



# Urban Planning as a Career Preference for Students: Efforts to Improve Awareness about the Profession

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## ABSTRACT

A professional awareness challenge persists in the urban planning field in North America, resulting from students' unfamiliarity, parents' misperceptions, and school counselors' non-recommendation of the planning profession as a potential career for students. With significant declines in enrollment and diversity in planning programs over the last decade, overcoming this professional awareness challenge is imperative. This paper argues that university planning programs and departments' steps toward creating the needed platforms via Design and Planning Language Programs to build awareness among youth to pursue planning in their education and as a profession needs to be expanded and consolidated through research.

## KEYWORDS

Education; pedagogy; diversity; community engagement; outreach

## Introduction

The *Student Enrollment in PAB-accredited Programs 2008–2018* report by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) reveals that the number of students in Bachelor-degree granting accredited programs collapsed between 2008 and 2018 from 1,343 to 1,109. This represents a decline of 17.4%, with the average number of students per program declining from 96 in 2008 to 65 in 2018. Meanwhile, the number of programs increased from 14 in 2008 to 17 in 2018 (Planning Accreditation Board, 2019). The slump depicted from the PAB data is even worse than that described in a 2016 report by a Joint Task Force of the American Planning Association, which measured the aggregate 2008–2013 enrollment decline for PAB-accredited bachelor's programs at 16% (Joint Task Force of American Planning Association, American Institute of Certified Planners, Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning & Planning Accreditation Board, 2016, p. 1). The 2016 APA report, although referring mainly to graduate programs, also underlines the fact that the enrollment decline challenge is predominant among domestic students (a decline of 12.8% from 2008 to 2014) and populations of color and underserved communities, a fact that 'portends a serious challenge for the pipeline of professional planners into the future.' (Joint Task Force of American Planning Association, American Institute of Certified Planners, Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning & Planning Accreditation Board, 2016, p. 5).

While the APA Joint Task Force's report did not sufficiently investigate the reason behind the decline, it is apparently part of a more general downturn of enrollment in postsecondary education in the United States – often observed after post-economic recessions (Hillman & Orians, 2013; Bedard & Herman, 2008; Dellas & Sakellaris, 2003; Black & Sufi, 2002; Berger & Kostal, 2002). The decline continues: the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) report on 2019 Fall term enrollment, released in December 2019, shows that 'overall postsecondary enrollment decreased 1.3% from the previous fall. [...] Public [...] four-year sectors [declined by] -1.2%. [...] Public sector enrollment (two-year and four-year combined) declined by 1.3%.' (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2019, p. 1).

The downturn of student enrollment in undergraduate planning programs has causes beyond this general enrollment decline in planning programs. For instance, high-school students are rarely exposed to planning-related issues in their courses as there are only a few states where Social Studies curricula include Geography or World Geography (Education Commission of the States, 2020). Otherwise, students are not exposed to the understanding of geography, spatial thinking and their connections with economic development, social issues, and government authorities. Therefore, most students do not encounter planning or planning-related topics during their standard high-school curriculum. The resulting lack of student understanding of planning is compounded by parents' inaccurate perceptions of the profession that limits families from considering it as a potential career path. To this end, the absence of both proximate and distal influences (Hutchison *et al.*, 2014; Howard *et al.*, 2015) necessary for engendering planning awareness has hindered the profession as a viable career choice among children and youth.

The enrollment challenge at the national level also exists at the School of Planning (SOP), a constituent school of the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP), at the University of Cincinnati. The School has two accredited planning programs, the Bachelor of Urban Planning (BUP), and the Master of Community Planning (MCP). In the period between 2012 and 2016, the number of freshmen coming directly from high school enrolled in the BUP declined by 23%. To better understand the causes of the decline, local high-school counselors were invited to meet with SOP faculty at a general meeting organized by Cincinnati Public Schools and the SOP. During the meeting, it became evident that most of the high-school counselors were not familiar with planning as an education program or career compared with other potential career paths available at DAAP. Counselors admitted that, in many cases, they did not suggest planning as a potential career, especially to first-generation college students in inner-city high schools. This was largely due to a common misunderstanding that translated into an axiom: planning is in DAAP with creative arts-related programs; hence, planning is a creative arts-related program. This incorrect assumption makes planning programs harder to market to inner-city high-school students and their families, particularly first-generation college students, due to a perceived lack of professional opportunities once the program is successfully completed. Indeed, a comparison amongst Urban and Regional Planners, Architects, Industrial Designers, and Interior Designers – all programs at DAAP – using the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2019 Occupational Outlook Handbook (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d) shows that the median pay per year is highest among Architects (\$79,380), followed by Planners

