

Planning@Illinois Strategic Plan, 2025-30

Letter from Head

Urban planning is simultaneously a profession, an approach to problem-solving and a way of thinking. In a world increasingly focused on narrow specialization, our discipline stands out for emphasizing breadth, context and connection. Our approach to planning education, practice, and research centers this insight. We treat planning as an applied liberal arts education, a defiantly holistic alternative to problem-solving strategies that insist on separating the fundamentally interconnected pieces of our world.

This emphasis on breadth makes equity and inclusion more than ethical commitments. Crafting plans and policies that work on their own terms, no matter how narrow, means learning from all of a community's constituents. When practitioners or scholars take society's full range of members into account, they both avoid the blind spots that undo narrower approaches to problem-solving, and gain access to a much fuller range of resources—intellectual, social and material.

These same commitments make a planning degree uniquely flexible and thus valuable. Our students acquire both technically exacting training in the core specializations of city planning—land use, environment, transportation, community and economic development—and the skills to make sense of and act upon the unpredictable problems that rise to challenge people everywhere. Illinois graduates flourish as planners, whether that means working for a city, a consultancy, a think tank, a housing developer, or even as filmmakers.

As we look ahead, we are proud of a flexible curriculum that cultivates this unique breadth in our students. And we appreciate the unique endowments that make Planning at Illinois stand out. Over 100 years old, our department has never been larger. We enter the '25-'26 academic year with 200 students and record growth in our cohorts of first-year and sophomore students. Our growth builds on rising enrollments in the College of Fine and Applied Arts and the University of Illinois, which now enrolls more than 60,000 students. Our position is strong, and recognizing that adds urgency to the task of taking stock and setting the right course.

That means recognizing the unique challenges to running a world-class research department with uncommonly broad educational goals, and doing so from a college town far removed from the large urban laboratories that fuel so many of our peers. We have the oldest accredited undergraduate planning department in the country, still one of just 15 approved by the Planning Accreditation Board. We combine that with one of the oldest Master of Urban Planning programs and the Regional Planning Ph.D. program. Shared by a single North American peer, this structure and mission impose unique challenges. Running three related degree programs committed to breadth, and doing so with a single, mid-size faculty, requires uncommonly thorough planning. This strategic plan presents a clear outline of the vision. Like the students it is our pleasure to train, we proceed with a mix of technical precision and humility borne from the experience that people plan, while fate laughs. Our students are up to the job, and so are we.

The Program: Our mission and vision statements lay out a clear challenge:

Our Vision

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning will be a global leader in environmental, economic, and social sustainability through engaged teaching, innovative research, and the pursuit of equity.

Our Mission

Planning at Illinois seeks answers to today's biggest social challenges through creative, multidisciplinary, and community-driven solutions. We live our university's land grant mission while pursuing global impact and prepare practitioners and researchers to lead in the development of novel approaches to just, sustainable urban environments.

Our Role on a State Flagship, Land Grant Campus

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning plays a unique role in the College of Fine and Applied Arts. As the only social sciences department, we engage students in policy-relevant questions and a tradition of public service. Our role in fulfilling the university's land grant mission keys on planning's attentiveness to place. Whether working with dancers, architects and musicians within our college to meet the public through culture, or extending our classroom past the university, we find common ground in making better places and futures.

Increasingly, connection to the outside world means working through our large network of impassioned alumni. Working across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, and spanning boundaries of physical geography and culture, our graduates complement classroom education with invaluable connections to the living work of serving the public.

The department's growing enrollments and faculty build on the real vitality of the College and University. The Department occupies a privileged position in Temple Buell Hall. Still new by university standards, Temple Buell Hall houses planning with its sibling units of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, taking advantage of bright, open spaces to facilitate interaction among students and scholars. The result is a community that manages the rare trick of being simultaneously expansive and cohesive.

Despite this growth, we remain small in comparison to cognate departments at other universities, with 11 tenure-track and four specialized faculty members teaching more than 200 total students. Our faculty size is a primary consideration for how to deliver and sustain three high-quality programs amidst growth in the college and university.

