



AUBURN

Master of Community Planning

STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

1) STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Stakeholder input: This plan emerges from formal and informal input from many stakeholder groups during fall and spring semesters of academic year 2022-2023. The plan was prepared and adopted in Spring 2023 with extensive input provided by all faculty of the Master in Community Planning (MCP) program and key stakeholders of the program. Our consultations include:

- MCP faculty met several times during fall and spring semesters of 2022-2023 academic year to review the previous strategic plan and formulate an updated one. In spring and fall semesters of 2022, the Department of Political Science underwent an academic program review and initiated its own restructuring discussions. In Spring 2023 semester, the MCP faculty met several times (including on 02/03/2023, 02/17/2023, 03/24/2023, and 04/03/2023) for strategic planning discussions, each meeting lasting four hours or longer. Several informal discussions were also held during the entire process.
- The draft strategic plan was circulated via email on 04/07/2023 to MCP faculty, current students in the program, members of the MCP Planning Advisory Council (PAC), and the department chair.
- Consultation with MCP student body was organized on 04/10/2023. Current students in the program had the opportunity to provide feedback after the meeting via email.
- The annual meeting of the PAC was held on 04/14/2023, where the main agenda item was discussions on the draft strategic plan. This meeting was attended by 13 PAC members (11 in person and 2 virtually). PAC members also had the opportunity to provide feedback after the meeting via email.
- The final Strategic Plan was adopted by the faculty on 05/02/2023 by a unanimous vote with immediate effect.

Review and updates: This plan is for five-years duration and will end in spring of 2028. It will be annually reviewed by the MCP faculty and the PAC.

Dissemination: This plan is publicly available to faculty, students, alumni, professionals, and other interested persons via the MCP web page.

Linkage to AU outcomes assessment: Auburn University requires that the outcomes of every degree program be assessed annually, with the focus being on measurable outcomes. Some of the outcomes in this plan will be used as part of the annual AU outcomes assessment.

Organization of the plan: The strategic plan includes the program's mission and vision statements and core values. It is organized into three primary goals that advance the program's vision and mission, and identify the program's future aspirations over a period of five years in the context of its mission and that of Auburn University. There are a set of sub-goals tied to each primary goal, along with measurable indicators for each of the sub-goals. The goals help operationalize the plan and the measurable indicators help determine progress and document how it tracks and assesses progress towards meeting the goals articulated in this plan.

2) MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Master of Community Planning (MCP) program at Auburn University, a Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) accredited program, is to prepare competent, ethical, and responsible future professional planners for addressing complex planning issues in an interdisciplinary and dynamic environment, with an explicit focus on social justice, equity, and inclusion, and making communities resilient and sustainable. Active, hands-on, and community-engaged learning on real projects, with partners in underserved communities in Alabama and the Southeast region, and facilitated by professionally active faculty, is the foundation of the program.

3) PROGRAM VISION

The vision of the Master of Community Planning (MCP) program is to serve Alabama and the Southeast region of the US through excellence in teaching, outreach, and research. The program aims to foster innovation, creativity, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and ethical planning practices among our students through the development of critical thinking, social justice, and sustainability informed action and community-engagement.

4) PROGRAM CORE VALUES

The Community Planning program at Auburn University will be guided by the following core values:

- 1) *Student excellence* - The program will strive towards student excellence in education and learning through student-centered teaching, community engagement, and research.
- 2) *Sustainability* – The program will integrate and reinforce sustainability education with specific focus on development and conservation strategies that help protect our health,

built and natural environments, and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse.

- 3) *Social justice*¹, *diversity*², and *inclusion*³ - The program will foster inclusive environments for all students, faculty, alumni, and other stakeholders, and the communities it serves, to integrate equity, social justice, and multiple perspectives.

5) PROGRAM GOALS AND MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

1. Program Growth and Visibility – Grow the program to an optimal size and increase its visibility.

Goal 1a. Maintain program accreditation by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB).

Measurable Indicator 1: The MCP program maintains accreditation by the Planning Accreditation Board for the longest term possible (7 years).

