Innovation and Communication in Planning Education Task Force

Report on Innovation

(*Approved by PAB March 1, 2019*)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Task Force on Innovation and Communication in Planning Education has prepared this report on innovation with the intention of furthering the conversation with the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) and its sponsoring organizations on how planning programs can innovate to respond to emerging challenges. In particular, the report outlines emerging issues facing planning education from an academic perspective (i.e., issues in higher education at large) as well as issues that planners must be prepared for in a professional setting (see Part II). The report also provides a working definition of a culture of innovation, and suggests strategies for collective effort by the academy and the profession to support innovation (Part III). Finally, Part IV of this report addresses PAB's role in fostering a culture of innovation and supporting innovation among accredited programs, with a focus on the application of its accreditation standards.

The Task Force looks forward to continuing the conversation on emerging issues in planning education and the knowledge and skills planners need in a changing environment. To that end, the Task Force hopes that PAB and its sponsoring organizations will consider the information provided in this report to develop policies and practices that support innovation in the educational setting. As both educators and the profession play a role in planning education, the Task Force encourages all parties to consider strategies and partnerships to collectively support innovation; potential next steps for PAB and its sponsoring organizations are outlined in this report. As a next step, the Task force will undertake an effort to articulate the shared values that form the basis for this collective effort, and develop strategies for PAB, the academy and the profession to communicate those values in a unified voice. The Task Force will be providing a companion report addressing these values and communication efforts in 2020.

Innovation and Communication in Planning Education Task Force: Report on Innovation

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), in collaboration with its sponsoring organizations, formed a special purpose Task Force on Innovation and Communication in Planning Education to support several of PAB's strategic goals as identified in its 2017-2022 Strategic Plan. The Task Force includes representatives from PAB, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), the American Planning Association (APA), and a student representative. The Task Force roster is attached to this report (see **Appendix 1**).

As a programmatic accreditor recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), PAB's role is to "encourage and assist institutions and programs in ongoing improvement of academic quality and performance, including a commitment to flexibility and appropriate innovation in promoting academic quality" (CHEA Recognition Standard 10F). In support of PAB's strategic plan goal of promoting and encouraging a culture of innovation in program content and delivery among accredited planning programs, the Task Force focused on key issues relating to innovation:

- Are planning programs adjusting to changes in the profession and the evolving role of planners?
- Are there innovations in the profession or new skills that planners may require that are not being effectively taught in planning schools?
- What innovative teaching practices (e.g. curricular, pedagogical, technological) are currently being used in accredited programs?
- How can the academy and the planning profession work together to support innovation?

In investigating these issues, the Task Force sought to define a culture of innovation in which planning programs and the profession together provide future planners with the knowledge and skills they need in a changing environment. In addition, the Task Force assessed PAB's role in fostering a culture of innovation and supporting innovation among the accredited programs.

This report summarizes the Task Force's findings in these areas with the aim of furthering the wider conversation on innovation in the academy and the profession, as well as providing PAB with a better understanding of emerging trends and their implication for the accreditation process. In order to develop these findings, the Task Force sought input from accredited planning programs through their annual reports to PAB. In addition, the Task Force held in-person workshops at the 2018 APA and ACSP conferences to receive feedback on these issues from the academic and practicing planner communities. Where relevant, the report incorporates information from outside sources (e.g., the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and the APA/AICP/ACSP/PAB Joint Task Force on Enrollment) as well as insight from the Task Force members based on their experiences in both academic and professional planning settings.

II. EMERGING TRENDS IN PLANNING PRACTICE AND EDUCATION

Innovation in planning education is driven both by developments in higher education in general and trends in the planning profession. In particular, planning programs are presented with challenges in their

college and university settings that lead to pedagogical innovations. At the same time, planning programs should be aware of new developments in the role of planners and new skills and knowledge that planners are expected to have coming out of their programs.