The Institutional Context

The University of Illinois' core mission is no less daunting for its simplicity:

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is charged by our state to enhance the lives of citizens in Illinois, across the nation and around the world through our leadership in learning, discovery, engagement and economic development.

The University's vision is similarly bold:

We will be the pre-eminent public research university with a land-grant mission and global impact.

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning stands at the forefront of the scholarly units who can realize these ambitious goals. As an applied social science, urban planning inherently enhances lives and livelihoods central to its scholarly mission. Given this fit, the department is already central to many of the University's other goals. As planning scholarship is rooted in collaboration with communities, engagement was central to the department's identity long before the University codified it as a goal. Urban and Regional Planning is likewise a premier academic department, both on campus and nationally, for the university's goal of ensuring economic development. Local economies grow, mature and diversify when people and places fulfill their full potential. Accordingly, everything the Department does supports the goal of building the economies the University envisions.

The University Environment

We plan for the future amidst unprecedented growth at the University of Illinois. The 2024 first-year class includes a record 9,000 students, a 30% increase in a decade. The University's total projected enrollment for Fall 2025 will exceed 60,000 students for the first time. Enrollment growth in DURP's home college, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, has exceeded the campus-wide rate, with the College's first-year enrollment of 427 in Fall 2024 marking a 41% increase from a decade prior.

These enrollment gains build on strong foundations. The University of Illinois's flagship campus has benefited from declining funding and enrollments at other public Illinois universities, with the value proposition of a degree from one of America's "[public ivies](#)" distancing it from previous competitors. The Illinois Commitment, a statewide program covering tuition and campus costs for families earning below the median household income, has expanded access to higher education. The Commitment has quickly become a university cornerstone, paying basic costs for one in four undergraduate students. Underscoring the point, one-fifth of the record first-year class of 2024 consisted of first-generation college students.

While the Illinois Commitment has brought the full population of Illinois to the university, Discovery Partners Institute brings the university's technological innovations to the state and the economic engine of Chicagoland. Discovery Partners provides infrastructure and resources to bridge the distance from Champaign-Urbana.

Both this fast-paced growth and the sturdy foundations on which it builds should at a minimum mitigate the campus's exposure to the so-called enrollment "cliff," or the [temporary reduction](#) in college-age population through 2031.

The Department Environment

Properly scoping the Department's aspirations requires careful appraisal of its unique position and structure. Atypically for a planning department, we sit in the College of Fine and Applied Arts, a resourceful and inventive collection of public-facing academic departments who do more with less because they have few resources at their disposal. This means that key departmental decisions and strategic approaches require extra scrutiny. Unlike peer planning departments who operate as the star programs at urban public universities, or as key social sciences in units in design or liberal arts

colleges, Planning at Illinois must make decisions with the knowledge that its resources support large (and important) programs in music, art, dance and theater.

That clarity begins with differentiating our means and goals from those of other planning departments. We are just one of two departments nationally with (1) an accredited BA program, (2) an accredited MUP program and (3) a PhD program and (4) more than 100 students. Like Ohio State's City and Regional Planning department, we have three programs and 200 total students. However, Ohio State sits within a comparatively well-resourced Engineering College and has more faculty members at its disposal. Our plans thus start with the recognition that Planning at Illinois, like the College in which it sits, does more with less.

The high number of students and programs relative to faculty obligates us to manage our resources with extra care. It also requires clarity in strategic priorities, as the department in its current form cannot meet the goal of delivering three top-quality programs without carefully structuring both its individual programs and the way they work together. One resource for this difficult work is the realization that social justice has evolved from a standalone focus with its own curricular pathways to a core component of the way we address the conventional planning focus of land use, transportation, environment and community-economic development.

Strategic Scan: Challenges, Strengths and Action Plan

The department's undergraduate major is its greatest current strength. One century old, accredited and a magnet for high-achieving students, the Bachelor of Urban Studies and Planning degree provides a daily heartbeat of learning, community and research. Especially important in a college with limited grant activity, the BAUSP earns the department a reliable share of the college's public funding through majors and instructional units. Equally important, the program's size and durability give us a large cohort of professionally advanced and diverse alumni. They are a major resource for current and future students, instructors and our public mission.

