Making a Living Making a Difference

Ball State University Department of Urban Planning
Fall 2011 Newsletter

Cover art by Lohren Deeg, ASAI
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chair’s Corner</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News from the Student Planning Association</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bithia Ratnasamy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby Wiles</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing our newest faculty members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Junfeng Jiao</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meagan Tuttle</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Changes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inaugural Cross-Studio Intensive Workshop - Muncie 2.0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on Urban Planning as a Career</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Speech</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Alumni Make a Difference</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning in the Non-profit Sector</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning in the Public Sector</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning in the Private Sector</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Students Make a Difference</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on CBP Project Experience – Griffith Charrette</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on CBP Project Experience - Madison Charrette</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflections on CapAsia in South Asia, Spring 2011</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Students Learn to Make a Difference</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPFY Chicago Field Trip</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Study Trip to Colorado</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable/Affordable Housing</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Planning</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News from our Faculty</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland-Seattle field trip</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Tear-down City”</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News From our Alumni</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caption from the Spring 2011 Newsletter:
“Don’t make bets because, in the end, someone has to lose.” Rodney Burayidi
These are exciting times for the urban planning profession and for our department! The need for urban planners to help address the pressing urban problems of the day has never been more obvious. Indeed, the commonality in most of the world’s problems, whether this is urban sprawl, inner city decline, climate change, or environmental disasters is that they all require a planning solution. Urban designers are needed to help in the regeneration of declining urban neighborhoods. Urban planners are needed to help (re)settle populations that have been affected by earthquakes and other natural disasters. The rise in sea level due to climate change requires expertise in designing communities that can both withstand and minimize floods. Urban demographers are needed to better understand the changing social structure of neighborhoods and the US population so that housing can be designed to meet the needs of community residents. Nationwide, people are warming up to the idea of neighborhoods that provide a sense of place, rather than the ubiquitous tract housing reminiscent of the modernist suburbs. In all of these areas, urban planners play an invaluable role in ensuring quality of place.

During my visit to Australia this past summer, it was gratifying to see how sustainable practices have permeated all spheres of life including economic development, urban form, business, and transportation. There were testimonies from our urban planning colleagues of the high profile of the profession in the country. In Australia, urban planning is regarded by policymakers as the profession that moderates the excesses of development in the private marketplace. Thus there is widespread acceptance of urban planning and an understanding of planners’ role in enhancing the quality of the public sphere.

I believe we are at the cusp of a planning revival in the US and around the world, similar to the experience of the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects a strong growth in demand for urban planners in the next decade and beyond. We are witnessing this in the growth of our student numbers. As we begin to tell the urban planning story more eloquently and to as wide an audience as possible, we not only educate the public about what we do, but we also are able to garner interest from students who see the profession as meeting their dual goal of helping to shape the public sphere and their individual goal of earning a good living. This year we welcomed students from Algeria, China, Ghana, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Sri Lanka into our department’s family. Twenty-four students enrolled in the first year of our MURP program. Additionally, thirty-two students elected to pursue urban planning as their major from the first year program.

As urban planners, we seek to make a difference while earning a living. Indiana’s economic health is closely tied to the health of its communities. Corporations and businesses usually consider quality of life factors in making decisions regarding the location of their businesses. There is virtually no community in Indiana where you won’t find graduates of our programs at work, laboring to help create quality places for Indiana residents. It goes without saying that our department and alumni are an integral part in creating a healthy Hoosier economy. This newsletter contains many of the activities that our students and alumni are engaged in to improve the quality of our communities. Enjoy!
Dear Planning Family,

On behalf of the Student Planning Association Executive Board, I would like to ask you to get excited for this upcoming year (if you’re not already, that is)! The other members of this years SPA Executive Board are:

• Kyle VanKlompenburg, Vice President
• Zach Lutz, 2nd Year Representative
• Jacob Egan, 3rd Year Representative
• Cory Banacka, 4th Year Representative
• Abby Wiles, APA-IN Representative
• Giang Tran, Secretary
• Rachelle Enochs, Treasurer
• Peter Sackers, Social/Communications Chair

For those of you who don’t know me, I am a third year undergraduate student from Findlay, Ohio with an affinity for chocolate peanut butter ice cream, community development, Nikes and globe-trotting.

Our primary goal this year is to actively engage the department socially, academically and by means of community involvement. This semester, we’re looking forward to facilitating an interdepartmental game of CAPture the Flag, volunteering in and around Muncie, increasing our attendance at the APA-IN fall conference, having a mini-lecture series featuring our own faculty and hosting a semi-formal dinner to end the semester.

However, we need YOU to make all of this possible. So everyone, undergraduate and graduate alike, get involved! We will be meeting biweekly on Wednesdays at 4pm (time subject to change depending on the week), and will be forming steering committees for the events listed above, amongst others. I look forward to serving you all this year, and appreciate feedback and ideas of any kind.

