

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING, M.S.

The Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture (DPLA) offers an accredited Master of Science (M.S.) degree in Urban and Regional Planning. The degree trains students in the knowledge, theories, and skills to be leaders in their communities by making positive change through informed and reflective action. Our department centers the values of sustainability, equity and justice, and works with communities to address many of the complex challenges involving space and place that are critical to the planning profession.

The M.S. URPL degree is intended to prepare graduates for professional planning careers in government, nonprofit and community organizations, and the private sector, and to work at a variety of scales including rural and urban communities. The program normally requires two academic years of full-time work plus an internship. In addition to the M.S. program, the department offers a Ph.D. program.

DPLA seeks students with high academic qualifications and the potential to become qualified professional planners. Since there are relatively few undergraduate planning programs in the country, students come into the field from a wide range of disciplines. In recent years, planning students have generally come from the social sciences with geography, economics, political science, and sociology among the most common undergraduate backgrounds. The range, however, runs from the arts to the sciences reflecting the multi-disciplinary character of our field.

DPLA is committed to establishing and maintaining a supportive climate of inclusion, diversity, and collegiality through our actions and policies. We envision a department in which all individuals are engaged in a vibrant learning community, where ideas, experiences, and perspectives are supported, nurtured, and developed to their highest levels. We value diversity, which we define to include race or ethnicity; sex; gender and gender identity or expression; marital status; age; sexual orientation; country of origin; language; disability; socio-economic status; and affiliations that are based on cultural, political, religious, or other identities.

Although DPLA stresses the development of general skills and mental attitudes that are common to all planning endeavors, students are required to specialize in an area of planning that is of interest to the student, such as housing, land use, food systems, environmental planning, regional economic development, transportation, public health, or urban design, among other possibilities.

The objectives of the professional M.S. degree are to:

1. Prepare students to engage in planning processes that recognize a complex, pluralistic and equitable democratic society. Students develop the capacity to work with diverse publics, across government agencies, and in private and nonprofit sectors. Planning processes include the identification of objectives, design of possible courses of action, and evaluation of alternatives.
2. Convey a set of planning literacies to enable students to perform effectively as planners in public, private or nonprofit sectors. These literacies include knowledge in the following areas:
 - Structure and function of cities and regions
 - History and theory of planning processes and practices
 - Administrative, legal, and political aspects of plan-making
3. Prepare students with the substantive knowledge foundation and tools, methods, and techniques of planning associated with an area of specialization.
 - Public involvement and dispute resolution techniques
 - Research design and data analysis techniques
 - Written, oral, and graphic communication skills
 - Ethics of professional practice
 - Collaborative approaches to problem solving

Details on administrative requirements for the degree are available in the MS URPL Handbook (<https://dpla.wisc.edu/academics/handbooks/>).

The M.S. program equips students with sufficient understanding of and training in the principal tools, methods, and techniques of planning to enable them to perform effectively as junior staff members from the start of their careers. UW-Madison's program in planning emphasizes concepts, perspectives, and practices that promise to be useful not only upon graduation, but even more so in later years for graduates who reach positions of major influence and responsibility. We train our graduates to be leaders of equitable change through urban and regional planning.