



**Internal Academic Review 2007-2008
School of Urban and Regional Planning
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate**

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the School of Urban and Regional Planning (SURP) is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of SURP and respectfully

Human, Physical and Financial Resources

SURP is implementing a five-year strategic plan “Building on Excellence” approved in 2005, to increase graduate enrolment from 48 to 66, increase the faculty complement from 5.0 to 6.3 FTE and stabilize its operating budget, and a new Director is in place. In the best urban planning tradition, the School has grown physically by intensification rather than outward expansion! Efficiencies were gained by using compact work stations consolidation of offices, and extensive use of recycled furniture. SURP is implementing a strategic plan to make its finances more sustainable, through tuition increases, increased enrolment, and the replacement of retiring senior faculty with hires at a junior level.

Attachments:

Review Team Report

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**Internal Academic Review of the
School of Urban and Regional Planning
Queen's University**

September 2008

CONFIDENTIAL

September 5, 2008

Dr. Patrick Deane
Vice-Principal (Academic), and Chair
Internal Academic Review Committee
Queen's University

Dear Dr. Deane,

On behalf of the Review Team for the internal review of the School of Urban and Regional Planning, I am pleased to attach our review Report. The work of the Review Team was guided in its work by the Senate *Internal Academic Review* document.

We trust that the Report will prove beneficial in the work of the IARC in its review and assessment of the School of Urban and Regional Planning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Chaykowski". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Chaykowski" clearly legible.

Richard Chaykowski
Chair
Review Team

1. Introduction: Scope and Process of the Review

The Review Team (Appendix A) for the internal academic review of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University conducted its academic review in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Senate *Internal Academic Review* document.

The Review Team evaluated the overall quality of the SURP and its programs, including the specific dimensions of scholarship and research, teaching and the learning environment, and service to the University and broader academic community, the profession and the community.

The Review Team conducted its work in the late fall of 2007 and Winter academic term of 2008. In the course of its work, the Review Team undertook:

- § Periodic meetings of the Review Team;
- § A meeting with the External Consultants (Dr. Dandekar and Dr. Skelton; Appendix B) during the consultants’ site visit;
- § A formal meeting with graduate students (approx. 15) in the SURP;
- § A meeting with the Acting Director of the SURP, Dr. David Gordon.

In its analysis and in arriving at its conclusions, the Review Team relied upon:

- § the SURP Self Study Report (USS Report);
- § the Report of the External Consultants (November 25, 2007) (EC Report);
- § the Comments on the SURP IAR Consultants’ report by Dean Deakin (February 1, 2008);
- § an Update on SURP events and activities

2. SURP Outcomes

(i) Overall Program Objectives and Outcomes

The SURP offers a two-year program leading to the Master of Urban and Regional Planning Degree (MPL). The overall objective of the SURP as articulated by the School is “... to produce competent and skilled planning professionals grounded in critical scholarship and learning.” USS Report p. 9.

The SURP offers three areas of concentration in its degree, including: (i) Land Use and Real Estate Development; (ii) Housing and Human Services; and (iii) Environmental Services. The main objectives include relating knowledge and action through critical study of urban and regional planning theories, emphasizing multi-disciplinary approaches to study, and focusing on issues from the perspective of community interests (Chapter 2 of USS Report). The view of the students is that, among the three streams of study, “land use” is dominant.

3. Teaching and Curriculum of the SURP Program

SURP is to be commended for employing innovative teaching strategies such as modules in courses, case studies, and other applied learning opportunities. The students appear satisfied with the teaching of most courses, and USAT scores are high. Students also perceive the links between faculty research and teaching, as well as expressed strong satisfaction with the support for student research by teachers.

Several major program strengths were identified by students including:

(i) The Faculty. Accessibility of

(ii) There was some concern expressed by students that all three streams of the program are not equally supported by the teaching staff. The view was that the environmental and housing and human services streams both need more Faculty to offer adequate teaching and supervision to students. Students are “diverted” to the land use and real estate stream because of the lack of faculty resources for the other two streams. The idea of having champions or leads for each stream was seen as having merit. For the human resources stream, the School is building linkages to other associated programs in order to strengthen the course offerings available to the SURP students (especially Policy Studies).

(iii) The USS Report notes the value of interdisciplinary studies for SURP, and points out linkages with Civil Engineering, Environmental Studies and Policy Studies. This is to be commended; however the Review Team concludes that more such linkages could be explored, especially to enhance the environmental and social streams.

