

Learning from California: Highlights of CRP Studios 2014/2015 AY

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Dr. Hemalata Dandekar highlights the studio projects from both BSCR and MCRP programs during the 2014-15 academic year. Fundamental in the learn-by-doing service-learning pedagogy embraced by the department, the studios help shape students into professionals that are fully with their communities.

The CRP department takes pride in the fact that our students, through core course work, serve California communities while they learn skills that make them invaluable as they enter the planning profession. We seek out opportunities for our students to work in contexts, and in communities, that otherwise might not have access to the planning analysis and visioning that our students can offer. The studio work completed in the past academic year (2014-15) represents some of the work this year, and is available for detailed review on the Cal Poly digital commons. First and foremost, in these “hands-on” efforts is our responsibility to our students, to pedagogic clarity, and the detail of incremental, aggregated accumulation of knowledge and capabilities. Student learning is always at the core of our concern and commitment. We are fortunate to have a very talented group of studio faculty who consistently demonstrate that with good direction and mentoring students deliver creative projects that meet the needs of multiple constituencies.

The California communities who hosted our studios were diverse and spread throughout California. Most upper division undergraduate and graduate masters studios received financial support from the host client-communities. This support is essential in subverting student travel and expenses but also exerting greater accountability and responsibility on super-

vising faculty. In the 2014-15 academic year CRP students engaged in the following projects in their various studios:

Undergraduate Studios: *Basic Graphic Skills CRP 201 (Fall 2014), Urban Design Studio 1 CRP 202 (Winter 2015). Professors Umut Toker and Woody Combrink.*

A series of applied in-studio and out-of-studio assignments introduced students to basic graphic communication methods and urban design concepts in CRP 201. Freehand sketching, orthographic drawing, and layouts using traditional drafting techniques, as well as basic computer-based graphic techniques were used to explore a site at the west end of the downtown core in San Luis Obispo adjacent to San Luis Creek.

Skills acquired in CRP 201 were applied to a small urban design project in CRP 202, in which students articulate the rationale behind their design decisions as they relate to a specific client program, environmental concerns, regulations and ordinances, economic factors, site opportunities and constraints, circulation, and creating a pedestrian friendly environment. This year the work was sited on a full city block at the east end of the downtown core where the major entries of Highway 1 (Santa Rosa Street) and Monterey Streets intersect forming an important gateway to the downtown.



Figure 1: Mixed-use block with bus terminal at Santa Rosa and Monterey, San Luis Obispo; CRP 202. By Julia Cannata, Maribel Covarrubias and Tanya Ramirez.

Undergraduate Studios: *Urban Design Studio 2 CRP 203 (Spring 2014).* Professors Vicente del Rio and Woody Combrink.

Mixed-use development, Avila Beach.

Designing a large mixed-use infill project in Avila Beach, a small beach community and popular tourist destination was the task addressed by both sections of CRP 203, taught by Professors Vicente del Rio and Woody Combrink. Located in the heart of town, the site is currently used as a major public parking lot. The students were challenged to assess the problem, study the existing Specific Plan, and propose feasible solutions that accommodate the needs of the local community with those of tourism, while satisfying parking and circulation requirements. Walkability, livable public spaces, complementary land uses, a variety of architectural typologies, strong economic anchors, and linkages to the beachfront were some of the design issues dealt with by the students' creative solutions.

Undergraduate Studio: *Urban Design Studio III CRP 341 (Fall 2014).* Professor Vicente del Rio; Student Assistant Evan Evangelopoulos.

Highway 46 Corridor Urban Design Plan, Wasco.

Through a contract with the City of Wasco's Planning Department, this studio of 28 undergraduate BSCRIP students engaged in an intense ten-week process leading to several forward-looking urban design ideas to help guide the city's future development along the Highway 46 corridor. Traversing Wasco from East to West, Highway 46 is a major connector between the Central Coast and the Central Valley, but acts as a divider between the north and the south parts of town. It also suffers from a limited two-lane capacity and irregular geometry; lack of sidewalks and bike lanes; limited signalization and dangerous intersections; the hodgepodge of big-boxes and car-oriented land uses; old and unattractive buildings, vacant or under-developed parcels; weak connectivity to the downtown; and very poor identity and character. The studio re-envisioned the Highway 46 Corridor to serve the region and the City of Wasco's community simultaneously. Taking advantage of the



Figure 2: *Mixed-use development in Avila Beach; CRP 203.*
By Nima Kabirinassad and Bryan Cochran.

thousands of drivers that use the corridor everyday and willing to complement Wasco's downtown uses, the strategic plan proposed by the class will help Wasco's economy and provide residents and visitors with a livable, walkable, more attractive, and well connected environment.

Undergraduate Studios: *Community Planning Laboratory I and II CRP 410/411 (Fall 2013 and Winter 2014).* Professors Kelly Main and Adrienne Greve.

General Plan Update, City of Sanger.

