



# MASTER OF URBAN PLANNING PROGRAM STUDENT HANDBOOK



ACADEMIC  
YEAR  
2023-2024



TEXAS A&M  
UNIVERSITY

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# PLANNING FOR THE TEXAS TRIANGLE AND BEYOND

Texas is brimming with planning opportunities and challenges: unprecedented growth, generational investment, congestion, poverty, sprawl and natural hazards are just a few. So when Texas plans, it plans big. For example, planning for the Texas Triangle — the area between Dallas, Houston and San Antonio, which surrounds Texas A&M — contains more than three-fourths of the state's population (nearly 21 million people!) and covers over 57,000 square miles and 66 counties.

Texas offers a microcosm of the changes the larger earth is undergoing. We have three of the ten most populous cities in the United States and two of only twelve American metropolitan areas in the world top 100. We are diverse in many ways: more than half of our population is a racial or ethnic minority and over 5 million are foreign-born. Our historic diversity is unparalleled — we have huge cosmopolitan cities surrounded by rural areas steeped in tradition, and we have almost every imaginable topographical feature, including a coastline, mountains, deserts and rivers along with the hazards, threats, and opportunities that come with them.

Our program boasts unique diversity of its own. We are housed in a design school that offers graduate education in everything from architecture to construction science. Add in our low cost of living, warm climate, and very reasonable tuition rates, and it's easy to see why we say with pride, "This is not your typical planning school!"



## OUR HISTORY

The MUP program at Texas A&M is the oldest planning program in the state of Texas. It was authorized in 1965 and accredited in 1969, and is now one of the four accredited Masters program in the state. In 1991, the Department of Urban and Regional Planning was merged with the Department of Landscape Architecture to form the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (LAUP).

Today there are hundreds of MUP alumni working in professional planning positions in Texas, the United States and around the world.



## AGGIE VALUES

*"The purpose of Texas A&M University is to develop leaders of character dedicated to serving the greater good."* Texas A&M University is steeped in history and tradition. As a member of the MUP program, you join a network of students, faculty, staff and alumni who exemplify the university's six core values:

- Excellence - set the bar high, then higher
- Integrity - character is destiny
- Leadership - follow me
- Loyalty - acceptance forever
- Respect - we are the Aggies, the Aggies are we
- Selfless service - how can I be of service?



# PROGRAM CONTACTS

The MUP program is administered by a team of faculty and staff and supported by programs and offices across the School of Architecture and the Texas A&M Campus.

- The **program coordinator** manages the program and can answer planning-specific questions like which courses to choose, and how to find a professional project or an industry internship. They are also a great resource for discussing career goals, researching and applying for fellowships, obtaining mentoring, and gaining advice about planning-specific related issues.
- The **graduate advisor** can answer questions about your enrollment, fill out our internship forms, degree plan, curriculum requirements, graduation requirements, degree completion, fees, and possible funding or scholarship venues.

## HAVE A QUESTION?



**IVIS GARCIA**  
**Program Coordinator**  
ivis.garcia@tamu.edu



**THENA MORRIS**  
**Graduate Advisor**  
tmorris@arch.tamu.edu



# FACULTY

The Master of Urban Planning program is delivered by some of the leading research and teaching faculty in the United States





# IVIS GARCIA

Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Public participation; asset-based community development; affordable housing and just disaster recovery

**Courses:** Communications in Planning (PLAN 661)



# CECILIA GIUSTI

Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

**Research Areas:** Urban and regional economic development & planning; planning in developing countries, especially in Latin America

**Courses:** Development Planning in Third World Countries (PLAN 623); Economic Development (PLAN 627)



# TARA GODDARD

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

**Research Areas:** Vulnerable road user safety; partial/condition autonomous technology and driver behavior; driver cognition and attention; transportation planning; design for sustainable transportation

**Courses:** Transportation in City Planning (PLAN 612); Design for Active Living (PLAN 632); Design for Sustainable Transportation (PLAN 673)



# JUSTIN GOLBABAI

Associate Professor of the Practice

**Professional Areas:** New Urbanism; urban and community-oriented design; plan implementation

**Courses:** Plan Implementation (PLAN 658)





## WEI LI

Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning and the Founding Director of the ENDEAVR Institute

**Research Areas:** Planning for smart and connected communities; societal impacts of autonomous vehicles; sustainable and active transportation; environmental economics

**Courses:** Transportation in City Planning (PLAN 612); Transportation System Analysis (PLAN 674); Transportation Investment Decisions (PLAN 676)



## MICHELLE ANNETTE MEYER

Director, Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center; Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Hazard mitigation; disaster recovery; disaster management; equity and stratification; environmental migration; social capital

**Courses:** Foundations of Hazard and Disaster Theory (PLAN 689); Interdisciplinary Hazard Science (PLAN 689)



# WALTER GILLIS PEACOCK

Sandy and Bryan Mitchell Master Builder Endowed  
Chair in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Sustainability and resiliency; natural hazard mitigation; climate change adaptation; long-term disaster recovery; quantitative methods

**Courses:** Disaster Recovery and Hazard Mitigation (PLAN 647)



# TOM SANCHEZ

Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

**Research Areas:** Urban planning; transportation; technology; social equity; scholarly impact

**Courses:** TBD Spring 2024





# SHANNON VAN ZANDT

Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Housing and community development; planning for disasters and climate change

