

On the Job: Expectations, Experience and Planning Education

Connie Ozawa, Ethan Seltzer and Nicole Iroz-Elardo
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How should we in graduate planning education prepare the next generation of planners?

Method: Surveys to identify elements desirable in graduate planning curriculum.

- Seltzer/Ozawa Survey(2002)
 - public agency managers
 - California, Maryland, Florida and New Jersey
 - Mirrored earlier survey in OR and WA (Ozawa and Seltzer 1999; Seltzer and Ozawa 2002).
- AICP 2007 Jobs Survey

WHAT DO THE RESPONSES FROM THE TWO SURVEYS TOGETHER INDICATE?

Two hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Those who hire planners and practicing planners themselves value skills, competencies and knowledge bases similarly.
- Hypothesis 2: Planners with less experience rate skills and knowledge bases differently from more experienced planners, and these differences are significant.

The challenge of “matching” questions

Seltzer/Ozawa Survey	AICP Survey Match Accepted	AICP Survey Match Removed
Understanding what the client wants	Manage client relationships	Visioning and goal setting
Speaking formally and informally with public and elected officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Report orally or in writing on the progress of work•Serve as an advisor to higher officials.	Prepare communication strategies

**Table 2:
Ranking Comparisons of Top Matches of Surveys:
Skills and Task Importance**

Diff in Rank	Seltzer/Ozawa Survey			AICP Survey			
	Rank of 19	Mean (SD)	Skill	Task (Importance)	Mean (SD)	Composite	
						Mean (SD)	Rank (of 19)
4	1	4.53 (0.95)	Working with the general public (those less familiar with planning methods and process)	Make public presentations	4.54 (0.87)	4.16 (0.93)	5
				Develop or implement strategies for public involvement	3.78 (1.32)		
10 (weak)	2	4.26 (1.09)	Ability to complete quality work on time and within budget	Prepare project or program implementation schedule	3.62 (1.39)	3.76 (1.13)	12
				Prepare work plans or schedules	3.77 (1.34)		
				Manage projects budgets or timelines	3.89 (1.37)		
5	3	4.23 (1.04)	Understanding what the public/client wants	Manage client relationships	4.06 (1.37)		8
9	4	4.20 (1.14)	Ability to read a zoning code and interpret its application to a case	Review development proposals and interpret regs	3.74 (1.55)		13
2 (strong)	5	4.13 (1.14)	Clear, concise in-house memo writing	Report orally or in writing on the progress of work	4.48 (0.78)		3
4 (strong)	6	4.1 (1.05)	Ability to think and respond on their feet	Make public presentations	4.54 (0.87)		2
6	7	4.01 (1.12)	Ability to write project reports, lengthier documents	Prepare written reports	4.70 (0.63)		1
5	9	3.84 (1.12)	Clear, linear thinking	Identify and analyze issues	4.40 (0.92)		4

Table 3. Rank Comparisons of Top Matches: Knowledge Importance

Difference in Ranking	Seltzer/Ozawa Survey			AICP Survey			
	Rank of 16	Mean (SD)	Skill	Knowledge (Importance)	Mean (SD)	Composite	
						Mean (SD)	Rank (of 16)
5	1	4.53 (0.95)	Working with the general public (those less familiar with planning methods and process)	Public participation techniques		4.06 (1.08)	6
1 (Strong)	2	4.00	Ability to use land records and blueprints Ability to read a zoning code and interpret its application to a case	Land use and development regs		4.41 (0.89)	1
1 (Strong)	3	3.75	Working with the general public (less familiar with planning methods and process) Speaking with public and elected officials Ability to communicate graphically	Communication techniques		4.39 (0.82)	2
5	4	3.74 (1.12)	Understanding of the planning process (who's involved and timing and dynamics of involvement)	Intergovernmental relationships	4.14 (0.98)	3.82 (0.90)	9
				Stakeholder relationships	4.15 (1.03)		
				Public involvement planning	3.82 (1.18)		
				Identifying, engaging & serving underserved groups	3.42 (1.32)		
				Working with diverse communities	2.57 (1.28)		
3 (Strong)	5	3.62 (1.19)	Understanding of law, legal institutions, codes ordinances, etc	Application of legal principles		3.95 (1.09)	8
3 (Strong)	6	3.57 (1.21)	Ability to conduct primary data collection	Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information		4.26 (1.09)	3
4	7	3.39 (1.26)	Ability to 'follow a thin thread' to collect data and information from many and diverse sources in creative ways	Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information		4.26 (1.09)	3
8 (Weak)	11	3.26 (1.13)	Ability to access and synthesize secondary data	Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information		4.26 (1.09)	3

