EWU Programmatic SLO Assessment
AY 2014-15 and "Closing the Loop" for AY 2013-14
Degree: Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning

Major/Option: Bachelor of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning
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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 BA Urban and Regional Planning SLO includes "… **possesses the 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 the first component of this SLO, students gaining proficiency in 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 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 were developed by faculty and reviewed by the Professional Advisory Committee (PAC). T he mission and Goal # 1 center on the basic skills and application of professional planning practice to local communities.

   > **Program 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 implementing the Strategic Plan, and identified Plan Making, the application of professional level planning practices and techniques, as a renewed focus for the EWU Planning Programs.

   In support of this effort, 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, to 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 data, particularly Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

    c. Two classes were selected to revise and update the curriculum presented to upgrade professional level reports (PLAN 301 Planning Research Methods) and to produce professional level graphics presentation of projects in poster representation of planning maps, data, and results (PLAN 300 Planning Presentation Techniques). Major revisions for these classes were implemented. Assessment methods were based on student final projects in each class.

    d. For PLAN 301, 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.

    e. In PLAN 300 students were introduced to graphic design software (In-design, Geographical Information Systems-GIS), and their final assignment was to create a graphic presentation that assessed field research in an illustrated poster with narrative and analysis.

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

Email report to your Dean and Helen Bergland (hbergland@ewu.edu) by November 2, 2015 | Questions? 509-359-4305

PLAN 261 Community Development

PLAN 271 Professional Planning Practice

PLAN 300 Presentation Graphics

PLAN 496 GIS for Planners (experimental class)

PLAN 430 Environmental Planning

PLAN 440 Land Use Planning

PLAN 450 Transportation Planning

PLAN 490 Capstone Planning Studio

Each course was to include readings from the common text, and formalize the relation between planning sub-fields and the overall processes related to sustainable communities and sound environmental grounding.

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

   a. Findings

      i. Class projects from PLAN 300 and PLAN 301 were assessed by faculty, and products were put on display and made available on our Department Share Drive.

      ii. For PLAN 300 seven students submitted posters. All five (71%) were rated very good or excellent, and successfully met the objective for students to utilize advanced software to create "state of the art" graphic presentations of field research and plans. The remaining students, 2 (29%) did good, and met the expectations, while there were no students who did not successfully complete this assignment. The projects (large format graphic map/posters) were placed on display at both Isle Hall and our EWU Planning Studio as representative of skills needed to practice planning consistent with professional planning expectations and consistent with planning ethics.

      iii. For PLAN 300 eleven students successfully completed final reports on their assigned county Demographic, Social and Economic Profile. 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. All eleven 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 county as a resource for planning.

    b.   Analysis of findings

        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."

       ii.   In PLAN 300, the emphasis was on advanced graphics skills and application of software programs to create displays representative of research and the technical skills to download and complete analysis of data creating tables, figures, and narrative description to form a professional level report.

      iii.   Findings are that 7 students in PLAN 300 successfully completed graphics assignments that represented field research utilizing advanced graphics software.

      iv.   For PLAN 301 all eleven students successfully completed professional quality final reports on assigned counties as "A Demographic, Social and Economic Profile" for that County. 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.

       v.   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 identified Plan Making to strengthen the skills needed to practice planning in ways consistent with planning ethics. We have identified courses throughout our curriculum that will incorporate expanded "Plan Making" skills and practice.

ii. Those courses are PLAN 261 Community Development, which will include a field-based project and new graphic communication instruction and readings from Land Use Planning.

iii. PLAN 300 and PLAN 301 will also be enhanced to incorporate Plan Making into the course instruction to continue to expand graphic and written communication skills and the application of the latest software in presentation and analysis of data and research in plans.

iv. PLAN 440 Land Use Planning and PLAN 450 Transportation Planning will also incorporate Plan Making instruction and assignments including readings from Land Use Planning.

v. Our Capstone Planning Studio Class, PLAN 490 Capstone: 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.

vi. 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. Key courses with Plan Making content will be offered in both our first (junior) year and second (senior) year courses.

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

a. 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 plan.

b. 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).

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. A new Strategic Plan was adopted by the Planning Programs by the faculty

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

   a. In PLAN 271, 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.

   b. In PLAN 261, lectures and case studies of planning ethical issues were added to the curricula along with concepts of social equity and environmental justice within the planning profession.

   c. A final review of Planning Ethics was incorporated into the PLAN 490 capstone 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 PowerPoint presentation and class discussions were incorporated into PLAN 261, 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 6 undergraduate 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 Capstone PLAN 490 class demonstrated 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.

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

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 assessment on planning ethics in our PLAN 490 Capstone class.

Definitions:

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

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

3. **Strategies and methods used to gather student performance data,** including assessment instruments used, and a description of how and when the assessments were conducted. Examples of strategies/methods: embedded test questions in a course or courses, portfolios, in-class activities, standardized test scores, case studies, analysis of written projects, etc. Additional information could describe the use of rubrics, etc. as part of the assessment process.

4. **Observations gathered from data**: This section includes findings and analyses based on the above strategies and methods, and provides data to substantiate the distinction made in #2. For that reason this section has been divided into parts (a) and (b) to provide space for both the findings and the analysis of findings.

5. **Program changes based on the assessment results:** This section is where the program lists plans to improve student learning, based on assessment findings, and provides a broad timeline of how and when identified changes will be addressed in the upcoming year. Programs often find assessment is part of an ongoing process of continual improvement.

6. **Description of revisions to the assessment process the results suggest are needed.** Evaluation of the assessment plan and process itself: what worked in the assessment planning and process, what did not, and why.

Some elements of this document have been drawn or adapted from the University of Massachusetts' assessment handbook, "Program-Based Review and Assessment: Tools and Techniques for Program Improvement" (2001). Retrieved from http://www.umass.edu/oapa/oapa/publications/online_handbooks/program_based.pdf