STANDING COMMITTEES

Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Approve Change of Designation: Designation of Urban Studies from a Program to the School of Urban Studies at the University of Washington Tacoma

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is the recommendation of the administration and the Academic and Student Affairs Committee that the designation of the Urban Studies Program at the University of Washington Tacoma be changed to the School of Urban Studies, effective July 1, 2019.

BACKGROUND

Urban Studies is a signature academic program of the University of Washington Tacoma, embodying its urban serving mission. We are committed to the development of current and future civic leaders and provide much-needed urban education and outreach in the South Sound Region. As an academic unit, we nurture urban professionals’ intellectual curiosity and skills, producing the next generation of urban leaders and community advocates. Our contributions are evident in the number of our alumni who currently serve as elected officials in various jurisdictions in Pierce County and beyond. Our graduates can be found in numerous public and private organizations throughout the Puget Sound Region, contributing to the future of our metropolitan area through land use, housing, and transportation planning.

As an academic program, we have an articulated vision of being a “premier Urban Studies program within a leading urban-serving university.” Our mission is: “Teach to engage; research to advance knowledge; act to promote social justice and equitable development.” With this vision in mind, we have expanded our educational degree offerings over the last five years, creating two new graduate programs and a new undergraduate program, all of which have proven successful in meeting their quantitative and qualitative goals. They are positioned to serve as premier programs in the nation, attracting students who share our commitment to social justice through education and practice. With five degree programs and highly popular certificate programs, Urban Studies has grown in size and, more importantly, in its educational and regional impact.

Our faculty members build community partnerships and our students participate in a number of community-engaged projects, leading to an organic understanding of the nature and value of public scholarship. Urban Studies is valued by our community partners throughout the region and has become an important resource for jurisdictions and non-profits alike. Urban Studies faculty members practice
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what they teach and teach what they practice, in a manner that creates a seamless relationship between the production of knowledge and its application in practice. We offer a number of public educational opportunities through our annual Urban Studies Forum (attended by 250+ residents of the Puget Sound, policymakers, nonprofits, and for-profit organizations) and 3 to 4 public lectures, and also participate in a handful of events in the region. We have an ongoing partnership with the Pierce County Regional Council and several of their member jurisdictions, and our faculty members are frequently called upon for their expertise. The trust and value placed in us have grown systematically, allowing us to become a partner to the region and a convener for its conversations.

Given the level of growth and complexity of our academic unit, our contributions to the urban mission of the university, and the recognition we have received from our external partners, the change from program to school designation would have both functional and symbolic values. We are often referred to as a school by our partners, who view our level of contributions to be beyond what they expect from a program. Symbolically, designating Urban Studies as a school would illustrate to our community partners that the University of Washington equally values what we do, and by extension values our partners. Functionally, being a School would allow us to create a more thoughtful faculty governance structure that relates to the multiple degree programs we now offer; improve our ability to manage and effectively operate a complex academic unit; increase the visibility of our degree offerings and faculty expertise to prospective students and community partners; and acknowledge our contributions to the urban serving mission of the university.

Breadth and Scale: Our academic unit provides a critical urban lens for understanding global challenges. We prepare our students to adopt this approach and excel as urbanists wherever they practice. Our curricular content is strategically designed to enhance the ability of our students to engage the topic of urbanism from multiple perspectives (theoretically and methodologically). This has allowed our students to understand the urban praxis as nuanced and multilayered. Our degree offerings and their inter-Connectivities are carefully constructed to create a structurally sound and diverse learning environment. We offer:

- BA in Urban Studies (with three formal options)
  - Global Urbanism
  - Community Development & Planning
  - GIS and Spatial Planning
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- BA in Sustainable Urban Development
- BS in Urban Design
- MS in Geospatial Technologies
- MA in Community Planning
- Certificate in Geographic Information Systems
- 2+1 Program (a cohort-based program for students with junior standing who meet specific criteria for admission to our program and who could potentially earn a BA, a certificate in GIS and an MS in Geospatial Technologies within three years)
- Minor in Urban Studies
- Minor in Sustainable Urban Development