**Courses:** Planning Housing and Community Development (PLAN 656)



# CHRISTINE WEN

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Economic development; tax abatements; data transparency; planning and schools;

**Courses:** Planning Theory and History (PLAN 664)



# DOUGLAS WUNNEBURGER

Instructional Professor in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Geographic Information Systems; social impacts of spatial planning policies; demographics

**Courses:** Geographic Information Systems in LAUP (PLAN 625); Advanced GIS in LAUP (PLAN 626)



# XINYUE YE

Harold L. Adams Endowed Professor of Urban Planning; Director of Center for Geospatial Sciences, Applications, and Technology

**Professional Areas:** Geospatial Artificial Intelligence; Geographic Information Science; Spatial Econometrics; Urban Data Science; Smart Cities

**Courses:** Professional Study (PLAN 693)





# SIYU YU

Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

**Research Areas:** Community resilience; plan integration for resilience; land-use and environmental planning; social vulnerability; hazard mitigation; climate change adaptation

**Courses:** Planning methods and techniques (PLAN 613); Plan Making (PLAN 665); Planning for Climate Change (PLAN 689)





## **ALEXANDER ABUABARA**

Postdoctoral Research Associate

Courses: Planning Methods I  
(PLAN 604)



## **WILLIAM EISELE**

Texas Transportation Institute

Courses: Applied Transportation  
Studio (PLAN 678)



## **WILLIAM FULTON**

Professor of the Practice

Teaches: Politics in Planning  
(PLAN 689)



## **JAIME HICKS-MASTERSON**

Director, Texas Target Communities



## **MATT MALECHA**

Instructional Assistant Professor

Courses: Problems of  
Environmental Planning  
Administration (PLAN 641)



## **NATHANAEL ROSENHEIM**

Research Associate Professor

Courses: Planning Methods I (PLAN 604)





## **JORDAN CARLEE SMITH**

Research Assistant Professor

Courses: Hazard Mitigation and Disaster  
Recovery (PLAN 647)



## **JEEWASMI THAPA**

Senior Program Coordinator,  
Texas Target Communities



## **KATHERINE TURNBULL**

Texas Transportation Institute

Courses: Urban Public  
Transportation Planning (PLAN 670)

# PROGRAM MILESTONES

The MUP program can be completed within two years if the proposed curriculum is followed.





# PROGRAM MILESTONES: FIRST YEAR

Timeline	Task
Before 1st semester registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet or correspond with the graduate advisor to plan your course of study for the first semester</li> </ul>
Beginning of 2nd semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to the faculty who teach, research, and practice in your area of interest. They can provide ideas for potential projects, connect you with practitioners doing exciting work, or involve you in one of their projects. Check out</li> <li>• Start searching for summer internship opportunities.</li> </ul>
End of 2nd semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare an abstract on your proposed professional paper or thesis abstract. The program coordinator will send guidelines on the abstract submission requirements.</li> <li>• Meet or correspond with your assigned professional paper or thesis chair to discuss next steps (committee formation, timeline, etc.)</li> <li>• Submit a degree plan to the Graduate and Professional School. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ <b>If you are an international student</b>, you must file your degree plan before your summer internship.</li> <li>◦ <b>If you are a domestic student</b>, you may file your degree plan in your 2nd semester or early in your 3rd semester.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Click [here](#) to check out a list of potential topics identified by faculty and others!

# PROGRAM MILESTONES: SECOND YEAR

Timeline	Task
1st semester	Submit internship report to the program coordinator (see internship section for report requirements)
Beginning of 2nd semester	Submit your degree plan through DPSS, following the Graduate and Professional School's deadlines and process
Monday following Spring Break	Submit a complete draft of your professional paper to your committee chair. See the professional paper section for more information.
Early March	Submit "Request for Announcement of Final Examination" to schedule final examination (i.e. professional paper presentation)
April	Present your professional paper to your committee
May	Submit your exit survey

**Please note:** these deadlines may vary if the student is completing a thesis instead of a professional paper. If you are writing a thesis, make sure to check with GPS, your graduate advisor, and your committee chair about the specific deadlines and requirements.



# THE MUP CURRICULUM

The MUP curriculum will prepare you for a rewarding career in professional planning, research, and planning-related fields

# THE MUP CURRICULUM AT-A-GLANCE

The Master of Urban Planning curriculum is a 2-year graduate program accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). The hallmarks of the MUP curriculum are:

**Core Learning:** Every student in the MUP program gains a solid foundation in the theory and practice of urban and regional planning. Our core curriculum prepares students for diverse planning career paths.

**Flexibility:** Students in the MUP program have the flexibility to design their own curriculum by choosing their emphasis area, pursuing an internship in their professional area of interest, and writing a professional paper to finish their degree.

**Experiential Learning:** MUP courses and students engage with real communities and real clients throughout the core and elective curriculum, especially through their engagement with [Texas Target Communities](#).