Abby Wiles
MURP 2013
APA-IN Representative for SPA

Greetings,

The Indiana Chapter of the American Planning Association held the first meeting of the school year in mid-September. The main topic was APA Indiana’s upcoming “Fall into Nashville” conference. The conference will be held October 20-21, 2011 at the Abe Lincoln Lodge in Indiana’s scenic Brown County State Park. The conference committee has been working to offer interesting and informative workshops. In addition to traditional presentations, there will be two mobile workshops, both to nearby Bloomington, IN which will look at infill housing projects.

The Indiana Chapter hopes to have a large cohort of Ball State urban planning students represented at the conference. A discounted student rate is available. Registration and more information about the fall conference are available online at APA-IN’s website: www.indianaplanning.org.
Junfeng Jiao, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Urban Planning

Dr. Junfeng Jiao was born and raised in China. Both of his parents were high school teachers. Dr. Jiao earned his PhD in Urban Design and Planning in December 2010 from the University of Washington. Prior to completing his PhD, Dr. Jiao completed three Master degrees: Transportation Engineering, University of Washington; Architectural Design, Wuhan University in China; and Urban Planning and GIS, the University of Twente in Netherlands.

As a child, Dr. Jiao developed the habit of memorizing the names of the tallest buildings and the longest bridges in the world. He believes this led him to choose urban planning as a career. Dr. Jiao has expertise in GIS, quantitative analysis, transportation planning and urban food systems. His research interests focus on methods for better understanding the built environment through the use of GIS, statistical models and investigating their influences on people’s daily travel behavior. Dr. Jiao has been involved in several projects funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the National Institute of Health (NIH), the Center for Communicable Disease Control (CDC), and the US Department of Transportation (DOT), among others.

Dr. Jiao’s dissertation, *Built Environments, Grocery Shopping Travel Behavior, and Food Deserts* investigated grocery shopping travel behavior and whether there were any food deserts in King County, WA. Dr. Jiao has published five articles in several peer reviewed journals including: *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, *American Journal of Public Health*; and *Engineering Journal of Wuhan University*. He has also presented his research at more than ten peer reviewed conferences including: Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP); Conference of the Association of American Geographers (AAG); the Annual Meeting of Transportation Research Board (TRB); the International Conference on Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management (CUPUM); and the International Association for China Planning (IACP) conference.

During his campus visit, he was deeply impressed by the close relationship between professors and students at Ball State University. This led him to choose Ball State as the place to start his academic career. Dr. Jiao believes his solid background in GIS, quantitative methods and transportation planning will enable him to contribute to the work of the department and college, and to attract more external research project funding.
Meagan Tuttle  
MURP 2011  
Instructor of Urban Planning

Although new to the faculty roster this year, Ms. Tuttle is a five-year veteran of the College of Architecture here at Ball State. She completed her undergraduate degree in Urban Planning here in 2010 and immediately went on to pursue the Fast-track MURP degree. Ms. Tuttle considers it a privilege to join the Urban Planning department for yet another year—this time as a part-time Instructor.

She is looking forward to the work that she, Ms. Dunaway, and the PLAN 302 Neighborhood Studio will be conducting this fall. Working with the Whitely Community Council and residents of Muncie’s Whiteley Neighborhood, they will put together a neighborhood plan to guide the physical and social development of the area. The PLAN 302 studio and community engagement projects were the highlight of her academic and professional experiences. She is excited to introduce the PLAN 302 class to the challenges and rewards of working for a real client and with residents that are highly invested in their neighborhood.
Curriculum Changes

Francis Parker, Ph.D.
Professor of Urban Planning

At a faculty retreat August 22nd, the Urban Planning department adopted proposed changes to the MURP curriculum. Total hours remain the same: 48 hours for the first-professional-degree program and 36 hours for the accelerated program, open only to graduates of accredited undergraduate professional planning programs (Ball State being one).

The changes add three courses to the required core: PLAN 605 – Design and Graphics Communication, PLAN 512 – Introduction to GIS, and PLAN 633 – Capstone Studio. Design and Graphics Communication has been frequently requested by graduate students coming from non-design backgrounds, and can be waived for those who already have a design background. The GIS course is self-evident, as a skill set that is simply assumed in new planning graduates.

The Capstone studio was added to further enhance our capability in applied professional projects. Students will now have a first year studio, a capstone studio, and quite possibly a studio within their Area of Concentrated Study.

The result is to increase the required core hours from 24 to 33 (plus ACS and thesis), thereby reducing the number of possible “open” electives from four to one. The required core for the 36 hour program also increases by 6 credits, with the addition of GIS and a required CAPstone studio.

