

# NOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

This is volume VI in what has turned out to be a very successful project for the City and Regional Planning Department. More people are reading FOCUS and the content quality continues to be informative and relevant. We strive for FOCUS to have national significance and regional relevance. This year is no different, and we hope you enjoy reading all the articles and giving us feedback on the work.

This issue brings to a close a special year for City and Regional Planning. It is our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, when the first class of students began in 1969 and we have been holding a series of events in 2008-2009 to celebrate. In October 2008 nearly 100 alumni came back to San Luis Obispo to share memories with each other and to talk to present students about getting the first job and being a planning professional. We thank the alumni steering committee for all the effort and support they put in to make this event happen. The alumni also helped us to put together more of the CRP Cal Poly story from Ken Schwartz (1968) to Bill Siembieda (2008).

As part of this celebration year, we are making a video featuring faculty and students who share experiences of the program, and it will serve as a means to memorialize the past. This year we lost a famous and valued alumni and adjunct faculty member with the passing of Paul Crawford, one of the leaders in the Form-Based Codes movement. We all do miss him. Throughout its history CRP has educated many people who have become planning directors of major cities (San Francisco, San Jose and Las Vegas, for example), many counties in California (Ventura, San Luis Obispo, for example) and even city managers (Fort Collins, CO, for example).

In 2007, I wrote about our Masters program (MCRP) being ranked in the top 20 nationally by practitioners the *Planetizen.com* ranking process. In 2009, we moved up to 15<sup>th</sup> nationally for all universities, and were ranked #1 for master's program without a PhD program. This is a simply wonderful ranking given that we are a publicly partially assisted university and not located in a large city. We owe all of this to the great students, the alumni, and the excellent faculty; all of who work hard at creating a wonderful educational experience. This high ranking has resulted in receiving 110 applications for the fall 2009 entering MCRP class, a departmental record for quantity and quality.

This is also moving year for us. We have left Dexter Hall and returned to Engineering West where faculty now enjoy offices with windows and new furnishings, and the students have much better studios and equipment to work with. We do owe much of this to generosity of the Errett-Fisher Foundation who has supported equipment and student fellowships for the department.

The Department continues to partner with cities and towns to provide needed planning projects that are completed in our studio and lab courses. This year we worked with local agencies in San Francisco, Ventura, Grover Beach, Delano, and Benicia, CA. Handled through CRP 410/411 by instructors Zeljka Howard and Adrienne Greve, the work in Benicia is especially exciting as we are doing a Climate Action Plan for the city. This work will provide a model for such plans in small towns throughout California. In support of these efforts, CRP faculty Umut Toker organized a Community Based Design symposium in spring 2008 where nationally known professionals and CRP students presented their work on how to design affordable housing using extensive user input in the process. And since CRP always likes to

have practitioners teaching in the program, this year we were fortunate to have Alex Hinds (former planning director of Marin County) and Scott Bruce (former community development director of Coweta, Oklahoma) teach with us.

CRP's "international component" continues to expand and enrich our lives. This year we have added a fifth university exchange program in partnering with the urbanism program of the Universidade Lusofona in Lisbon, Portugal. We have also hosted two Brazilian academics that came to do post-doc research on California urbanism. Douglas Aguiar, from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, and Paulo Afonso Rheingantz, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Both gave lectures and participated in studio reviews; it was great having them with us.

In 2009, in collaboration with the Architecture Department, CRP will be sponsoring the visit of Geoffrey Payne, an international expert in housing and land development for the World Bank, UN-Habitat, and the British Government, and formerly a lecturer at Oxford Brookes University and DPU-University College, London. Geoffrey will spend a week with us in April lecturing and conducting a one-day workshop. To deepen this mix of international experiences I spent five weeks as a research professor at Kyoto University in Japan, studying the Japanese disaster recovery and disaster mitigation planning systems. This work will feed into a four-year project by a CRP faculty team that is beginning to support the State of California's disaster mitigation programs through the newly formed Emergency Management Agency

In closing, I want you to know that FOCUS is produced with a volunteer staff of faculty and students under the watchful eye of Vicente del Rio, the Managing Editor. There would be no FOCUS without Vicente.

William Siembieda, Ph.D. AICP  
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