

Student Connection

Jess Brandes, UNC
Brian DuPont, ASU
Melissa Norton, UNC

A new addition to this issue, the Student Connection is an attempt by the editors of Carolina Planning to better connect the broader readership with the three academic planning departments across this state, their faculty, student bodies, and current happenings. We intend for the Student Connection to become a permanent element of CPJ. This section provides a venue for current planning students at Appalachian State University, Eastern Carolina University, or UNC Chapel Hill to showcase important work or notable events within their departments, either by a stand-alone submission or through inclusion in the Department Review section. UNC-CH student Melissa Norton provides the first stand-alone contribution through her thoughtful description of the first DCRP Diversity Bus Tour; an event with the intention to broaden the purview of planning education. For the Department Review section, all student NCAPA representatives were invited to submit an overview and update of their respective departments. UNC-CH and ASU student representatives each submitted an update for this inaugural run.

DCRP Diversity Committee Sponsors First Annual Neighborhood and Community Bus Tour

Melissa Norton

The Diversity Committee at UNC's Department of City and Regional Planning is a group of faculty and students dedicated to furthering the following goals:

- Integrate diversity into the undergraduate and graduate curricula.
- Support and encourage recruitment of diverse faculty.
- Recruit a more diverse student population.
- Support students of color in their academic, professional, and personal development.
- Provide a forum to discuss issues related to communities of color.

Each year one of the main endeavors of the Diversity Committee is to organize an event aimed at furthering dialogue about diversity issues by involving new graduate students, returning students, faculty, and staff.

To this end, the committee sponsored a day-long Neighborhood and Community Bus Tour in the fall of 2007. The motivating ideas were first, to raise students' awareness about the needs and challenges of the Triangle's diverse communities and second, to create

an opportunity for them to connect their educational experience to the vital social justice work in the area.

The day was divided into two parts with tours of Chapel Hill in the morning and an afternoon tour of Durham. Each leg of the tour was then followed by a panel discussion to continue dialogue about the issues raised throughout the day. Panel participants came from the public, private, and non-profit sectors and included representatives from Blue Ribbon Mentors, El Centro Latino, the Hidden Voices Project, EmPOWERment Inc., local elected leaders, city staff, and long-time neighborhood resident activists.

The Neighborhoods Bus Tour was an eye-opening experience for all involved. The highlights of the Chapel Hill tour included an overview of the environmental racism issue concerning the location of a landfill in a

***Melissa Norton** is a May 2008 graduate of UNC's Department of City and Regional Planning with a concentration in Housing and Community Development. She plans to work in neighborhood revitalization and advocacy with the City of Durham.*

predominantly low-income minority community, the physical isolation of public housing communities, and the challenges facing new immigrant communities from Latin America and Southeast Asia.

In Durham, the tour was facilitated by three long-time resident activists who shared powerful personal narratives about the history of their neighborhoods' decline and the day-to-day reality of life in a distressed inner-city community. They also left students with an inspiring message about the spirit of community activism and the important role planners can play in neighborhood revitalization.

The DCRP Diversity Committee expresses appreciation to all those who participated in the Neighborhoods and Community Bus Tour and hopes that participants were left with a lasting impression as to the real challenges facing communities of color in the Triangle area, as well as some glimpses of the roles that can be played by planners in overcoming these challenges.



Dorcas Bradley
West End Durham resident



Vivian McCoy
Northeast Central Durham resident



Ray Urqhart
Southside/ St. Theresa Durham resident

CAMPUS CONNECTION

Appalachian State University

Department of Geography and Planning

Brian DuPont

The Department of Geography and Planning at Appalachian State University, which is located in the small mountain town of Boone, NC, has been preparing students for the planning profession since 1976. As an undergraduate program with dual disciplines in both planning and geography, it offers students a B.S. in Community and Regional Planning. To date, 244 planning students have graduated from the program. The planning program has effectively targeted the public sector's needs by providing knowledgeable graduates who go on to work in rural communities or small towns across North Carolina; most are working in planning or planning-related jobs. The department also offers a graduate geography degree with a concentration in planning, and the graduate planning concentration will be available in Asheville in the fall.