Trends in Higher Education

Throughout the academic world, there is an ongoing effort by higher education thinkers and think tanks to document and predict trends shaping college and university settings. Based on recent articles and reports from sources like *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Inside Higher Ed*,[1] these key trends are currently the most prominent and may be relevant to planning scholars and programs in their strategic planning and efforts to harness innovation:

- Despite a more recent decline in popularity, the **rise of Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** accelerated individual and institutional interest in: a) the role of technology in higher education; b) evaluation of learning outcomes; and c) robust evaluation and improvement of teaching methods.
- The erosion of the middle class, coupled with rising costs of higher education, has led to increasing concern for **equitable access to higher education and the potential of educational attainment to support economic mobility**; similarly, there is an increased focus on **the return on investment** of coursework and degrees and the measurable value provided to students.
- Education is increasingly treated as a lifelong pursuit, with **increased demand for multiple "stackable" credentials** like associates, bachelor's, and/or master's degrees, as well as certificates and continuing education.
- Colleges and universities (in particular state institutions and smaller institutions) continue to face **financial pressures and decreased funding**, a trend which started with the financial crisis of 2008 but has persisted during the recovery.
- While students typically search for education programs in their region, due to decades of population shifts in the US, **there is excess educational capacity in some regions** (i.e. the Northeast and Midwest) and **excess demand in other regions** (i.e. the South and West).
- Demographic changes, such as differential birth rates across racial groups, are **diversifying the student population**; at the same time, historic disparities in educational attainment and mismatches in institutional responses raise questions about the **ability of the US higher education system to meet the needs of a diverse population**.
- Turnover in faculty composition due to the retirement of the baby boomer generation has come less quickly than expected, which has slowed the **pace of diversification of faculty bodies**; along with the increasing use of adjunct and lecturer positions, this has led to a **bifurcation of faculty** between older, full-time tenured faculty and younger, part-time and non-tenure stream faculty.
- **Faculty roles are being reconsidered**, with an increased distinction between teaching-focused faculty and research-focused faculty, as well as the expansion of the scholarship of teaching, learning, and public engagement.

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[1] A key resource on these overarching trends is the Chronicle of Higher Education's report*, 2026 The Decade Ahead: The Seismic Shifts Transforming Higher Education.*

Specific to planning programs, in addition to these overall trends in the academy, a key trend is declining student enrollment. This trend was the subject of a focused review by the Joint Task Force on Enrollment created by the Presidents of APA, AICP, ACSP, and PAB, which presented its findings in 2016. The overall decline was reflected in data compiled by PAB which showed that total enrollment in accredited planning masters programs, after a recession-driven increase from 2008 to 2010, declined every year through 2014, to a level that was even lower than pre-recession enrollment. However, the Task Force found that the decline was unequally distributed: from 2008 to 2014, out of 71 schools with accredited planning masters programs, 20 (28%) had flat enrollments, 16 (22%) had increased enrollments, and 35 (50%) experienced decreased enrollments. Although not addressed by the Task Force, this unequal distribution may be related to the geographic mismatch in higher education supply and demand noted above. A survey of accredited programs covering 2011 to 2016 found that the decline had levelled off slightly—17 out of 48 responding schools (34%) reported undesired or unplanned decreases in enrollment during that five-year period—but also found that enrollment was still generally below satisfactory levels: half the respondents (53%) reported that their enrollment levels were "too low," compared to 45% reporting that enrollment was "about right," and 2% reporting enrollment was "too high."

In addition to these ongoing trends, developments that are just beginning to emerge and may affect planning programs include: increased use of online tools and big data analytics to inform and shape more aspects of higher education, such as the application process; self-paced competency-based education replacing traditional conceptions of higher education, with a focus on skills as outputs rather than class time as input; a related increase in employers seeking graduates with demonstrable work-relevant skills rather than just a degree (i.e., a degree plus certificates and badges is the norm); and with rising costs, students increasingly taking longer windows to complete a degree. Overall, these developments raise important questions guiding the academy's development and innovation. This includes the role of the digital revolution in spurring innovation and providing for self-paced, skill-based, and affordable higher education; the benefits and shortcomings of online platforms as an alternative to in-person education; the potential for institutions to engage in fad-chasing at the expense of the long-standing, comparatively stable academic tradition; and the appropriate strategy for resource-constrained institutions (e.g., state universities) who lack the resources supporting innovation at wealthier institutions.

