EWU Programmatic SLO Assessment

AY 2014-15 and "Closing the Loop" for AY 2013-14

Degree/Certificate: Masters of Urban and Regional Planning

Major/Option: Masters of Urban and Regional Planning
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Date: 11.10.15

Part I – Program SLO Assessment Report for 2014-15

Part I – for the 2014-15 academic year: Because Deans have been asked to create College-Level Synthesis Reports annually, the template has been slightly modified for a) clarity for Chairs and Directors, and b) a closer fit with what the Deans and Associate Deans are being asked to report.

1. **Student Learning Outcome**: The student performance or learning objective as published either in the catalog or elsewhere in your department literature.

    The MURP Urban and Regional Planning SLO includes two SLO statements that will be addressed in this effort: "**understand historical and contemporary planning practice, policy and processes based on knowledge of the relevant concepts and theorie**s;" and "**demonstrate skills needed to practice planning in a variety of venues in ways consistent with planning ethics**."

    The key focus for the last three years has been a combination of these two SLOs around Plan Making: "understand … contemporary planning practice, policy and processes based on knowledge of the relevant concepts and theories;" and "demonstrate the skills needed to practice planning in a variety of venues…" The faculty identified Plan Making as a critical framework for the skills needed for planning practice, and that our MURP program needed to refocus on the basic processes and skills of plan making, the core of our profession.

    During the PAB Accreditation Process (AY 2013-14) a Draft Mission and Goals approved. The mission and goal # 1 is centered on the basic skills and application of professional planning practice to local communities.

    > **Mission: The mission of the Urban and Regional Planning Programs at EWU is to provide quality professional planning education, research, and community service with an emphasis on problem solving at the local level.**

    > **Goal 1. Provide a quality applied professional planning education for both graduate and undergraduate students that emphasizes planning action at the local and regional level.**

    During the year (AY 2014-15) after our successful PAB reaccreditation, we continued to restructure our program with an emphasis on the Draft Strategic Plan, and identified Plan Making, the application of professional level planning practices and techniques, as a renewed focus for the EWU Planning Programs. Faculty identified the creation of a common text that best reflects a focus on these skills (Berke, P.R., Godschalk, D.R., Kaiser, J.K. and D.A,

Rodriguez. (2006). *Urban Land Use Planning, Fifth Edition*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press).

2. **Overall evaluation of progress on outcome:** Indicate whether or not the SLO has been met, and if met, to what level.

_____*SLO is met after changes resulting from ongoing assessments, referencing assessment results from the previous year to highlight revisions;*

XX_____*SLO is met, but with changes forthcoming;*

_____*SLO is met without change required*

3. **Strategies and methods:** Description of assessment method and choices, why they were used and how they were implemented.

a. A critical skill central to the practice of professional planning was the planning process and approach to problem identification, research and mapping, identification of alternatives, and implementation across the discipline from foundations in the natural environment, land use, transportation, urban design, economic and community development. Plan Making integrates theory and practice around how to approach development of plans, greatly enhanced by basic skills in planning graphic communication and design.

b. Recent changes in the practice of professional planning incorporates advanced computer graphic software packages to enable students to better conceptualize and illustrate data in the form of maps, posters, tables, and spatial data analysis, particularly Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

c. Two classes were selected as focus for improving and implementing Plan Making skills: PLAN 504 Planning Research Methods, and PLAN 502 Advanced Community Development. Major revisions for these classes were implemented. Specific foci for improve were:

   i. Upgrade to professional level reports (PLAN 504 Planning Research Methods II). PLAN 504 students completed a planning report document for assigned counties, "A Demographic, Social and Economic Report for _(assigned)____ County." During class, students learned the latest techniques to identify census and related data on-line, download and produce tables and graphs to represent the data, and to create a formal report including narrative and proper template for a professional planning report.

   ii. Produce professional level graphics presentation of projects in poster representations of planning maps, data, and results (PLAN 502 Advanced Community Development). This course incorporated completion of a Draft Neighborhood Plan as part of Plan Making.

d. Assessments were based on student final projects in each class.

e. In addition, to provide an integration and coordination across the curriculum, one text was identified as a resource and key component for each of the following classes:

PLAN 500 Planning Practice

PLAN 502 Advanced Community Development

PLAN 504 Planning Research Methods II: Demographic, Social and Economic Analysis

PLAN 506 Research Methods III: Synthesis Planning Project, Part I

PLAN 540 Land Use Planning

PLAN 550 Transportation Planning

PLAN 570 Environmental Planning

PLAN 590 Planning Studio: Synthesis Project Part II

f. Each course was to include readings from the common text, (Berke et al. 2006) and formalize the relation between planning sub-fields and the overall processes related to sustainable communities and sound environmental planning.

g. PLAN 506 (Fall) and PLAN 507 (Winter) were to be linked around a continuing planning project utilizing Burke et Al. (2006) as readings and a guide for implementation of a coordinated project.

