



Planning Accreditation Board Newsletter

Ensuring Quality and Excellence: The Significance of Programmatic Accreditation and Self-Evaluation

Programmatic accreditation assures that students receive a high-quality education that reflects the needs of the specific discipline or profession. The role of the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) is to ensure programs meet minimum standards of educational quality and deliver a common core of planning knowledge and skills. In tandem with the focus on quality assurance, PAB seeks to promote continued improvement and excellence in planning education, through its emphasis on self-evaluation and peer review, within the framework of its Accreditation Standards.

However, the structured nature of the accreditation standards are not intended to force all programs into a uniform mold. PAB's goal in conducting accreditation reviews is to evaluate programs according to the goals the Program sets for themselves. Programs must demonstrate evidence of educational quality and student success through its assessment of outcomes and program effectiveness. While the emphasis is on outcomes, inputs play a fundamental role in ensuring necessary support and resources are provided to faculty and students to achieve the program's mission and goals. Standards related to faculty size, scholarship and research activities, and involvement with planning practice and the community ensure that students in accredited programs are learning from active scholars and engaged educators.

The last three revisions of the standards were focused on the advancement of academic quality and continuous improvement, but also increased flexibility for programs. For example, the 2006 standards contained guidelines that "one full time faculty member have the rank of full professor; and at least two faculty with the rank of assistant professor or higher" and that the faculty size should be "5 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty." The guideline related to faculty rank was removed in the 2012 accreditation standards. Since the 2017 standards, there is no longer faculty FTE size requirements. While PAB's precondition to accreditation states: "For students for whom the graduate degree constitutes the first professional degree in planning, a minimum of two academic years of full-time student or the equivalent is required"; there is no credit hour requirement. Credit hours are determined by institutional and programmatic policies.

PAB reviews its standards on a regular basis to ensure clarity, relevancy with the academy and practice, compliance with Council of Higher Education (CHEA) standards, and address changes in programmatic accreditation. At least every 5 years, PAB engages in a collaborative process to review and revise its standards with broad stakeholder involvement – educators, higher administration, students, practitioners, employers, APA, AICP, ACSP and the public (the detailed process is available in the PAB [Policies and Procedures Manual](#)). The PAB Standards are not created in a Silo; they are created by all of us.

"Accreditation offers a mark of distinction for academic programs and institutions, signaling high quality and a commitment to excellence." (Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors)

2022 PAB ANNUAL REPORT

Map: Total Students Enrolled in PAB-Accredited Programs

Did you know PAB provides a yearly overview of aggregate data from accredited programs, including student enrollment (2008-2022) and actual graduates (2010-2022)?

View [Student and Faculty Data](#) on the PAB website. Utilize search filters through the Annual Report Online Database (AROD) such as program type, region, state, and report year to conduct cumulative analysis on Student Data, Faculty Data, AICP Data, and/or Student/Faculty Ratio Data to gain valuable insights.

Philadelphia - Spring 2023 Board Meeting



Board Members (left to right): Dawn Terkla, Ed.D., Bonnie Johnson, Ph.D., FAICP, Mitch Thrower, CPA, Weiping Wu, Ph.D., Byron Nicholas, AICP, PP, Lois Takahashi, Ph.D., Linda Tatum, FAICP, & Bristol Ellington, AICP, ICMA-CM.

During the Board Meeting, the PAB granted accreditation to the following programs:

- **George Washington University**
Master of Professional Studies in Sustainable Urban Planning
- **University at Albany, State University of New York**
Master of Regional Planning in Urban and Regional Planning
- **University of British Columbia**
Master of Community and Regional Planning
- **University of Oregon**
Master of Community & Regional Planning

Initial accreditation granted to the following program effective January 1, 2024:

- **University of Massachusetts, Boston**
Master of Science in Urban Planning and Community Development

For a summary of recent actions or additional details, visit the PAB website, specifically the [News](#) and [Accredited Planning Programs](#) directory.



CHEA Recognition

Just the same as programs are accredited, some accreditors undergo reviews by external agencies against established standards in order to be “recognized.” PAB recently underwent an external review by the Council of Higher Education (CHEA), a non-governmental organization. PAB chooses to engage in this voluntary recognition process for several reasons:

- CHEA recognition provides assurance that PAB is demonstrating the same expectations required of the programs, specifically focused on: student success; public accountability; innovative practices; continuous improvement; rigorous standards that protect students; commitment to diversity and autonomy of mission; and fairness in application of standards.
- Opportunity for comprehensive self-assessment against specific standards
- Increased visibility and validity for the planning field and education

At its May 2023 meeting, the CHEA Board of Directors granted recognition to PAB for 7 years.