Correspondingly, threats to the BAUSP's preeminent status constitute the department's main challenge. The principal challenge comes from other programs catching up to our decades-long head start on undergraduate education. Where we have adjusted our curriculum incrementally, new entrants to undergraduate planning education have the advantage of devising an education without the constraints of existing infrastructure and policies. As a rule, they have simpler, fresh curriculums, with undergraduate concentrations that closely mirror the familiar concentrations of Master of Urban Planning programs. We will lose good students if we fail to adapt.

Another threat comes from the global decline in demand for planning graduate education. Good planning programs, particularly those at research-intensive institutions, need a critical mass of advanced students, whose work across the intersections of different planning specializations drives the enterprise forward. The challenge of drawing graduate students amidst this pressure is magnified by our location in Central Illinois, away from the large urban centers that capture prospective students' imaginations. Graduate study is also resource-intensive, requiring substantial financial and intellectual support to adequately prepare future leaders in practice and research. In light of the size of our faculty, and limited financial resources, care and innovation will be required not just to move forward, but to maintain the department's current stature.

The final threat is internal. If we neglect to act decisively to improve the curriculum and ensure that a relatively small faculty can deliver excellent education at three levels, the department will lose the students, faculty, and energy that make it meaningful to its current and past constituents.

Overarching Goals

Goal	Recent Actions	Future Actions
Goal #1: Curricular Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the workshop capstone pathway • Review 400-level course offerings • Review enrollment within BAUSP concentrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance resources for the workshop capstone pathway • Decrease reliance on 400-level courses • Restructure BAUSP Program concentrations
Goal #2: Research Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructure program leadership around administrator positions • Discontinue the MSSUM program • Increase funding packages offered to incoming Ph.D. students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incentivize faculty pursuit of high-impact funded research
Goal #3: Enhance Student Professional Development Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a full-time professional academic advisor for the BAUSP and MUP Programs • Update UP 591 and UP 592 to focus on core job market attributes and professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further engage program alumni and local practitioners in professional development, outreach, and recruitment • Increase available funding for student professional development • Increase financial support for integrating learning the profession

		by doing in course offerings
Goal #4: Operational Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing core and elective course offerings for redundancy and inefficiency • Publish 2-year course availability for faculty and student planning purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise course offerings to address redundancies and to reflect current instructional capacity • Establish greater consistency in course offerings
Goal #5: Maximize the Illinois Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Development to seek alumni support for students in need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to grow department resources to address unmet financial needs amongst undergraduate and graduate students • Strengthen coordination with College and University staff on student financial aid and support

Goal #1: Curricular Excellence

Over the past two years, we have instituted several changes to ensure high curricular quality. Improvements to the MUP program have focused on increasing exposure to planning practice. Beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year, the department offers four annual Master's-level workshop courses and gives students the option of fulfilling the capstone exit requirement with two workshops in place of an individual master's project or thesis. As an alternative to the project or thesis options, the workshop option defines a pathway for students to acquire professionally vital planning and project management skills. Expanding the menu of workshops also expands applied elective course options for students who decide to pursue a capstone or thesis.

A second curricular improvement concerns the balance and distribution of electives shared across the BAUSP and MUP programs, primarily via 400-level classes which enroll both undergraduate and graduate students. In response to student demand, we have separated a number of open-enrollment 400-level courses into courses dedicated to either undergraduate (100- through 300-level) or graduate (500-level) enrollment. This allows greater differentiation in teaching and a curriculum more carefully tailored to the educational needs of undergraduate and graduate students.

These changes have registered an immediate impact, and there is more to come. The steady growth of our undergraduate program in particular provides valuable opportunities to innovate with new

courses and curricular goals. We plan to streamline our current electives, launch new courses matched to changes in the field, and develop multiple new large-scale general education courses which will expose undergraduates across the campus to the field of planning.