4. **Observations gathered from data: Include findings and analyses based on the strategies and methods identified in item #3.**

   a. Findings:

      i. Textbook adoption: All faculty did not implement or fully implement the Burke et al. text as requested and modified the course to incorporate Plan Making. In some cases, previously used readings or materials substituted to cover the SLO, but did not result in the integration anticipated.

      ii. Courses that utilized the new text and Plan Making focus are:

         PLAN-502 Advanced Community Development

         PLAN-504 Research Methods II

         PLAN-540 Land Use Planning

         PLAN-550 Transportation Planning

      iii. For PLAN 502 six students participated in the final presentation centered on graphic presentation of spatial data on maps and Plan Making. One

student reflected excellent skills in Plan Making and graphics (16.7%), four reflected good skills (66.7%), and one (16.7%) was Fair.

    iv.   For PLAN 504, (16.7) six students successfully completed final reports on their assigned county Demographic, Social and Economic Profile. The assessment of this work was 50% Excellent and 50% Good.

        a.   Each plan was carefully edited and students responded to comments and feedback to produce a final report. These reports represented professional level skills in downloading and analysis of census and related on-line data with narrative description and graphic representation of the data. Student reports ranged from 30-50 pages.

        b.   All the reports successfully displayed skills required to write a professional report, and the skills to complete complex data download and analysis with appropriate tables and figures to further describe and represent US Census and related data. A final copy of each report was bound, and digital copies are posted as student products for this class on our Department Share Drive. Six of these reports were presented to the relevant county as a resource for planning.

    b.   <u>Analysis of Findings</u>

        i.   Both classes were revised to create more formal planning documents, maps, and posters of student research "needed to practice planning in a variety of venues in ways consistent with planning ethics."

           a.   The purpose of this effort was to increase the professional skills of students in graphical representation of plans and research, and to demonstrate professional skills in data analysis and writing a formal planning document.

           b.   Revisions in the curriculum led to new or expanded assignments, and student products from each class represented increased skills and application of professional planning techniques and graphic/written communication.

5.   ***What program changes will be made based on the assessment results?***

    a.   *Describe plans to improve student learning based on assessment findings (e.g., course content, course sequencing, curriculum revision, learning environment or student advising).*

        i.   The revisions to these two classes led to strong demonstration of core planning graphics representation and professional writing as basic

communication skills. The planning program assessment is to continue to expand computer graphics and GIS skills, along with written reports, but to be expanded around the concept of Plan Making. Future assessment will seek to link multiple courses around plan making that emphasizes process and content of plan making as central to our profession.

    ii. The coordinated adoption of one common text across multiple classes was designed to enhance the understanding of inter-relations between the topics in different classes in a context of planning theory and practice centered on sustainability, as reflective of the text. Each class incorporated required reading from the one text to emphasis basic planning theory and application around sustainability. Expanded discussion emphasized the inter-relations of specific topics to the overall plan making and plan development.

b. *Provide a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year.*

    i. For the upcoming year, we have again identified Plan Making to strengthen the skills needed to practice planning in ways consistent with planning ethics. We have identified a specific graduate course into which we would incorporate the Plan Making material– PLAN 503 (Methods I).

    ii. We also identified that the graphical aspects and Plan Making from PLAN 503 be explicitly utilized and expected in PLAN 502 Community Development, in order to enhance graphic and written communication skills and the application of the latest software in presentation and analysis of data and research in plans.

    iii. PLAN 540 Land Use Planning and PLAN 550 Transportation Planning will also incorporate Plan Making instruction and assignments including readings from Land Use Planning. Our capstone planning studio class, PLAN 506-507: Planning Studio will represent a final demonstration of student skills in Plan Making including graphic and written communication in the form of a professional plan developed around a field-based research project.

    iv. All classes will present consistent expectations for plan making to be reinforced and expanded in each class to reach professional skills as identified in the outcome.