The Urban Studies academic unit was founded in 2001. By Autumn 2008, it had a well-established undergraduate degree in Urban Studies and a certificate program in GIS. In Autumn 2011, the Urban Studies program added a second undergraduate degree: Sustainable Urban Development. Across these years, the total Autumn headcount hovered between 80 and 90. In Autumn 2014, we started the MS in Geospatial Technologies and, in Autumn 2016, added the MA in Community Planning. Our active recruitment and the addition of new programs increased the Autumn student headcount to about 140 in 2017. This year we added the new undergraduate degree in Urban Design. In Autumn 2018, our majors totaled 146.1 Within the next three years and with the full activation of the Urban Design degree, we expect to achieve (conservatively speaking) a total Autumn student headcount of 200. In addition to majors, the GIS certificate also serves two cohorts of students per year, adding another 50 to our total headcount in all majors and certificates.

Our academic unit has become significantly more complex over time as the scale and breadth of our academic offerings have increased. This is matched by growth in our faculty, which currently consists of 4 full professors, 3 associate professors, 3 assistant professors, one senior lecturer, and two lecturers. We are in the process of recruiting an additional assistant professor for design and planning, which will bring the total to 14 faculty members. Consistent with UW policies, we have hired one full-time competitively-hired multi-year lecturer and will be recruiting a second position during the 2018-2019 academic year. Urban Studies will not have

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1 On most university campuses, Urban Studies academic programs are below 4% of the total university student population, with many in the 2-3% range. Our program is well within that range at the University of Washington Tacoma.
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any full-time temporary lecturers by the end of this year. We do employ a few part-time lecturers, varying by quarter and programmatic needs. There are three full time staff members within the program: an Administrator, a Program Coordinator, and an Academic Advisor, who also serves as a recruiter.

Rationale for Becoming a School:

Responding to Growing Complexity
As the content of the Urban Studies Program has become more complex, including the presence of a larger graduate student body, the School designation is more fitting to reflect the diversity of our degree offerings, our faculty expertise, our evolving structure, and our growing community standing. The school designation will help elevate the position of Urban Studies on campus and in the region, which we believe is commensurate with the level of our activities and contributions to the university and the communities we serve. Finally, this designation will help us with future recruitment, particularly for new faculty members and future leadership. It is worth noting that, given our high level of community engagement, our regional partners think of us as a school, and a formal UW recognition will match their expectations.

Higher visibility of our excellence as a program (internally and externally)
As stated, the Urban Studies Program has and will continue to grow in its complexity and presence within and outside the university. We have also become an important and effective component of UWT’s urban serving mission. Our faculty and students are highly engaged scholars whose work is consistently praised within the discipline and the community alike. As a program dedicated to social justice and sustainability, we operate at all spatial scales in our scholarship and community partnerships. This includes local South Sound cities and neighborhoods, as well as national and international communities. As the scholarly and service track records of our academic unit illustrate, we are engaged in both local and global dimensions of urban studies and planning. Our engaged scholarship, use-inspired research, and pedagogy are recognized nationally and internationally. In the section below, we provide a brief description of our collective scholarship, community engagement and achievements.

Faculty Scholarship, Community Engagement and Achievements
Urban Studies faculty members are highly active in research and contribute significantly to the discipline, the university and the communities we serve. Their research and community partnerships are diverse in nature and span a wide range of scholarly interests and expertise. They are recognized scholars, nationally and
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internationally, who contribute significantly to their respective sub-disciplines. Their body of work includes theory, methodology, policy and practice. However, they share a common commitment to social justice and equity, enriching the educational atmosphere within the Urban Studies program, and establishing a vibrant learning environment for our students.