The Student Planners Association at ASU has worked on such community service projects as road and stream clean ups around Boone. We are a service-oriented club that contributes to the University by participating in campus events. SPA is also a creative group that allows members the freedom of expressing their different ideas in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Membership is not limited to planning majors but is open to any student at ASU, because community planning requires broad input.

The ASU curriculum provides plenty of opportunities for students to work in small groups and to take courses that advance their technical skills in the field of planning. Both are important core elements of the department. Students learn the processes of planning and are able to implement those plans in real-world situations. Students seem to get the most enjoyment from classes by doing hands-on work and moving from theoretical to practical applications. One of the strengths of the department is that students gain the necessary skills to succeed as planners in the professional world by developing a framework throughout their coursework that will allow them to perform well on the job or in graduate studies. Professors would like to broaden the planning department by introducing environmental planning, urban design, or more GIS analysis courses; these courses would be a

Brian DuPont is a double major in Community and Regional Planning and Geography at Appalachian State University. He is president of the Student Planner's Association as well as NCAPA student representative for ASU.

great addition to current GIS and sustainable development courses.

Currently, research projects by the department faculty and students involve the town of Boone, Habitat for Humanity, and ASU's Renewable Energy Initiative Council. One project of great interest is the Kraut Creek project: ASU planning students have had the opportunity to work on this project in the classroom setting and now are watching as their plans for this area transition into a real world project in the groundbreaking stage. Overall, the Planning Program at ASU is small, but it is beginning to grow both in enrollment and impact. As students and faculty, we can already see our influence on the community around us, and with new ideas for the future and an improving GIS curriculum, the coming years for the ASU Planning Program look very promising.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Department of City and Regional Planning

Jess Brandes

Founded in 1946, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Department of City and Regional Planning was the first planning program established on the foundation of the social sciences. Currently, 26 PhD candidates, 47 first-year MA students, and 46 second-year MA students comprise the department's student body. Many of UNC's 16 faculty are engaged in research with other UNC departments at research centers that include the Carolina Transportation Program, the Center for Community Capital, the Institute for Economic Development, the Center for Urban and Regional Studies, and the Center for Sustainable Community Design within UNC's Institute for the Environment.

In the fall of 2007, students who enrolled in Dr. Roberto Quercia's New Orleans Recovery Initiative workshop traveled to Louisiana to work in the Gentilly area of the Crescent City, assessing needs and inventorying properties. In the spring, Dr. Bill Rohe continued this NOLA-based project with another group of students; workshop participants helped local community members interpret and develop plans for

redevelopment scenarios based on the data collected in the fall. Dr. Thomas Campanella was a visiting lecturer in the spring at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and is anticipating the release of his forthcoming book, *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What it Means for the World*. Students enrolled in the Spring economic development workshop worked with the Center for Community Action in Lumberton, NC, to assess the economic impact of community food programs. In addition, a group of nine students traveled to Berlin in March with Dr. Harvey Goldstein to gain an international perspective on planning.

Many of Carolina's planning students currently hold positions outside of the department at firms and organizations such as the City of Raleigh, Triangle Transit Authority, Zapolski and Rudd, and the City of Chapel Hill, to name a few. Additionally, students and faculty members demonstrate their strong, continuing commitment to community involvement throughout the year. Service activities included building with Habitat for Humanity, performing trail maintenance with North Carolina's Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and volunteering at Project Homeless Connect, a day-long event bringing together service providers and local homeless families.

Planner's Forum, DCRP's student government organization, works in many capacities in the department, including serving as a liaison between students and the faculty. Recently, Planner's Forum successfully advocated to change the official Master's degree title to Master of City and Regional Planning in order to reflect the field's shift toward planning on both a local and regional level. In addition, members of the Forum's Diversity Committee organized a tour of Chapel Hill and Durham for the purpose of highlighting the issues of equity and diversity in the area; they then hosted a panel discussion on the topic to conclude the event. DCRP continues to benefit from a dedicated social committee, which organizes and publicizes weekly departmental events, in addition to planning and hosting certain special events like the holiday party and the Open House weekend for prospective students in March. Finally, planning students are currently working alongside faculty to hire an additional senior land use professor.

Jess Brandes has completed the first year of the master's program in the Department of City and Regional Planning at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is concentrating in Housing and Community Development. Jess is also the UNC student representative to the NCAPA.