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INTRODUCTION

This strategic plan was the result of a day-long retreat held at the Wyndham Resort in Deerfield Beach on September 12th. It was an open forum consisting of tenure-track, instructional, and adjunct faculty, current and former students, staff, and representatives from the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions.

The attendees were:

Steve Bourassa, Professor
Eric Dumbaugh, Associate Professor and Director
Nicole Estevez, Project Manager, Abacoa Project
Linda Friar, Adjunct Professor
Nicole Galehouse, Student & President, Planning Society
Peter Henn, Esq., Instructor
Yanmei Li, Associate Professor
Sylvia Miller, Student Representative

Sherryl Muriente, Alumna and Instructor
Diana Mitsova, Associate Professor
Anthony Olivieri, Alumnus and Instructor
Alejandra Quintero, Executive Secretary
Jesse Saginor, Associate Professor
Frank Schnidman, Director, Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions
Asher Soldwedel, Coordinator, Visual Planning Technology Lab
We aspire to cultivate future leaders and be an innovator in the creation, design, and implementation of solutions to the urban, environmental, and economic challenges of the 21st century.
The School of Urban and Regional Planning is committed to conducting the education, research, training, and community engagement needed to prepare planning professionals to address the urban, environmental, and economic challenges of the 21st century. This includes a focus on three specific areas:

1. Creating vibrant, livable, healthy, and equitable communities;
2. Ensuring that our communities and ecosystems are sustainable and resilient, and;
3. Developing interdisciplinary solutions, bridging the public and private sectors, that are able to overcome the policy, fiscal, and regulatory barriers to sustainable, economically-viable development.
GOALS, OBJECTIVES & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOALS OVERVIEW

1. Prepare current and future professionals to address the urban and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

2. Develop scholarly and professional innovations that advance the health, sustainability, and livability of the built and natural environments.

3. Provide service to the scholarly and professional community in advancing critical planning issues.

4. Ensure that our facilities adequately support the school’s teaching, research, and service mission.
Goal 1 Prepare current and future professionals to address the urban and environmental challenges of the 21st century.

Objective CONTINUOUS QUALITY ENHANCEMENT
Performance measures:
- STUDENT SATISFACTION FROM EXIT SURVEYS
- ALUMNI SATISFACTION FROM POST-GRADUATION SURVEYS

Objective TRAIN THE NEXT GENERATION OF PLANNING LEADERS
Performance measures:
- # OF INCOMING MURP STUDENTS
- GPA/GRE OF INCOMING MURP STUDENTS
- AICP PASS RATES OF GRADUATING MURP STUDENTS

Objective PROVIDE CONTINUING EDUCATION SERVICES TO CURRENT PROFESSIONALS
Performance measures:
- # OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
- # OF LECTURES/LECTURE SERIES
- # OF ANNUAL ATTENDEES AT SURP EVENTS

Objective DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGING AND INNOVATIVE PLANNING TOPICS
Performance measures:
- # AND DESCRIPTION OF TOPICS (E.G., CREATIVE PLACEMAKING, FOOD SYSTEMS)
Develop scholarly and professional innovations that advance the health, sustainability, and livability of the built and natural environments.

**Goal 2**

**Objective**

**Lead Scholarly Research**

**Performance measures:**

- # of articles in premier journals
- # of articles in other journals
- # of externally-funded projects
- # of scholarly recognitions
- $ amount of externally-funded projects

**Objective**

**Lead Practice Through Exhibits, Civic Engagement, and Demonstration Projects**

**Performance measures:**

- # of projects or exhibits
- Project impact:
  - Number of people engaged (attending or reached by media)
  - Extent of media coverage (# news items, by media type)
  - Lasting impacts (# of programs/groups resulting from project)

**Objective**

**Disseminate Knowledge to the Scholarly and Professional Communities**

**Performance measures:**

- # keynote/invited lectures
- # conference lectures
- # other lectures
- # of active memberships in scholarly/professional groups
- # of citations in public/popular media
- # of externally-funded projects
- # of scholarly/professional recognitions
- $ amount of externally-funded projects
Goal 3

Provide service to the scholarly and professional community in advancing critical planning issues.

Objective

**ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Performance measures:

- # OF ORGANIZATIONS
- # OF LEADERSHIP POSITIONS
- # OF JOURNAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS
- # OF AD-HOC MANUSCRIPT/PROPOSAL REVIEWS

Objective

**PARTICIPATE IN LOCAL PLANNING GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES**

Performance measures:

- # OF GROUPS/ACTIVITIES
Goal 4  Ensure that our facilities adequately support the school’s teaching, research, and service mission.