Recent conversations with our alumni in particular point to a final, valuable curricular change: restructuring BAUSP program concentrations to reflect common specialization areas for planning practitioners: Housing Community and Economic Development, Design and Development, Transportation, and Environmental Planning. Grouping our elective courses this way will provide clearer educational and career development pathways for students; consolidate their skills in a way that's legible to employers; help the department organize and update the curriculum; and make the field legible to students with limited exposure to planning.

Goal #2: Research Excellence

The appeal of our degree programs rests on continued faculty research excellence. Research drives teaching, provides professionalization opportunities for students, develops the field of planning, ensures the university's relevance to the public, and confers prestige and stature that make the Illinois brand valuable. Sustaining excellent research requires constant attention and adaptation to changes in the university and world outside.

The department's top goal in the past two years has been to free more time for faculty to pursue their research. A related goal is for faculty to pursue more high-impact research opportunities that advance knowledge by taking chances. Having the time needed to develop bigger goals and escort bold ideas to publication and dissemination is integral to this goal.

Since the 2023-2024 year, we have implemented a number of measures to support faculty research capacity. We restructured the department's program by creating the Associate Head for Academic Programs and Director of Graduate Studies positions. These two administrative positions move many of the department's policy and curriculum management responsibilities to faculty members compensated for this work, and eliminate the need for faculty to staff committees tasked with managing these responsibilities. As a result, curriculum planning and program administration eat into less faculty research time, and are better coordinated between programs. Another benefit to this change comes from senior faculty gaining more time in which to mentor the department's pre-tenure faculty on publishing, fundraising, and public engagement. We have also moved to afford tenure stream Assistant Professors a full semester of pre-tenure research leave as part of a series of flexible course releases, giving them needed time to assemble records of impact leading to successful promotion and tenure at the end of their probationary period.

Several additional program reforms have added to research time. Discontinuation of the MS of Sustainable Urban Management Program (MSSUM) in the 2024-2025 academic year eliminated significant program administration, advising and teaching activities that were largely uncompensated at the department and faculty levels. The addition of the workshop capstone pathway to the MUP program has also cut down on very labor-intensive faculty advising time for student capstone projects. In the coming years, we plan to complement these improvements with additional resources that reward faculty for pursuing large-scale external research grants.

A final piece to the research puzzle comes from building a PhD program integrated with faculty's research work. After looking at the base funding packages provided by peer Ph.D. programs, in the 2024-2025 academic year, we increased our base offer of funding support for incoming Ph.D.

students from 3 to 4 years. We will use the growth in undergraduate enrollments to offer more teaching assistantships to PhD students, and will further integrate support and guidance for teaching into the Ph.D. curriculum and evaluation system. Incentives for faculty to pursue larger and more ambitious external funding opportunities will also increase opportunities for multi-year RA positions for doctoral students, ensuring the quality students needed to maintain and enhance the department's research profile.

Goal #3: Enhance Student Professional Development Activities

Planning degrees are about much more than classroom experience. In the last two years, we have taken several steps to ensure students' access to high-quality professionalization opportunities. Adding a full-time student advisor provides a reliable contact point for students, and assigns the work of building bridges with alumni and practitioners to a single person. Adding MUP-level workshops likewise increases students' contact hours with professionals. Additionally, we have revamped graduate-level professionalization courses for MUP and PhD students. Changes to the MUP professionalization course (UP 591) focus on building professional identities and narratives out of the curriculum and specializations. Changes to the Ph.D. course (UP 592) focus on the basics of running projects and research, building a scholarly identity, and navigating key doctoral student milestones.

These changes have made a notable difference with our students. Much more will follow. Beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year, DURP alumni have asked to take on an expanded role in the department, via guest lectures, visits, informal mentoring and professionalization activities for students. Our recent efforts to fundraise with alumni have also borne fruit, as students can now benefit from an expanded pool of resources supporting conference attendance, job searches and other professionalization activities. In the 2026-2027 academic year, we will incorporate this new direction in the MUP core curriculum, inaugurating a required course on community engagement methods.

Goal #4: Operational Efficiency

With a small tenure-track faculty and growing student body, realizing the department's basic goals inevitably means doing more with less. Accordingly, we must be strategic and skilled in securing new resources, limiting the department's commitments and maintaining the day-to-day operational consistency vital to faculty and student well-being. A well-run department that avoids overwhelming its members is also in an ideal place to experiment intentionally with new ideas for teaching and student experience.