Students will continue to take an “Area of Concentrated Study” or ACS. Each ACS consists of four courses, starting with an introductory course, relevant electives, and sometimes a final studio. The five ACS currently available (including one approved in August), are: 1) Community and Economic Development, 2) Land Use and Public Policy, 3) Community Design, 4) International and Multicultural Planning, and 5) Sustainability and Environmental Planning. Students also have the opportunity to assemble a “do-it-yourself” ACS, including options such as Historic Preservation which are outside our own department.

The Bachelor of Urban Planning and Development (BUPD) remains as currently constituted at 82 hours for the major, including the 16 credit hour common CAP first-year program. No immediate program changes are underway. The introductory GIS course could become an undergraduate requirement, but is already being frequently taken as an elective by students who recognize its importance.

The proposed changes must be approved at college and graduate school level. Assuming they meet a January 2012 deadline they will take effect in Fall 2012.
Scott Truex, MARCH (Urban Design)
Associate Professor of Urban Planning

From the 2nd to 5th of November the Department of Urban Planning will be kicking off a new initiative called “Muncie 2.0”. The department will leverage resources, academic might and community input to conduct a three-day workshop that tackles a tough problem facing the Muncie community.

This “immersive learning” event will provide students in the department with an opportunity to work with visiting practitioners, urban planning alumni and community leaders. The initiative will be modeled after the Urban Land Institute’s Technical Assistance Panel and the College of Architecture and Planning’s CBP program “Community Visioning Charrette Workshop”.

The Department will create a steering committee comprised of local leaders, alumni and department representatives who are willing to help frame and guide the study.

The goals of the initiative are:

1. Identify a critical issue facing the Muncie Community that is appropriate for a workshop based planning process;
2. Provide urban planning students with an immersive learning experience that enhances their understanding of community engagement and professional planning;
3. Increase awareness of critical issues facing the quality of life of the community;
4. Provide ideas and recommendations that can be used by public and private sector groups and organizations to implement change; and
5. Establish a body of knowledge that is transferable to other communities within the profession and with students as future change agents.

The Delaware County Fairgrounds will be this year’s study site! Teams will be developing multiple scenarios that range from enhancing the existing facility to relocation options. We will have up to eight teams, so we can address a wide range of ideas. The workshop will include developers as well as designers so we can identify costs and funding scenarios that correspond with the proposals.

We welcome alumni participation in the event! Please consider joining us! Contact Scott for more information – 317.696.6170 or struex@bsu.edu.
Reflections on Urban Planning as a Career

Claire Thomison
BUPD 2012

For as long as I can remember, I have never been afraid to try something new. From tennis and theater to kayaking and swing dancing, I’ve constantly involved myself in things that I’ve never done before. My vast interests have likewise played a large role in my education and profession career choice. Growing up, I wanted to be an artist, an oceanographer, and even an astrophysicist. It turned out that these were brief phases, as I painted glamorous images of each profession and ultimately discovered that my interests did not quite align with any of them. I finally decided on architecture, and before long I was seated in a first-year studio at Ball State University’s College of Architecture and Planning. I quickly learned that my interests and passions were most closely aligned with planning and development. Planning, I realized, could allow me to work with critical urban issues such as poverty and housing, while still adding an element of design.

My first two years in the planning studio were both marvelous and disappointing. I was captivated by the complexity of the city and the incredible forces that determine the development, growth and shape of all urban existence. The problem, though, was that many of the scopes of the studio projects—and the instruction that I was receiving—often touched surface issues only. We drew elaborate plans and beautifully rendered images. We discussed sustainability as if it were entirely achievable through site design, and spent late nights recommending “smart growth” principles and low-impact development guidelines we viewed as gospel. It was not until after my first economics course that I began to understand the complexity of the city and the dynamic systems that are much far influential than any renderings I had drawn. I became increasingly aware that the romanticized planning methods I was taught were arbitrary, if the forces that drive growth, economic, and social patterns were not considered. I soon declared a second major in economics, encountering tools and themes that illuminated my studio projects and explained growth and development patterns in cities. Most importantly, in order for me to ultimately become a community leader who could truly view a community comprehensively, I knew that I would need to understand both the science and analysis of economics as well as the social and urban considerations of planning.

Such ideals finally became real for me when I left Indiana for a semester in Southeast Asia and soon found myself sipping chai in Ahmedabad, India, while trying to catch a rickshaw to Chharanagar, a vibrant neighborhood on the fringe of the city. Although I had spent a week on a service trip in Haiti, this was my first long-term experience in a developing nation.