Objective
CREATE A DESIGN STUDIO COMPARABLE TO THAT WHICH FORMERLY EXISTED ON THE FORT LAUDERDALE CAMPUS

Objective
ENSURE THAT OUR CLASSES ARE TAUGHT IN PHYSICALLY-INVITING FACILITIES

Objective
PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORKSPACE FOR STUDENTS

Objective
CREATE AN INVITING ATMOSPHERE IN THE MAIN OFFICE
STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS ANALYSIS
STRENGTHS

The School has a diverse, well-rounded faculty that has expertise in housing, transportation, real estate, land development, and environmental planning. Indeed, with the combination of our recent tenure-line and instructional hires, the faculty is stronger than it has been at any point in its history.

While we have the faculty needed to provide a broad education to our students, the School has a truly unique cluster of strength in three areas. The first is the cluster of faculty talent in the areas of real estate, land development, and housing. Our faculty members include both leading academics and experienced developers, a combination that positions us to take a leading role in the development of planning strategies that merge the strengths of the public and private sectors, an area which we expect will be increasingly important to the future success of our cities and regions.

Our second is a cluster of strength in the arena of placemaking and civic engagement. We currently bring together faculty with expertise in the arenas of architecture, engineering, and planning to develop new methods for engaging the public in envisioning the design and use of the public realm. We have further begun to develop new means for empirically measuring how design interventions influence the use of the public realm, measures that are ultimately intended to allow livability considerations to compete with automobile-oriented metrics like level-of-service in the planning and programming of capital infrastructure.

The third area of strength is in environmental planning, particularly with respect to the areas of climate change and environmental restoration. In addition to our full-time and adjunct faculty, we also have the ability to work with other faculty members throughout Florida Atlantic University with expertise in these areas.

In addition to our research strengths, SURP is also an innovator in the use of technology in planning. SURP houses the Visual Planning Technology (VPT) Lab and Production Studio, which provide students with access to state-of-the-practice computing facilities and software applications and has a full-time coordinator committed to ensuring students have access to the data and technology needed to be at the leading edge of planning practice.

A particularly unique strength of the School—though this perhaps more rightly falls under the area of opportunity—is that we are the only accredited urban planning program in the state of Florida that is located in an urban area. This allows us to provide our students with experiences and career opportunities that are unavailable at our major competitors: Florida State and the University of Florida. Moreover, there are no competing programs in the South Florida tri-county region, home to 5 regional planning entities, 100 municipalities, and 6 million people.
WEAKNESSES

The School has undergone a great deal of transition over the last several years, including a nearly-complete transition of its faculty, a forced campus relocation and a period of uncertainty about whether the University would continue the program. While these changes have ultimately allowed us to strengthen the program, several weaknesses remain. The first is that the relocation from Fort Lauderdale to Boca Raton has made it difficult for commuter students from Miami-Dade County—historically a major source of our students—to pursue planning degrees at FAU.

Second, while we have greatly improved the quality of our main office space—particularly the reception area—during the relocation from Fort Lauderdale, our instructional space is vastly inferior. Of particular concern is the loss of our design studio space. Immediately prior to the forced relocation, we had developed a state-of-the-practice design studio consisting of configurable tables and high end computing facilities (which are now part of our production studio), we lost the instructional space as a result of the move. We now lack classroom space that can be used for design-related projects.

Similarly, we lack a faculty member whose primary area of expertise is urban design. While we have faculty expertise in physical planning and architecture, we need a faculty member with expertise in the areas of site planning and urban design, areas that many of the employers of our graduates have indicated is desirable.

A particularly critical weakness is the small size of our faculty. While our overall teaching and research productivity is excellent, we lack the faculty resources needed to sustain this level of productivity over time. The ongoing elimination of administrative personnel and growing number of university mandates thus falls particularly hard on small programs such as ours which, at full capacity, has 8 full-time faculty members. We need the resources necessary to ensure the research productivity of our faculty, particularly in dealing with the growing levels of administrative demands placed on faculty at FAU, of particular importance is support in marketing our academic programs, as well as the scholarly achievements of our faculty.