Table 4. Task Importance: Comparing Planners <5 and > 5 years experience

Seltzer/Ozawa Survey Skill	AICP Task	Mean (S.D) Importance			
		<5 Years Experience		≥5 Years Experience	
Working with the general public (those less familiar with planning methods and process)	Make public presentations	4.19 (1.12)	3.81 (1.10)	4.59 (0.80)	4.21 (0.89)
	Develop or implement strategies for public involvement	3.43 (1.44)		3.83 (1.29)	
Ability to complete quality work on time and within budget	Prepare project or program implementation schedule	3.08 (1.51)	3.06 (1.30)	3.70 (1.35)	3.86 (1.07)
	Prepare work plans or schedules	2.96 (1.55)		3.89 (1.27)	
	Manage projects budgets or timelines	3.16 (1.65)		4.00 (1.29)	
Understanding what the public/client wants	Manage client relationships	3.64 (1.51)		4.12 (1.33)	
Ability to read a zoning code and interpret its application to a case	Review development proposals and interpret regs	3.73* (1.56)		3.74* (1.55)	
Clear, concise in-house memo writing	Report orally or in writing on the progress of work	4.22 (0.97)		4.52 (0.75)	
Ability to think and respond on their feet	Make public presentations	4.19 (1.12)		4.59 (0.80)	
Ability to write project reports, lengthier documents	Prepare written reports	4.54 (0.81)		4.73 (0.60)	
Clear, linear thinking	Identify and analyze issues	4.07 (1.11)		4.45 (0.87)	

Table 5.

Knowledge Importance: Comparing Planners <5 and > 5 years experience

Seltzer/Ozawa Survey Skill	AICP Knowledge	Mean (S.D) Importance			
		<5 Years Experience		≥5 Years Experience	
Working with the general public (those less familiar with planning methods and process)	Public participation techniques		3.80 (1.18)		4.10 (1.05)
Ability to use land records and blueprints 28. Ability to read a zoning code and interpret its application to a case	Land use and development regs		4.32 (0.94)		4.43 (0.88)
Working with the general public (those less familiar with planning methods and process) Speaking formally and informally with public and elected officials Ability to communicate graphically	Communication techniques		4.18 (0.96)		4.43 (0.80)
Understanding of the planning process (who's involved and timing and dynamics of involvement)	Intergovernmental relationships	3.87 (1.11))	3.58 (0.98)	4.17 (0.96)	3.86 (0.88)
	Stakeholder relationships	3.79 (1.21)		4.20 (0.99)	
	Public involvement planning	3.62 (1.25)		3.86 (1.17)	
	Identifying, engaging and serving underserved groups	3.24 (1.39)		3.44 (1.30)	
	Working with diverse communities	3.33 (1.35)		3.61 (1.27)	
Understanding of law, legal institutions, codes ordinances, etc	Application of legal principles		3.53 (1.25)		4.01 (1.11)
Ability to conduct primary data collection	Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information		4.17 (0.98)		4.28 (0.86)
Ability to 'follow a thin thread' to collect data and information from many and diverse sources in creative ways	Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information		4.17 (0.98)		4.28 (0.86)
Ability to access and synthesize secondary data	Collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting data and information		4.17 (0.98)		4.28 (0.86)

19 questions from the
Seltzer/Ozawa survey could be
reasonably matched with AICP
survey

Two groups of AICP questions:
Tasks (what respondents do on
their jobs and how important) and
Knowledge (what they need to
understand)

What matters for promotion?

Seltzer/Ozawa

- Loyalty
- Judgment
- Understanding of politics
- Living within budgets
- Management
- Creativity
- Innovation

AICP Differences between >5 and <5 years

- Prepare project or program implementation schedule
- Prepare work plans or schedules
- Manage projects budgets or timelines
- Report orally or in writing on the progress of work
- Serve as advisor to higher officials
- Negotiate or mediate with public/private parties
- Supervise or direct the work of others

Conclusion

- Surveys are largely consistent.
- Basic analytical skills and understanding of planning dynamics is essential for entry-level planners.
- Management skills and political savvy more important as planners rise up the ladder.

Looking forward...

- Research skills valued less for knowledge creation than knowledge application
 - Focus on linking knowledge to action – working with others to create usable knowledge
- Working not only within the field, but across fields (interdisciplinary problems)
 - Mirroring society rather than universities
- Infusing a concern for outcomes, not just process

So what does this mean for graduate planning education?

- Preparing students through the graduate experience itself
 - Taking risks reaching across disciplines
 - Reflecting on the impact of planning
 - Providing opportunities for how planning might better create impacts that we value

Creating the behaviors we believe planners ought to exhibit to remain relevant