**CORE CURRICULUM - 27 CREDITS**



**METHODS ELECTIVES - 6 CREDITS**



**AREAS OF EMPHASIS ELECTIVES - 12 CREDITS**



**INTERNSHIP + PROFESSIONAL PAPER / THESIS - 3 CREDITS**

# THE STANDARD CURRICULUM: 48 TO GRADUATE

## Core Courses (27 credits)

- Planning History & Theory
- Structure & Function of Human Settlements
- Planning Methods I (Demographic and Economic Analysis)
- Planning Methods II (Land Use Transportation and Infrastructure)
- Planning Law
- Plan Making
- Communications in Planning
- Plan Implementation
- Applied Planning Studio

## Spatial Analysis/Communications Electives (6 credits)

### Choose two:

- GIS for Landscape & Urban Planning
- Site Planning
- Digital Communications

## Internship (1 credit)

## Professional Paper or Comprehensive Exam (2 credits)

## Areas of Emphasis (12 credits) Select one emphasis:

- Transportation Policy & Planning
- Resilient Communities
- Housing, Community, and Economic Development

*As an alternative to an emphasis area, students may choose to complete a more extended (15–18 credits) and more prescribed certificate in one of the following:*

- Sustainable Urbanism
- Environmental Hazard Management
- Transportation Planning & Policy
- Historic Preservation
- Health Systems Design & Planning
- Facilities Management

30

CORE COURSE  
CREDITS

6

SPATIAL &  
COMMUNICATION  
ELECTIVE CREDITS

12

AREA OF EMPHASIS /  
CERTIFICATE CREDITS



# ELECTIVES & EMPHASIS AREAS

Title	Frequency	Emphasis Area(s)
<u>PLAN 612</u> : Transportation in City Planning	Annual	<b>T</b>
<u>PLAN 623</u> : Planning in Third-World Countries	Annual	<b>C</b>
<u>PLAN 624</u> : Digital Communication	Semester	<b>M</b>
<u>PLAN 625</u> : Geographic Information Systems	Semester & Summer	<b>M</b>
<u>PLAN 626</u> : Advanced Geographic Information Systems	Annual	<b>M</b>
<u>PLAN 627</u> : Economic Development	Annual	<b>C</b>
<u>PLAN 629</u> : Neighborhood Revitalization	Bi-Annual	<b>C</b>
<u>Plan 634</u> : Environmental Health Policy and Planning	Bi-Annual	<b>H</b>
<u>PLAN 635</u> : Concepts of Ecological Planning and Design	Bi-Annual	<b>H</b>



Community, Housing and Economic Development



Planning for Natural Hazard and Climate Resilient Communities



Methods Elective



Transportation Policy and Planning

# ELECTIVES & EMPHASIS AREAS

Title	Frequency	Emphasis Area(s)
<u>PLAN 641</u> : Problems of Environmental Administration	Annual	<b>H</b>
<u>PLAN 642</u> : Planning for Coastal Sustainability	Annual	<b>H</b>
<u>PLAN 647</u> : Disaster Recovery and Hazard Mitigation	Annual	<b>H</b> <b>C</b>
<u>PLAN 650</u> : Disaster Response Planning	Bi-Annual	<b>H</b>
<u>PLAN 656</u> : Housing and Community Development	Annual	<b>C</b>
<u>PLAN 667</u> : Site Planning	Annual	<b>M</b>
<u>PLAN 670</u> : Urban Public Transportation Planning	Bi-Annual	<b>T</b>
<u>PLAN 689</u> : Foundations of Hazard & Disaster Theory	Annual	<b>H</b>
<u>PLAN 689</u> : Planning Tools for Hazard Mitigation, Climate Adaptation and Disaster Recovery	Annual	<b>H</b>

- C** Community, Housing and Economic Development
- H** Planning for Natural Hazard and Climate Resilient Communities
- M** Methods Elective
- T** Transportation Policy and Planning

# ELECTIVES & EMPHASIS AREAS

Title	Frequency	Emphasis Area(s)
<u>PLAN 673</u> : Design for Sustainable Transportation	Bi-Annual	T
<u>PLAN 678</u> : Applied Transportation Studio	Annual	T
<u>PLAN 685</u> : Directed Studies		C M H T
<u>PLAN 689</u> : Special Topics Courses		C H M T

The roster of electives for the upcoming semester is released just ahead of the early registration period, typically in mid-November and early May. Please note that the catalog of electives changes from semester-to-semester according to faculty availability and student needs. Following is a list of the electives we **typically** offer each year or every other year. For course descriptions, please see the [graduate school catalog](#). Students may also enroll in electives outside of the MUP program. Visit Howdy for a complete list of graduate electives in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, the School of Architecture and at Texas A&M.

- C** Community, Housing and Economic Development
- H** Planning for Natural Hazard and Climate Resilient Communities
- M** Methods Elective
- T** Transportation Policy and Planning



# EMPHASIS AREAS

An emphasis area is a great way to gain specialized knowledge and tools in an area of planning that you will use after graduation.



# EMPHASIS AREAS



## TRANSPORTATION POLICY AND PLANNING



## PLANNING FOR HAZARD AND CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



## HOUSING, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



# EMPHASIS AREAS

You will develop an emphasis area - specialized knowledge and tools in an area of planning - by choosing your electives and tailoring the topic of your internship and professional paper. Along with your emphasis area, you might complete a five-course interdisciplinary certificate (see Interdisciplinary Certificates below).