During the last three years (2015-2018), they have published 6 books, 29 articles, and 14 book chapters. This list does not include conference proceedings, scientific poster sessions, and non-academic/public scholarship. Collectively, they have also presented numerous articles at national and international conferences. Almost all faculty members are recognized for their unique contributions to the their respective disciplines and sub-disciplines and on topics including economic geography, waterfront development, subjectivity, space and power, urban governance and planning, regional planning, smart cities, geospatial technologies, community development, equity planning, sustainable development, affordable housing, economic development, planning with youth, and global labor migration and its impact on the future of urban economies. Their diverse expertise is sought out in the region, which points to our purposeful development with an eye on regional needs.

Given their impressive body of work and collective expertise, it should not come as a surprise that Urban Studies faculty members are consistently sought out by our community members and partners. Our faculty members regularly serve on community boards and city task forces and committees (for various jurisdictions in the region), work on community projects, individually and/or with their students, and provide professional advice on planning and policy matters to numerous organizations. Last year, one faculty member (Dr. Anne Taufen) served as the co-director of the Livable City Year initiative with colleagues from the College of Built Environments, leading and coordinating a number of class projects for the city of Tacoma and various organizations in Pierce County. The impressive outcome was showcased at the end of the academic year, and the project report is available online (https://www.washington.edu/livable-city-year/2017-2018-projects/). Another faculty member (Dr. Lisa Hoffman) has served as one of two leaders in a study of the Japanese Language School in Tacoma. A third faculty member (Dr. Matthew Kelley) has worked for a number of years on a community mapping project (Action Mapping Project, AMP) with thousands of high school and middle school students, producing a significant body of data reflecting how youth view their communities and built environment. Dr. Kelley is in the process of institutionalizing his research activities with the
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assistance of the Tacoma Public School District and external funding support. The list continues with Dr. Linda Ishem’s service and well-established relationship with communities in Tacoma, Dr. Anaid Yerena’s growing portfolio of engagement with affordable housing and community advocates, and Dr. Yonn Dierwechter’s many years of engagement with jurisdiction in and beyond Pierce County in all matters related to land use planning. To illustrate the level of our collective commitment to community engagement and partnerships as an academic unit, suffice it to say that the last three Assistant Chancellors for Community Engagement have been members of this academic unit, serving the campus for more than 5 years collectively.

Within academic and professional arenas, the contributions of our faculty members are equally impressive, ranging from organizing specialty groups within professional associations and contributing significantly to their respective disciplines (Dr. Jim Thatcher, Dr. Anne Taufen, Dr. Anaid Yerena, and Dr. Ali Modarres), organizing and authoring leading-edge edited collections (Dr. Lisa Hoffman and Dr. Jim Thatcher), and serving as editors-in-chief, guest editors, book editors, and editorial board members of major disciplinary journals (Dr. Ali Modarres, Dr. Yonn Dierwechter, Dr. Mark Pendras, and Dr. Jim Thatcher). Our faculty members also collaborate on research with their international colleagues in Europe, Africa, and Asia, expanding the notion of community beyond limited geographies.

Opportunity to Improve Governance
Currently, the Urban Studies Program functions as one faculty. We have an established governance structure that includes a number of faculty committees. These include the Curriculum Committee, By-laws Committee, Futures Committee, Graduate Admission Committee, Third-Year Review Committee, Scholarship Committee, and Promotion and Tenure Committee. Over the last few years, we have adopted (by faculty vote) a number of by-laws and policies, including Third-Year Review, Lecturer Promotion, and Faculty Recruitment. Membership elections and reporting structures are articulated in the adopted by-laws.

Given the growing size of our student body, number of degree offerings, and diversity of faculty expertise associated with various degree programs, school designation will allow us to create a more robust governance structure, but also improve our operational efficiency. To that end, our faculty members began working during the 2017-2018 academic year to develop a more robust
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governance structure and associated by-laws to become effective once we are a school.

