This past year students from the City and Regional Planning Department were honored with important regional, state, and national awards. Faculty and students in Cal Poly’s City and Regional Planning Department have a long-standing tradition in assisting local communities in their planning and urban design efforts. CRP work in these areas have received numerous awards and commendations, and CRP students have been recognized among the best in the US.

**BEST STUDENT PROJECT, AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION AND AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF CERTIFIED PLANNERS**

The American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) has chosen the Community Plan for San Miguel, CA as the best example for “Applying the Planning Process” of student work in the country. Last year this same work was awarded by the California’s Central Coast Session of the American Planning Association, and also received the Award of Excellence from the California Chapter of the APA.

The project, which appears in this issue of FOCUS was the final product of a six-month study conducted by the undergraduate Community Planning Lab lead by faculty advisor Professor Zeljka Pavlovich Howard. The study was designed to emulate the process of preparing a community plan and expose students to state-of-the-art technology, methods and techniques used in “real-world” planning situations. The Community Plan created a vision for San Miguel in cooperation with the residents and the San Miguel Advisory Committee, which will use it to guide future community development and revitalization of the downtown.

The Award Program jurors commented that the student’s work provides “an interesting reflection on urban design; a guide for growth and design; a model for other jurisdictions to use; it recognizes the ‘Jewel’ of California missions; and is very comprehensive.” They also mentioned that the quality of the student work approaches that of many professional firms.

**AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION, DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AWARD FOR A STUDENT PLANNER**

The City and Regional Planning Department is especially proud that two of our students have received the American Planning Association’s Distinguished Leadership Award, one in 2000 and one in 2005. In the history of this national competition, CRP students have won more than any other program in the country.

The first APA Distinguished Leadership Award for a Student Planner was made in 2000 and it went to Alison Pernell, who graduated with a bachelor’s degree in City and Regional Planning. The APA declared that “her list of planning-related projects, undertaken while a student, reads more like the credits of a planner in the field for several years. Pernell exceeded academically; she was named to the Dean’s and President’s honor rolls.”

In 2005, the sixth APA Distinguished Leadership Award for a Student Planner goes to Elizabeth FitzZaland a second year Master’s student in Cal Poly’s CRP Department. She was honored at APA’s national Planning Conference, and Planning magazine highlighted her accomplishments in it’s March 2005 issue. “Ms. FitzZaland is a uniquely talented student,” said APA Awards Committee Co-Chair Carol Rhea, “her academic achievement is remarkable, as is her dedication to improving the urban condition through planning.” Another co-chair of the Awards Committee Bruce Knight, declared that “Ms. FitzZaland’s accomplishments
as a student demonstrate her uncommon potential as a future leader in the planning field... the combination of her academic accomplishments and experience in the field points to someone destined to have a meaningful career.”

**REASONS FOR SUCCESS**

The number of awards granted to CRP is an unparalleled record given the size and resources of the department, and proves the importance of faculty and student engagement and real-world challenges as a student learning laboratory. The judges consistently remark that the work done at CRP looks as though the students have had many years of professional practical experience. They are reflecting on the high standards achieved, and the level of engagement established by the faculty. Being a teaching centered professional planning program, theory is used to inform the work while always seeking to have students provide professional level solutions based on the limits of the world presented to them. The learning outcome of this solutions-focused approach, provides students with skills, values and knowledge relevant to professional practice on an applied level. The prestigious APA and AICP awards tell the world that engagement of faculty, at a deep level with the student, does produce educated and talented soon-to-be professionals.

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