The MUP program does not have any strict course requirements for emphasis areas, i.e. *you may choose which electives you would like to take* based on availability and your schedule. We make suggestions below, but there are many different courses that could meaningfully contribute to your emphasis area. You can also create a unique emphasis area. If you have any questions about choosing or crafting an emphasis area, contact the program coordinator or a faculty member in the area that most interests you.





# TRANSPORTATION POLICY & PLANNING

The graduate certificate in Transportation Planning is a multi-disciplinary program aimed at providing students with a substantive base of knowledge needed to be broadly successful in the transportation profession. This program will be open to any graduate student at Texas A&M University with an interest in transportation. The certificate is housed in the Center for Housing & Urban Development in the School of Architecture and is developed as a partnership between the School of Architecture, the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute (TTI), and the Bush School of Government and Public Service.

## Key Outcomes

- Improved knowledge and understanding of the components of transportation planning, including multimodal approaches, public policy, and transportation and urban design
- Development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills related to transportation planning.
- An increased appreciation of the synergy of departments, agencies, and stakeholders involved in transportation planning and implementation.
- Ability to formulate, execute, and evaluate solutions to transportation challenges from a variety of interests.
- Improved skills in spatial analytics for transportation planning.
- Ability to effectively communicate the results of data analysis, transportation planning, and policy considerations.
- The development of an appreciation of professional ethics related to transportation planning.

# TRANSPORTATION POLICY & PLANNING

## Suggested Electives

- PLAN 612 – Transportation in City Planning
- PLAN 626 – Advanced GIS in Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
- PLAN 670 – Urban Public Transportation Planning
- PLAN 673 – Design for Sustainable Transportation
- PLAN 678 – Applied Transportation Studio

## Faculty Involvement

The following faculty members actively advise students or serve on committees in the Transportation Policy and Planning area of emphasis:

- Dr. Tara Goddard
- Dr. Wei Li
- Dr. Xinyue Ye
- Dr. Bill Eisle



# PLANNING FOR HAZARD AND CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

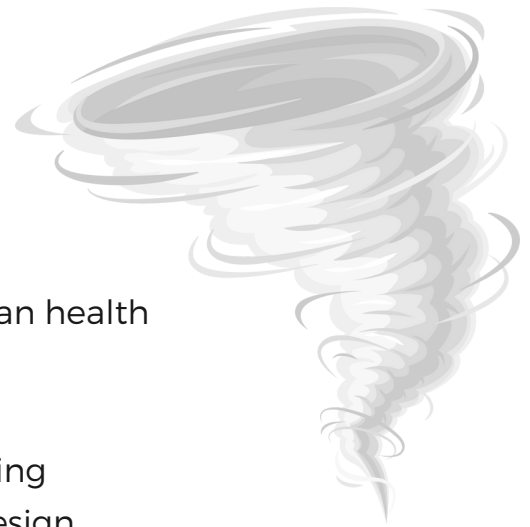
Today, planners have their eye on resilience, or how well we can anticipate, plan for, and recover from disasters and climate change impacts and mitigate against natural hazards. Planning for hazards and climate resilience has been a core research area for the faculty and students at Texas A&M University's Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center (HRRC) for 33 years. We are leaders in the study of hazard mitigation, community disaster recovery, and climate change planning – especially in the Gulf Coast region.

## Key Outcomes

- Crafting land use and environmental plans;
- Developing hazard mitigation and recovery plans;
- Fostering sustainable urban communities;
- Protecting the integrity of ecological systems; and
- Examining the impact of the environment on human health

## Suggested Electives

- PLAN 634 – Environmental Health Policy and Planning
- PLAN 635 – Concepts of Ecological Planning and Design
- PLAN 641 – Problems of Environmental Planning Administration
- PLAN 642 – Planning for Coastal Sustainability and Resiliency
- PLAN 647 – Disaster Recovery and Hazard Mitigation
- PLAN 689 – Foundations of Hazard and Disaster Theory
- PLAN 689 - Planning Tools for Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation
- PLAN 689 - Interdisciplinary Hazard Science
- PLAN 650 - Disaster Response Planning





# PLANNING FOR HAZARD AND CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

## Faculty Involvement

The following faculty members actively advise students or serve on committees in the Planning for Hazard and Climate Resilient Communities emphasis area. They are also are faculty members of the Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center that manages the Environmental Hazard Management Certificate.

- Dr. Ivis Garcia, AICP
- Dr. Matthew Malecha
- Dr. Michelle Meyer
- Dr. Galen Newman
- Dr. Carlee Purdum
- Dr. Walter Gillis Peacock (Environmental Hazard Management Certificate Coordinator)
- Dr. Nathanael Rosenheim
- Dr. Shannon Van Zandt, AICP
- Dr. Xinyue Ye
- Dr. Siyu Yu, AICP



# HOUSING, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Planners help cities manage growth that coincides with the visions of their community stakeholders. Today, more cities are focusing growth inside their existing boundaries, increasing density, and infilling under- or undeveloped areas. Students who choose an emphasis in this area have as a great resource the Center for Housing & Urban Development (CHUD), a leader in the inquiry for creating sustainable housing and communities.