A first component of this is to update our curriculum to minimize overlapping electives and offer students more consistency in core and elective course offerings. Part of this adjustment means monitoring course sizes: While students learn well in both small-and-intimate lecture/seminar courses and in large courses in which the department takes advantage of its excellent stock of teaching assistants to challenge students with weekly assignments, 30-35 student courses run in a figurative no-man's land, too big to engage students through close discussion, but too small for the benefit of intensive assignments. Reducing the total number of electives offered and consolidating essential learning in regularly offered core courses are vital strategies. Enhancing the number of large-format general education courses offered to undergraduate students also brings in the resources needed to staff our courses of around 30 students with teaching assistants. We have in place multiple plans to debut new, high-appeal general educations that should help with this goal.

Goal #5: Maximize the Illinois Commitment

Higher education in Illinois has been transformed by the Illinois Commitment, a statewide program waiving tuition for students from households earning less than the state's median income. The department and the college have seen an influx of Illinois Commitment students since the Covid-19 pandemic. Fully benefiting from the commitment will require the additional steps of systematically targeting first-generation college students with the department's offerings, and developing the advising and material resources necessary to ensure success for commitment students once they reach campus.

Delivering on the campus's commitment to these students entails two basic steps. First, we must raise awareness and familiarity with planning among Illinois high-school students, who often arrive in Champaign unaware of the program and its strengths. Second, we must recognize that the campus can waive tuition, but not students' other developmental and financial needs. On campus, commitment students require systematic engagement from the department and additional financial resources to cover rent, food, family obligations and other basic needs that do not fulfill themselves when households are exempted from tuition. Adding a full-time student advisor helps with the first need. The unaddressed financial burden issue requires two approaches: 1) additional fundraising on the part of the Department and College; and 2) strengthening relationships with the web of College of Fine and Applied Arts professionals who administer financial aid and basic student assistance.

Strategic plans for the BAUSP and MUP programs

Practical, day-to-day decisions about the Department's operations and procedures are undertaken by the Undergraduate Program Committee and Graduate Programs Committees. Accordingly, we translate the overall strategic plan for the department into program-specific plans that can be practically carried out by these bodies.

BAUSP Strategic Plan

Goal	Sub-goal	Metric	Benchmark	Action Item	Responsibility
1: Maximize graduates' preparation for professional employment					
1.1	Organize program into professionally aligned concentrations and strive for balanced enrollment	Number of concentrations Number of students enrolled in each concentration	Four concentrations At least 15 majors enrolled in each concentration	Begin administrative process of revising concentrations in 2026-2027 academic year Assess enrollment at end of 2029-2030 academic year and each year thereafter	Associate Director of Academic Programs Department Head Academic Advisor
1.2	Organize and balance elective courses into professionally aligned concentrations	Number of electives in each concentration Student enrollment in elective courses	At least 5 electives per concentration At least 20 students in each elective	Monitor enrollment in elective courses annually and adjust courses as needed	Associate Director of Academic Programs Department Head Academic Advisor
2: Maintain and enhance diversity					
2.1	Ensure core courses cover race, equity and social justice	Readings and lecture topics in syllabi	Every course addresses normative values and planning contributions of diversity,	Faculty workshop and peer review of syllabi in 2026-2027 year Review Core Syllabi every 2 years	All Faculty BAUSP Program Committee

			equity, inclusion		
2.2	Monitor share of underrepresented students in department	URM student shares	Fall 2024: 28.4%	Maintain or increase percent or URM Evaluate numbers annually Reassess communications as necessary	Associate Director of Academic Programs Department Head Academic Advisor BAUSP Program Committee
2.3	Enhance student financial support	Award funds available per student	2025-26 funding level	Fundraise with alumni to secure additional funding Monitor funds annually	Department Head
2.4	Improve College and University resource uptake by students	Number of scholarships listed by the department	Current year: Zero	Compile department list of available resources Add question to exit survey on scholarships held	Department Head
2.5	Maintain/enhance diversity in special events	Number of speakers from URM background or	2024-2025 guest lectures: 7	Recruit at least three annual speakers from URM communities or	Department Head Associate Director of Academic Programs

