MURP HANDBOOK
MASTER OF URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING
SOCIAL MEDIA

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**Mission**

Our mission is to prepare students to be effective leaders and facilitators in planning and related professions throughout the world. We aim to equip students with the tools they need to understand and address the economic, ecological, and social dimensions of urban growth and change. We strive to do this through innovative teaching, research, and service, with an emphasis on fostering just and sustainable communities.

The Virginia Tech MURP program is available in two locations: Blacksburg (main campus) and Arlington, VA in the Washington D.C. National Capital Region (NCR).

**Location**

The Virginia Tech MURP program is accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). The MURP curriculum emphasizes experiential learning for students, as well as the challenges and opportunities presented by rapid social changes, technological advancement, and growing global interdependence.

**Curriculum**
MURP Curriculum

The Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program is a two-year, 48-credit hour, interdisciplinary professional degree open to students from a wide variety of undergraduate fields. The program prepares students to become professional planners who can address the economic, environmental, and social consequences of growth and change; and to provide leadership in fostering just and sustainable communities through teaching, scholarship, and service.

The required core courses provide a foundation of planning theories and skills, and constitute approximately one-half of the MURP curriculum. The remaining credit hours are selected by students and their advisors to develop individualized areas of concentration using coursework from across the university.
## Curriculum Requirements

### Core Requirements (18 credit hours)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5014</td>
<td>Gateway to Planning (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5084</td>
<td>Collaborative Planning and Community Involvement (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5174</td>
<td>Planning Theory and History (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5224</td>
<td>Planning Methods and Technologies (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5234</td>
<td>Urban Economy, Equity, &amp; Society (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5554</td>
<td>Land Use and Planning Law (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Capstone Project (6 credit hours)

- UAP 5125 – 5126 Planning Studio: Real World Problems and Solutions (3, 3)
- or
- UAP 5994 Master Research and Thesis (6)

### Electives (24 credit hours)

Electives are for students to develop their specialty (see page 8-12 for details). Elective hours are also for students to obtain graduate certificates (see page 13-17 for details).

### Total Credit Hours: 48

## Suggested Sequence of Courses for Full-time Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fall Semester</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spring Semester</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5014</td>
<td>UAP 5084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5214</td>
<td>UAP 5174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5224</td>
<td>UAP 5554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAP 5234</td>
<td>3 hours of electives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 hours of electives</td>
<td>3 hours of electives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Part-time students should consult with their advisor to discuss appropriate modifications to this sequence.
Areas of Concentration
Areas of Concentration

Students are expected to work with their advisor to identify a MURP Plan of Study that includes courses relevant to their interests. Sample concentrations are provided below, but students may also work with their advisors to design a custom concentration that fits their particular interests.

- Environmental Policy and Planning
- Land Use and Physical Development Planning
- Housing, Community, and Economic Development
- International Development Planning
- Transportation Planning and Policy
- Planning Analytics
- Urban Design

There are no required courses for these areas. Courses should be selected in consultation with an advisor to determine an appropriate set of electives. The following lists of courses can be used as a starting point. In addition, students are free to consider other VT courses not listed. MURP students are restricted to 6 hours of 4000 level courses on their Plan of Study.
# Suggested Areas of Concentration

## Environmental Policy and Planning

**Goal:** Provide students with the conceptual and analytical skills involved in planning and policy development for protection and enhancement of environmental quality.

**Career Opportunities:** Students in this area of concentration may pursue careers with local, regional, and state planning agencies; state and federal environmental agencies; public interest environmental groups; and private consultants.

**Support Faculty:** Hall, Hankey, Lim, Mastran, Misra, Schenk, Wernstedt, Zahm, Y.Zhang

**Recommended Electives:**
- UAP 5214 Disaster Resilience and Natural Hazards Mitigation
- UAP 5264G Environmental Ethics and Policy
- UAP 5374G Land Use and Environment: Planning and Policy
- UAP 5384G Pollution Control Planning and Policy
- UAP 5394G Community Renewable Energy Systems
- UAP 5414 Natural Resources Planning
- UAP 5424 Environment & Behavior Studies
- UAP 5794 Environmental Planning Studio

## Land Use and Physical Planning

**Goal:** Provide students with skills that enable them to improve the quality of life of communities through the effective analysis, planning, and development of physical land use and related resources of their environment.