## Key Outcomes

Students who pursue an emphasis in urban and economic development can expect to come away with these key outcomes:

- How distressed neighborhoods and areas may be revitalized;
- Principles of business location, development and attraction, public-private partnerships, public sector incentives and revenue sources;
- Tools and techniques for addressing regional and local economic development needs;
- Methods of increasing the supply of affordable, quality housing opportunities;
- Bottom-up decision making and capacity building strategies;
- Ethical research approaches and communication

## Suggested Electives

- PLAN 627 – Economic Development
- PLAN 629 – Neighborhood Revitalization
- PLAN 656 – Housing and Community



# HOUSING, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## Faculty Involvement

- Dr. Deidra Davis
- Dr. Ivis Garcia, AICP
- Dr. Cecilia Giusti
- Prof. Justin Golbabai, AICP, CNU-A
- Dr. Walter Gillis Peacock
- Dr. Shannon Van Zandt, AICP
- Dr. Christine Wen, AICP





# DESIGN YOUR OWN EMPHASIS AREA

Students are free to design their own emphasis area and to choose elective courses that meet their specific interests and professional goals. Faculty are available to talk about your interests and can help you to develop a curriculum that meets your needs. Don't know where to start? Contact the [program coordinator](#).

## Some example 'design your own' emphasis areas:

- Land-Use and environmental planning
- Smart and connected cities
- Urban data science
- Healthy communities



# INTERDISCIPLINARY CERTIFICATES



Considering an interdisciplinary certificate as part of your master's program is an excellent way to broaden your expertise and knowledge base.



# INTERDISCIPLINARY CERTIFICATES

The School of Architecture's research centers offer six interdisciplinary certificates, which feature courses and faculty from each of the School's departments. MUP students may choose to do a certificate as an official recognition of their selected emphasis area. Certificates require a minimum of five courses. Students who complete the requirements for the certificate will be recognized on their diploma.





# INTERDISCIPLINARY CERTIFICATES

It is important to know that graduate certificates are administered by the research centers and not by the MUP program. That means that the authority to make decisions about certificate requirements, course substitutions, and other administrative matters rests with the certificate coordinator. Please see the certificate pages linked above for more information on required and elective courses and to contact the certificate coordinator.



# DUAL DEGREE & ARTICULATED PROGRAMS

Articulated Programs often allow university credit to be applied toward a second degree, while Dual Degrees allow students to study a range of different disciplines and complete them more quickly than if they were studying separately.

# DUAL DEGREE & ARTICULATED PROGRAMS

Available programs:

Master of Architecture + Master of Urban Planning

Master of Land and Property Development + Master of Urban Planning

Master of Urban Planning + Ph.D. Urban & Regional Science

Students with strong motivation to work towards obtaining a more than one degree can make arrangements at the beginning of their degree program. The Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning offers two dual degrees which include the Master of Urban Planning, as well as an articulated program that allows students to earn both the Master of Urban Planning and the Ph.D. in Urban & Regional Science. Dual degrees enable students to complete two degrees in three years, instead of the four years both degrees would normally take. The articulated programs can save students up to a year of coursework.

Students interested in these programs must be admitted to both degree programs, and both degrees will be conferred at the time of graduation. Interested students should contact the Program Coordinators of each program listed below as soon as they are admitted for studies.



# INTERNSHIP

The internship requirement can help you apply the knowledge you are learning in the classroom to real-world scenarios and make valuable connections and career opportunities.

*Education  
learning*

# INTERNSHIP

Students enrolled in the Master of Urban Planning must complete the program's internship (120 hours of paid/unpaid work) for graduation.

## Finding an Internship

Finding internships is the student's responsibility. Review job postings on the MUP list-serv, the Aggie Urban Planners Linkedin Group, or talk to MUP faculty to gain insight into available opportunities. Also, contact agencies directly for internship possibilities. Many industries offer internships including:

- Local planning departments, including the cities of Bryan and College Station, Texas, and the Brazos Valley Council of Governments;
- Metropolitan planning organizations;
- Local housing authorities;
- Private consulting firms which specialize in planning, architecture, and engineering;
- Nonprofits and advocacy groups;
- Non-governmental organizations.

Students are encouraged to seek internships locally, nationally, and abroad. The Department office has lists of Career Fair-participating firms, many of whom hire students.





# INTERNSHIP

If all practical internship options are exhausted, students may appeal to the MUP coordinator in writing before the end of the spring semester to seek aid in finding supplemental options like conducting research for a faculty member or assisting with department-supported community engagement projects. Note that compensation is unlikely. In order to facilitate the successful completion of the internship requirement, students should follow these steps:

1. Ask the MUP graduate advisor for the Graduate Variable Credit Course Proposed Form and ask about what are the next steps.
2. Apply for internships during the spring semester of their first year.
3. Interview broadly with prospective employers.
4. Students may seek advice on the appropriateness of an internship from the MUP program coordinator.
5. Provide the MUP program coordinator with an intern-agency agreement or letter signed by the potential employer which states the scope of the intern's responsibilities, number of hours, and scheduling to the academic secretary for placement in their permanent file.
6. Register for PLAN 684, typically in the semester following the summer internship; **please note that international students must register for PLAN 684 in the summer semester.**
7. Before grades are due, submit a report to the supervising professor for signature.