Notably, the *2026 The Decade Ahead* report by the Chronicle of Higher Education concludes with this planning-relevant quote:

> "Perhaps a more apt analogy might be to cities. They tend to evolve, change, and grow over time, but rarely do they die. The same is likely to be true of higher education in the decade ahead, as it evolves to adapt to a new generation of students, faculty, and technological advances." (p.41)

Trends in the Planning Profession

In addition to changes being felt in higher education more generally, planning programs face challenges and opportunities that may be unique to the planning profession. The challenges planners face and ideas of how planning programs should adjust to broader developments in the planning field (societal, political, and technological) were the subject of a wide-ranging discussion at the 2018 APA conference session. These key issues emerged from the discussion:

- Planners entering roles in government are often facing an **uncertain and contentious political world**. While in some ways this has always been a challenge to planners, it has become more acute in the current highly partisan environment, and planners are working in a world of strongly divided political views. Planners need to be able to work with a variety of stakeholders, both in government and in the community, that do not necessarily share a planner's outlook or goals. Similarly, there is a perceived mistrust in technocratic thinking and "expertise" in general.
- The **rapid pace of change** is presenting challenges to planners who are focused on community planning for the long term. At the same time, **shrinking government support and funding** is leading to fewer resources for long-range planning efforts, e.g., community engagement.
- As communities become more diverse across the country, planners require **enhanced cultural competencies** and the ability to work with marginalized populations.
- There is a perceived need for planners to **engage in broader political and social issues**. Social justice, climate change, and public health were cited as areas where planners are taking on larger roles.
- **New technology** is being made available to planners and becoming more prominent in the field. GIS is now considered a core competency for planners, and the use of social media and data analytics are growing. Critically, the potential of technological innovations is a major motivation for many students interested in planning.

Building on these issues, APA participants suggested the following skills and competencies as areas of focus for planning programs:

- **Enhancing "soft" skills**: communication and "storytelling," negotiation and consensus building, and collaborative skills were cited as particularly important to better prepare planners to work in their communities.
- **Increasing cross-disciplinary studies**, both to add dimensions in other fields that are important to planners (e.g., public health) and to prepare planners to work with a variety of partners.
- **Increasing training in new technology** and data analytics, particularly with the use of "big data."

In general, there was no clear consensus on how programs should adjust to meet the needs of the profession. In particular, there was a perceived disagreement between those who saw planning as a more specialized, technocratic approach and those who saw a need to "double down" on the community-based planning approach. This was in some ways presented as an inflection point for planning programs: increasing focus on hard science and specialization would come at the expense of traditional planning skills (e.g., qualitative methods, observation, visioning, communication) and a broader sense of planning as a compassionate field that values emotional and social intelligence, service leadership, and cultural humility. While it is important for new developments in the field to be taught in the classroom (and in many cases, students are highly engaged with and seek out emerging practices), it is clear that a balanced approach is needed to maintain the core planning education that remains critical to the profession.

Trends and Innovative Practices in Planning Education

In light of the trends presenting new challenges to planning programs, the Task Force assessed how accredited programs are adjusting and what innovative practices are emerging. The PAB Annual Report, required by all accredited programs, covered three key questions: 1) what new offerings and

adjustments to the planning curriculum are being made; 2) what new course delivery methods are being employed; and 3) how is new technology being incorporated? A summary of the findings is presented below.

In some areas, there are clear adjustments and innovations in response to developments in the field and the needs of professional planners and students:

- In the area of curriculum, the most commonly cited area of innovation is the **use of specialized courses in specific skill areas**. In many cases, programs cited curricular offerings on important contemporary planning issues: e.g., coastal area planning, hazard mitigation, and planning for climate change; community health and food systems; or planning for indigenous communities. In many cases, programs have adjusted to emerging trends by providing more degree specializations and certificate programs.
- **Immersive and applied learning programs** are becoming widespread. In particular, programs are increasing incorporating client-based projects involving local professionals, community groups, and government agencies. This is often reflected in the course delivery through the use of project-based workshops and studios or case-study based courses.

In other areas, innovations are developing more slowly:

- **Cross-disciplinary teaching** is less prominent, but many programs are developing in this area through partnerships with other academic units, e.g., architecture and landscape architecture, engineering, public health. These are typically conducted as cross-listed courses, although in many cases programs are expanding into dual degrees.
- **Education and training in the use of new technology** is also less prominent. GIS is widely taught, however there are comparably few programs expanding instruction in analytics, data visualization, or modeling. There is also relatively little use of more advanced software tools in the classroom.
- Although there is widespread use of hybrid course delivery that incorporates a large online component, although **relatively few programs have implemented (or are seeking to implement) fully online courses**. Notably, in most cases where programs were seeking to enhance distance learning, they are pursuing the use of synchronous learning (e.g., video-conferencing students into lectures through Skype or similar programs) rather than online-only classes. However, in one case, a program that had been using a synchronous learning program for many years had discontinued it, having found that it created two classes of students (in-person and remote) that were getting unequal learning experiences.