With my fellow students I entered the oppressed, though hopeful, community Ahmedabad in hopes to understand the goals and priorities of the people, become involved in their lives, and utilize my skills as a future planner to help them achieve their community goals. Because typical research methods such as census and GIS data were not available, I had to draw upon the only resources available to me: the people. I spent my afternoons roaming Chharanagar, talking to mothers on porches, sipping yet more tea with family members inside their cool homes. I attempted to participate in games of rooftop cricket, taking notes about everyday life, sketching structures and creating a manually constructed map of the entire community. Through such interaction, I discovered countless details, from caste oppression to a remarkable pursuit of justice through the medium of theater that cannot be drawn on a map or displayed by numbers. I realized that while data and statistics are important for background information and analysis, it is absolutely critical that people are at the center of the planning process.
Reflections on Urban Planning as a Career (con’t)

As I studied Chharanagar, I also carried out an independent study in urban economics. The course changed the entire way that I viewed both economics and planning, enabling me to see the explicit relationship between the two. When I look back at my past community development projects, I see that the proposals lacked depth, feasibility, and people as the top priority. The lens through which I viewed my world shifted drastically, and I refocused my undergraduate thesis on low-income affordable housing in a way that reflected these new insights.

Before I even had a chance to fully digest my experience in Ahmedabad, I was living on the edge of Kathmandu with Timila, an architecture student at Nepal Engineering College and her lively and hospitable family. For two weeks, I was incorporated into nearly every aspect of their lives. I walked 45 minutes to and from school every day with Timila, took part in the family’s celebration of Holi, the festival of colors, and came home to a nightly meal of dal bhat, a satisfying dish of rice and beans. Although my stay with Timila was the most challenging part of the trip, it was ultimately the most rewarding and enjoyable as I was immersed in the vibrant, everyday life of a young Nepalese woman my age.

After four months in Southeast Asia, my entire viewpoint had been shaken, electrified and entirely revolutionized. With an incredible passion for the synthesis of economics and urban planning, a substantially expanded worldview, and a far greater understanding of the planning process, I was quite far from the romantic planner that I had once been. Today my goal is to bridge the gap between social urban planning and economic development as a leader in a not-for-profit organization or in government, through a redevelopment authority. I hope to use economic and data-driven methods, in conjunction with community engagement, to regenerate declining urban areas and revitalize local economies. Drawing upon these goals, as well as my understanding that environmental and energy issues play an increasingly important role in development, I ultimately want to become a planner and economist who makes effective decisions within the urban fabric.
A great philosopher and teacher, also known as my mother, once told me that the meaning of life is to give life meaning. Yet, how does one come about accomplishing such an arduous task? Can the answer be found in one of the many detailed environmental planning and design problem statements we have conquered? Does it lie within the answers our professors have provided that are questions within themselves? Or, does the answer come from one of the “mandatory” 1,440 hours spent in studio over the past four years? Although these instances may fuel the search, we come about answering and accomplishing this feat by intentionally living in the moment, using our God-given talents, and by connecting with others.

To give life meaning, we must first live in the moment. It seems that our lives are so complex and so full of things to do that we forget to feel the moments that together make up a day. Spiritual writer, Dr. Ronald D. Bissell, eloquently states, “In seizing the moments of your life you extend their value and allow each to create magic. You see each as a miracle and know that within them lies the importance of life. Life is not full of quantity time but full of quality time. It is up to each of us to recognize the quality within each moment and to allow it to shine throughout our day. The truth of life is that all you have is today. Yesterday is only vapor and tomorrow will never come. Today is the timeline of your life and each moment contains the essence of your being. Allow this essence to shine brightly by allowing others to see its fullness for each moment is a gift that is given to you just for being who you are.” This, again, enables us to create a life of meaning.

The second step to give life meaning is focusing on our God given talents. Some people may spend a lifetime finding themselves, when in fact the true mission is creating ourselves. Understand that to achieve this great feat requires strength and faith in our God given abilities to create a life of meaning. We must also remember that our past mistakes do not define who we are, or what we may become, but rather, they enable us to foster growth – a growth for change – a growth for self-improvement. This self-growth is a lesson that continues for as long as we live. Critical to this development is the attitude and perspective in which we approach every situation. For instance, graduation is a definable moment; it is an opportunity to recall what the last four years have molded us into. It is a time to ask ourselves what we have become and whether or not we are living a meaningful life. Will we choose to appreciate lessons learned despite their outcome? Will we value the life lessons and experiences learned from others, or will we choose the more difficult path? How we answer these questions determine the degree of meaning we bring into our lives.

To live a life of meaning we must also connect with others. Each of us has a story to tell. Stories of happiness and sorrow, growth and defeat. Yet, each story contains a message of hope, a message of inspiration. Despite the different stories each of us possess, a connection is made when appreciating what others have to tell. We must be cognizant of every person whose path we cross, for it is a sacred moment filled with respect and opportunity. Not only will others help give meaning to our lives, but remember, you, in turn, will be giving meaning to others’ lives. This connection defines a life of meaning.