Finally, our budget is entirely inadequate to the task of developing a world-class planning program. As a result of ongoing budget cuts, we currently receive an annual operating budget of $32,000 to cover all of the school’s facility, travel, development, and technological needs. These budget cuts are greatly exacerbated by the service charges levied by administrative units in the university, which are greatly above those that which could be obtained from the private sector.
The School’s location in the South Florida region is one of its greatest strengths. The School has a historic legacy of being a leader in planning issues, not only locally, but nationally. The School emerged out of the work of growth management pioneer John DeGrove, who, during his tenure at FAU between 1972 and 2000, positioned FAU as a leader in the areas of land use planning and growth management. An entire generation of leaders were created through the Environment and Growth Management (EGM) program that he oversaw, many of whom remain in South Florida and currently occupy leadership positions in planning agencies throughout the region. Re-establishing these connections is a key opportunity. An advisory board was proposed as one mechanism for doing so.

Similarly, the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions, which was created by John DeGrove and has a legacy of being an apolitical, non-partisan source of planning expertise, is another untapped opportunity. While the center went dormant following the departure of Jim Murley in 2008, the reactivation of the Center creates an opportunity to reposition SURP and its faculty as being key to the long-term success of the region.

SURP is uniquely positioned to be a leader in addressing the needs of the developing world. Between now and 2050, the urbanized population is expected to more than double to 6.5 billion urban residents. Accommodating this growth will necessitate building the equivalent of 437 New York Cities in 35 years. Much of this growth will occur in Latin America, which is tightly linked to South Florida. As the only urban planning program in South Florida, SURP is uniquely positioned to be the leading planning program for Florida, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The School’s relocation to the Boca Raton campus allows us to develop partnerships with allied units on the main campus that were unavailable while we were at the satellite campus in Boca. By leveraging strengths in the areas of public administration, engineering, geosciences, and environmental sciences, among others, the School is able to offer a depth and breadth of specializations that were simply unavailable in Fort Lauderdale.

An exciting opportunity is President Kelley’s interests in economic development and the physical planning of the campus and environs. The School and its faculty are uniquely able to help the president achieve these aims. This, combined with our unique opportunity to leverage our regional context to distinguish SURP as a leading planning program, places us in an excellent position to attract resources. Our model should be the Toulan School of Planning at Portland State, one of FAU’s peer universities.

Relatedly, President Kelley’s interest in developing the 20th avenue corridor (in which SURP is participating) creates an opportunity to promote the idea of a studio facility in the new development,
thereby generating foot traffic along the corridor. One means of encouraging this is the idea of creating a broader “student innovation incubator” as part of the development.

Another opportunity is the Board of Governors emphasis on student success, which is to say, student retention and graduation. While FAU fared very poorly in these measures (leading to a university-wide budget cut), SURP—and especially BUD—is likely ahead of most units in the university in retaining and graduating its students. By capturing accurate data on our graduation and retention rates and comparing them against other units in the college and university, we are likely positioned to attract new university resources.

SURP is particularly well-poised to distinguish itself in the area of undergraduate research. Sherryl Muriente and Jesse Saginor work closely in various capacities with FAU’s Undergraduate Research Initiative (URI); Diana Mitsova serves as the College’s representative to the University Undergraduate Honors committee.

Faculty and students both observed that the student experience is less than it should be. This pertains both to the classrooms in which our classes are held, as well as to the common areas accessible to students.

**THREATS**

Several potential employers of our students have expressed concerns about the skills that our students—particularly the undergraduates—have upon entering the workforce. While we have little control over our incoming majors, we need to ensure that the SURP imprint is not degraded by graduating underperforming students. Unfortunately, this runs in direct conflict with the current university mandate for student success.

The political climate of Florida, which has provided only one nominal raise for faculty members over the last seven years, is also a major threat. As the only promise of salary advancement for faculty members comes from the receipt of outside job offers, FAU has created a culture that encourages its most talented faculty members to pursue other positions. While SURP has been able to hire extremely talented faculty members in recent years, current university practices have created an environment that allow more motivated universities to hire off our faculty.
Following the SWOT analysis, participants were asked to detail critical actions confronting the School. Given the widespread turnover of faculty and the recently relocations from Fort Lauderdale to Boca Raton, it is perhaps unsurprising that much of the discussion was focused on how to develop and enhance the culture of the School for students, faculty, and stakeholders, as well as the related issue of ensuring that our facilities support this culture. Education, engagement, and communication and marketing were the other interrelated issues that emerged.
CULTURE

There was a shared consensus that the culture of the School could be improved. Three recommendations emerged:

1. Have faculty present short (10 minute) presentations of their research. Many of the participants noted that they were unfamiliar with each other’s work. This limits opportunities for mutual cross-promotion and is a barrier to developing the collective strength of the faculty. Other ideas that emerged were annual research symposiums, similar to those held at Texas A&M.