# INTERNSHIP

## The Internship Report

PLAN 684, the MUP internship requirement, allows students to apply coursework in a professional planning office. Contacts, workplace practices, and ethics, (such as those listed in the AICP Code of Ethics) should be studied and documented in a 3-5 page report reflecting on the internship.

While the first part of the report may be primarily descriptive — what they did, who they worked with, what types of deliverables were produced, etc. — the second part of the report should address workplace practices and ethics. The paper should make explicit reference to the AICP Code of Ethics, and should address the ways in which this code of ethics was or was not demonstrated in the internship workplace.

During the internship, students should observe whether, how, and to what extent these ethical standards are being met. Such observations may include customer service practices, transparency in dealings with the public, the use of data for decision-making, or the extent to which planning efforts are promoting the public interest. They may also include collegiality and support of professional development within the office. We encourage students to keep a journal during their internship.

Upon completion of the experience, the report must be submitted to the MUP program coordinator by the last day of classes.



# INTERNSHIPS AND JOBS

Searching internship or a job? One resource is the [Aggie Urban Planners group on LinkedIn](#), where current students, alumni, and Planning Advisory Board members post job and internship opportunities.

Other good resources for finding planning-related jobs and internship opportunities:

- [American Planning Association Career Center](#)
- [APA Texas Chapter Job Announcements](#)
- [Planetizen Jobs Board](#)



# PROFESSIONAL PAPER

The professional paper is an important part of a student's education, giving them the opportunity to demonstrate their research, analysis, and design skills, as well as their expertise in their chosen field of emphasis.



# PROFESSIONAL PAPER

## Overview

The professional paper is an original work involving a substantial degree of independent research, analysis, and/or design. It should reflect the student's emphasis area and should demonstrate the student's learning and capabilities in this area and their readiness for professional practice. This requirement is typically met by a paper with text supported by tables, charts, graphics, references, and a bibliography. It may also be met by an original product of some other form such as a plan, a website, or a set of design products.

The professional paper is expected to have considerably more substance than a typical term paper. It is expected to be professionally formatted and presented as though it were being provided to a client (which in some cases, it may be). Each paper should include a statement of the problem (what is the issue your paper addresses?), a justification for the problem (a literature review or other justification for why this issue needs to be addressed), an approach to addressing the problem (methods), findings, and practical implications for practicing planners. While the paper should address all of these items, it may use a variety of approaches to do so. There is not an outline or template which all papers must follow.

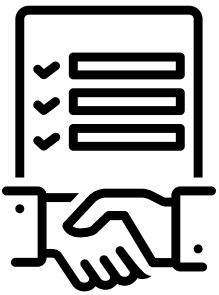
The professional paper may build upon a term paper done for a class (but should be substantively different), may be related to an internship or job, or may be an original project. Some students partner with a community or client who would like to undertake a project appropriate for the professional paper. Below are several types of professional papers done in the recent past. This list is not exhaustive—other models for professional papers are acceptable, and should be discussed with your graduate committee chairperson.

# PROFESSIONAL PAPER

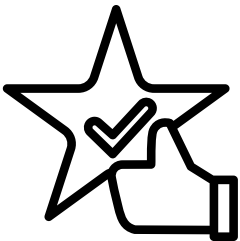
## Types of Professional Papers



*Model Ordinance:* Students may develop a model ordinance that addresses an identified issue in communities. Typically, the model ordinance would be developed through a thorough assessment of the literature on the topic to identify what the ordinance should be striving to achieve and the criteria by which existing ordinances may be evaluated. Then, a review of several existing ordinances will be conducted to assess how strong and effective they are. Using the best features of each of these ordinances, a model ordinance can be generated.



*Program Proposal:* A variation on the Best Practices model is the Program Proposal, in which the professional paper develops a program or policy to address an identified problem. The process is similar to that undertaken for a Best Practices paper, but instead of culminating in a set of recommendations, a location-specific program is proposed that solves or addresses the problem. This type of project is more often done as an outgrowth of an internship or association with a specific organization or community who has partnered with the student to produce this product. This type of project is also most likely to include a design element, if design is part of the solution.



*Best Practices:* Professional papers may identify best practices for achieving a particular desired outcome. A literature review identifies and justifies the need for the desired outcome, and then several communities that have been successful (and perhaps other unsuccessful examples) would be identified and assessed for which of their practices have been most successful and effective at achieving the desired outcome.

# PROFESSIONAL PAPER



*Small Area Plan:* Done in conjunction with a community through the Texas Target Communities Program, individual students may undertake a small area plan, such as for a neighborhood or district, or may do a specialized plan, such as an economic development plan, a site plan, a tourism plan, etc. This type of professional paper is much narrower, and would not include as much of a literature review as other types. Instead, it would include data analysis, issue identification, and the development of proposed solutions for a specific planning unit, such as a neighborhood or district. It would also typically involve regular interactions with the client.



*Program or Policy Evaluation:* This type of professional paper would focus on an existing implementation of a novel program or policy, often in a specific community. The professional paper would evaluate the program or policy to learn whether, how well, and why it achieves the desired outcome, if indeed it does. A literature review would establish and justify the criteria by which it would be evaluated, and then a careful assessment of outcomes and impacts of the program would be undertaken, culminating in a set of recommendations for improving the existing program or expanding it to other areas. This type of professional paper may be done in conjunction with a community or client, but may also be done independently.