Advancing the strategic needs of the campus
Urban Studies has been highly active within the university and is regionally sought after for its expertise in various planning and policy discussions. Our program has become a significant organizer of public dialogues regarding important urban issues in the South Sound Region. With the active presence of our faculty members, staff and students in various external projects and discussions, we have become a positive and contributing change agent in the communities we serve. We have built a strong relationship with public, private, and non-profit organizations in Tacoma and beyond. The Tacoma News Tribune acknowledged the contributions of our program in an editorial column, written by the President and Publisher of the newspaper.

We have reached this status through direct engagement and timely community-centered dialogues that bring academia and community together, allowing our public university to provide the much-needed safe public space for community conversations. Urban Studies organizes an annual Urban Forum (attended by 250+ community members, public/private/non-profit sector representatives, faculty, staff and students) and three or more annual lectures, actively participates in community conversations, publishes reports, distributes data, presents and disseminates relevant research results (e.g., economic development), and partakes in local and regional decision making processes on topics ranging from youth and family-centered planning to housing policies, immigration and global labor migrants, sustainable development, transportation, and economic development. We plan to expand and augment these efforts through a center that will act as a data portal for the region and engage in timely and relevant applied urban research.

Urban Studies has proven itself a strategically important component of UWT’s urban serving mission and its anchor institutions status. Given our highly positive standing within the community, it is important that we are recognized as a school, a title that fully acknowledges our accomplishments and meets the strategic needs of the campus.

Enhancing our national standing among our peers
Attracting and retaining exceptional faculty is vital to our success in serving students, advancing knowledge, and fulfilling the mission of a public university.
Designation as a School will enhance faculty status among their peers, allowing them to better position themselves within the discipline.

As we grow as a program, we will be recruiting additional faculty members. Having school designation will allow us to reach more widely and be more attractive to prospective candidates. School designation will, in turn, enhance the standing of the program among other institutions within and outside UW.

Creating a more even academic structure within UWT
One of the challenges of remaining a Program within a growing number of Schools at UWT is the unevenness that it creates, internally and externally. A Program will be viewed as less important (which fails to acknowledge our accomplishments, complexity, and contributions to the university and the community), diminishing our ability for effective engagement within the university, as well as the external communities we serve. This also affects our potential for fundraising and seeking external support for our faculty, students, and the academic unit. Given the current Capital Campaign and the fact that our Program has been highly engaged with potential donors, it is more equitable for us and enticing for our partners to contribute to a School than a Program.

Budget: The Urban Studies Program manages its own budget. The Urban Studies budget is managed by the Program Administrator and approved by the Program Director. Transition to a school is not dependent on any new immediate resources and will not result in increased administrative costs. A summary of the 2017-2018 budget is below.

**FY 2018 Budget**
- General Operating Funds (biennium): $3,138,186
- Designated Operating Funds: $186,130
- Discretionary Funds: $27,701
- Fiscal Year 2018 Total: $3,352,017
- Scholarship Funds: $28,500
- Endowment Funds: $99,173

Advisory Board: Urban Studies has an active advisory board that helps with external outreach and fundraising for scholarship and community events. Currently, we have 17 board members, representing public, private, and non-profit sectors. This board will continue as the Advisory Board of the School.
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Responsibilities of the Advisory Board will include promoting the School’s mission and goals to the broader community, providing external perspectives, advocacy and support, engaging in fundraising activities and creating a larger financial base for the School, and working collaboratively with the School to promote its efforts in education, research, and community engagement.

Summary: The Urban Studies Program continues to grow in complexity and scale. Our faculty members contribute significantly to the discipline and are recognized for their scholarship. We are also highly active and engaged in the community, contributing significantly to the urban mission of the campus. We offer multiple degrees and create a positive co-learning environment for our faculty members, students, and staff. Our contribution to the university, our presence in the community, and our record of excellence in education and research warrants our designation as a School.

Approved by Urban Studies Faculty on February 21, 2019.