

# Third-Year Graduate Degree Program Review

Program: **Urban and Regional Planning (MURP-URP)**  
 Year Approved: **2008**

The Office of Graduate Studies and the USF Tampa Graduate Council would like to ask you to complete this brief survey of your Graduate Program. This one-time survey, given to all recently approved graduate programs, will provide information about the program's standing and offers opportunities to showcase program's accomplishments in the first few years. Currently, no other mechanism is available to collect this type of information. The Graduate Council will prepare a brief report based on the survey, which will be circulated back to you and kept on file in the Office of Graduate Studies. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important project!

## PART I: Program Metrics (pre-populated by the Office of Graduate Studies)

(Optional comments regarding these numbers may be separately attached.)

Enrollment Statistics	Current Year (2013/2014)*	2012/2013	2011/2012	2010/2011
Applied (SIF)	20	19	22	28
Admitted (SIF)	13	8	13	18
Enrolled (SIF)	7	4	8	9
Degrees Awarded (SIF)*	3*	4	4	-
Time to Degree (if applicable) (info center mean)	*	2.29	1.54	-
Total program enrollment (SIF)	17	17	21	16
Number of graduate faculty** (PROFESSOR, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR)	5 (see below)			
Student: Faculty Ratio (students per faculty)***	~3.5:1			

\* Degrees not yet awarded for spring 2014

\*\*Information not available on Info-center. Please provide a total number and then please attach a list of names, level (Full, Assoc., etc.), and research areas of these faculty

\*\*\*Information not available on Info-center. Please provide.

**Part II: Annual Student Success Metrics (populated by the Program)**  
 (Optional comments regarding these numbers may be separately attached.)

	Current Year (2011/2012)	2010/2011	2009/2010	2008/2009
Professional Presentations by Students	See Additional Information below			
Student Publications/Creative Works	See Additional Information below			
Student Funding and Scholarships (including internal awards)	See Additional Information below			
Other				

**Part III: Program Narrative**

In a few sentences:

1. Note any programmatic changes since original approval or last review and why the changes were made (i.e. changes to degree requirements, courses, qualifying exams, theses etc).

We just submitted program changes that: A) increase the number of courses in the core requirements from five to seven; B) reduce the number of electives and eliminate required elective concentrations; C) revise admissions requirements.

As the MURP program has grown in size and maturity, the faculty desired to modify the current curriculum to better reflect the changing demands of the planning field. Based on consultation with local planning professional associations, we found that students that are trained as generalists are more marketable than those who specialize in a single area of concentration. Therefore, we have strengthened core requirements while eliminating the required elective specializations, to allow for greater flexibility. We also modified the current admissions standards, allowing for more flexibility in the admissions process and aligning them with the requirements of our sister-program in MPA.

2. Discuss diversity in your program and you are actively involved in promoting this initiative.

We highly value the diversity in our program. Demographically, our current student population is just about evenly split between male and female. Approximately 50% are White Non-Hispanic; ~20% are Black Non-Hispanic; ~20% are Hispanic; and the remainder are from a variety of foreign countries (e.g. Bahamian, Korean). We actively recruit internationally (USF INTO, and other avenues). In addition, through our local community engagement activities, we actively encourage future enrollment in our program by Hispanic and African-American students.

3. Discuss student "creative works" (publications per student, etc.) captured in Part II above.

Creative works primarily consist of student presentations at conferences and in front of community/government organizations as part of their course work or internships. Publications are encouraged but are rare for students in our discipline (see Additional Information below for examples). This is an area which the faculty needs to address to improve this metric.

4. Discuss placement of your recent graduates (e.g., types of employment, admittance to other degree programs).

We have a ~100% success rate amongst our graduates who are actively seeking employment. Placements range from public sector city and county planning agencies to private sector consulting firms. A sampling of some recent positions obtained by our MURP graduates include:

- **Todd Engala:** Pasco County Government – Planner II
- **Stephen Benson:** Florida Dept. of Trans. Dist. 7 (Tampa) – Transportation Planner, and also the youngest member ever to be appointed as a Commissioner on the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission
- **Aiah Yassin:** Florida Dept. of Trans. Dist. 6 (Miami) – Local Program Administrator
- **Alana Brasier:** Renaissance Planning Group – Urban Planner
- **Tomohiko Music:** Jacobs – Planner
- **Christopher Zuppa:** Jacobs – Planner
- **Josef Cigoi:** AirSage (Atlanta) – Planning Consultant
- **Kevin McCarthy:** Florida Housing Finance Corp.(Tallahassee) – Policy Administrator
- **Michael Case:** USF Research Foundation – Operations and Planning
- **Rebekah Brightbill-Dasari:** Central Community Redevelopment Agency (Bradenton) – CRA Manager
- **Isis Francis Brown:** Highlands County – Planner I
- **Singeh Saliki:** Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Planning Department – Urban Designer
- **Chelsey Welden:** City of St. Pete Beach – City Planner
- **Asha Greenidge:** Collier County Government – Planning Technician
- **Emmily Tiampati:** Albeck Gerken, Inc. – Transportation Planning Analyst
- **Danny Shopf:** Cambridge Systematics (Tallahassee) – Transportation Analyst

For several of the students above, the position named is their second or even third, indicating professional marketability and upward mobility.

5. Identify qualities/metrics of applicants who prove to be successful in your program (e.g., REU experience, experience specific to your discipline, GRE performance).