(\$73,050), Industrial Designers (\$66,590), and Interior Designers (\$53,370). Also, the BLS 2018–2028 Job Outlook indicates that while the average growth rate for all the occupations considered by Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019e) is 5.2%, the growth for urban planners is 11%, 8% for Architects, 3% for Industrial Designers, and 4% for Interior Designers. This evidence demonstrates that counselors' and parents' perceptions are misplaced.

The APA, the Canadian Institute of Planners, the Royal Town Planning Institute, and particularly non-profits and some planning schools, in recognizing that there is a professional awareness challenge to the urban planning field, have dedicated resources and programs to raise awareness of the planning profession and its related concepts among youth. This paper reviews different outreach programs, here called Design and Planning Language Programs, in North America to answer the question: *how can planning schools effectively raise awareness about urban planning to inspire youth to choose planning as an undergraduate education and as a career preference?* In answering this question, this paper contributes to the urban planning and career development discourse by providing pathways to tackle the professional awareness challenge of urban planning among youth through employing outreach programs to raise awareness about urban planning and its career opportunities.

## Career Awareness and Preferences

Children and youth (hereafter youth) career preferences are influenced by multiple factors in their environments (Howard *et al.*, 2015). Specifically, high-school counselors, teachers (Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005; Hurwitz *et al.*, 2012; Hutchison *et al.*, 2014; Howard *et al.*, 2015) and a student's family (Kenny & Bledsoe, 2005; Strom *et al.*, 2014; Stritch & Christensen, 2016) play major roles in shaping their career preferences. For less-known professions like urban planning, this implies that many high-school students will probably miss out on the opportunity to know about, and subsequently choose, the profession as a career preference. Emerging arguments suggest that there exists a general unfamiliarity with the planning profession among high-school teachers, guidance counselors, students and their parents, and the public (Rodriguez, 2009; Tiarachristie, 2016). Even design-oriented physical planning or policy-oriented socio-economic planning which results in urban transformation are barely recognized as products of a deliberate planning activity (Gleye, 2015). Worse, many have negative perceptions of planning programs due to negative historical experiences (McClendon *et al.*, 2003).

A further challenge to urban planning career preference is that the profession has, historically, lacked a specific academic 'home'. Urban Planning programs, both around the United States and internationally, are located in various colleges or schools, ranging from architecture to liberal arts, design, or public policy. This has confounded its professional identity and created (mis)perceptions about its matriculation criteria, curriculum content, and employability, to the detriment of urban planning programs. This challenge is compounded by institutional and societal barriers to enrollment, particularly the enrollment of students of color.

For many K-12 schools, career education is increasingly becoming an integral part of curricula, sometimes manifesting as career counseling programs mandated by state

departments of education (Withington *et al.*, 2012), or as one-stop counseling centers, online counseling services, mentoring and coaching programs, or career fairs (Amundson, 2006; Tien, 2007). However, career education programs need to expand and incorporate new ways of introducing career opportunities to youth as well as targeting broader social contexts (Watson & McMahon, 2005; Amundson, 2006). Such programs can include educating parents and guardians, and even the general community, about different career opportunities of which they may not be aware.

Efforts to increase awareness of particular careers among specific groups are frequently undertaken through counseling activities and programs initiated by higher education institutions, often for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education. While the most common awareness programs are outside of the urban planning profession, issues of misperceptions, unfamiliarity, and fears about the profession also affect urban planning (Rodriguez, 2009; Santo *et al.*, 2010; Tiarachristie, 2016). For example, in a study about diversity in the urban planning profession, Tiarachristie (2016) identified a number of barriers to recruiting and retaining people of color in the New York metropolitan area, including an absence of opportunities for many African-Americans to be active change agents in their neighborhoods; missed potential of exposure to the planning profession through good planning; ‘the late, or lack of, exposure of the planning profession in communities of color, largely due to limited social capital’; and low levels of diversity in urban planning schools (p. 49). This only gives a glimpse of a broader challenge for the profession in North America.