Sanger is located in Fresno County, in California's Central Valley approximately six miles east of the City of Fresno, the largest city in the county and the fifth largest city in California. The Sierra Nevada Mountains, east of the city create a scenic setting for the area as does the Kings River. Highway 180 the nearest major roadway, is approximately one mile north of Sanger and runs in an east-west direction. Sanger populations was 24,270 residents in 2010 and encompassed a land area of just over 5.5 square miles. A general plan update for the City of Sanger, completed by fourth year undergraduate CRP students, helped strengthen community. The effort was to assist the City of Sanger to develop a strategic plan and become a vibrant, unified,

Figure 3 :
Highway 46 Corridor Urban Design Plan, Wasco; CRP 341.
Class project for the City of Wasco, showing major proposed redevelopment sites and the redesigned highway.



community. The plan envisions that in 2035, the City of Sanger will have maintained the small-town feel that so many residents appreciate and have built a strong sense of community. The downtown area will have an economically healthy community and small, local businesses will be promoted (Figures 4 & 5).



Figures 4 & 5: Images of students working on the General Plan Update or Sanger. Above: helping highschoolers to plan their ideal city. Below: helping residents choose their favorite ideas as developed by the class, outside Sanger's Walmart.



Graduate Studio: *Project Planning and Design Studio CRP 553 (Spring 2013). Professor Vicente del Rio.*

South El Camino Real Urban Design Vision, San Clemente.

The City of San Clemente's Planning Division hired this graduate studio to explore innovative visions for future development and public investment along a one-mile stretch of the South El Camino Real (SECR) corridor that extends to the city's southern edge. The class conducted extensive studies including field surveys, an internet-based survey, and collected comments from a project website and a public workshop. The resulting Concept Plan promotes an attractive, safe, and walkable environment; community vitality and connectivity; increased aesthetics and identity-giving features; and opportunities for public and private investment. The recommendations included: redesigned sidewalks, public art, a specially designed sound-wall (to buffer sound from the I-5), the redesign of the existing pedestrian bridge, new pedestrian crossings, parklets, a zoning overlay to encourage vertical mixed use, design guidelines to shape new developments, and three anchor points of concentrated retail. The project is discussed in detail in this issue of FOCUS (see *Faculty and Student Work*).

Graduate Studio: *Project Planning and Design Studio CRP 553 (Spring 2013). Professor Kelly Main.*

Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Woodland.

The City of Woodland hired this graduate studio to study and develop a vision for the city's parks and recreation system for the next 20 years. Developed by the graduate CRP Masters class and employing several surveying and participatory techniques, the plan strove to improve the parks, facilities, and programs to accommodate the diverse community in Woodland and offer a variety of social, recreational, and cultural opportunities. The plan emphasizes community values in the needs assessment and recommendations chapters, as well as asserts health, sustainability, public space, connectivity, and fiscal responsibility for the parks system (Figure 6).



Graduate Studio: *Community and Regional Planning Studios CRP 552/554 (Fall 2014 & Winter 2015). Professor Chris Clark.*

Campus Master Plan Update, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Cal Poly's Master Plan update was the subject of a graduate studio. This work presented a rare opportunity for students to be engaged in the work of setting the University's course for the next three decades. They were engaged by the professional master planning team to staff and in some instances, orchestrate public outreach events. Over a thousand individuals participated in these outreach events, giving students ample opportunity to meet with members of the public. The Master Plan will entail over one and a half billion dollars worth of capital improvements to the campus. An additional six thousand students are programmed in the plan to live on campus. It is anticipated that Cal Poly enrollment will grow to approximately 24,000 students. In a culminating effort, the graduate students were invited by President Armstrong to present their plans and policies to him and his executive staff.

Graduate Studio: *Community and Regional Planning Studios CRP 552/554 (Fall 2014 & Winter 2015). Professor Cornelius Nuworsoo.*

Draft General Plan, Wasco.

An administrative draft General Plan for the City of Wasco was the focus of Professor Cornelius Nuworsoo's CRP 552/554 studio, through a contract with the city's Planning Department. Fourteen graduate students collaborated with residents, planning staff, and city leaders to formulate a development scenario to accommodate projected population, jobs and housing needs by 2040. The class engaged in a thorough analysis of the community and the opportunities and constraints for development through a process that included intense public feedback.

The comprehensive update of the City's General Plan and its twelve elements (Economic Development; Land Use; Circulation; Conservation; Housing; Public Facilities; Safety; Health; Open Space; Noise; Community Design, and Air Quality) will help improve the quality of life for residents, provide diverse housing options, generate economic vitality, and enhance Wasco as an attraction and a center for agricultural production in the Central Valley, and service provider for truckers and tourists on SR 46. Three distinct alternative growth scenarios for 2040 were explored and the class combined the preferred that captured community desires: (a) for vibrant, walkable, and attractive neighborhoods; (b) to preserve the City's character; (c) to provide an adequate supply of housing; and (d) to increase the number of jobs within the City (Figure 8). The map shows areas focusing on neighborhood commercial centers, on district commercial centers, and on a regional commercial center to serve residents, travelers, and neighboring communities.



Figure 6: Professor Main's graduate class conducting a workshop with students from the Pioneer High School in Woodlands.



Figure 7: Professor Clark (pictured on the left) and his graduate students presenting their work on the Cal Poly's Campus Master Plan Update to President Armstrong (forth from the right).

Figure 8: City of Wasco's General Plan Update. Preferred Growth Scenario.