Overall, the trends in accredited planning programs reflect many of the key issues in the academy described above, in particular an increased use on digital learning tools and a focus on providing specialized "stackable" credentials. Similarly, in many ways, the emerging practices in the accredited planning programs are in sync with the trends in in the profession discussed above. In particular, there is a widespread recognition of the need for planners to gain instruction in emerging trends and engage in contemporary issues, with a particular emphasis on engagement at a local level. Concerning skills needed in the profession, instruction in data analytics and the use of technology and cross-disciplinary learning are lagging but also emerging. The focus on specialization and skill-based education to provide a professional credential may conflict with the emerging need for a less technocratic approach to

planning; however, there is the potential balancing effect in the increased use of immersive learning and project-based courses. For planning programs, it is likely that the need to follow current trends and innovate is heightened by the concern over declining enrollment and the emerging need to attract and accommodate a wider group of prospective students.

III. CULTURE OF INNOVATION

Defining a culture of innovation

In order to support ongoing innovation in planning programs, the Task Force endeavored to define '*a culture of innovation.*' One key challenge in this effort was identifying a single locus for innovation. Through the PAB Annual Report, 69 institutions with accredited planning programs provided their definition of a culture of innovation. Within those definitions six potential loci for innovation were identified:

- *Diversity* - The people, perspectives, and methods of exploring difference
- *Courses* - The content and delivery of material
- *Research* - The rigor and flexibility of new topic exploration
- *Response to changing conditions* - The anticipation of and pedagogical/research response to emerging trends
- *Human capital engagement* - The commitment to people and their time
- *Institutional environment* - The flexible, risk-rewarding, inspiring, ethical, and entrepreneurial conditions

Within each institution's definition of '*a culture of innovation*' are various subtexts of successful threads of innovation. One major thread throughout the different loci is the safeguarding of space, inspiration, freedom, or flexibility to innovate. In other words, supporting (financially, physically, emotionally, etc.) the creative license for the people tasked with innovating to have the time and resources to think alternatively to the status quo. Additionally, some definitions provided by the accredited programs address more comprehensively the conditions needed to support innovation, whereas other definitions addressed the desired outcomes if innovation were to occur. In pursuit of a singular definition of '*a culture of innovation*', the Task Force considered whether the culture is focusing on the inputs to foster innovation or focusing on what the outputs of innovation are considered to be.

The following definition is an attempt to focus on how the inputs identified by the survey respondents can create innovative outputs:

> A **culture of innovation** invests in the institutional environment and human capital to create anticipatory and responsive research and courses in pursuit of a more informed planning practice.

Notably, the distinction between inputs and outputs is an important consideration in determining PAB's role in supporting innovation (discussed below), as PAB may find a role in supporting. A component of a culture of innovation for planning programs is the ability to support the balance of PAB requirements while reflecting their individual strengths and circumstances. But in this respect, PAB must encourage flexibility and innovation.

Developing a Culture of Innovation Between the Profession and the Academy

For the practice of planning, planning education, and planning research to fully embrace a culture of innovation, it is essential that improved understanding and connections between the academy and the field be developed. Fostering these connections and sharing of knowledge will support academic planning programs to help form the next generation of planning innovators and pioneers. By the same token, entrepreneurs and cutting-edge practitioners should stay actively engaged with the academy to help encourage research and education that is innovation-focused. Through the discussions at the APA and ACSP conferences, the Task Force identified several challenges facing the promotion of a joint culture of innovation between the profession and the academy and identified a number of strategies to address the challenges to advancing innovation.