		speaking on URM issues		speaking to their interests Consult prior year's results at beginning of new academic year	Professional Development/Lectures and Events Committee
2.6	Extend student exposure to professionalization beyond the public sector	Number of speakers from nonprofit sector	2024-2025 guest speaker from nonprofit sector: 1	1-2 guest speakers per year	Department Head Professional Development/Lectures and Events Committee
3. Ensure curricular excellence					
3.1	Deliver a greater share of BAUSP credits through BAUSP-dedicated courses	Number of 100-, 200- and 300-level courses	2024-2025 year counts: 21 courses	Add/reactivate four additional courses over AY 2026-27 to 2029-30 period Assess at end of 2029-2030 year	Associate Director of Academic Programs Academic Advisor BAUSP Program Committee
3.2	Monitor core curriculum along with concentrations to ensure skills, knowledge, and values reflect the profession along with critical emerging issues.	Topics, readings, and assignments in syllabi	All core and concentration courses collectively address the skills and knowledge identified by the profession	Create transparent pathway of skills development via coursework for students Review core and gateway course syllabi every two years	Associate Director for Academic Programs BAUSP Program Committee

				Develop schedule of syllabi review for elective courses	
4. Deepen experiential learning					
4.1	Increase student attendance at IL-APA, APA national, and other practice-oriented conferences	Percent of students attending at least one practice-oriented conference over three-year period	2025-26 number of BAUSP students attending at least one conference	<p>Apply endowment funds to registration subventions and discounted transit; promote event with students via course credit and RSO announcements</p> <p>Monitor counts and reassess strategies/fundraise as necessary</p>	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Academic Advisor</p>
4.2	Increase student attendance at departmental guest lectures	Average percent of BAUSP student body in attendance at given lecture	2025-2026 attendance at departmental guest lectures	<p>Beginning 2026-2027 year: increase attendance through promotion, extra credit, integration with course assignments</p> <p>Monitor attendance, compile end-of-year numbers,</p>	<p>Professional Development/Lectures and Events Committee</p> <p>All faculty</p>

				monitor for progress	
4.3	Increase alumni attendance at end-of-year awards/capstone ceremony	Number of alumni attending	2025-2026 count of attending alumni	<p>Increase with social media publicity, direct outreach, offers for alumni to bestow awards</p> <p>Build count from communications with Department Head and program directors</p> <p>Monitor for progress</p>	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Associate Director of Academic Programs</p> <p>Director of Graduate Studies</p>
4.4	Maintain multiple study abroad opportunities	Number of planning faculty-affiliated study abroad courses per year	2024-2025: 2	<p>Maintain at least two faculty-led courses via negotiation with faculty and college</p> <p>Explore additional semester-long opportunities with the college of FAA</p>	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Associate Director of Academic Programs</p> <p>Key faculty</p>
5. Deepen Student Engagement					
5.1	Regularly hold Departmental Town Halls to solicit	Number of Events	2024-2025: One town hall	Maintain at least one town hall per semester	Department Head

	BAUSP student feedback on the program and department	Number of students attending annually	with BAUSP students	50% of BAUSP students engage 1x per year	Associate Director of Academic Programs Director of Graduate Studies
5.2	Regularly solicit feedback from four-plus-one students on the program and department	Number of Events Number of students attending annually	One focus group with Four-plus-one students	Maintain at least one focus group per year	Department Head Associate Director of Academic Programs Director of Graduate Studies
6. Engage Alumni					
6.1	Maintain engagement with Alumni Strategy Council	Number of Meetings	2024-2025: 6	Continue regular meetings with the Alumni Strategy Council (8 per academic year)	Department Head
6.2	Survey Alumni for satisfaction with the program and career status	Survey	2019 Survey	Implement an alumni survey every two years, beginning Summer 2025	Department Head Associate Director of Academic Programs Director of Graduate Studies

