A Note from the CRP Department Head

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Another year has passed and, incredibly, we are already publishing Volume 9 of Focus! It has been an extremely busy year. We completed accreditation of our undergraduate (BSCRP) and masters (MCRP) degree programs, finalized a tenure track hire, and participated actively in a search for the new Dean of CAED, Christine Theodoropoulou.

Three important books authored by CRP faculty were published in the first half of 2012. These included Dr. Umut Toker’s book on Community Design, Dr. Michael Boswell and Dr. Adriene Greve’s book on Climate Action Planning, and Mike Multari’s book on Municipal Finance. They will have broad impact on professional practice and we look forward to seeing them in the hands of planning professionals around the nation. The Lisbon summer studio efforts were translated into a monograph that is getting educators’ attention. Faculty made presentations at both the State and National APA conferences, which brought attention to work that has drawn on activities in our classes. We had some excellent brown-bag presentations by visiting practitioners and scholars. And our team won the Bank of America Affordable Housing Challenge a second year in a row. Clearly, there was much to occupy our time and attention!

We continue our contribution to serve the community and challenge our students to “learn by doing” by successfully seeking out city partners for the majority of our community planning studios. These have enriched the professional experience of our students. They do involve significantly more work for faculty and students, but we remain committed to this effort in the belief that the experience makes our students “job ready.”

We hear from employers that our graduates make an easy entry into the profession as a result of this kind of direct exposure to city planning. Financial sponsorships of our studios by our city partners and faculty success in obtaining sponsored research helped this past year, not only to intellectually energize the CRP community but also to buffer us financially. Despite the pervasive and gloomy news on the budget, the morale and performance of the CRP family has remained high. Thanks to their goodwill and persistence we have completed a successful year, one we are proud of.

The highlight of this past year was that both the BSCRP and the MCRP programs were accredited, described as “very strong programs preparing outstanding professionals.” For this successful outcome we thank not just CRP’s hard working faculty and office staff, whose assistance and collegiality the site visitors appreciated profusely, but also a tremendous cadre of support from the professional field. This includes the loyal group of dedicated practitioners who teach as part time instructors; the alumni and friends of CRP who provide us studio projects and make known their satisfaction with the work produced; practitioners who mentor our students through internships; and CRP students who gave clear and constructive input throughout the process. Thank you all very much! Both programs are accredited through 2017 with a possible additional two-year extension.

My three years as Department Head of City and Regional Planning have been productive and stimulating. It is a pleasure to serve in a collegial environment to sustain our long-standing commitment to excellence. Getting to know CRP alumni and friends this past year has been gratifying. I am looking forward to expanding this circle and enlisting their collaboration as we move forward. Offering internship, serving as a mentor, supporting student projects, organizing alumni gatherings, endowing scholarships for students, investing in grants to support international travel and exposure, or facilitating symposiums are some opportunities to engage with CRP that we would warmly welcome.

In January 2012, Dr. William Riggs joins our full time faculty. He has a Ph.D. in Planning from the University of California Berkeley, and substantial professional experience in California. Offerings in CRP will be enriched by his expertise and technical skills. September 2012, CAED welcomed a new Dean, Christine Theodoropoulou, who comes to Cal Poly from the University of Oregon where she has served as Head of the Architecture Department since 2003. She is a graduate of Princeton and Yale universities in civil engineering and architecture respectively, and licensed in California in both professions.

Please keep in touch and do send us news of your activities at crp@calpoly.edu. We want to showcase and celebrate the successes of CRP family members.

Hemalata C. Dandekar
PhD; professor, CRP Department Head.