Measurable Indicator 2: All reporting and mandatory disclosure requirements for PAB accreditation are fully complied with in a timely manner.

Measurable Indicator 3: All PAB accreditation criteria are fully met.

Goal 1b. Strengthen connections with program alumni, the Alabama Chapter of the American Planning Association, and program stakeholders.

Measurable Indicator 1: Program sponsors the AL-APA annual conference and sets up a table at the conference, program organizes a session at the AL-APA annual conference, and program regularly contributes to AL-APA newsletters.

Measurable Indicator 2: Increased number of student and faculty presentations at the AL-APA annual conference.

Measurable Indicator 3: Increased circulation of program’s newsletter to the program alumni, and alumni contact database is updated regularly.

Measurable Indicator 4: Increased number of program alumni giving guest lectures, participating in studio reviews, and engaging with students.

Goal 1c. Pursue renaming the degree program to appeal to larger group of potential students.

Measurable Indicator 1: The degree is renamed *Masters in City Planning*, or other appropriate and recognizable name.

Measurable Indicator 2: Program website and marketing materials are updated to reflect the above.

The MCP program adheres to the following definitions of Social Justice, Diversity, and Inclusion as included in the American Planning Association Code of Ethics (<https://www.planning.org/ethics/ethicscode/>)

¹ *Social Justice:* Social justice examines both the positive and negative impacts of community change on all community members so that no one group or neighborhood is unfairly disadvantaged.

² *Diversity:* The inclusion of all in a manner not limited by race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, educational attainment, spiritual beliefs, creed, culture, tribal affiliation, nationality, immigration status, political beliefs, or veteran status, so as to embrace varied perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, talents, and interests in all human efforts.

³ *Inclusion:* An environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully; are valued for their distinctive skills, experiences, and perspectives; have equal access to resources and opportunities; and can contribute fully.

Goal 1d. Develop a robust student recruitment plan to achieve appropriate student size and attract high quality students.

Measurable Indicator 1: Average GPA of incoming students is 3.0 or higher.

Measurable Indicator 2: Maintain a faculty: student ratio of approximately 1:10, aligned with PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 3: Recruitment plan includes specific strategies to increase recruitment from within the Department of Political Science, the College of Liberal Arts, and Auburn University.

Measurable Indicator 4: Recruitment plan includes specific strategies to increase recruitment of international students.

Measurable indicator 5: At least one graduate research assistantship is awarded to an international student each year.

Measurable Indicator 6: The program's website, marketing materials, and student recruitment plan reflects (forthcoming) STEM designation.

Goal 1e. Recruit students, faculty, and PAC members from diverse backgrounds.

Measurable Indicator 1: Robust recruitment plan focuses on attracting students from diverse backgrounds.

Measurable Indicator 2: Faculty is from diverse backgrounds.

Measurable indicator 3: Approved Planning Advisory Council (PAC) bylaws are adopted and define membership and composition of the PAC, representing diverse interests and views.

Goal 1f. Establish an Undergraduate Minor in Community Planning.

Measurable Indicator 1: Undergraduate Minor in Community Planning is established to teach planning to a wide range of undergraduate students.

Measurable Indicator 2: Number of students pursuing the Undergraduate Minor in Community Planning.

Goal 1g. Include POLI 2120 (CPLN 2120) in the core university curriculum.

Measurable Indicator 1: POLI 2120 (CPLN 2120) is included in the core university curriculum to teach planning to a wide range of undergraduate students.

Measurable Indicator 2: Number of students taking the POLI 2120 (CPLN 2120) university core class.

Goal 1h. Establish accelerated bachelors and masters (ABM) degrees with interested undergraduate programs.

Measurable Indicator 1: ABMs are established with potential interested undergraduate programs in Auburn University such as Political Science, Law and Justice, Environmental Design, etc.

Measurable Indicator 2: Number of students pursuing ABM degrees.

Goal 1i. Establish dual degrees with interested graduate programs.