Among the key challenges are:

- **Barriers to the mutual understanding** of the role of education and providing a professional education. In addition to educating students to become future planners, academic programs have a responsibility to further the overall education of students, to advance research in the field and conduct inter-disciplinary research. In an academic setting, planning is treated as a broader discipline than a traditional set of professional skills and is not solely focused on teaching students to do the job of a planner, as a good percentage of graduates do not end up as traditional land use planners. As a result, academics may be disconnected from the emerging issues facing practicing planners or what the market and employers need in entry level planners. There may also be a mismatch in culture, with practicing planners not using skills and knowledge that academic planners believe are important, and/or practicing planning in a way that isn't widely taught.
- **Disincentives for academics** to take time away from research to pursue practice-related issues. The ability of faculty to bring practice into the university setting is difficult when academic titles, budgets, collective bargaining, and time pressures on faculty are a constraint. Faculty are judged for tenure in a way that doesn't necessarily reward engagement with practice, e.g., publications and funding. Academic hiring practices are also a deterrent. Research is funding-driven and community engagement and planning innovation are not necessarily fundable.
- **Disincentives for professionals** to participate in innovative research and to promote changes in their own practice. In addition to time and ability constraints, professionals may be limited by the need to work within various political systems, particularly as political tensions increasingly drive the conversation in ways that can profoundly affect communities. Professional planners may be insulated within their profession and, specifically within the APA organization.
- Academic planning programs may not fully recognize that today's **students have a broader view of planning** in a professional world (e.g., students who are involved in social entrepreneurship, organizing or outreach, but not necessarily planning).
- **Practical logistical matters (geography, time, and resources)** serve as a constraint: there is often a physical separation of university and practice when campus is far from downtown, making it difficult to bring people out to campus, or to bring academics out to the community. While there is a mutual interest in engaged learning and partnerships, there may be limited available venues that support it and build value for it in the academic setting. For professional planners working in local government, there are constraints of budget, politics, and many other

obstacles to navigate in trying to partner with academic programs. Due to resource and time constraints, it is also often difficult to build effective long-term partnerships.

In light of these challenges, the Task Force identified strategies and partnerships that academic and professional planners can pursue to collectively support innovation:

- Planning faculty can connect practice to the classroom by forming **relationships with the local community** and seek out local professionals as connection points. In particular, developing local connections would support long-term, multi-year partnerships between the academy and practice, that will benefit the community partner as well as student learning. Development of these local relationships can be supported by incorporating local governmental and policy issues into the curriculum. Faculty can also seek to become involved in the formation of planning-related policies, such as educating local governing boards and developing relationships with community decisionmakers. Faculty and professional planners may also collaborate to develop continuing education courses aimed at the general public, e.g., courses in planning for citizen representatives on local committees.
- Practitioners can help academics with emerging skills and strategies used in practice (e.g., economic development techniques used by the local government) through **involvement as adjuncts guest lecturers, and participating in campus events.** To the extent practicable, programs should encourage co-teaching to maximize intellectual and practical applications.
- Planning programs can develop **formalized roles for practitioners** such as an advisory board or alumni network, to keep practitioners in constant communication and ensure that they have an interest in the program beyond professional practice.
- Planning faculty can look to **students as a resource** to bring in practice and innovations of their own, e.g., from Silicon Valley.
- Planning programs can also seek to **broaden the scope of what is considered planning practice** in the curriculum. This strategy aligns with the recent decision by APA to extend APA student membership to interested students from non-planning departments.
- Academic and professional planners **can engage with the APA/local chapter as a resource** (e.g., to establish meeting points and programs). Practitioners involved in local APA chapters can encourage planning faculty and professors of practice to sit on APA Chapter Boards, or potentially create a dedicated seat for a local academic representative, to encourage collaboration.
- APA, AICP and local chapters can seek to **engage planning faculty in continuing education.**
- As a wide collaborative effort, the numerous planning organizations (APA, AICP, ACSP, PAB) should seek to **recognize and celebrate successful partnerships, and disseminate examples of innovation in practice and academia**. This would align with PAB's continuing publication of noteworthy practices and innovations in planning education. This effort may include the developing and expanding of awards for projects produced in collaboration between faculty and practitioners of various sorts. To the extent practicable, planning organizations can work to support publication of work developed in collaboration between academics in a way that offers benefits in the tenure process (e.g., peer review), and make these available as a teaching resource to member schools and practitioners.

IV. ROLE OF PAB IN SUPPORTING INNOVATION

At the 2018 APA and ACSP conference sessions, the Task Force sought input from the professional and academic communities on how PAB could support innovation, in particular through PAB's accreditation standards. During the sessions, several participants noted that the current PAB standards provide room to innovate; however, the vast majority did feel constrained by PAB's required knowledge, skills and values.

