

Urban and Regional Planning, MS

The Master of Science in urban and regional planning is a two-year degree program fully accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board. It is built on the premise that planners must be educated in methods of policy analysis and that there is a common body of knowledge, represented in the core curriculum, that provides a solid foundation for all specializations in the field.

A wide range of educational backgrounds provides good preparation for graduate study in urban and regional planning. Students with undergraduate majors such as environmental policy and planning, architecture, anthropology, public policy, geographic information science, business administration, economics, engineering, communication studies, finance, geography, education, marketing, political science, sociology, history, journalism, and English currently study in the school. With an increasingly diverse student body and a low student-faculty ratio, the School of Planning and Public Affairs is committed to creating an environment that is inclusive and welcoming of all students. Approximately 20 full-time students and some part-time students are enrolled and about 20% are international students.

The common core of courses and the design of the facilities allow students to get to know each other quickly. Students interact closely with faculty members in the classroom, in informal conversation, and while working on research projects. Students and faculty also collaborate in the second-year capstone courses, URP:6209 Sustainable Communities Lab I and URP:6210 Sustainable Communities Lab II, to prepare plans and reports for communities throughout Iowa. This work is supported by the university's Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities, which was created by the School of Planning and Public Affairs.

Graduate students working toward a master's degree in urban and regional planning may elect to pursue one of the combined degree programs offered by the school in collaboration with the colleges of Education, Engineering, Law, and Public Health, and the schools of Earth, Environment, and Sustainability and Social Work (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences).

Learning Outcomes

General Planning Knowledge

The comprehension, representation, and use of ideas and information in the planning field, including appropriate perspectives from history, social science, and the design professions:

- purpose and meaning of planning—appreciation of why planning is undertaken, the impact of planning;
- planning theory—appreciation of the behaviors and structures available to bring about sound planning outcomes;
- planning law—appreciation of the legal and institutional contexts within which planning occurs;
- human settlements and history of planning—understanding of growth and development of places over time and space;

- the future—understanding relationships between past, present, and future in planning domains, potential for intervention; and
- global dimensions—appreciation of interactions, flows of people and materials, cultures, and differing approaches to planning.

Planning Skills

Use and application of knowledge to perform specific tasks required in the practice of planning:

- research—tools for assembling and analyzing information from practice, scholarship, from primary/secondary sources;
- written, oral, and graphic communication—the ability to prepare clear, accurate, compelling text, graphics, and maps for presentations;
- quantitative and qualitative methods—data collection, analysis, modeling tools for forecasting, analysis, and projects/plans design;
- plan creation and implementation—tools for sound plan formulation, adoption, and implementation and enforcement;
- planning process methods—tools for stakeholder involvement, community engagement, and working with diverse communities; and
- leadership—tools for attention, formation, strategic decision-making, team building, and organizational/community motivation.

Values and Ethics

Values inform ethical and normative principles used to guide planning in a democratic society:

- professional ethics and responsibility—appreciation of key issues of planning ethics, public decision-making, research, and client representation (American Institute of Certified Planners Code of Ethics);
- governance and participation—appreciation of the roles of officials, stakeholders, and community members in planned change;
- sustainability and environmental quality—appreciation of natural resources, how to create sustainable futures;
- growth and development—appreciation of economic, social, and cultural factors in urban and regional growth and change; and
- social justice—appreciation of equity concerns in planning.