**Career Opportunities:** Students with this concentration will likely become physical planners qualified to discharge a wide variety of assignments in town, county, city, and regional planning agencies, with private consulting firms, and with non-profit corporations.

**Support Faculty:** Buehler, Hall, Mastran, Morton, Sanchez, Skuzinski, Wernstadt, Zahm, Y.Zhang

**Recommended Electives:**
- UAP 5104 Urban & Regional Development / Theory
- UAP 5304 Land Use Planning
- UAP 5374G Land Use & Environment
- UAP 5434 Urban Development Project Studio
- UAP 5624 Urban Design Seminar
- UAP 5634 Urban Design Studio
- UAP 5854G Planning the Urban Infrastructure
Suggested Areas of Concentration

Housing, Community, and Economic Development

**Goal:** Provide students with the background knowledge, analytical perspectives, and methodological skills that will enable them to assist effectively in the development and implementation of public and private policies relating to housing socio-economic development at the local, metropolitan, and regional scales.

**Career Opportunities:** Students who complete this concentration can expect to be specialist planners who focus on community and economic development policies and issues with general planning agencies; with specialized economic development, community development and redevelopment organizations; and with private development corporations and consulting firms.

**Support faculty:** Bieri, Cowell, Morton, Provo, Stephenson, Sanchez

**Recommended Electives:**
- UAP 5104  Urban & Regional Development Theory
- UAP 5164  Collaborative Processes & Civil Society
- UAP 5184G Community Involvement
- UAP 5744G Principles of Real Estate & Development
- UAP 5774  Economic Development Studio
- UAP 5784  Local Economic Development Planning

International Development Planning

**Goal:** Provide graduate training in theory, methods, and skills within a multidisciplinary framework needed to prepare students for effective planning work in developing countries.

**Career Opportunities:** Planning students with this concentration may pursue professional careers in public and private agencies concerned with urban, rural and regional development, international lending institutions, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, private business, or universities and consulting firms engaged in international development planning and policy.

**Support Faculty:** Hall, Stephenson, Wernstedt, Y.Zhang

**Recommended Electives:**
- UAP 5364  NGOs and Development
- UAP 5384  Infrastructure Planning in the Third World
- GIA 5525  Critical Issues in International Development
- UAP 5764  International Development Planning Studio
- UAP 5764G International Development Planning and Policy
**Suggested Areas of Concentration**

**Transportation Planning and Policy**

**Goal:** Provide students with skills that enable them to analyze problems of the current transportation system, assess the connection of transportation plans, policies, and land-use, critically evaluate transportation policies and plans directed at improving sustainability of the current transportation system. Courses focus on active modes of travel (i.e. cycling and walking), public transportation, and the coordination of transportation and land-use.

**Career Opportunities:** Students with this concentration typically work in the area of transportation planning and policy at town, county, city, regional, and federal planning agencies, with private consulting firms, and with non-profit corporations.

**Support Faculty:** Buehler, Hall, Hankey, Sanchez, Schenk, W.Zhang

**Recommended Electives:**
- UAP 5644 Transportation Systems Planning
- UAP 5794 Environmental Planning Studio (with focus on transportation)
- UAP 5864 Topics in Transportation Planning and Policy
- UAP 5864 Public Transportation
- UAP 5864 Walking and Cycling

**Note:** Students are also encouraged to take at least one transportation course in the Civil Engineering department. Please consult with your adviser before signing up.

**Planning Analytics**

**Goal:** Provide students with knowledge and experience with data, analytical tools, and visualization techniques. The amounts and types of data available to planners is growing at a fantastic rate. The challenge is harnessing these data to answer timely questions with sound analytical methods and communicate the results to other planners, stakeholders, and the community. Courses focus on analytics as an element of plan-making.

**Career Opportunities:** Analytic skills are becoming increasingly important for all types of planning roles. While certainly valuable for technical roles, it is important for all planners to understand the language, capabilities, and limitations of data being used for decision-making purposes.