2. Replace the student orientation with a dynamic kick-off event. It was observed by students and faculty alike that our fall orientation is a dull exercise in presenting information. Two specific suggestions were presented. The first was a social reception for incoming students. The second was a kick-off project that, at orientation, challenges students across programs to undertake an exercise in team building, such as the urban interventions exercise used by Sherryl Muriente.

3. Offer an introductory “capstone course,” co-taught by Henn and Muriente. This idea was introduced humorously to highlight the differences between Henn and Muriente in planning. Yet the quality of the banter between them made it evident that this would be an entertaining and dynamic opportunity to introduce students to the dimensions of planning.
1. Obtain classroom space in Boca appropriate for studio courses. This was one of the most important issues identified in the retreat. Multiple strategies for doing so were discussed, including sharing space with other units within the college, such as Architecture and Social Work, both of which have classrooms that can support studio courses, as well as pursuing dedicated studio space as part of President Kelley’s 20th Street Initiative. It was also proposed that the School seek a fabrication lab for urban design. This would be a wonderful addition to our facilities, and one that needs further exploration.

2. Enliven the faculty suite. This included adding color to the suite. It was proposed that we enlist a local artist to conduct a visioning exercise with faculty and students to develop a mural for the suite.

3. Provide flexible space for students to work and interact. A major shortcoming of the student experience in Boca, as compared to Fort Lauderdale, is the absence of formal space for students to meet, congregate, and engage in the development of student culture. The presence of such space near the School offices is essential for developing student culture. Two spaces are available: the first is open space in the departmental suite. The second is the space in the current “production studio.” In the case of the latter, it would be possible to relocate some (or all) of the computers, while maintaining the room’s instructional capacities. This issue will be presented to faculty and students for consideration.
EDUCATION

There was general, though not universal, agreement that our curriculum should be enhanced. Of particular concern was how poorly our undergraduates have performed on the AICP exam, as well as the perception that our graduates require additional, on-the-job training in order to be effective practitioners. Also of concern was a perceived lack of cohesion between the courses constituting our three academic programs.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of the School’s curriculum. Next to the inadequacies of our facilities, this was the issue that emerged most frequently during the retreat. Dr. Bourassa indicated his willingness to undertake this exercise during the 2015/2016 academic year.

2. Provide students with opportunities for study at locations outside of South Florida. The School has historically conducted “study abroad” courses that provided students with the opportunity to visit other countries. The faculty agreed on the value of this program and it was proposed that, rather than necessitating that students undertake the expense of traveling overseas, that the program could also be used to explore other cities or regions in the United States as well. This can be achieved either through a formal class, as was done by FAU in the past, or as part of an existing courses, such as is done at Georgia Tech. It was further suggested that it would be useful to pair this activity up with a conference at which SURP would like a presence. This issue will be explored in greater detail over the upcoming year.

3. Engage students in planning conferences. The School has traditionally done little to encourage student participation in planning conferences, wither at the state or national levels. We need to develop a more formal program of encouraging student participation in these conferences. Our student representatives observed that we were the only planning school in Florida that lacked a booth at the most recent Florida APA conference.

4. Expand undergraduate research opportunities. Sherryl Muriente and Jesse Saginor serve in various capacities on the University’s Undergraduate research initiative; Diana Mitsova serves on the University’s honors committee. Collectively, this creates a unique opportunity to enhance the undergraduate experience through scholarly work.
ENGAGEMENT

There was a broadly-shared, though not unanimous, view that the School should seek to engage the South Florida region to enhance its research and educational opportunities.

1. Re-establish the Center for Urban and Environmental Solutions (CUES) as a source for applied research. CUES has historically been the mechanism through which FAU faculty has engaged planning and development issues in South Florida. We are currently preparing to re-launch CUES in 2014, which will include a formal event and the public issuance of the results of the South Florida Regional Survey.

2. Build upon the linkages between CUES and the John Scott Daley Institute of Governments (IOG) to train planners and public officials on key issues confronting the planning profession. This effort is similarly underway, with the first course, in urban food systems, scheduled to be offered in October of 2014.

3. Provide summer instruction on urban planning to high school students in the region. Most high school students are unfamiliar with urban planning. Faculty will explore opportunities for engaging high school students in planning issues in the upcoming years.