Among those who did not see a major issue, one participant in the ACSP session noted, In Standard 1. Strategic Planning and Progress "with [criteria] A through F – we *should* be innovating in all of those, and I think we are. Maybe it needs to be a reminder. It will also look different in different places." Another participant pointed out how "the updated 2017 standards were intended to give more flexibility to let programs show what they want to do and how they will do it." Similarly, a participant at the APA session, reflecting on the most recent revision to the standards, noted, "With the educational accountability movement in the United States, I think PAB rightly recognized that its standards were functioning counter to innovation. PAB began a path toward outcomes, rather than focusing on inputs. I think the change in PAB is working well, we are seeing more innovation."

On the whole, however, most participants sought "reassurance from PAB that it's OK to experiment to get to innovation" and an accreditation system that will "allow more experimentation, even failure." Participants suggested a number of changes PAB could make to better support a culture of innovation in urban planning programs, as summarized below (organized by each section of the PAB standards).

Preconditions

There was general consensus that PAB's preconditions to accreditation were not limited to innovation, but programs needed better definition and clarity. In particular, ACSP workshop participants asked for illustrative examples that could explain more clearly what the preconditions mean in terms of: the "equivalent" when outlining the length of the program (e.g., *undergraduate degree programs shall require a minimum of four academic years of full-time study or the equivalent*) and how online courses and full intensive summer loads are counted as well as the dual degree and fast track options. There was also discussion about the precondition that a program name and degree must include the word "planning," with one participant noting: "Keep an eye on market demand. Do we dilute our brand by making conditions/standards more relaxed? Do we lose members by being too rigid? How can we improve without really allowing so much room to maneuver/flexibility so that we suddenly have twice as many accredited 'planning' programs?" Considering that many planning programs already face competition for declining enrollment, along with the ongoing trends in the field that are leading toward an expanded vision of planning as a profession and planners taking on larger roles in a variety of issues, elaboration of this precondition may be warranted.

Strategic Planning

ACSP workshop participants tended to support the elevated focus on strategic planning in the PAB standards, but also noted that that programs may be hesitant to incorporate innovations in curriculum content and delivery into their plans because of the accreditation process. For instance, one participant suggested that the strategic planning process may limit innovation through self-censorship because of a reluctance to introduce aspirational goals and objectives "if you are going to be judged on your ability to

achieve them," or because of "anxiety over how the plan will be judged by an outsider (e.g., site visit team from another institution)." A particular concern raised by several participants is that the strategic planning process (and accreditation process) operates on a long-time horizon that may conflict with the need for short-term adjustments; for example, 5 to 7-year accreditation periods "create tensions with efforts to innovate." Similarly, it was noted that a 5 to 10 year strategic plan can leave a curriculum "out of touch" or "out of date." One participant proposed a more incremental review process or using the annual report submitted to PAB as a form of "continuous review and updates every year" that could focus on different elements of the accreditation process, to better adjust to trends and to allow for "ongoing coaching and conversations as needed." On a related note, another participant pointed out that some programs may hesitate to update their curriculum if they think it will be inconsistent with their strategic plan, which may be out of date.

Finally, one participant indicated that "programs under pressure or in survival mode institutionally" face particular challenges in balancing a program's short-term needs and long-term goals in a strategic plan. On a similar point, one participant noted that a concern for many programs was the "evaluation fatigue" that comes from reporting to multiple overseeing bodies (e.g., accreditors plus internal departmental or institutional reviewers): the need to meet multiple standards simultaneously and to defend innovations to different bodies may add to the restrictiveness of the strategic planning and accreditation processes.

Curriculum and Core Requirements

The top area of concern for ACSP participants was that the extensive PAB curriculum requirements is stifling potential innovation. Many discussed the need to streamline the core requirements to focus only on the basic requirements necessary to be a professional planner, allowing programs to innovate through electives, specializations or concentrations that allow for more choices, flexibility, and adjustments based on student and faculty interests, while providing opportunities to incorporate emerging trends from practice. As one participant put it, reduced curriculum requirements would "free up time for creative people to be creative." Several participants noted that small programs are especially challenged to innovate when they have to cover so many requirements, since currently, "Innovating happens outside of core classes when you feel that you are meeting the core standards." Similarly, as another participant explained:

> Innovation requires exploration and creativity – you need space to do that. When you need to be accountable, you have to be careful with that space and time. Really exploring possible innovations requires some testing, evaluation and at least three years [to determine if it is working]. By then, you're halfway through your accreditation. When you're small, everyone is very busy covering a lot of bases. When I introduce the idea of innovation, colleagues are overwhelmed.