**Support Faculty:** Buehler, Hankey, Lim, Misra, Sanchez, Schenk, Wernstedt, W.Zhang, Y.Zhang

**Recommended Electives:**
- UAP 5114 Computer Applications in Planning
- UAP 5424 Planning Analytics and Visualization*
- UAP 5464 Qualitative Methods
- UAP 5484 Advanced Urban Research Methodology
- UAP 5494 Advanced Quantitative Techniques
- UAP 5564 Information Technology, Society, and Public Policy
- UAP 5854G Planning the Urban Infrastructure

**Note:** This is currently a special topic course. It will be a regular course once it is approved by the governance.
Graduate Certificates
Graduate Certificates

Our program offers Graduate Certificates in Metropolitan Studies, Economic Development, Disaster Resilience and Risk Management (forthcoming), and Global Planning and International Development Studies. MURP students also regularly obtain certificates in other areas, including Watershed Management, Geospatial Information Technologies, and Public and Nonprofit Management.

Virginia Tech offers more than 70 certificates, many of which could be obtained as part of the MURP program or as a Commonwealth Campus student. For a complete list of available certificates, please consult the Graduate School’s website. Please check with certificate contacts to see whether desired certificates are available on your campus.

Graduate Certificates Application Form can be found at https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/GAAPforms/Application_for_Degree_or_Certificate.pdf
Certificate in Metropolitan Studies

The Graduate Certificate in Metropolitan Studies is designed for those who are interested in acquiring a basic understanding of urban and regional economic development dynamics and the role of policy in influencing them. Urban and regional planners need to know how they can develop their economies. The challenge for policymakers, economic developers and urban planners nowadays is to design appropriate local and regional economic development policies and programs to respond to challenges resulting from globalization, technological development, demographic changes, urban decline, sprawl, and social inequities.

Course Requirements
The Certificate requires the completion of a minimum of 12 credit hours of graduate course work. To receive the Certificate, students must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for the courses taken. MURP Students seeking the Certificate must complete the following two core certificate courses plus six credit hours in electives:

UAP 5104: Urban & Regional Development Theory
UAP 5194: Urban Growth Management

Electives (6 credit hours)
Select courses from among other UAP courses not used for the core noted or other courses, as approved by the faculty.

Faculty contact: Maggie Cowell, Kris Wernstedt

Certificate in Economic Development

The Graduate Certificate in Economic Development is designed for those who are interested in acquiring a basic understanding of urban and regional economic development dynamics and the role of policy in influencing them. Urban and regional planners need to know how they can develop their economies. The challenge for policymakers, economic developers and urban planners nowadays is to design appropriate local and regional economic development policies and programs to respond to challenges resulting from globalization, technological development, demographic changes, urban decline, sprawl, and social inequities.

Course Requirements
The Certificate requires the completion of a minimum of 12 credit hours of graduate course work. To receive the Certificate, students must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for the courses taken. Students seeking the Certificate must complete at least six credit hours from among the following courses plus six credit hours in electives:

UAP 5234: Urban Economy & Public Policy
UAP 5104: Urban & Regional Development Theory
UAP 5784: Local Economic Development Planning
UAP 5774: Economic Development Studio

All credits for the Certificate must be 5000- or 6000-level courses and must be graded on an A-F basis unless they are only offered on a Pass/Fail basis. All courses must be taken from programs in Virginia Tech’s School of Public and International Affairs with at least nine in Urban Affairs and Planning. The Certificate is offered at both the Arlington and the Blacksburg campuses.

Faculty contact: Margaret Cowell
The Graduate Certificate in Disaster Resilience and Risk Management (DRRM) provides graduate students with a trans-disciplinary learning opportunity to train future leaders in managing disaster risks and improving society’s disaster resilience. By cross-cutting and uniting science, engineering, social science, and public policy, this certificate program teaches students the full complexity of disaster risk and resilience. This certificate program will help the students overcome discipline-specific conceptualizations, and will generate new trans-disciplinary knowledge and solutions for achieving disaster resilience.

Course Requirements
The Certificate requires the completion of a minimum of 12 credit hours of graduate course work. All courses must be completed with a grade of B or better. Courses completed with a pass/fail or audit option do not count toward the certificate. Students seeking the certificate must complete the interdisciplinary core (3 credits) and select at least 6 credits from the core cross-disciplinary electives.