Having an opportunity to make meaning out of life is a blessing because it is a gift that not only transcends the moment, but will guide us in who we are to become. To the College of Architecture and Planning Graduating Class of 2011, yours are the stories waiting to be told. May your opportunities be rich, may your stories be blessed, and may your life be filled with meaning.
Planning in the Non-profit Sector
John Marron
MURP 2009, Policy Analyst, Indiana University, Public Policy Institute

When I was in graduate school, it was drilled into us that 1) our education would prepare us to know a little bit about a lot of things and 2) that our education would be applicable in just about any way in which we chose to apply it. These sentiments were colorfully combined in our professors’ acknowledgement that “we’d all be a little bit dangerous at everything.”

In my professional experience, I would add that another result of the planning education is that planners become uniquely situated to understand the world holistically across sectors and across time; to that end our AICP Code of Ethics requires us to understand the interrelatedness of decisions and consider the long-term consequences of present-day choices. While many professions prepare young professionals to see either the forest or the trees; planning education demands that we see both – that ability is a tremendous asset when a planner works in the non-profit sector.

As a program manager for the Indiana Association for Community Economic Development (IACED), I held the interesting position of not only being a planner in a non-profit organization, but working for an organization whose mission was to assist other non-profit organizations through training, technical assistance, and advocacy. In thinking about how my daily decisions impacted my employer, I also had to consider how my decisions impacted the nearly 200 non-profit organizations that were members of my organization and their constituencies as well. Talk about having to think holistically! The planning education was the perfect primer for having to understand the interrelatedness of all of those interested parties.

During my time at IACED, we approached community-based charitable (non-profit) work from a philosophical perspective with three tenets: 1) community-based work should be driven by the community itself and all of the interested parties within that community; 2) that work should seek to leverage the community’s existing assets – including its residents, institutions, physical and economic assets; and 3) solutions should be holistic in nature (i.e. we should seek to understand whether a proposed solution reinforces other solutions or causes additional problems, and consider that question from multiple perspectives). In my experience, I found that my planning education was unique in that it prepared me to effectively navigate these three tenets. As noted above, planners think holistically – seeing both the forest and the trees – and they are also charged with working with diverse populations, including all of the interested parties in a community, and seeing multiple perspectives that can appreciate diverse views as well as a community’s assets. Stepping back from IACED, I’ve found that these three tenets are broadly applicable in nearly all community-based work, and especially applicable in work undertaken by community-serving non-profit organizations; given that, it stands to reason that planners are uniquely situated to fill roles, and have an impact, throughout the non-profit sector. The tremendous work being done by Dept. of Planning Alumni throughout the state assures me that this is the case.
When I was a graduate student, my classmates and I watched in dismay as Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans. At the time, I was working with Dr. Bilello to publish his research on natural disasters and the built environment. The following semester I enrolled in a course taught by Prof. Truex on Hurricane Katrina. Who knew at the time, that those two experiences at Ball State would play a larger role in my career?

I currently work as a transportation planner with Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) where I administer the freight and security planning programs. In that role, I served as project manager for the first evacuation plan in the United States that focused primarily on those with mobility needs. This plan was funded by the Federal Transit Administration to serve the residents of central Ohio and to provide a guide for other regions in developing their own plans. The plan has been warmly received, winning two national awards and was a featured session at the 2011 APA National Conference in Boston.

For more information or to view the plan, please visit www.morpc.org/evac.
Planning in the Private Sector
Rose Scovel, AICP
BS 1999, BUPD 1999, MPA 2005

Many people think working in the private sector is all about the money— in fact, when I first accepted a job in the private sector a friend asked me when I would be issued my light saber for going to the “dark side.” All kidding aside, for seven years I have enjoyed working in the private planning consulting sector. And for me it has never been about the money, and the benefits are much better in the public sector. For me planning in the private sector has been about working on a variety of projects with a variety of different communities around (and outside) Indiana. I have been able to work on a few projects in my home state of Michigan, work on some around the country, and work with a variety of Indiana cities, towns, and counties.

In a lot of ways this is very consistent with my answer to the question Dr. Kelly asked years ago in professional practice class—“Would you rather be right than planner or would you rather be planner than right?”—while even in the public sector you can’t make decisions and stick to them just because they are the “right” planning decision, there is a lot of room to guide communities toward better planning choices than they may have made on their own, and that a benefit of the private sector. Yes, the pay is better than in public service for the most part, but the rewards are different than just money.

Another opportunity that can be greater in the private sector is the ability to serve in an elected capacity in organizations like APA Indiana and even at the national APA level. Generally the private sector considers these positions as “good exposure” and good marketing, even if they expect the majority of the time will be outside of your “working” hours.