6. *Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed and an evaluation of the assessment plan/process itself.*

      i.   Our revisions to the assessment process will assess skills in graphics and written communication for each class with Plan Making content, with the expectation that students will gain basic competencies during their first quarter in the program, and constantly build on those skills and competencies across the Plan Making courses through to the final Capstone course.

      ii.   Faculty identified additional cross-class interaction by inviting all faculty to participate in project-based classes at the beginning to review and comment on project/research proposals, to review progress at mid-term, and to review and critique final presentations/projects near the end of the quarter. This is based on the architecture and design field practice of "critiques" or crits. Assessment of student projects from each class and from the final Capstone plan should show advanced and more sophisticated and professional skills within the context of planning ethics across a variety of venues (scales or topics of research).

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NEW: PART II – CLOSING THE LOOP

FOLLOW-UP FROM THE 2013-14 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT

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In response to the university's accrediting body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, this section has been added. This should be viewed as a follow up to the previous year's findings. In other words, begin with findings from 2013-14, and then describe actions taken during 2014-15 to improve student learning along, provide a brief summary of findings, and describe possible next steps.

> PLEASE NOTE: The College-Level Synthesis report includes a section asking Deans to summarize which programs/certificates have demonstrated "closing-the-loop" assessments and findings based on the previous year's assessment report.

Working definition for closing the loop: Using assessment results to improve student learning as well as pedagogical practices. This is an essential step in the continuous cycle of assessing student learning. It is the collaborative process through which programs use evidence of student learning to gauge the efficacy of collective educational practices, and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning." Adapted 8.21.13 from http://www.hamline.edu/learning-outcomes/closing-loop.html.

1. **Student Learning Outcome(s) assessed for 2013-14**
   a. Catalog SLO: *Understand the different values and ethical standards affecting the practice of planning.*

2. **Strategies implemented during 2014-15 to improve student learning, based on findings of the 2013-14 assessment activities.**

   a. Students were presented with an overview of planning ethics and the legal frameworks of the open public meetings laws and appearance of fairness guidelines for elected and public officials in PLAN 500.

   b. Lectures and case studies of planning ethical issues were added to the curricula in PLAN 502 along with concepts of social equity and environmental justice within the planning profession.

   c. A final review of Planning Ethics as incorporated into the PLAN 508 Reflective Planning and the PLAN 590 Planning Studio class as a result of initial steps to strengthen student awareness and knowledge of planning ethics as central to our planning profession and the practice of planning.

   d. Students also participated in the Washington Chapter APA Conference (Spokane) and the National APA Conference (Seattle) where they were encouraged to look for ethics and ethical issues across our profession.

3. **Summary of results (may include comparative data or narrative; description of changes made to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc.): Describe the effect of the changes towards improving student learning and/or the learning environment.**

   a. Description of the AICP Code of Ethics represented in a ppt presentation and class discussions were incorporated into PLAN 502, along with presentations on equity and social/environmental justice, both of which have "policy statements" from the American Planning Association.

   b. Presentations at the opening session of the National APA Conference in Spring, 2015, attended by 4 graduate planning students, had Mr. Ron Sims discuss the problems of defining (and limiting) people by their zip codes, and the compelling need to address that problem within our profession.

   c. Students in their PLAN 508 spent one class period with a lecture on the AICP Code of ethics and its relation to the practice of professional planning for individual planners and the profession. All students successfully completed an assignment discussing ethics in relation to an applied ethical issue.

   d. The PLAN 502 Planning Studio class discussed the AICP Code of Ethics and its implications for the project they completed.

   e. A good knowledge of the planning profession's AICP Code of Ethics and its importance to our profession. Students successfully answered the question: Who are we responsible for in carrying out professional planning. The answer is "the general public" as the first aspiration of our Code of Ethics.

   f. During Fall, 2014, working with the Inland Empire Section (Spokane region) of the APA we hosted a 1.5 hour ethics workshop led by EWU Philosophy Professor Kevin Decker, and several graduate students and faculty participated in that workshop.

   g. Finally, all graduate students complete a one-hour oral exam with a range of questions regarding ethics. In previous years a number of students did not display a clear understanding of ethics. Of the graduating students, all displayed a good knowledge of the AICP Code of Ethics and its relation to the planning profession, and four had excellent knowledge of ethics. This was a significant improvement from previous years, and Ethics as a component of each of these classes will be maintained into the future.

4. **What further changes to curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, etc. are projected based on closing-the-loop data, findings and analysis?**

   a. We continue to formalize curricula on the AICP Code of Ethics, seeking to engage practicing planners and students with a better understanding of planning ethics, and

to present critical issues our profession has taken policy position on including environmental justice, social equity, sustainability, local food.

b. We will continue to update and expand presentations in our introductory classes, reinforced throughout our curriculum, and add a more formal presentation and assessment of planning ethics in PLAN 508 Reflective Planning.