Interdisciplinary Core (3 credits)
GRAD 5134: Principles of Disaster Risk Management

Core Cross-discipline Electives (at least 6 credits):
One course from the following list:
UAP 5084: Collaborative Planning & Community Involvement
UAP 5214: Natural Hazards Mitigation Planning
PAPA 5354: Homeland Security, Response & Recovery
UAP 5784: Economic Development Planning Topics

One course from the following list:
BIT 5474: Computer-based Decision Support Systems
CEE 5594: Risk Analysis in Geotechnical Engineering
CEE 5854G: Advanced Coastal Engineering
GEOS 6204: Simulation and Modeling in Geosciences

Faculty contact: Y. Zhang, M. Cowell

*Certificate is expected to be official in Spring 2020.
Certificate in Global Planning and International Development Studies

The Graduate Certificate in Global Planning and International Development Studies builds on Virginia Tech’s internationally recognized, 30-year specialization in international development planning and an innovative partnership between faculty in programs such as Urban Affairs and Planning, Public Health, Geography, and Building Construction. The certificate seeks to prepare graduate students in multiple disciplines to engage in meaningful global professional leadership and academic positions to systematically tackle and resolve these global planning and development issues.

Course Requirements
The Certificate requires the completion of a minimum of 12 credit hours of graduate course work. To receive the Certificate, students must have a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for the courses taken. Following the required six credits core courses, students may select an additional six credit hours in three specializations:
- Non-profit and Non-governmental Organization Management and Development
- Sustainable Infrastructure Development
- Public and Environmental Health and Global Development

Additional graduate courses of study in environmental planning and policy, women and gender in international development, natural resources management, homeland and global security, agricultural and rural development, and international business management are also offered at Virginia Tech and may be taken in addition to the three areas of specialization.

Required Core Courses (6 credits)
1. UAP 5764G International Development Policy and Planning (3H)
2. UAP 5764 International Development Planning Studio (3H)

Elective Courses (6 credits)
Non-profit and Nongovernmental Organization Management and Development
- UAP 5364 Nongovernmental Organizations in International Development
- UAP 5454 Nonprofit Organization and Management
- UAP 5534 Nonprofit Leadership and Governance
- UAP 5544 Public and Nonprofit Financial Management

Sustainable Infrastructure Development
- UAP 5324 Topics in Infrastructure Planning in Developing Countries
- UAP 5864 Topics in Transportation Policy and Planning
- BC 5144 Sustainable Infrastructure Systems
- UAP 5424 Urban Planning in Europe

Public and Environmental Health and Global Development
- PHS 5004 Fundamentals of Public Health
- PHS 5014 Environmental Health
- PHS 5224 Comparative Health Systems
- GEOG 5214 Health and the Global Environment

Faculty contact: Ralph Hall, Kris Wernstedt
Simultaneous Graduate Degrees

UAP actively participates in Simultaneous Graduate Degree programs jointly offered with Landscape Architecture (MLA/MURP), the Center for Public Administration and Policy (MPA/MURP), and Natural Resources (MNR/MURP). If you are interested in this option, please consult your academic advisor for assistance.

Less typical dual degree options are also available outside of CAUS, including, but not limited to: Geospatial Information Technology (GEOG); Infrastructure Systems (CEE); Intermodal Transportation Planning and Analysis (ENG); Construction Engineering and Management (BC/ENG); International Research and Development; Solid Waste Management; and Transportation Policy.

Interested students must submit applications to both programs and be accepted into both programs. Applications may be submitted simultaneously or after the student has joined the first program. An Application for Simultaneous Degree must also be submitted [https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/GAAPforms/simultaneous_degree.pdf](https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/GAAPforms/simultaneous_degree.pdf)

No more than 50% of appropriate graded course work requirements for a master’s degree may be common to both degrees. For example, if one master’s degree requires 20 credits of graded coursework and the other degree requires 30 credits of graded coursework, no more than 10 credits (50% of the graded work on the degree with lower credit requirements) can be used toward both degrees. No Research or Project and Report credits from one degree may be counted toward the other degree. No credits can be triple-counted.
Plan of Study

All students must file a Plan of Study (POS) with the Graduate School no later than the end of the semester prior to the proposed graduation date. However, students and their advisors should begin drafting their POS in their first semester, and have a draft program on file with the department upon completion of 24 credits. Students should complete a POS form, which is available on the SPIA website.