There is a dark side to the private sector, one that too many Indiana planners are experiencing in this recession, including myself. In the reality of lower government revenues and lower government budgets and spending, there is less work for consultants. Some of us have found ourselves unemployed through no fault of our own. This is the risk side of the reward of higher pay when we are working, there is little guarantee that when things are bad we will keep our jobs. But there is hope and the broad skill set we have in client relationships, planning process, and project management will serve us well whatever is next.
Our Students Make a Difference

This summer I had the opportunity to work closely with Community Based Projects as an intern for the Imagine Griffith project. After compiling analysis and data on our own, the group made site visits to Griffith in order to get to know the area and the community members. A charrette was held in June that allowed residents of Griffith to give their ideas and input into the project as well. The final product consisted of many new development ideas for Griffith’s downtown and surrounding areas. These ideas were expressed through drawings, diagrams and charts that were published in a booklet. A set of display posters were also given to the community upon completion of the project. Through this summer experience I gained a knowledge of analyzing a community and working closely with community members in order to create a plan for Griffith’s future.

Reflections on CBP Project Experience – Griffith Charrette
Laura Granieri
BUPD 2012

This summer I interned with the Community Based Projects program and helped to conduct three design charrettes in local communities across Indiana. The charrettes were great opportunities for us as students to interact with local residents and for community members to get involved and see their town’s potential for development.

My team focused on Madison, Indiana. We took multiple trips to the community at the beginning of the summer to document and take an inventory of the downtown and to administer community surveys. On one of our trips to Madison, each student stayed with a committee member’s family for the weekend. It was a great way for us to interact and build relationships with local residents.

After the mid-summer charrette, we took our work back to Muncie and refined multiple community visioning initiatives such as riverfront development, parking and sustainability to help guide Madison’s downtown development and to link the ideas of residents with city leaders and local businesses.

These community visioning initiatives were then grouped together to imagine Madison as a livable, accessible, sustainable and destination community. We established these four goals and mapped out multiple strategies to help guide Madison in the right direction.

I would encourage every Urban Planning student to participate in a charrette. Trust me, it is well worth your time. Working with Community Based Projects was a wonderful way to link our traditional creative studio projects with the real world to make a difference.

Reflections on CBP Project Experience - Madison Charrette
Kyle Van Klompenburg
BUPD 2012

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Reflections on CapAsia in South Asia, Spring 2011

Nihal Perera, Ph.D.
Professor of Urban Planning

CapAsia VI pushed the research agenda a bit further. Along with providing a service to the community, the central CapAsia issue: whether the planners and designers can take part in people’s processes was extensively investigated. The 7-week “Planning to Learn” project was conducted in one of the most discriminated communities in Ahmedabad, with the help of a leading school of planning in India: CEPT University. It taught us that planners and development specialists can indeed participate in (and enhance) people’s processes (instead of the other way around) and community development does not have to be about tools, but larger goals, convictions and people’s journeys. This is our “non-evangelical,” people-based alternative to the World-Bank-MIT model of economic development.

The students began by settling into comfortable roles such as teaching English and map-making using electronic tools. They were then directed to engage the community and study their “development journeys” using the same tools that they developed. Through continuous visits and many meetings, they all came to know most of the community members and their aspirations. They not only developed future plans with them, but also made a presentation of possible development scenarios --more empathic to people’s aspirations-- to the Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner. We learned that even a plan can be a significant tool for empowerment.

The 3-week “Building to Learn” component helped upgrade a community square in Duwakot (Nepal). It continued the same research at a smaller scale in collaboration with Nepal Engineering College. In both cases the CapAsia participants worked hand-in-hand with the communities, meeting almost daily. The most intriguing is that the people in Duwakot have now completed the upgrading of the square that we began, but in their own way. Our work provided a foundation for the community to achieve what it wants. They are empowered.

Living in the old city of Ahmedabad and homestays in Kathmandu helped the students to better understand people. They also met with great people such as development specialist and current Prime Minister of Nepal, Baburam Bhattarai; the 2010 CNN Hero Anuradha Koirala who created an organization (Maiti Nepal) to prevent the trafficking of women; and Ganesh Devy who left his professorship to help develop tribal groups in India. The team included students from Rutgers University and IUPUI. For the third consecutive time, the program was supported by a Fullbright-Hays grant of $80,510 from the US Department of Education (DOE). Two faculty members, Jeff Brackett and Maria Williams-Hawkins, helped expose the students to local Hindu practices and temples and social media.

The trip has had an influence on the student participants. After the trip, Claire Thomison applied for a Marshall Scholarship and Jeffrey Lauer for a Fulbright award. Following similar research, Sanjeeewani Habarakada immersed herself in the World Heritage Site of Galle for two months, studying how people create their own spaces under the radar of the authorities’ plan. Wenya is exploring people’s notions of Fengshui in city planning and design. Two very bright students from Sri Lanka and Italy have also applied to continue their studies in our graduate planning program.

