECU appear good for several reasons. First, with approximately 60 majors currently enrolled and 94 projected for 1984-85, the curriculum has a well-established niche in the University. An international dimension has been added to the program since these projections include about 30 students from Malaysia. Second, over 120 ECU planning alumni hold planning-related positions; approximately 100 are in North Carolina. A substantial number of them

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A little greenery garnished this Wilson facade.

- public/private cooperation
- knowledge of financial tools and marketing and recruiting techniques
- strong leadership
- public support

The Main Street Program recognizes and encourages pursuit of a wide range of revitalization strategies it acknowledges the importance of strong leadership and public support in its requirements for a full-time downtown manager and an existing downtown organization. The program demands public/private cooperation. Participation in the program, moreover, provides city agencies with an information network; it encourages sharing of financial and marketing strategies employed by towns of similar character and capacity.

Paradoxically, the Main Street Program can only be employed when a revitalization effort is well underway. If a town qualifies for Main Street designation, it has probably already succeeded in establishing a revitalization program. Clearly, if a town understands how to establish a revitalization program, it can get help from the state. But what of the towns that need help to establish a program? This is an elementary, but most important, issue confronting the Main Street policy-makers.

The fundamental measure of a useful revitalization program is its ability to create and retain jobs and housing. The means for achieving these goals include a knowledge of redevelopment finance options, marketing, and recruiting skills. The ability to achieve public/private cooperation is also essential. The state needs to provide assistance in these areas through its downtown program. The Main Street Program has shown that attention to design alone is not enough. Towns have a need for more basic and more extensive revitalization assistance. ⊕

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have earned graduate degrees in planning or a related field. These men and women are an increasingly valuable resource for job leads and suggestions for curriculum improvements.

Finally, the continued growth of the ECU planning program may ultimately lead to accreditation by the American Planning Association. This would fulfill the North Carolina Chapter of the American Institute of Planners 1973 Statement on Planning Education..... "NCAIP should provide strong support to develop at least one bachelor's program in planning at a university in the state that fully meets AIP accreditation standards." ⊕

A piece by Donald A. Krueckeberg in the Winter 1984 issue of Journal of Planning Education and Research is relevant to Hankins and Stephenson's discourse on undergraduate planning education.

Krueckeberg's paper, "Planning and the New Depression in the Social Sciences", examines the growth of planning education over the past 30 years in institutions of higher education in the United States that peaked in 1975. Current projections of the number of planning graduate students relative to the total pool of graduate students indicates a serious decline in the number of planning students.

In the face of this enrollment decline, Krueckeberg suggests that planning educators dig deeper: educate a more productive planner for the society and economy in which we now live; one who offers a higher quality of services at a lower cost.

One "sacred tenet" of planning education that may be an obstacle to this approach, according to Krueckeberg, is that "professional planning education, correctly done, belongs mainly at the graduate level." This position has long been justified either by argument that planning education represents advanced training in a field or by the argument that it requires a platform of liberal education on which to build. In fact, however, most graduate students in planning have little or no prior education in the field and we teach them accordingly. Furthermore, a liberal education is not the national baccalaureate norm, either for students entering graduate planning schools or most other fields. Krueckeberg concludes that "the assumptions are simply false.....I believe this all implies a shift from an educational system dominated by graduate studies to one which gives major importance to undergraduate professional training."