The POS must be signed by all of the appropriate faculty members before being submitted to the UAP department office. The POS form is shown in Appendix I.

Requirements

In developing your plan of study for the MURP Degree, students must adhere to the following requirements, in addition to requirements listed above about core courses, capstone etc.:

**4000-level courses**
Maximum hours: 6

**Independent Study (5974) & Special Studies (5984) courses**
Maximum 9 combined total hours for non-thesis students of 5974 and 5984 courses

OR

Maximum 6 credit hours combined total hours for thesis option students of 5974 and 5984 courses.

**Metro Seminar (5424)**
Maximum hours: 12

**Research & Thesis (5994)**
Maximum hours: 6
All faculty members are available for either academic or career advising by appointment. Upon entrance into the program, all first-year students are assigned an interim primary advisor by the Program Chair. Assignments are made on the basis of student academic interests as stated in their application as well as faculty advising loads.

Students should take the opportunity to introduce themselves to their primary advisor and meet with him/her sometime early in their first semester to begin preliminary planning for their program of study. It is the student’s responsibility to set up a meeting with their advisor after 12 credits. It is also the student’s responsibility to keep in touch with their advisor and notify them of relevant deadlines and requirements related to their progress and graduation. If a student wishes to change advisors, this may be done simply by 1) obtaining approval from the new advisor; 2) notifying the old advisor, and 3) notifying the Program Chair of the change.

During the spring semester of the first year, full-time students should work with their advisor to establish their advisory committee. Committee membership varies depending upon the form of capstone project a student selects (see “Capstone Projects” below). Final membership must be approved by the Program Chair.

Before the Plan of Study (POS) is signed by the advisory committee, changes in the composition of the committee may occur following the procedure for changing advisors outlined above. After the POS is signed, committee changes are made with the Graduate School “Change of Committee” form requiring signatures of both old and new members and the Program Chair. This form may be obtained from the Graduate School website.
Planning Studio Sequence (6 credit hours)

The UAP 5125 – 5126 planning studio sequence provides intensive, on the ground, practical exposure to current planning issues and professional contexts. It builds upon and synthesizes skills developed through the core masters curriculum, such as research methods, communication techniques and community involvement.

The first course in the sequence (5125) introduces students to specific subject matter and professional contexts related to a client-based problem, along with a set of skills to analyze the issue. Students will be required to employ project management skills to define the scope of the problem and to conduct original empirical research using specialized planning tools and methodologies.

Students will use advanced communications skills to engage with the client and community stakeholders throughout the semester and receive feedback on a presentation of proposed alternatives at the end of the term.

The second course in the sequence (5126) allows the student teams to develop the preliminary analysis from 5125 into a professional-quality report and/or presentation. Students will be required to apply specialized data analysis and visualization tools; professional communication standards; and advanced written, visual and oral presentation skills.

The student completing the planning studio sequence is expected to demonstrate his/her ability to:

1. Apply project and task management techniques in individual and collaborative work contexts
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the norms and practices of professionals in planning-related fields
3. Formulate a problem, define the scope of a project, and collect and analyze appropriate data related to contemporary planning problems
4. Propose sound solutions that respond to the needs and constraints of clients and stakeholders
5. Report results effectively through high-quality written and oral presentations

All students must successfully complete the planning studio sequence, UAP 5125 – 5126 or thesis as their capstone project toward the MURP degree. Student work on the thesis option will be directed by a faculty committee consisting of a committee chair in UAP plus two additional committee members. Upon finish, theses must be submitted electronically to the Graduate School and conform to its guidelines.
The Master’s Thesis (6 credit hours)

The thesis presents the results of a well-defined and original research effort that involves either:

1. the analysis of primary or secondary data sources (an example of a primary source would be the statistical analysis of the results of a questionnaire you designed and mailed to a set of state economic development agencies, a secondary source would be a statistical analysis of HUD Housing Survey data in an innovative way);

2. the analysis of primary or secondary document sources (an example of a primary document source would be a set of municipal ordinances relating to economic development which you collect and analyze, a secondary source would be a set of such sources collected by someone else but which you analyze in an innovative way);

3. the analysis of primary or secondary ethnographic sources (an example of a primary ethnographic source is a set of interviews with city planning directors whom you interview personally, a secondary source would be a set of interviews someone else collected but which you interpret in your own original way); or

4. the use of another academically legitimate analytical technique (such as history, jurisprudence, philosophy) with approval and guidance of your thesis advisor and your committee.