Revealingly, for a profession that works to put people, particularly the vulnerable, at the center of development, Sutton and Kemp (2011) note that youth, particularly those from low-income households and those of color, are not invited to participate in urban planning and policymaking. This missing cohort creates avenues for urban planners to overlook their interests (McKoy *et al.*, 2015), deprive them of influential contexts to introduce them to and build their awareness of the urban planning profession, and the opportunity to have experiences about becoming change-makers in their communities (McKoy & Vincent, 2007; Santo *et al.*, 2010; McKoy *et al.*, 2015).

The role higher education institutions play in shaping the career choices of youth is immense (Good *et al.*, 2002; Tsui, 2007; Santo *et al.*, 2010). The need for collaboration with K-12 schools and the implementation of youth career programs are important to provide influential contexts to raise awareness of different career preferences (Stipanovic & Stringfield, 2013). Accordingly, this paper argues that university urban planning programs and their home departments have a responsibility to create Design and Planning Language Programs (hereafter DPLPs) – as career programs about urban planning – to interact with high-school students, their counselors and teachers, and local design and planning professionals to increase awareness of different career pathways related to urban planning, which may then influence these students to choose urban planning as a career. The paper, while recognizing the potential contribution of DPLPs to the enrollment challenges in urban planning schools in North America, enhances the discourse on planning education awareness initiatives as an initial step to understanding their contribution to enrollment. It thus envisages subsequent discourses to examine and provide an understanding of the formative and implementation processes of DPLPs and their contribution to enrollment.

## Design and Planning Language Programs

Design and Planning Language Programs involve students in outreach, community engagement, professional awareness, and student development activities. These programs are intended as supplementary to the more traditionally diffused presentations of planning programs to high-school students at their schools, in college fairs, or during campus visits. DPLPs exist throughout the U.S. and the majority of these programs are supported by professional organizations associated with the built environment (see [Table 1](#).) A few are supported by academic institutions including Florida State University, the University of Illinois – Chicago, and the University of Cincinnati. Some DPLPs are also developed by individuals or by local chapters of national organizations, crafting initiatives targeted to students in their communities.

A survey of planning academics (facilitated through both a list-serve and a Facebook posting) in June/July 2019 and an internet search of DPLPs between 2017 and 2020 reveals 39 U.S., Canadian, and U.K.-based initiatives, with the earliest, the Center for Understanding the Built Environment’s *Box City*, dating to 1983. These programs range from one-time classroom visits and summer programs to school year-long residencies to design competitions. Many of the existing DPLPs exclusively focus on high-school students (15 out of 40); however, a sizable portion (10 out of 40) is designed for students of all ages, including children as young as Kindergarten age. Demonstrating that there is no agreement about the appropriate age for these enrichment programs to take place, six of the programs are designed specifically for primary-aged students, five for those in middle school or junior high, and four for junior or senior high-school-aged students.

Common to these DPLPs is an outreach effort by representatives of design, planning, and/or engineering disciplines, with a goal of increasing awareness of the affiliated professions. DPLPs affiliated with the field of architecture are largely representative of the expertise areas of the partners who team with local educators; architects, urban planners, or other land use or design professionals lead the initiatives, acting as resources, mentors, or judging outcomes. A few of the existing DPLPs are led by design educators who work directly for the sponsoring organization. Fractured Atlas’ *Arch for Kids*, the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum’s *Design in the Classroom*, and The Center for Architecture’s *Urban Investigations* and *City Studies*, all based in New York City, are led by full-time art educators who, in some cases, work alongside classroom teachers (*ArchForKids*: architecture for children, [n.d.](#); Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 2020; The Center for Architecture, [n.d.](#))

## Design and Planning Language Programs at North American Universities<sup>1</sup>

Initial survey results suggest that there are few university Urban Planning programs that are actively working to inspire high-school students to choose planning as an undergraduate education. They can be grouped into two categories based on their leadership. The first comprises those DPLPs that are led by either students or faculty: the University of Illinois at Chicago, the University of Oklahoma, and the University of Southern California. The second category is DPLPs that are led by University/Planning Departments or Programs, namely: the University of Cincinnati, DePaul University, Ryerson University, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and the University of California, Berkeley. What