Measurable Indicator 1: Dual degree programs are established with interested graduate programs in Auburn University such as Social Work, Business, History, etc.

Measurable Indicator 2: Number of students pursuing newly established dual degree programs.

Goal 1j. Establish graduate certificates.

Measurable Indicator 1: Graduate certificates are established in fields such as urban design, preservation and placemaking; urban sustainability and resiliency; social justice, inclusion and diversity; real estate and local economic development; and urban policy.

Measurable Indicator 2: Number of students pursuing graduate certificates.

Goal 1k. Initiate distance learning or online courses to attract students from a wider geographic area.

Measurable Indicator 1: Select distance learning or online courses are offered on a regular basis.

Measurable Indicator 2: Number of students taking distance-learning or online courses.

Goal 1l. Appeal to students with a wide variety of career aspirations.

Measurable Indicator 1: Students have the opportunity to take a limited number of non-CPLN elective classes that align with their professional goals with prior approval. These may include topical areas of urban sustainability and resiliency; urban design, placemaking, and preservation; social justice, inclusion and diversity; real estate development and economic development; urban policy, etc.

Measurable Indicator 2: Graduate Planning Student Handbook provides students with guidance on curriculum and course offerings.

Measurable Indicator 3: Program website and promotional materials are updated to communicate topical area packages with course offerings.

Goal 1m. Collaborate with colleagues in the Department of Political Science to build upon interdisciplinary strengths in teaching and research.

Measurable Indicator 1: Students have the opportunity to take a limited number of non-CPLN electives in the department that align with their professional goals with prior approval.

Measurable Indicator 2: Graduate Planning Student Handbook provides students with guidance on curriculum and course offerings.

Measurable Indicator 3: Faculty collaborates with departmental colleagues on research projects, grants, and publications.

Measurable Indicator 4: Faculty contributes to the PhD program in Public Administration and Public Policy and other programs in the department.

2. Education, Planning Skills, and Job Readiness: Prepare students for professional success by fostering relevant, innovative, and multi-perspectival education.

Goal 2a. Create and maintain a high-quality and conducive learning environment with appropriate spaces, infrastructure, and instructional support systems.

Measurable Indicator 1: Availability of appropriate spaces and infrastructure including a well-functioning GIS and visual communication Lab with required information systems and technology, well-equipped classrooms, and a dedicated Planning Studio.

Measurable Indicator 2: Students have access to a graduate planning students lounge that allows them to build community.

Goal 2b. Develop a Graduate Planning Student Handbook.

Measurable Indicator 1: Graduate Planning Student Handbook provides information to students on program policies, program curriculum, course offerings, and other important and relevant information.

GOAL 2c. Curriculum is updated to make it up-to-date, holistic, grounded in theory, builds marketable planning skills, and is fully aligned with PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 1: Establish a process to review the curriculum to fully align it with the PAB accreditation criteria, the AICP exam requirements, the APA areas of practice, and the needs of the planning profession.

Measurable Indicator 2: Curriculum map for core classes meets all PAB accreditation criteria related to the curriculum.

Measurable Indicator 3: Core and elective classes address most AICP exam topics and APA areas of practice.

Measurable Indicator 4: Revisit the comprehensive exam to align it with the updated curriculum.

Measurable Indicator 5: Alumni surveys results indicate that they have gained marketable skills.

Goal 2d: Emphasize job readiness through a professionally-oriented curriculum, need-based training, and workshops.

Measurable Indicator 1: At least 90% of graduates are employed within the field of planning or pursuing a higher education degree within a year of graduation.

Measurable Indicator 2: At least 75% of all graduates who appear for the AICP exam within 3 years of graduation will pass it.

Goal 2e: Develop a set of SLOs for Synthesis Studio and update assessment rubric.

Measurable Indicator 1: Review and update the student learning outcomes (SLO) for Synthesis Studios, fully aligned with PAB accreditation criteria related to curriculum.

Measurable Indicator 2: Identify areas of improvement based on Synthesis Studio assessment rubrics and program assessment reports.