Students selecting this option should enroll in UAP 5994 - Research & Thesis and consult with their advisor and/or Committee Chair at the beginning of the second year in the MURP program. Ideally, students planning on pursuing the thesis option will discuss with their (potential) chair within their first year in the program.
Internships

For-credit and not-for-credit internship placements are an important part of the pre-professional experience and are highly encouraged. Students in the MURP program may receive up to three hours of credit for successful completion of an internship placement. The department distributes information about available internships, but the student is responsible for acquiring the position.

General requirements when an internship is to be taken for course credit:

1. Students must be in good academic standing (GPA 3.0 or higher.)

2. Students must meet with their advisor prior to enrolling for credit.

3. The student, the sponsor/ supervisor, and the advisor enter into an internship agreement that defines the duties and responsibilities of the position and establishes objectives relative to student learning and/or skill development. In general, the internship experience should be:
   • consistent with the student’s professional goals;
   • related to the major program of study; and
   • integrated into a full range of activities and responsibilities of the organization.

4. The internship must provide the student an opportunity to engage in independent professional work. Clerical work is not acceptable.

5. Credit for internships is based on total hours worked. The policy is 60 hours of work equals one hour of credit, with a maximum of 3 credit hours for the internship. Students must enroll in the appropriate number of credits during the time of the internship placement (e.g., summer credits for summer work).

6. Each student submits a portfolio of work to their advisor for the final grade. The portfolio includes:
   • examples of work completed during the internship, with a description of the intern’s role/responsibility relative to the final product/deliverable; and
   • a reflective essay assessing preparedness for the internship, learning achieved during the internship, relationship to personal and professional background, goals, etc., and any needs identified (relative to future coursework).

A site supervisor’s evaluation will constitute half of the final grade.

If any of the work the student completes is confidential so that he/she cannot produce copies for review by the advisor, then the intern and the advisor will agree on a proxy for that particular requirement.

All paperwork needs to be submitted prior to starting the internship to receive credit.
Student and Professional Organizations

Capital Area Student Planning Association (CASPA)
The Capital Area Student Planning Association (CASPA) serves as the student organization for the UAP program at Virginia Tech’s Arlington campus. The organization aims to provide a creative and professional forum for the program’s graduate students to facilitate dialogue and friendship, while also providing resources and support from the university, faculty, and the public and private sectors to help students reach their academic and professional goals. Ultimately, the organization serves as the “voice” for NCR students in the UAP program. Social activities, often paired with lectures, are held on campus or in the D.C. Metropolitan area.

Find CASPA on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/245088195639155/about/

Graduate Urban Affairs & Planning Association (GUAPA)
The Graduate Urban Affairs and Planning Association (GUAPA) serves as the student organization for the UAP program at Virginia Tech’s Blacksburg campus. GUAPA maintains links with professional organizations at the local, state, and national levels and is the liaison between the students and the faculty on departmental issues. GUAPA also organizes social activities for graduate students, including parties, athletic teams, and various outdoor events.

Find GUAPA on Facebook:
https://www.facebook.com/groups/122177651141892/about/

American Planning Association (APA)
Full-time students interested in planning are eligible to join APA at a reduced cost. APA currently offers free membership to first-year planning students. When submitting a membership form, students must remember to also join the local APA chapter, either the Virginia Chapter, or the National Capital Area Chapter.