**Table 1.** Design and Planning Language Programs (DPLPs) by school years.

Programs	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
ACE program (University of Cincinnati)													
ACE: breakthrough (University of Cincinnati)													
Kids + Architecture Website: <a href="https://aiahouston.org/v/site-home/Kids-Architecture/3i/">https://aiahouston.org/v/site-home/Kids-Architecture/3i/</a>													
ArchForKids Website: <a href="https://archforkids.com/">https://archforkids.com/</a>													
Architects in Schools (Oregon, Chicago, Austin, San Rafael CA, Washington DC) Websites: <a href="https://www.af-oregon.org/architects-in-schools/">https://www.af-oregon.org/architects-in-schools/</a> <a href="https://www.aiachicago.org/images/uploads/pdfs/AIS_SS_032417.pdf">https://www.aiachicago.org/images/uploads/pdfs/AIS_SS_032417.pdf</a> <a href="https://www.aiaaustin.org/committee/architecture-k12">https://www.aiaaustin.org/committee/architecture-k12</a> <a href="http://www.youthinarts.org/programs/architects-in-schools/">http://www.youthinarts.org/programs/architects-in-schools/</a> <a href="https://www.aiadc.com/ArchitectureintheSchools">https://www.aiadc.com/ArchitectureintheSchools</a>													
Architecture and Children Around the World Program Website: <a href="http://architectureandchildren.com/">http://architectureandchildren.com/</a>													
Beep (Built Environment Education Program) (California Architectural Foundation) Website: <a href="http://www.aiacc.org/beep/">http://www.aiacc.org/beep/</a>													
Box City Website: <a href="https://cube-education.org/box-city">https://cube-education.org/box-city</a>													
Box City (Florida State University) Website: <a href="https://www.planning.org/blog/blogpost/9102172/">https://www.planning.org/blog/blogpost/9102172/</a>													
Center for Understanding the Built Environment (CUBE) Website: <a href="https://cube-education.org/initiatives">https://cube-education.org/initiatives</a>													
The Center for Urban Pedagogy – City Studies Website: <a href="http://welcometocup.org/Projects/CityStudies">http://welcometocup.org/Projects/CityStudies</a>													
The Center for Urban Pedagogy – Urban Investigations Website: <a href="http://welcometocup.org/Projects/UrbanInvestigations">http://welcometocup.org/Projects/UrbanInvestigations</a>													
City Transformers DAAP Day Camp (University of Cincinnati) Website: <a href="https://daap.uc.edu/community/daap-camps">https://daap.uc.edu/community/daap-camps</a>													
Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum: K-12 Design in the Classroom Website: <a href="https://www.cooperhewitt.org/education/designk12/">https://www.cooperhewitt.org/education/designk12/</a>													
Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum: DesignPrep Website: <a href="https://www.cooperhewitt.org/education/emerging-designers/">https://www.cooperhewitt.org/education/emerging-designers/</a>													
Creative Reaction Lab – Design to Better [Our Community] Website: <a href="https://www.creativereactionlab.com/">https://www.creativereactionlab.com/</a>													
Design LAB: Learn and Build (Architectural Foundation of Cincinnati) Website: <a href="https://www.architectureincy.org/programs/design-lab/">https://www.architectureincy.org/programs/design-lab/</a>													
Exposure (University of Illinois – Chicago)													
Frank Lloyd Wright Trust Website: <a href="https://flwright.org/education/inyourclassroom">https://flwright.org/education/inyourclassroom</a>													
Future Cities Competition Website: <a href="https://futurecity.org/">https://futurecity.org/</a>													
Future Leaders in Planning (Chicago Metro Agency for Planning) Website: <a href="https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/about/involvement/flip">https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/about/involvement/flip</a>													
Future Leaders in Planning (Hillsborough County [Florida] City-County Planning Commission) Website: <a href="http://www.planhillsborough.org/flip/">http://www.planhillsborough.org/flip/</a>													
Giros – Lincoln Institute of Land Policy Website: <a href="https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/game-time">https://www.lincolnst.edu/publications/articles/game-time</a>													
Greetings from East L.A. (University of Southern California) Website: <a href="https://priceschool.usc.edu/greetings-from-east-la/">https://priceschool.usc.edu/greetings-from-east-la/</a>													
HiArch – Summer High School Architectural Workshop (UIUC) Website: <a href="https://arch.uic.edu/HiArch">https://arch.uic.edu/HiArch</a>													
iPlan Camp (Georgia Tech) Website: <a href="https://planning.org/content/content/9101342/">https://planning.org/content/content/9101342/</a>													
Leading Community Change (DePaul University)													