(iv) Some students noted that there could be further strengthening of the linkages between the SURP and the City of Kingston (even beyond the successes it has enjoyed up until the present).

Overall, with regard to the teaching program, the external consultants characterized it as “high quality,” “sound,” and as “one of the strongest programs in Canada” (EC Report p. 2). Moreover, the curriculum was viewed as providing “a good grounding for professional planning work” (EC Report p. 6). Teaching was characterized as being “seriously executed” (p. 8) while the faculty was judged to be “collegial, supportive, deeply committed to its students and takes the teaching component of its mission seriously.” (p.4)

The Review Team concurs with this assessment and considers the teaching and curriculum of the SURP to be of high quality. The challenges noted above are manageable and addressing them would simply further strengthen the program.

4. Equity

As noted by the external consultants, up until recently, SURP enjoyed a reasonably diverse faculty complement. However, recent retirements and an extended sick leave have seriously undermined this. We agree with the external consultants that SURP should be strongly encouraged to devise a strategy to enhance the diversity of its faculty through the two scheduled hires that are anticipated. There may also be a further opportunity through the search for a new Director, who would be scheduled to start July 1, 2009.

While an equity strategy in regards to appointments is not evident in the USS Report, it was apparent through our discussion with the Acting Director, Prof. David Gordon, that SURP is well aware of the need to be pro-active on this issue. The Review Team also agrees with the point made by the external consultants, in discussion with them, about the desirability of faculty diversity as reflected in different innovative approaches to urban planning that attracted students in other comparable school.

In relation to equity and diversity among the student body, the external consultants suggest that more could be done to enhance ethnic and racial diversity. This is a positive suggestion that the Review Team supports.

The Review Team also notes that SURP has achieved a high degree of gender balance within the student body. It should also be noted that the students themselves expressed satisfaction with the fact that SURP attracts a diverse range of students, especially in relation to academic and professional backgrounds, a situation that promotes important types of learning and sharing both inside and outside of the classroom.

(ii) Physical Resources

The SURP occupies most of the fifth (top) floor of the Policy Studies Building. In addition to space for administrative offices and faculty offices, students share office space. There is a dedicated classroom that accommodates much of the instruction needs, as well as access to computer labs. SURP students also have access to facilities in departments with which SURP partners, such as Geography (e.g., the GIS lab). Study space and significant academic resources relevant to urban and regional planning are available to SURP through the main Queen's University library system, including books and monographs, reference materials, journals, and maps, government supported data,

6. Societal Impact

The services provided by SURP to the broader community are extensive and have considerable positive impact. These service activities include:

- § The National Executive Forum on Public Property;
- § Executive Seminars on Corporate and Investment Real Estate;
- § The China Projects;
- § The Queen's Fudan Collaboration;
- § The Ambassador's Forum;
- § A strong and active working relationship with the OPPI and the CPI and with the broader planning profession;
- § Creating linkages with local communities, through substantive activities such as class projects and faculty involvement in local planning issues;

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The Review Team concludes that, taken together, these activities create a positive learning environment and constructive opportunities for SURP students, contribute financial support and stability to the School, and enhance the external profile of the SURP program and Queen's. The Review Team therefore concurs with the overall

7. Overall School and Program Objectives and Achievements

The SURP seeks to maintain a balance between its core missions of offering an applied professional Master level degree in urban and regional planning that meets professional accreditation requirements, and conducting research and professional work in the field, thereby fulfilling its goal of producing academic as well as professional outputs. The vision of the SURP “...is to become a leading planning school in North America, with particular strength in specialized areas, to be recognized and competitive among the best” (USS Report p. 78).

The Review Team notes that the external consultants were particularly well situated to comparatively evaluate the performance of the SURP along the key dimensions of teaching and the curriculum, research and the professional status of the SURP.

As noted in the report above, the external consultants characterized the program as “high quality” and as “one of the strongest programs in Canada” and that the curriculum was provided “a good grounding for professional planning work” (EC Report p. 6). In summary, the external consultants concluded:

“...through the structuring of its core curriculum, and its entrepreneurial activities ... it [SURP]has established its reputation as a grounded and competent program which is attracting quality students and providing them planning training of high quality.” (ECC Report p. 3)

In addition, the faculty was judged to be collegial, supportive, and committed to the students.