Other Organizations
There are a number of graduate student organizations on campus that seek to help students successfully complete their course of study and integrate them into campus life. The Graduate Student Assembly represents the interests of graduate students on campus. Election to that body is through the college. Visit the GSA homepage here:
https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/graduate-student-organizations.html

The Council of International Student Organizations (CISO) is an umbrella organization representing all international student organizations at Virginia Tech. CISO currently includes students from over 110 countries attending Virginia Tech. Together with the Cranwell International Center, CISO officers try to make students feel at home in Blacksburg. One of the missions of CISO is to represent the interest and voices of international students to the university’s committees and commissions. To get involved with CISO, send an email to the CISO President, blairshi@vt.edu.

For those interested, there are also numerous social, athletic, political and academic societies and clubs on campus. A list of student groups is available from the Division of Student Affairs: http://www.dsa.vt.edu/
Students should follow these steps by the deadlines to get their degree and participate in the commencement ceremony. For updated deadlines, see: http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/what-you-need-to-graduate/deadlines-for-academic-progress.html

**Steps to Completing Your Degree**

1. **Submit a Plan of Study (POS)**
   A POS details all of the courses you will take in order to complete your degree program. All degree-seeking graduate students must submit a plan of study. Master's students must submit by the end of their second academic semester (or after completion of 24 hours for PT students). Refer to the Graduate Catalog for policies and requirements.

2. **Enroll in Your Final Semester**
   You must enroll in at least three credit hours in your last semester to receive a degree and participate in commencement, unless you qualify for the Start-of-Semester Defense Exception.

3. **Check the Name on Your Diploma**
   The name printed on your diploma will be the full legal name on your official university record. If you wish to make a change, submit a name change request before the deadline to apply for your degree.

4. **Apply to Receive Your Degree**
   Electronically submit a Degree or Certificate Conferral Request online using HokieSPA. A $25 fee will be charged to your student account. You must do this by the deadline for your name to be printed in the Commencement Bulletin.

   If you don’t complete all the degree requirements during the semester on your Degree or Certificate Conferral Request, you’ll need to submit a new request for the term you wish to graduate.

5. **Schedule Your Final Exam**
   Schedule a date for your final exam to defend your thesis using the Electronic Signature System. You must submit this request at least two weeks before your desired exam date. Please consult with your Committee Chair to ensure that you have a defensible draft completed in time to defend.

6. **Thesis Students Need to Submit Your Electronic Thesis or Dissertation**
   Upload your electronic thesis or dissertation (ETD) within two weeks after your exam/defense date. Submit any supporting documentation to the Graduate School during this timeframe as well, such as copyright permission letters, IRB approval or exemption notices, UMI form, or Survey of Earned Doctorates.

   Once your final exam is approved, an ETD archiving fee of $20 for master’s thesis students or $45 for doctoral students will be charged to your student account.

7. **Attending Commencement**
   Use the degree menu in HokieSPA to confirm whether or not you plan to attend your commencement ceremony. Master’s candidates who finish the requirements but not in time to receive a degree this semester are still welcome to participate in commencement.
Student Activities
MURP Student Travel

To encourage, support, and make visible the research of graduate students, SPIA will provide limited travel support annually to conferences or workshops where the graduate students are presenting a paper.

Graduate students presenting a paper at a conference must first secure support from GSA or other sources. SPIA and UAP may be sources of travel support for students. This can be for one trip or spread over two trips as long as the guidelines for presenting research are met.

Requests for travel support should be made to the SPIA director and the UAP program chair, accompanied by a brief budget for the trip (estimated costs for travel, lodging, meals and conference registration), and should identify any additional support available for the travel. The request should also include the name and location of the conference and the title of the paper to be presented.

Find the travel form here: https://www.controller.vt.edu/content/dam/controller_vt_edu/forms/travel/request_for_travel_approval_vt.pdf
Other Activities
Faculty

Ralph Buehler, Associate Professor and Chair [Arlington]
Ph.D., Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University
Transportation policy and planning, bicycling, walking, active travel.
(571)858-3111 | ralphbu@vt.edu

Margaret (Maggie) Cowell, Associate Professor [Arlington]
Ph.D., City and Regional Planning, Cornell University
Economic development, urban politics, regional development, economic restructuring.
(571)858-3118 | mmcowell@vt.edu

Shelley Mastran, Professor of Practice [Arlington]
Ph.D., Geography, University of Maryland
Land use planning, community engagement, natural resources planning, historic preservation. (703)927-4584 | smastran@vt.edu