MUP Strategic Plan

Goal	Sub-goal	Metric	Benchmark	Action Item	Responsibility
1: Strengthen the MUP Core Curriculum					
1.1	Reduce duplication of exposure to planning theory within the core curriculum	# of courses focused on urban and planning theory in the core curriculum	Current number: 2 Target number: 1	Combine UP 501 and 504 into one single course (UP 501: Planning History and Theory)	Director of Graduate Studies Graduate Programs Committee
1.2	Increase exposure to qualitative methods and methods for community engagement within the core curriculum	# public engagement courses in the core curriculum	Current number: 0 Target number: 1	Add a core course focused on public engagement (UP 506: Community Engagement and Analysis)	Director of Graduate Studies Graduate Programs Committee
2: Ensure curricular excellence					
2.1	Publish a two-year plan for course availability on an annual basis	# Annual publication of a two-year plan for course availability	Current number: 2 times within the last 5 years (AY 23 and AY 24) Target number: 1x/year	Publish a 2-year plan for course availability at the beginning of each academic year	Curriculum Committee
2.2	Increase predictability of elective offerings	# of electives annually over two-year period	14 (2023/24-24/25)	Increase by 2	Curriculum Committee

		# electives offered at least every 2 years			
2.3	Increase regularly offered 500-level electives shared between the BAUSP and MUP programs	Number of MUP-only electives offered annually	5 (2024-2025)	Increase to 7	Curriculum Committee
2.4	Ensure diversity of voices across the curriculum	# course faculty peer reviews completed per year	Review one of each annually	Review core and gateway courses for diverse voices and content	Advisory Committee / Curriculum Committee
2.5	Increase opportunities to learn planning through practice	# annual workshop courses	Maintain at 4x/year		Curriculum Committee
2.6	Prepare MUP students for diverse professional trajectories	Increased exposure to a diverse range of professional practice skills	Exposure to practice skills and professionals in at least 4 of 8 seminar sessions	Add research and project management components to UP 591: Capstone Seminar	Director of Graduate Studies
2.7	Develop sample career profiles to guide students in market	# sample profiles identifying skills, courses, and model career paths	Begin developing profiles in 2026-2027 academic year	Target eight sample career profiles over four-year period	Director of Graduate Studies / MUP Advisor
3. Maintain and Enhance Diversity					
3.1	Expand curricular options to address a diverse range of global legal and institutional	Provide an alternative to UP 511 to the core curriculum that focuses on global	Taught 1/x year	Update UP 494-KS to full-credit core course available to all students	Curriculum Committee

	planning frameworks	institutional and legal contexts			
3.2	Orient incoming students to the U.S. legal and institutional context for planning	Orientation material on U.S. legal and institutional structure	Orientation session offered annually as part of graduate student orientation	Maintain and expand	Director of Graduate Studies / MUP Advisor
3.3	Maintain diverse faculty and staff	<p>Monitor departmental diversity against PAB data, college and university benchmarks</p> <p>Use diversity hiring programs when they are applicable and available</p>	Annual review of department diversity against PAB, college, and university benchmarks	<p>Monitor diversity of the faculty on an annual basis using institutional metrics</p> <p>Monitor diversity within faculty and staff hiring pools as part of the search process</p>	Department Head
3.4	Maintain and enhance student diversity	<p>Increase outreach to minority serving institutions</p> <p>Monitor diversity amongst incoming graduate cohorts</p>	<p>Annual outreach to at least 1 program-level contact at every minority-serving institution in the U.S..</p> <p>Domestic student gender, race, and ethnicity</p>	<p>Annual graduate admissions outreach to minority serving institutions</p> <p>Annual review of diversity amongst incoming graduate cohorts</p>	Director of Graduate Studies / Admissions and Records Officer

