

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A NEW PROGRAM AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY:  
MASTER OF URBAN DESIGN PROGRAM**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by Iowa State University to establish a new Master of Urban Design Program in the College of Design.

**Executive Summary:** The proposed program is an interdisciplinary program that will offer new opportunities for students to examine contemporary challenges facing urban regions. This proposal was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. No concerns were raised when it was presented to the Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education. The proposed program addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities to “provide educational excellence and impact as well as economic development and vitality” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of program.** The proposed program is an interdisciplinary program of study for students with degrees in architecture, landscape architecture, city planning, or the equivalent in professional design experience. This three-semester, 36-credit program will engage students in a community of inquiry, learning, and practice to examine contemporary challenges facing urbanized regions. Students will learn to work across boundaries and scales using the process of design to make sense of human settlements and the complex systems that shape them, creating more adaptable, flexible, and ecologically sustainable urban places with the dynamic context of change.  
  
Students will (1) gain an awareness of professional knowledge and integration of new practices, technologies, and methods of urban planning and design; (2) learn to engage in advanced thinking skills, integrating concepts, ideas and approaches in a team-based, interdisciplinary design process; and (3) acquire new knowledge and skills in urban design that supports professional leadership in research and design work focused on local and global issues facing the contemporary city.
- ◇ **Relationship to existing programs at ISU.** The proposed program draws on the College’s architecture, landscape architecture, and planning faculty research and teaching expertise demonstrated in current studio and seminar offerings. The positioning of the proposed program as a research-based program in the college for students with an undergraduate design degree is expected to contribute to the development of other interdisciplinary programs. The proposed program supplements related disciplinary courses across the University in such departments as History, Environmental Studies, Horticulture, Natural Resource Ecology and Management, Political Science, and Sociology.
- ◇ **Duplication.** The proposed program does not exist elsewhere in the state of Iowa. The Urban and Regional Planning graduate program at the University of Iowa has areas of concentration on economic development; geographic information systems; land use and environmental planning; housing and community development; and transportation. Its focus is on analytical urban planning, public policy, and sustainability. The proposed program will integrate the design process with the framework and understanding of global and local urban environments to create more sustainable and healthy cities.

- ◇ Student demand. The proposed program has been developed to attract designers with a professional design degree, including architects, landscape architects, graphic designers, artists, and interior designers, who seek to specialize in a more intellectual/interdisciplinary oriented aspect of urban design. The emerging role of transdisciplinary design will likely provide a wide audience from a variety of backgrounds for the proposed program.
- ◇ Unique features. The proposed program combines academic and professional experience and expertise of faculty from Architecture, Art and Design, Community Regional Planning, Graphic Design, Interior Design, and Landscape Architecture in the College of Design. Each of these nationally recognized programs has graduates employed throughout the United States and the world. The proposed program is desirable because of the global employment of ISU alumni and the fact that the Architecture and Landscape Architecture programs are unique professional programs in Iowa.
- ◇ Resources. The College of Design has facilities and personnel resources to establish the proposed program. Course content exists in many of the academic programs and can be used in the proposed program as electives. New courses will be developed to incorporate faculty expertise and research; professional practitioners in urban design as well as architecture, landscape architecture, and community regional planning will also be consulted. Professors and lecturers in the areas of architecture, planning, landscape architecture, design (industrial, graphic, and interior), digital media, studio arts, design history and criticism will participate in the proposed program. College facilities can accommodate both studio and seminar learning experiences; the college offers state-of-the-art technology, model shop, gallery exhibitions, Design Reading Room, and a comprehensive Visual Resource Collection.
- ◇ Cost. The University projects that the cost for the proposed program will be \$109,000 in Year 1, increasing to \$129,000 by Year 7. The costs will include one additional faculty member, four graduate assistants, and software licensing and program supplies. New tuition revenue from the proposed program (\$169,308) is expected to cover the cost of offering this program.
- ◇ Projected enrollment. The projected enrollment is four students in Year 1, increasing to 16 students by Year 7. The College anticipates three sources of students for the proposed program – (1) current undergraduate students in design programs who want to target their career paths toward urban design; (2) undergraduate students at other institutions who are interested in a more specialized study in urban design; and (3) mid-career professionals with a design degree who seek to transition from their current design practice, such as architecture and graphic design, to urban design.
- ◇ Off-campus sites. The following off-campus sites could be used in the proposed program:
  - ⇒ **The Rome Program.** This is the College of Design's flagship international program and the only fully licensed study-abroad program among the Regent universities. The urban setting of the studio and its proximity to other major European academic centers that are engaged in contemporary urban design issues can provide active discourse and hands-on projects confronting the exploding metropolis. The summer program led by the landscape architecture department has offered an intense two-month urban design studio and supplementary urban theory classes. These offerings can be expanded to accommodate the proposed program.

- ⇒ **Summer Academy Berlin.** In collaboration with faculty and students from Germany and other U.S. architecture programs, the Summer Academy Berlin explores the possibility of designing sustainable urban environments. Due to its construction needs after the reunification of Germany, Berlin has become a field laboratory for energy-efficient design in many new residential, commercial, and government buildings. This intense design program, offered in collaboration with the Polytechnic Berlin, investigates technical requirements and architectural opportunities.
- ⇒ There is also opportunity to collaborate with universities in China, Mexico, and Turkey where ISU and the College of Design have student exchange programs and agreements. Given today's use of technology and global issues facing design and cities, the opportunity to collaborate with these universities is desirable and appropriate for the proposed program.
- ◇ Workforce Need/Demand. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of urban designers will increase approximately 19% between 2008 and 2018.<sup>1</sup> This rate is slightly higher than for architects, whose employment is projected to increase by 16% and slightly lower than for landscape architects, whose employment is projected to increase by approximately 20%.<sup>2</sup> The Report also notes that this rate of growth is faster than the average rate of growth for all occupations. The rate at which cities grow is increasing and recent press has profiled the urban design profession as a sustainable approach to design, which may increase its appeal to prospective students. The December 2009 issue of *U.S. News and World Report* ranked urban design as one of the 50 best careers in 2010, offering strong outlook and high satisfaction in both the public and private sectors.
- ◇ Link to institutional strategic plan. Urban design can mediate between individual architectural and landscape projects and overall planning strategies. It is both a research and practice-based field seeking new methods and technologies to help cities develop in more sustainable ways. The College of Design has a long tradition in design-based research and outreach. The proposed program supports the College's mission of interdisciplinary research and scholarship while providing a resource for the university, community, and state. The College's strategic plan focuses on continuing development of graduate programs and faculty research. A research-based graduate program in Urban Design will help the College achieve its goals.

The proposed program advances the College's emerging themes – dedication to graduate education and advanced study with the college; increased support for faculty; commitment to diversity as a defining characteristic of the college community; continued preoccupation with the development of interlocking centers of interest within its pedagogy and intellectual pursuits; and development of global venues for the extension of the academic community.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/ind-occ.matrix/occ\\_pdf/occ\\_17-1012.pdf](http://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/ep/ind-occ.matrix/occ_pdf/occ_17-1012.pdf); and /occ\_17-1011.pdf.

The proposed program also supports the University's strategic plan "to create distinguished urban design scholarship by promoting discovery and innovation within its cross-disciplinary concentration and advanced study; to share the urban design scholarship and practice to enhance the learning opportunities for the university community, professional constituencies, alumni and consumers of design; and to apply urban design knowledge with its many constituents, enriching the intellectual environment of the university community, and improving the visual and experiential environment of state, national and global communities by addressing the interwoven issues of social and economic development, environmental stewardship, community design, preservation, and growth."