Shalini Misra, Associate Professor [Arlington]
Ph.D., Planning, Policy, & Design, University of California Irvine
Social ecology, digital stressors, public managerial thinking and decision-making, trans-disciplinary collaboration and education. (571)858-3131 | shalini@vt.edu

Elizabeth Morton, Associate Professor of Practice [Arlington]
Ph.D., Urban Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Urban design, historic preservation and cultural policy and planning.
(571)858-3181 | ElizabethMorton@vt.edu

Thomas W. Sanchez, Professor [Arlington]
Ph.D., City Planning, Georgia Institute of Technology
Transportation, justice, technology, and planning scholarship.
tom.sanchez@vt.edu

Kris Wernstedt, Professor [Arlington]
Ph.D., City & Regional Planning, Cornell University
International policy and planning, water and sanitation, solid waste, infrastructure, decision-making. (301)785-6725 | krisw@vt.edu
Faculty

David Bieri, Associate Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D, Public Policy, Virginia Tech
Public finance, urban economics, real estate.
(540)231-3802 | bieri@vt.edu

Ralph Hall, Associate Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., Technology, Management & Policy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Sustainable development, transportation, water/sanitation in developing countries.
(540)231-5485 | rphall@vt.edu

Steve Hankey, Assistant Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., Civil Engineering, University of Minnesota
Urban air quality, bicycle and pedestrian planning, exposure assessment, health impacts of the built environment. (540)231-7508 | hankey@vt.edu

Theodore Lim, Assistant Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., City and Regional Planning, University of Pennsylvania
Water resources, environmental planning, geospatial and environmental analytics, “big data” and planning. tclim@vt.edu

Todd Schenk, Assistant Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D. Public Policy & Planning, M.I.T.
Collaborative planning and deliberation, joint fact-finding, climate change adaptation, sustainability, serious games. (540)231-1803 | tschenk@vt.edu

Thomas Skuzinski, Assistant Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., Urban & Regional Planning, University of Michigan
Land use law, land use and resilience policies, local and regional governance, models of cognition in governance and policy processes. (540)231-1801 | skuzinsk@vt.edu

Max Stephenson, Jr., Professor and Director, Institute for Policy & Governance [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., Government, University of Virginia
Public policy, public and non-profit management, non-profit organizations and management. (540)231-7340 | mstephen@vt.edu

Diane L. Zahm, Associate Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., Environmental Science, SUNY at Syracuse
Land use, physical planning, design and crime prevention.
(540)231-7503 | dzahm@vt.edu

Wenwen Zhang, Assistant Professor [Blacksburg]
PhD. City Planning, Georgia Institute of Technology
Innovative transportation and land use interaction, urban informatics, smart city, big & open data. (540)232-8431 | wenwen.zhang@vt.edu

Yang Zhang, Associate Professor [Blacksburg]
Ph.D., Urban and Regional Planning, Texas A&M University
Natural hazards mitigation, floodplain planning, post-disaster recovery, geospatial analytics and modeling. (540)231-1128 | yz@vt.edu
APPENDIX: Plan of Study Form

Student’s Name: ____________________________________________________________

Student Number: ___________________________ E-mail: __________________________

Thesis or Non-Thesis Option (circle one)

Date Submitted to UAP: ______

Procedures for submitting Plan of Study:
- Please type your information following your unofficial transcript
- Plan of Study has to be approved and signed by all committee members before submitting to Leigh (Blacksburg) or Myriam (Alexandria) in the UAP Main Office
- Graduate School Policy: POS on file after successfully completing 15 hours; must be on file BEFORE final semester.

Proposed Plan of Study Urban Affairs and Planning

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Research &amp; Thesis or Dissertation or Research Project</th>
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5000 & Higher Level Courses

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### Supporting/Transfer Courses: 4000 and 5000 level

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Note: Student met scholarly ethics and integrity requirement through completion of UAP 5174 and IRB certification, as noted in Urban Affairs and Planning’s approved ethics and integrity plan.

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<th>Committee Member Name</th>
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Date Entered: ____________  
Date RS to GR: ____________  
Date of Final Approval: ____________  
Rev. 2/29/2016 1b

Link to online version of Plan of Study form -  