(Continued)

**Table 1.** (Continued).

Programs	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Learning by Design: NY – In School Residencies (AIA New York) Website: <a href="https://www.centerforarchitecture.org/k-12/k-12-school-programs/learning-by-design-ny/">https://www.centerforarchitecture.org/k-12/k-12-school-programs/learning-by-design-ny/</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Metropolis Website: <a href="https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9149250/">https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9149250/</a>	Light Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
NeighborWalks (City of Oklahoma City Office of Sustainability) Website: <a href="https://www.acogok.org/neighborwalk-okcps/">https://www.acogok.org/neighborwalk-okcps/</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Pre-Collegiate School (University of Oklahoma) Website: <a href="https://pacs.ou.edu/precollegiate/">https://pacs.ou.edu/precollegiate/</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
PUPS (Pre-Urban Planners Preparing Urban Problem Solutions) (University of Wisconsin – Madison)	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Remix the Block (Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission)	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
RTPI – Future Planners Website: <a href="https://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/engagement-and-outreach/">https://www.rtpi.org.uk/education-and-careers/engagement-and-outreach/</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
RU a Planner (Ryerson University) Website: <a href="http://www.rsuonline.ca/441/affiliate-groups/RU-a-Planner">http://www.rsuonline.ca/441/affiliate-groups/RU-a-Planner</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
UrbanPlan – (Urban Land Institute Initiative/University of California, Berkeley) Website: <a href="https://sf.uli.org/get-involved/urbanplan-new/">https://sf.uli.org/get-involved/urbanplan-new/</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Vibe Cincy (Cincinnati)	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Y-PLAN Initiative (Youth – Plan, Learn, Act, Now) (University of California, Berkeley) Website: <a href="https://y-plan.berkeley.edu/">https://y-plan.berkeley.edu/</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Youth Engagement and Action for Health! (YEAH!) (Georgia Tech) Website: <a href="https://georgiaplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/Jasmine-Jones-Bynes-GPAFa2019.pdf">https://georgiaplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/Jasmine-Jones-Bynes-GPAFa2019.pdf</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey
Youth Engagement Planning (YEP!) Website: <a href="https://www.youthengagementplanning.org/about-yep.html">https://www.youthengagementplanning.org/about-yep.html</a>	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Dark Grey

Key: Dark Grey – Recommended Ages for Program  
 Light Grey – Program can be adapted for use in these age groups  
 Source: Authors’ construct, 2020.

follows is a brief description of some of these programs with a summary in Table 2. This is followed by an in-depth examination of the University of Cincinnati’s DPLP experience.

### Students/Faculty-Led DPLPs

#### The University of Illinois at Chicago

At the University of Illinois at Chicago, planning students formed the Society of Black Urban Planners (SBUP) in 2016. SBUP worked with high-school students in the Bronzeville neighborhood to expose them to planning issues and the planning profession. The *Exposure* program was led by students who visited the Bronzeville Urban Prep Academy, once a week or twice a month, to talk about planning issues and develop planning projects at an after-school program. Due to student turnover and a lack of capacity as well as a discontinuity in leadership at the high school, the program only existed in its intense, weekly form for one year. The SBUP continues to do one-day informational sessions on urban planning at area high schools.

#### University of Oklahoma

At the University of Oklahoma, faculty member Meghan Wieters has created a curriculum based on urban planning for the university’s Pre-Collegiate School. Primary-aged children