Applicants with a variety of backgrounds have been successful in our program. A record of undergraduate success (e.g. GPA) appears to be a better indicator of successful achievement in the program than standardized test scores (GRE). Students with good communication skills – written, oral, and graphic – have the strongest performances in the program. As a faculty, we have discussed helping students polish these skills through the development of in-house forums to highlight their research and practice experiences, as well as continuing to facilitate their involvement in regional and national professional conferences.

**Comment succinctly on the following (e.g., 200 words max).**

Based on the data in Part I, discuss current enrollment trends, graduation rates, time to graduation, and retention. Provide details on how the program is addressing each of these areas and will correct any deficiencies (i.e. low number of applicants, loss of students etc.)

The number of applicants continues to increase each year, and we currently have 20 active students in the MURP program (plus two deferments). One student graduated in Fall 2014 and three more will graduate in Spring/Summer 2015. We expect to admit 6-10 new students for the 2015/2016 academic year.

We recently admitted several students who chose not to attend due to a lack of graduate funding opportunities. We are working with public and private sector partners to develop more co-op and fellowship opportunities to fund students, similar to what we currently have with Tindale Oliver and CUTR. We have recently partnered with USF Campus Recreation to fund 1-2 students interested in natural resources, parks/recreation planning.

In Fall 2014, Mark Hafen began presenting information about the program in classes, to recruit applicants from the Geography and Environmental Science & Policy undergraduate programs. Additional presentations are planned for courses in other degree programs. We also plan, contingent on funding, to establish greater presence at regional and national professional meetings to increase applicants from outside USF.

Full-time MURP students are graduating in ~2 years. Part-time students are on track to finish in 3-4 years. Thus far, we have 100% retention and 100% employment success rates.

Identify three programs that are considered to be peers.

1. Boise State University, Community and Regional Planning Dept.
2. Portland State University, Toulon School of Urban Studies & Planning
3. Univ. of Central Florida, School of Public Administration

Describe how the Program aligns with the strategic goals of USF.

The strategic plan for the School of Public Affairs is aligned with USF's strategic goals. The MURP program, in particular, comprehensively addresses two of the University's strategic goals:

Goal 1: Academic Excellence, Student Access, and Student Success. We provide rigorous, high quality education to our students, while assuring their retention and post-graduate success through partnerships in the community, relevant internships, and funding of students' active participation in professional organizations.

Goal 2: Impactful Research, Economic Leadership and Community Engagement. Our faculty engage in practice-based research and scholarship to help develop cutting edge, best-practices in the discipline. Community engagement is a lynchpin of the MURP program, with students participating in community-based projects as part of their academic experience (course projects, internships).

What are three program goals to be accomplished in the next 5 years?

1. Achieve program accreditation with the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP).
2. Increase faculty grant applications and funding opportunities to promote student success.
3. Double the actively enrolled student population to ~40.

Anything else you'd like to share? Since the recent shuffling of faculty with Geosciences, we are now in a position to establish a period of program stability and steady growth. The addition of a new faculty member is going to help this tremendously. Mark Hafen will attend the ACSP Administrators' Conference, New Chairs' School and Diversity Retreat in March to facilitate the outside accreditation process, and to learn from peer and aspirational peer programs how we can grow and improve our own.

## **Additional Information**

### **PART I: Program Metrics**

#### **Number of graduate faculty:**

##### **2013/2014**

Professors = 2 (Kim Lersch, Ambe Njoh)

Associate Professors = 2 (Elizabeth Strom, Robin Ersing)

Assistant Professors = 1 (Evangeline Linkous)

##### **2014/2015**

Professors = 1 (Kim Lersch)

Associate Professors = 2 (Elizabeth Strom, Robin Ersing)

Assistant Professors = 1 (Evangeline Linkous)

Senior Instructors = 1 (Mark Hafen)

Ambe Njoh has moved to the School of Geosciences. Mark Hafen has joined the MURP faculty as Asst. Director for the School of Public Affairs. For 2015/2016 we have been given a new hire at the Asst. Professor level, and as this is being written, we are in the process of extending an offer to our top candidate.

### **Part II: Annual Student Success Metrics**

#### **Professional presentations by students:**

We have not kept official records on this, so we're not exactly sure of years on some of these. But we have compiled the following:

- Christopher Zuppa presented his thesis research at the Florida APA Sun Coast meeting in November 2014, and at the 2014 Florida APA annual meeting.
- Chelsey Welden and Mattrell Everett presented at (2013?) Florida APA (FAPA) conference.
- Stephen Benson presented at the FAPA conference (2012?)
- Kevin McCarthy presented at the Florida Planning and Zoning Association conference (2011?).
- Rebekah Brightbill presented at the 2010 Florida Academy of Science.
- Alana Brasier presented at the 2010 FAPA conference.

#### **Student publications/creative works:**

- Stephen Benson. 2012. STEPPING OFF THE CURB: A Look at Florida's Pedestrian Safety Problem. *Florida Planning*, Winter:8-9.
- Mara Latorre led a city tour of public art in downtown Tampa in Fall 2014.

#### **Student funding and scholarships:**

- Patrick Dougherty was awarded the Tindale Oliver Fellowship for 2014/2015.

- Monica Martin was awarded a teaching assistantship for 2014/2015.
- Tia Claridge was awarded a graduate assistantship for 2014/2015.
- Alexandra Carroll was awarded a research assistantship through CUTR's Livable Cities grant.
- This past year, Florida APA Sun Coast chapter awarded travel scholarships of \$800 for MURP students to attend the FAPA annual conference.