Goal 2f. Increase education on the plan creation and implementation process and community engagement opportunities for students in Alabama and the Southeast region.

Measurable Indicator 1: Synthesis studios incorporates community engagement opportunities and develops plan creation and implementation skills, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 2: Review and update the synthesis studio assessments rubric on planning process and community and stakeholder engagement, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 3: Students have the opportunity to participate in at least two real-world community engagement project opportunities every year.

Goal 2g: Provide students exposure to global planning issues by embedding planning knowledge in the global context.

Measurable Indicator 1: Review and update the Synthesis Studio assessments rubric that embeds planning knowledge in the global context, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 2: Review and update the core curriculum to embed global planning issues in planning knowledge, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 3: Students have the opportunity to participate in at least one study abroad opportunity every two years.

Goal 2h: Provide opportunities for students to develop skills and mechanisms and practices for ensuring equitable and inclusive decision-making.

Measurable Indicator 1: Review and update the Synthesis Studio rubric assessments on social justice and equity, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 2: Review and update the core curriculum to include equitable and inclusive decision-making.

Goal 2i: Provide opportunities for students to develop skills and mechanisms and practices for ensuring sustainability, resiliency, and climate justice.

Measurable Indicator 1: Review and update the synthesis studio rubric assessments on sustainability and resiliency, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Measurable Indicator 2: Review and update the core curriculum to include sustainability, resiliency, and climate justice, aligned with the PAB accreditation criteria.

Goal 2j: Explore and expand internship opportunities.

Measurable Indicator 1: Explore and study potential options for requiring internships for students.

Measurable Indicator 2: At least 75% of students will complete a planning internship.

Goal 2k. Fully utilize core planning faculty strength and expertise with judicious use of adjuncts.

Measurable Indicator 1: A range of core and elective courses are offered based on the expertise of MCP core planning faculty.

Measurable Indicator 2: An elective and class rotation schedule that aims to fill CPLN classes offered on a consistent basis.

Measurable Indicator 3: Adjuncts and non-CPLN courses are strategically used to expand course offerings for students, recruit new students, and count towards FTE if a significant number of students take them.

Goal 2l. Appeal to a broader range of student interests and expand choices.

Measurable Indicator 1: Students have the opportunity to take a limited number of non-CPLN electives that align with their professional goals with prior approval. These may include the areas of urban sustainability and resiliency; urban design, placemaking, and preservation; social justice, inclusion and diversity; real estate and local economic development; and urban policy.

Measurable Indicator 2: Graduate Planning Student Handbook provides students guidance on curriculum and course offerings.

Measurable Indicator 3: Program website and promotional materials are updated to communicate possible topical area packages and multiple career paths with courses.

3. Community Engagement: Expand community engagement through engaged teaching, engaged research, and outreach, to provide experiential learning to students and serve local communities.

Goal 3a. Study the mission, purpose, and future of the Alabama City Year Program.

Measurable Indicator 1: Faculty have explored strategies to potentially expand and restructure the Alabama City Year Program.

Measurable Indicator 2: Alabama City Year Program is developed and structured appropriately with increase visibility in Alabama and the Southeast.

Measurable Indicator 3: Faculty have explored the possibility of renaming and rebranding the Alabama City Year Program, focusing on Alabama and Southeast communities surrounding Alabama.

Measurable Indicator 4: Website and marketing materials are updated to reflect the above.

Goal 3b. Seek institutional support and partnerships from Auburn University for community engagement and outreach.

Measurable Indicator 1: Community engagement and outreach is accounted for in faculty workload, compensation, and promotion and tenure criteria.

Measurable Indicator 2: Support from Auburn University, CLA Office of Outreach, the Extension Offices, or other units.

Goal 3c. Seek support from and provide support to community partners for community engagement.

Measurable Indicator 1: Increased number of internships and graduate assistantship positions offered by partner communities.

Measurable Indicator 2: Partner communities provide financial and/or in-kind support for projects.

Measurable Indicator 3: Underserved communities are provided community engagement services.