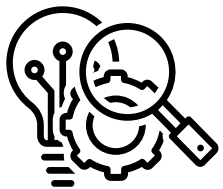
*Meta Analysis:* A meta analysis is an extensive and systematic literature review on a specific topic. Meta analyses can provide the evidence for evidence-based design or decision-making. A meta analysis focuses on comparing and contrasting results from different studies to develop a thorough understanding of what is known and what is not known about the topic. The meta analysis integrates findings from the studies to identify patterns, sources of disagreement among those results, or other relationships that become clear in the context of multiple studies. It typically involves not just an assessment of the findings of each study, but an assessment of the quality of the studies themselves as a way of weighing how much confidence to place in the findings.



# PROFESSIONAL PAPER



*Meta Analysis Cont...* A meta analysis should involve a systematic method of identifying the studies to be evaluated, as well as a method of assessing them. The paper would conclude with an assessment of what we know (findings that have been consistent and strong over a range of studies), what we may know (findings that have appeared in multiple studies, but for which there are contradictory findings and/or weak results), and what we don't know about a topic or a relationship among variables. The conclusion would also likely include recommendations or prescriptions for how policies, programs, or design should or should not rely on specific assertions about the topic.



*Original research:* Students often choose to do a professional paper that answers a specific research question. An original study can be done as a thesis (more involved; typically involves primary data collection and/or rigorous statistical analysis) or a professional paper. This type of professional paper is most closely associated with working directly with a faculty member on a funded or unfunded research project, but may also be a spin-off of such a project. These types of professional papers typically follow the structure of a journal manuscript—a clearly stated research question(s), hypotheses, data and methods, analysis, findings, discussion, and conclusions. Given the time constraints for a professional paper, data collection is typically limited to secondary data, or an existing primary data set from a faculty member. Analysis may include statistical analyses, spatial analyses, or, more simply, descriptive analysis. For a professional paper, the level of sophistication of analysis is usually somewhat less than it would be for a thesis. Students interested in this option should seek a faculty advisor to work with before developing the project idea.

# PROFESSIONAL PAPER TIMELINE

Month & Year	Milestone or Activity
March of 1st Year	The program coordinator and graduate advisor share instructions for submitting a professional paper abstract and list of preferred committee members, via the MUP list-serv
April of 1st year	Students submit an abstract and preferred committee members to the program coordinator, following the guideline set forth by the program
May of 1st year	Program coordinator makes chair assignments and shares them with students. Students meet with their chair to discuss their abstract and timeline for completing the professional paper.
August of 2nd year	Students meet with their chair to discuss the formation of the rest of their committee, which must include 1) an additional member from within the LAUP department and 2) a third committee member from outside the LAUP department.
March of 2nd year	Students submit full draft of their professional paper to their committee chair
April of 2nd year	Students, in consultation with their chair, schedule a presentation date. After defending their professional paper, the students must revise their paper in accordance with the committee's feedback and chair's instructions
May of 2nd year	Students submit final professional paper for evaluation and grading

# PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

Professional planning organizations are also a great resource to tap into for networking opportunities and other resources. Student organizations are a great way to connect with other students interested in the field of planning and learn outside of the classroom.



# PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS AND NETWORKS

Urban planning education also happens outside of the classroom. There are numerous planning-related organizations and professional networks that you might consider engaging with:



The American Planning Association is the primary professional organization for urban planners. The APA is a key space for professional networking, ongoing education, and planning-focused policy research and advocacy. You receive a free membership to the APA while you are a student at Texas A&M.



The APA Texas Chapter focuses on planning issues in the Lone Star State. The APA Texas annual conference is an excellent opportunity to learn more about professional planning in the state and network with future colleagues and employers.



The Urban Land Institute is a membership organization centered on real-estate development and land-use planning. ULI hosts a national conference and has active chapters in many different cities in Texas and the Gulf Coast.



WTS is a membership organization dedicated to creating a more diverse, inclusive and equitable transportation industry. There are numerous local chapters of WTS in Texas in cities like Houston, Dallas/Forth Worth, and San Antonio.

# THE ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT PLANNERS

The Association of Student Planners (ASP) is the Texas A&M University student organization for the American Planning Association (APA) that represents students in the Masters of Urban Planning (MUP) program. The officers of ASP play an important role in both the School of Architecture and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.



## Monthly Meetings

ASP members get together monthly to discuss important issues related to the students and their future activities. Often the meetings are anchored by a guest speaker that talks about professional work outside academia. This creates a great medium for outside involvement and increased knowledge of professional planning.



## Career Fair

Each year the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning hosts a career fair which attracts companies from across the state and even from other parts of the country. The Association of Student Planners collaborates with the American Society of Landscape Architects, student chapter (ASLA) to organize and invite different firms for this special event. This event occurs every February and allows students to spread their résumés and interview with different firms.



## Social Events

ASP hosts several social events each semester. This provides an opportunity for MUP students, old and new, to get to know each other in an out-of-school setting and build community at Texas A&M. These events can include bowling, laser tag, or other fun activities decided by members. Connection to fellow MUP students is crucial to success in the program and into the profession, so ASP aims to foster these relationships as much as possible.