PAB Trainings & Sponsored Sessions



Site Visitor Training

Training was held at the APA conference in Philadelphia. The next in-person training will be conducted in conjunction with the [ACSP conference](#) in Miami, FL.

The State of Accreditation of Planning Programs

Watch the recording [here](#) to learn more about the Who, What, & Why of PAB. *Sponsored by APA Kansas.*

Skills for Future Planners

Panelists Tom Sanchez, Ph.D., Lian Plass, AICP, & Jack Heide, AICP presented to over 200 attendees at the APA conference.

Are They Learning What We're Teaching?

A Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Workshop

[Watch the Recorded Session](#), presented by Laurie Goldman, Ph.D., which focused on how to develop an effective approach to assessing student learning, not only to fulfill programmatic and institutional accreditation requirements, but primarily as a means to strengthen the Program, its curriculum, teaching and the learning within the Program.



Senior Lecturer and Director of
Graduate Studies, Tufts University

Laurie Goldman,
Ph.D.

Policy Updates

At its March 24, 2023 meeting, the Planning Accreditation Board voted to offer Hybrid Site Visits, in conjunction with In-Person Site Visits. A hybrid visit consists of 1 or 2 days of virtual meetings with the Site Visit Team at their home locations; followed by 1.5 days on-site. Only accredited programs that received a 7-year accreditation term (or a 5-year accreditation with a 2-year extension based on a progress report) during the immediate previous cycle are eligible to conduct a Hybrid Site Visit.

In response to the needs of programs interested in accreditation, the previous deadline of April 1 for submitting a [Letter of Intent](#) has been eliminated. As a result, programs now have the flexibility to submit their intent at any time throughout the year. Programs interested in applying for [Candidacy Status](#) are advised to contact PAB staff at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss the review process and any particular issues affecting their application, as well as to establish a calendar for review of application materials. Complete details on the process are available in the [PAB Policies and Procedures Manual](#).



AICP

Registration for the Fall 2023 AICP Certification Cycle opens Monday, October 2, 2023 to take the AICP exam November 1–29, 2023.

[Learn more about One Path to AICP](#)

JAPA Editor - Call for Nominations

APA has issued a [call for nominations for a new Editor](#) for the [Journal of the American Planning Association](#), as Dr. Ann Forsyth ends her five-year term as JAPA's Editor. Applications are due **June 30, 2023**. The successful candidate will assume the position of Editor January 1, 2024.

Thank You Spring 2023 Site Visit Teams

With the assistance of 18 Site Visitors, 7 programs at 6 institutions were reviewed.

Site Visit Team Chairs:

Mary Anne Akers, Ph.D.
Susan Bradbury, Ph.D.
Tom Daniels, Ph.D.
Rob Olshansky, Ph.D., FAICP
George Rogers, Ph.D.
Tom Sanchez, Ph.D.

Site Visit Team Members:

Asha W. Agrawal, Ph.D.
Phillip Berke, Ph.D.
Lee Brown, FAICP
Bob Cowell Jr., AICP, CNU-A
David Kinsey, Ph.D., FAICP, PP
David Lewis, Ph.D.
Ramona Mattix, AICP
Luis Santiago, Ph.D.
Charlie Santo, Ph.D.
Sue Schwartz, FAICP
Michelle Thompson, Ph.D., GISP
Elizabeth Tyler, Ph.D., FAICP

Site Visitor Recognition

PAB is grateful for the hard work and dedication of all our Site Visitors. On behalf of PAB, thank you to the following former Site Visitors for your time and commitment to improving planning education and the profession.

Educators:

Sy Adler, Ph.D.
Victoria Basolo, Ph.D., AICP
Kristen Day, Ph.D.
Mark Lapping, Ph.D.
Mickey Lauria, Ph.D.
David Marcouiller, Ph.D.
Kirk McClure, Ph.D.
William M. Rohe, Ph.D.

Practitioners:

Mark Kulaas, FAICP
Lisa Verner, FAICP
John Whalen, FAICP

Arizona State University Site Visit

Site Visitors (left to right):

David Kinsey, FAICP
Michelle Thompson, Ph.D., GISP
Robert Olshansky, Ph.D., FAICP



In Memoriam

PAB notes the passing of Richard W. Willson, Professor at Cal Poly Pomona and PAB Site Visitor. PAB extends our sincerest condolences to his friends and family.

Planning Accreditation Board
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PAB sends periodic updates and newsletters to program administrators, Site Visitors, and others interested in the planning profession.