The students will make a presentation of their experience on Monday, October 10 at 1:00pm in AB 100.
Our Students Learn to Make a Difference

CAPFY Chicago Field Trip
Lohren Ray Deeg, ASAI
Assistant Professor of Urban Planning

The CAP first year field trip to Chicago conducted in the summer semester allowed students to explore a range of issues applicable to the disciplines of urban planning, landscape architecture, and architecture. Students had a full itinerary that included: i) walking tours of the University of Chicago campus courtyards, ii) the Illinois Institute of Technology campus plan, iii) several sites in the Chicago downtown loop, iv) a Wendella river boat tour, v) a walking tour of Oak Park (a neighborhood that has a history of progressive social diversity as well as sites relevant to Frank Lloyd Wright), vi) a guided tour of Unity Temple, vii) a walking tour of the Lincoln Park historic neighborhood (with several blocks that survived the Chicago fire), and viii) a day at the Chicago Botanic Garden of Glencoe, Illinois, including the Rice Center for Plant Science Studies (rated LEED gold), and several opportunities to study place-making at the famed Millennium Park.

Above, CAP students and faculty view the “Model City” exhibit, a scale model of the Chicago “Loop” central business district, in the lobby of the Santa Fe Building, Chicago, Illinois. Photo by Lohren Deeg.
Above, students learned about opportunities in LEED-ND (Neighborhood Development) at an exhibit located at the Chicago Architectural Foundation, Santa Fe Building. Photo by Lohren Deeg.

Above, students explore testing beds on a green roof installation, Rice Center for Plant Science Studies (LEED-Gold), Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe, Illinois. Photo by Lohren Deeg.
Students review one another’s sketches and diagrams during a stop in Oak Park, Illinois. Photo by Lohren Deeg.
Field Study Trip to Colorado  
Eric Kelly, Ph.D.  
Professor of Urban Planning

Southern Colorado and Northern New Mexico were the destination for the second field trip that Amy Gregg (Associate Professor of Natural Resources and Environmental Management) and I led to the Southwest. We stayed in Gallup, NM, Durango, CO (in dorms at Fort Lewis College) and at Hermit Basin Lodge above Westcliffe, CO (http://hermitbasin.com/) – our second visit to Hermit Basin.

We studied the earliest known permanent settlements in this area (Chaco Canyon National Historical Park, 850 to 1150 or so) the later but more spectacular cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park (1200s), a contemporary Native American culture (Zuni, NM) evidence of the later Spanish and Mexican settlement of the area (the entire area that we visited was part of Mexico until 1849) and evidence of the activities of later Anglo and European settlers and miners (Durango, Silverton, the Wet Mountain Valley) and the influence and impact of the railroads in shaping the area. We visited two national forests – the Sangre de Cristo and the San Juan. Amy and I are practicing our tree identification skills and sharing them with the students. We talked about the management of public lands – Bureau of Land Management lands, National Forest lands and USFS lands, that are located in a wilderness area. We talked about the Tragedy of the Commons and efforts to avoid it through management efforts for public lands and ever-scarce water in the Southwest. We made a point of eating at only local restaurants. We learned a lot at the Mountain Park Environmental Center, a nonprofit educational program using a 160-acre municipal park that adjoins the national forest; and we did some service learning there, helping to clear slash from their forest-thinning project, which also provides fuel to heat space and water (http://www.hikeandlearn.org/).

We also had fun! Hermit Basin has a wonderful indoor pool, a hot tub and two separate game rooms. A black bear prowled across the old ski slope for our breakfast entertainment two or three times. We saw buffalo (fenced in), elk, bighorn sheep and lots of deer. On our last day, we rafted the Arkansas River with Vessels for Honor Rafting Company.

Our group this year was smaller than last – a total of eight students: 2 grad students, 6 undergrads; 1 planning student (Min Wang) and seven from Natural Resources. Even after 12 long days on the road, everyone remained cheerful and friendly. I think we all made new friends.

For more information on the trip – and hundreds of pictures – see our Facebook page – Ball State in the San Isabel (and more) 2011.
Urban Planning graduate student Min Wang (left) and Natural Resources student Lora Nelson helping to clean up forest slash at the Mountain Park Environmental Center in Beulah, Colorado. Photo by Eric Kelly.
Sustainable/Affordable Housing
Vera Adams, M.C.P., M.ARCH., M.B.A.
Instructor of Urban Planning

As part of the immersive learning experience in PLAN 441/541 Sustainable/Affordable Housing seminar this fall semester, students are to volunteer 16 hours at Habitat for Humanity in Indianapolis. Students started by working on a Build Site in Fountain Square neighborhood on a 4 bedroom, 1.5 bath house for the Njeri family. Other volunteer activities include working the retail sales counter at Habitat's ReStore home equipment, supplies and appliance store at 22nd and Monon in Indianapolis.