# THE ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT PLANNERS



## Conferences

The ASP arranges for students to attend the Texas APA conference in the Fall semester of each academic year. National APA is held in the spring and brings together planners across the country to do the same, but at a much larger scale. Both conferences provide opportunities to network, learn and also to come closer as a planning class. In order to offset costs incurred by attending conferences, ASP receives assistance from the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning. However, they also participate in fundraising activities such as shirt and textbook sales, as well as other campus activities such as replacing seat cushions at Kyle Field before the football season.

## Elections

The ASP holds annual elections every March for the officer positions of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, internal communications, career fair, social, and APA student representative chair. This timeline allows for the new officers and old officers to transition between academic years. In October of every year a 1st-year representative officer is elected among the incoming Masters of Urban Planning student class. As a student in the Masters of Urban Planning program at Texas A&M University, participation in ASP enhances your personal and professional experience.





# UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

University policies provide guidelines to inform student behavior, and resources such as counseling help equip students with the skills and support they need to ensure academic success and personal well-being.

# UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

## Academic Integrity

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the TAMU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor System.

To meet this standard in the Master of Urban Planning courses and program requirements such as the master's paper or thesis, all ideas (including text, data, or graphics) that are not your own must be properly cited. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see the “Academic Integrity and Plagiarism” section on the TAMU Library website. Violations of university policies on academic integrity will be handled according to university guidelines. Depending on the severity of the infraction, sanctions for academic dishonesty include:

- A failing grade for the assignment
- A failing grade for the course
- Student dismissal from the program
- Student dismissal from the university



## Americans With Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. You can learn more about accessibility or request an accommodation at <https://caps.tamu.edu/about/contact/accessibility/>.

# UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

## **Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality**

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post.

Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

## **Texas A&M at College Station**

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

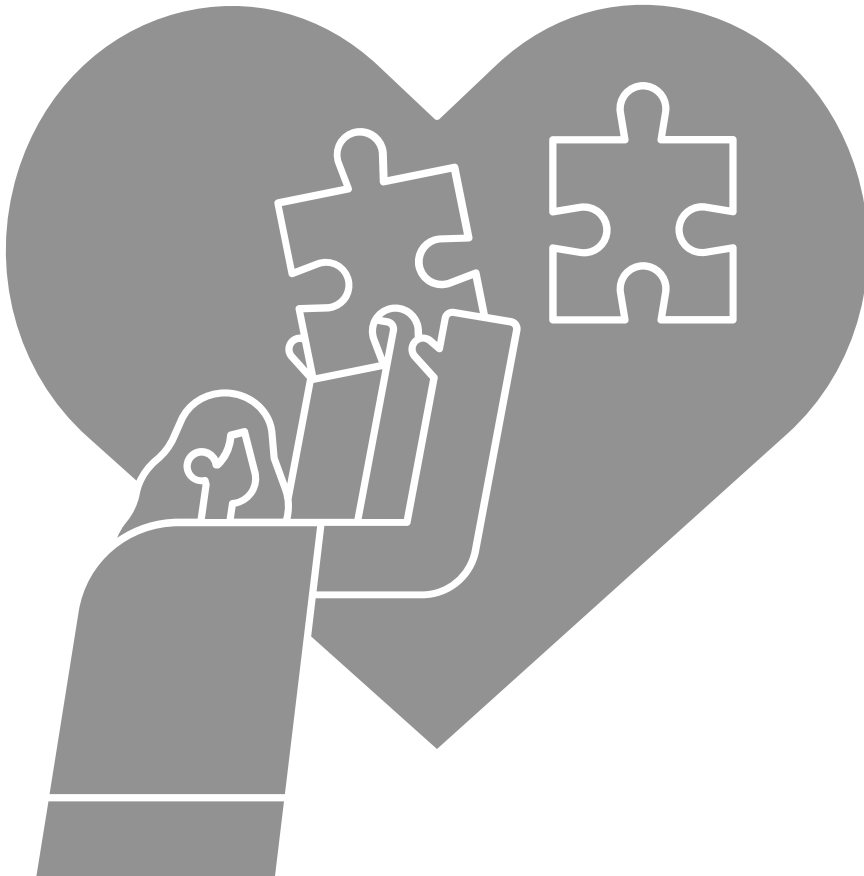


# UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

## Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall well-being. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus.

Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org) (now accessible at 988 or at [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)).




# AGGIE PLANNERS ARE ON LINKEDIN!



Aggie Planners is a LinkedIn Group for current students, program alumni and Aggie friends. Scan the QR code below to connect with the Aggie planning network and to learn about internships, career opportunities, news and events...





An aerial photograph of a university campus. In the foreground, a wide, multi-lane road with a green median runs vertically. To the left of the road is a large green lawn with a winding path. To the right is a green field with scattered trees. In the background, a dense cluster of university buildings, including a large central building with a dome, is visible. The sky is clear and blue.

**HAVE QUESTIONS?**  
**EMAIL GRADUATE ADVISOR**  
**THENA MORRIS**  
**T-MORRIS@TAMU.EDU**

*Visit the program website at*  
*[https://www.arch.tamu.edu/academics/graduate-](https://www.arch.tamu.edu/academics/graduate-programs/master-of-urban-planning/)*  
*[programs/master-of-urban-planning/](https://www.arch.tamu.edu/academics/graduate-programs/master-of-urban-planning/)*