**Table 2.** Summary information on DPLPs at North American Universities.

School	Program Focus	Year/Duration	Activities	Primary Audience	Staffing and Financing	Outcome Measured
The University of Illinois at Chicago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> <li>• Planning issues and concepts awareness</li> <li>• Career development</li> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> <li>• Planning issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaken between 2016 and 2018.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visits to high schools to talk about planning issues and profession</li> <li>• Weekly presentations and exercises on planning topics; capstone design project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-school students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning students from the Society of Black Urban Planners</li> </ul>	N/A
University of Oklahoma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> <li>• Planning issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First undertaken in summer 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed a curriculum to teach design and planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary-aged children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning faculty member</li> </ul>	N/A
University of Southern California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> <li>• Planning issues and concepts awareness</li> <li>• Career development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Began in spring 2016</li> <li>• Currently ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the 2016–2017 academic year, students addressed the question of ‘what makes an East L.A. main street?’</li> <li>• In 2017–2018, students explored multimodal and active transportation in East LA</li> <li>• In 2018–2019, students explored transportation safety in five corridors in East LA</li> <li>• Builds a pathway to planning programs at USC Sol Price School of Public Policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-School students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led by in staff from a non-profit called Place Matters in partnership with the University.</li> </ul>	N/A
DePaul University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> <li>• Planning issues and concepts awareness</li> <li>• Career development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertaken in 2008–9 during the Burnham Plan’s Centennial Celebration</li> <li>• FLIP is ongoing since 2009</li> <li>• Began early 2000s through 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides planning education to schools and students learning of planning issues in metro area via Leading Community Change high-school program</li> <li>• Promotes students’ interactions with professionals via Future Leaders in Planning (FLIP)</li> <li>• Urban planning was designed as a STEM class for students to enroll in through summer and after-school programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K-12 age students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning faculty in partnership with staff from participating organizations</li> </ul>	N/A
University of Wisconsin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Began in 2015</li> <li>• Currently ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage students in planning charrettes and interactive presentations under the <i>R/UpPlanner</i> program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Middle and high-school students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning faculty</li> </ul>	N/A
Ryerson University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning education awareness</li> <li>• Planning issues and concepts awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Began in 2015</li> <li>• Currently ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on technology and GIS</li> <li>• Conducts workshops on World Town Planning Day with students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-school students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master of Planning Students</li> <li>• City of Toronto planners</li> </ul>	N/A

(Continued)



**Table 2. (Continued).**

School	Program Focus	Year/Duration	Activities	Primary Audience	Staffing and Financing	Outcome Measured
The University of California at Berkeley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Planning issues and concepts awareness</li> <li>● Career development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Began in 2010 as part of the Y-Plan Initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engages students on real-life projects</li> <li>● Connects young people to community and city partners</li> <li>● Conducts education and community research</li> <li>● Provides guidelines and toolkits to teachers and principals on curriculum and professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Young people</li> <li>● Schools, teachers, and civic partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Students and faculty</li> </ul>	Yes
University of Cincinnati	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Planning education awareness</li> <li>● Planning issues and concepts awareness</li> <li>● Career development</li> <li>● Enrollment and student diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Began with the ACE program in 2016</li> <li>● Ongoing with the City Transformers summer initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engage students on real-life projects through planning charrettes and interactive presentations</li> <li>● Facilitates students' interactions with planning professionals</li> <li>● These were done via two initiatives: Activating Community Empowerment (ACE) and City Transformers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Middle and high-school students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Planning faculty and students</li> </ul>	Yes

Source: Authors' construct, 2020.

enrolled in this program take specially designed classes across the breadth of the university's departments over a week during the summer; 2019 was the first year that curriculum was extended to include urban planning courses.

### **University of Southern California**

The University of Southern California's *Greetings from East L.A.* program (begun in 2016) is a year-long program in which undergraduate planning students mentor high-school students investigating issues in their communities, with an awareness of Urban Planning being a primary goal of the program (Kredell, 2017).

### **University/Planning Department or Program Led DPLPs**

#### **DePaul University**

In 2008, during the Burnham Plan's Centennial Celebration, Chicago's DePaul University was involved with several efforts to expand planning education and awareness among K-12 age students. One of these was the development of a third-grade curriculum that was adopted by several classes in Chicago Public Schools. Another was funding for the *Leading Community Change* high-school program which introduced planning issues in several schools on the city's south and west sides. At that time, one of DePaul's faculty members, Lauren Ames Fischer, was hired by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency on Planning to develop the *Future Leaders in Planning* (FLIP) leadership development program. Through FLIP, students from the metro area learn about issues shaping the seven-county region and meet with regional leaders who are involved in planning (CMAP, 2020).

#### **University of Wisconsin**

In the early 2000s, the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Department of Urban Planning created the *PUPS* program (Pre-Urban Planners Preparing Urban Problem Solutions) as part of an academic support and guidance program. Through the university's Pre-College Future Success Program, urban planning was designated as one of the STEM electives that middle- and high-school students could choose to take classes in. Faculty members and urban planning students currently lead this program on an entirely voluntary basis.