One participant suggested that drawing on a smaller, more general list of requirements would make "programs more comfortable with more latitude to cover certain innovations without feeling boxed in." Some noted that innovation and creativity could be listed as required values or skills, although others raised concerns about how innovation would be measured and judged. Instead, most agreed that "the idea of innovation should be left open rather than be explicit," since faculty "don't want to be boxed in to having to cover certain innovations."

While few participants specified which PAB curriculum requirements should be dropped, clarified or added, one participant noted that certain PAB requirements seem "arbitrary" (e.g., why is health mentioned and not transportation?). The applicability of some requirements across all programs was considered: for example, concerning the land use law requirement, one participant asked, "Does a program with an international focus and large number of international students need to provide extensive coverage of US law?" Another participant noted that some required knowledge elements (e.g., global dimensions, health) are vaguely defined, causing uncertainty about how to cover those standards. During the APA session, some participants also discussed the need to continue improving and emphasizing the global dimensions of planning, citing an APA survey that found that a majority of students expect to work internationally, at the same time that many students have never left their state and do not have the cultural competency to work with immigrants from Latin America and other cultures. One APA participant also expressed the need for coursework that focuses on political challenges and mediating different viewpoints/priorities.

Curriculum Delivery

Workshop participants were also concerned about the way that current PAB requirements may be constraining course delivery formats. Because of the content and the size of some programs, some expressed concern that PAB is not supportive of using adjunct faculty to teach core courses, even when some courses (e.g. plan making and implementation, law, urban design) may be better taught by professionals and practitioners. The sense was that allowing practitioners to teach practice-oriented courses could build stronger ties to the profession and allow innovation in course formats (e.g., workshops, pop-up courses, etc.), which generally aligns with the strategies for developing a culture of innovation and supporting collaboration between the academy and profession outlined above. As one participant put it, "Understanding and applauding the use of adjuncts instead of penalizing programs would be better." Two participants also noted a desire for more performance-based standards, and generally, more of a focus on how programs deliver content, especially for programs facing fiscal constraints and changing environments.

Governance

In discussing governance, participants noted a need for PAB standards to reflect the current reality of many programs and their institutional settings. Some, for instance, noted a shift in program autonomy given the increasing interdisciplinary nature of urban planning programs. As one participant put it, "[PAB] standards are reflective of a time when Planning was its own department. Increasingly, Planning is a program within a multidisciplinary department. The standard on autonomy and program leadership needs to reflect this." Another participant added that, because planning is a multidisciplinary field, "program leadership should be extended to allied disciplines; tenured full professors should be encouraged to take on more administrative duties …or could a professional administrator be a more effective choice?"

V. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

With the understanding that innovation is a constant need in the planning profession, the Task Force recommends that PAB and its sponsoring organizations continue to develop policies and practices that

support flexibility and openness in the academic setting. For all partners, there should be an emphasis on enhanced communication to share innovative practices and foster collaboration between the profession and the academy. In reviewing the issue of innovation, the Task Force found that there is general agreement between the profession and the academy on the direction planning is going and what is needed in planning education. In many ways, this can be attributed to the commonly shared values that is one of planning's greatest strengths. In the next step of its work, the Task Force will focus on articulating these shared values as they relate to the planning profession and planning education, and develop communication strategies that will help all partners tell the story of planning in a unified voice. At the same time, the Task Force encourages APA, AICP, and ASCP to consider the common issues that are affecting both the profession and academy outlined in this report, and work on ways to collaboratively address them. In particular, the Task Force recommends that PAB and its sponsoring organizations continue to work collectively to support a culture of innovation, and to consider the potential steps presented in this report to support innovation on an ongoing basis.

For its part, PAB should also consider the issues of innovation related to accreditation as presented in this report, with a focus on how PAB's standards may be reducing flexibility for planning programs and inhibiting innovative practices. In addition to considering innovation in its ongoing review of programs for purposes of accreditation (i.e., weighing the value of innovation when judging programs under the current standards), PAB and the Standards Committee may also consider ways to enhance flexibility and support innovation during the next revisions of the standards.

APPENDIX 1—PAB ROSTER

PAB Taskforce on Innovation and Communication in Planning Education Roster

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