		Monitor the representation of students entering the MUP program from outside of the U.S.	characteristics should roughly mirror those of Illinois residents.		
3.5	Increase resources for graduate students	<p># of scholarships available</p> <p>% of graduate students receiving scholarship, assistantship, or fellowship support</p> <p>List all scholarships and assistantship opportunities on departmental website</p>	<p>Currently varies by year and available funding. Increase from 4 to 6</p> <p>Currently 44%. Increase to 50%</p> <p>Currently: No list. Increase to: One List</p>	<p>Work with development office to increase giving for student scholarships.</p> <p>Update website with a list of scholarship and support resources.</p>	Department Head
4. Deepen experiential learning					
4.1	Increase student contact with practitioners and alumni	% of MUP students attending at least one APA-IL event per year	50 percent of students attending at least	Work with development to build an alumni ask for professional	MUP Advisor

		<p>% MUP students attending at least one academic conference per year</p> <p># of resources to support professional development</p>	<p>one APA-IL event per year</p> <p>10% of MUP and 60% of Ph.D. students attending at least one academic conference per year</p> <p>\$100 per MUP student available annually for professional development activities</p>	<p>development resources</p> <p>Integrate APA-IL events into departmental calendar</p> <p>Regular professional development communication to students</p>	
4.2	Enhance financial resources for workshop courses	<p>\$\$ for materials and travel</p>	<p>Average of \$2,000 available for materials per workshop course</p> <p>Average of \$100 available per student for workshop travel</p>	<p>Work with FAA Advancement to build an alumni ask for workshop resources</p>	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Director of Graduate Studies</p> <p>FAA Advancement</p>
4.3	Maintain multiple study abroad opportunities	<p>Number of planning faculty-affiliated study abroad courses per year</p>	<p>2024-2025: 2</p>	<p>Maintain at least two faculty-led courses via negotiation with faculty and college</p>	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Associate Director for Academic Programs</p>

				Explore additional semester-long opportunities with the college of FAA	Key faculty
4.4	Increase alumni attendance at end-of-year awards/capstone ceremony	Number of alumni attending	2025-2026 count of attending alumni	<p>Increase with social media publicity, direct outreach, offers for alumni to bestow awards</p> <p>Build count from communications with Department Head and program directors</p> <p>Monitor for progress</p>	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Associate Director for Academic Programs</p> <p>Director of Graduate Studies</p>
5. Deepen student engagement					
	Regularly hold MUP program town halls to solicit MUP student feedback on the program and department	<p># of town hall events per year</p> <p># of students attending annually</p>	<p>2 per year (1 per semester)</p> <p>50% of MUP students engage at least 1x / year</p>	Maintain regular schedule of town halls once per semester	<p>Department Head</p> <p>Director of Graduate Studies</p> <p>Associate Head for Academic Programs</p>
6. Engage Alumni					
6.1	Maintain engagement with Alumni Strategy Council	Number of Meetings	2024-2025: 6	Continue regular meetings with the Alumni Strategy Council (8 per academic year)	Department Head

6.2	Survey Alumni for satisfaction with the program and career status	Survey	2019 Survey	Implement an alumni survey every two years, beginning Summer 2025	Department Head Associate Director of Academic Programs Director of Graduate Studies
-----	---	--------	-------------	---	--

Appendix: Stakeholder Engagement

We used a multi-level engagement process to build a strategic plan meeting the needs of the Department's diverse stakeholders

Faculty:

Faculty were engaged at multiple levels. First, key components of the strategic plan were discussed at the 2023 and 2024 annual department retreat. Second, key decisions in the strategic plan were discussed in faculty meetings throughout the 2024-2025 year. Third, faculty were engaged in the plan through their positions on the department advisory committee, the BAUSP program committee, and the Graduate Programs Committee. Fourth, the department held a special, two-hour meeting in April 2020, at which the entire faculty was invited to comment on a draft strategic plan. That meeting yielded multiple changes to the plan.

Students:

Students were also engaged at multiple levels. First, the department held semi-annual student town hall meetings (combined for undergraduate, graduate and PhD students) at which input was collected throughout the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years. Second, students representatives on the BAUSP and Graduate Program Committees reviewed and responded to key proposals and decisions.

Alumni:

Alumni were engaged principally through regular meetings of the Alumni Strategic Council. Alumni were further engaged through one-on-one meetings at Illinois-APA, the National APA Conference, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning and Urban Affairs Conferences, and through long-form discussions attached to alumni visits to campus as guest lecturers and donors.