4. Develop a professional advisory board. A professional advisory board was proposed as a means of engaging our numerous regional stakeholders in the oversight of the program and ensuring that our curriculum is preparing our students for professional success.
ACTION ITEMS

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING

It was agreed that the School, College, and University does a poor job of communicating its strengths to the broader community, or even to members of the School itself. We currently rely on email listservs to communicate critical information to students, such as job opportunities. We do nothing to communicate our accomplishments to alumni and the broader planning community.

1. Compile listserv postings into a “planning digest.” Rather than barraging students with multiple emails, we should instead create a scheduled forum for the collection and distribution of this information.

2. Develop an external communications program for the School. At present, all external communications of faculty activities are handled on an ad-hoc basis, given the abilities and interested of individual faculty mechanisms. Given the absence of a communications professional, we need to develop a standardized mechanism for promoting the accomplishments of our students and faculty.
NEW FACULTY HIRES

We also detailed the faculty lines we sought for the School. We anticipate two new hires in the upcoming year, leading in the following descriptions:

1. We seek a faculty member with expertise in the areas of urban design, physical planning, and community engagement. The ability to instruct students in the development and review of site plans is especially welcomed.

2. For the second position, we seek a faculty member who is able to build faculty strengths in one of two areas of relevance to South Florida. The first is in the area of urbanization, particularly as it relates to Latin America and the Caribbean. This may include areas such as economics, infrastructure planning and finance, or disasters and displacement. The second is in the areas of planning for tourism and entertainment.
SURP Strategic Planning Retreat

Date: September 12
Location: Wyndham Deerfield Beach Resort

Invited: Steve Bourassa, Chelsea Byrnes, Lisa Colmenares, Eric Dumbaugh, Nicole Estevez, Linda Friar, Nicole Galehouse, Peter Henn, Erin Kelley, Yanmei Li, Sylvia Miller, Sherryl Muriente, Diana Mitsova, John Norquist, Anthony Olivieri, Alejandra Quintero, Jesse Saginor, Frank Schnidman, Asher Soldwedel, Michael Stamm

9:00  Continental Breakfast
9:30  Vision and Mission (45 Minutes)
  • Vision: What do we aspire to?
  • Mission: What is it that we do?
10:15  SWOT Analysis (120 Minutes)
  • Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, threats (25 Minutes each)
  • Summary Discussion (20 Minutes)
12:15  Lunch Break (45 Minutes)
1:00  Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures (120 Minutes)
  • Goal Articulation (Teaching, Research, Service, Other) (45 Minutes)
  • Goal Elaboration – Objectives and Performance Measures (75 Minutes)
3:00  Key Actions and Next Steps (30 Minutes)
  • Faculty Opening
  • Other
3:30  Wrap-Up (and an opportunity to share additional thoughts and recommendations)
4:00  Adjourn
**Vision**
We aspire to be a global leader in the creation, design and implementation of solutions to the urban, environmental, and economic challenges of the 21st century, as well as the premier planning program in the State of Florida.

**JN:** We aspire to be a global leader in the creation of design solutions that enhance economic value while addressing environmental and community challenges, as well as being recognized as the premier planning program in Florida.

**Mission**
The School of Urban and Regional Planning is committed to conducting the research, training, and outreach needed to prepare planning professionals to address the urban and environmental challenges of the 21st century. This includes a focus on three specific areas:

1. Ensuring that our communities and ecosystems will be resilient to the challenges of global climate change;
2. Creating vibrant, livable, and equitable communities, and;
3. Developing the tools, practices, and policies that will allow our cities and regions to be financially self-sustaining in a period of ongoing federal decline. (JN: decline in federal resources?)

**JN:** I suggest as 4) or to replace 3):
Identify policy and regulatory obstacles to sustainable urban development. (Discussion: for example Federal and state housing programs tend to promote separate use zoning which can distort the real estate market and Fed and state highway programs direct tax dollars toward infrastructure that can undermine the development of walk-able urban places. With Federal resources reduced by economic and political circumstances FAU can lead American universities in identifying strategies that efficiently achieve both environmental improvement and economic gain. Also as FAU seeks to provide leadership in planning within Florida it is important to reach out to other departments and entities within the Florida University system. For example the business schools, particularly the real estate programs can gain from and aid FAU SURP. The engineering programs also should be sought out, particularly the transportation and water related engineering programs. Also FDOT. You’re no doubt already doing some or all of these things, but I think they’re really important activities.)