Planning undergraduate student Andrew Magee

Historic Preservation graduate student Kate Donelley
Environmental Planning
Lisa M. Dunaway, ASLA, LEED AP
Instructor of Urban Planning

Our immersive learning project in the Spring semester was a partnership between the students of the 433/533 Environmental Planning course, the Indiana Interchurch Center (IIC) at 42nd & Michigan in Indianapolis and the Indiana Wildlife Federation. Through our Immersive Learning Programs, Ball State matches students with real projects for real clients, to give students the opportunity to gain practical experience and develop critical job skills. We feel this helps to better prepare our graduates for future employment. The impact of the students’ project lasts beyond the experience itself and has a tangible result such as a creative work, business plan, or in this case, a master plan and site design for the IIC.

The students who took this course came from various departments on campus, such as Urban Planning, Landscape Architecture, Natural Resources and Environmental Management, and Architecture. They ranged in age from second year students up through graduate students. The entire class worked together, hand-in-hand with the IIC, to design and install a wildlife habitat which was certified by the Indiana Wildlife Federation in early August. The design included plants that were all native to Indiana that provide excellent food and shelter sources for wildlife. The students also produced a master plan for the IIC property to coordinate with their other sustainable projects such as building efficiency improvements and a solar panel demonstration installation. The master plan outlined additional sustainable site improvements the IIC can undertake in the future, such as a prairie planting, community garden, and contemplative garden, and also provided a budget for those future improvements and suggested opportunities to fund them, such as grants.

Keep Indianapolis Beautiful (KIB) donated a number of native trees for the site and Spence Restoration Nursery donated a large quantity of perennials for the bioswale. The tree donation was funded by a partnership that KIB formed with the Arbor Day Foundation called “Planting with a Purpose,” which seeks to help connect trees with spirituality. KIB worked with volunteers from the IIC to plant the trees and also loaned us the equipment to install all the plants. Planting Day was April 30th and was featured in both the Indianapolis Star and on Fox 59 Sunday Morning News.

The installation will increase the amount of livable area in the city for our native birds, insects, and mammals, as well as making the highly visible site more beautiful and environmentally sustainable.
News from our Faculty

Bruce Frankel, Ph.D.
Professor of Urban Planning

Portland-Seattle field trip
As organized by Professors Frankel and Jiao, more than 40 students will travel to Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington for an October 2-8 field experience. The six days are filled with a rich itinerary of events including growth management practices, state-of-the-art public transit, TOD’s, successful urban renewal, sustainability projects, wondrous public spaces, and presentations by local planners, public officials, developers, as well as faculty and students at the urban planning programs of Portland State University and University of Washington. Upon their return we will report on this trip.

“Tear-down City”
Professor Frankel has been quite active in the preservation of, and reinvestment in, our historic downtown residential and commercial neighborhoods. He has been leading a neighborhood effort to stop the scheduled demolitions in the historic districts and to set the City on a course to rehabilitating these buildings, or where demolition is appropriate to replace these structures. He has remonstrated through the National Council on Historic Preservation (as created by the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act) and initiated its involvement in the Section 106 review process, as the planned demolitions were to be executed with Federal funds. That review is coming to its conclusion with some degree of success for preservationists, including the designation of the McKinley neighborhood as an historic district, the rehabilitation of several historic homes and apartment buildings instead of their demolition in existing historic districts, and a “stay of execution” on all planned demolitions pending the efforts of Historic Landmarks and Frankel in restoring these assets. If you wish to engage in this endeavor, as many Historic Preservation students have already done, please contact Professor Frankel at bfrankel@bsu.edu.

Here is an excerpt from her review:

“The book’s scope and hierarchy of ideas is informative as each chapter unfolds along a logical, sequential flow answering first, the Why or the importance of the topic to planners; second, the What or historical perspective and key principles such as scales of urban design practice, including rules of thumb and guidelines; third, the Where or current projects, highlighted in grey and integrated into the reader’s path; fourth, the How or the design process with visual illustrations, (bubble diagrams, schematic plans, proposed site plan); fifth, the How or a community charrette process. Finally, the student is engaged in a practice as a young planner in Rivertown through problem-based learning exercises.”

Look for it in an upcoming edition of JPER.
Hamad Alsaiai
MURP 2010

Hamad is currently in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia where he was offered the position of lecturer in the Department of Urban Planning at King Saud University. After he graduated from Ball State University he went to the University of New Orleans for his PhD. However, he had to withdraw in the second semester to take advantage of the job opening in King Saud University in Riyadh. He plans to pursue his PhD in Urban Design in the near future and return to Riyadh to teach urban design at the university.