#### **Ryerson University**

Ryerson University began its *RUaPlanner* program in 2015 as a collaboration between the university's School of Urban and Regional Planning and the City of Toronto. Designed and managed by Master of Planning students, their primary initiatives take place in November, at the time of World Town Planning Day. Ryerson students spend about an hour in 10 high schools across the Toronto area, introducing students to urban planning and the topic of civic engagement. They have also been able to access funding that has enabled two classes of high-school students from areas further from the Ryerson campus to travel to Ryerson and spend time with students learning about urban planning and participating in a design charrette.

### *The University of California at Berkeley*

The University of California at Berkeley's *Y-Plan Initiative* (Youth–Plan, Learn, Act, Now), is based out of the UC Berkeley Center for Cities+Schools, dates to 2010, and is active in California and New York City elementary, middle school, and high-school classrooms. This initiative is led by students and faculty affiliated with the Center for Cities+Schools who empower 'young people to tackle real-world problems in their communities through project-based civic learning experiences' (Center for Cities+Schools, 2020). Interestingly, this program is not affiliated with UC Berkeley's top-ranked City+Regional Planning program (Planetizen, n.d.), nor is awareness about the field of urban planning stated as an explicit goal (Center for Cities+Schools, 2020).

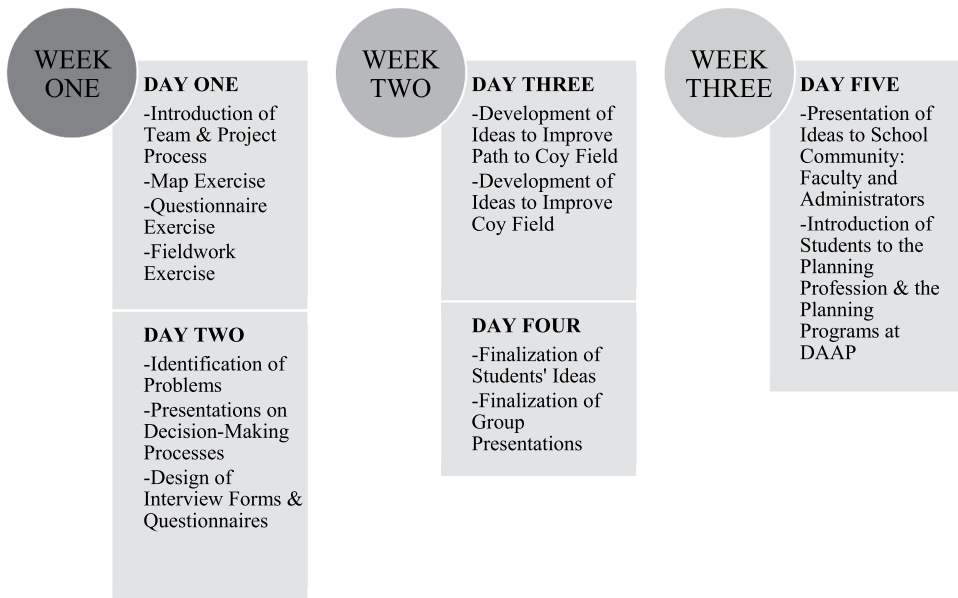
### *University of Cincinnati*

To reach a more diverse group than that currently represented in the BUP program – over the 2015–2019 period, with an average student enrollment of 115, 20.3% of students are non-white – and to increase planning program enrollment and local awareness of urban planning among youth, the University of Cincinnati (UC) has developed two programs since 2016. The first is a pilot, three-week-long workshop with high-school students at Hughes High School – located in the proximity of the UC Campus – called *Activating Community Empowerment (ACE)*; the second, *City Transformers*, is a week-long intensive summer camp held regularly from 2017 to 2019 and intended to be offered annually (although suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 emergency.)

*ACE* is an educational outreach program developed and implemented by SOP faculty and students with dual aims: to empower students at Hughes to have a voice in their community and to potentially consider urban planning as a career choice, both achieved through a series of community engagement activities. *ACE* sought to broaden the knowledge of urbanism, community planning, and economic development among high-school students and to recruit worthy and diverse candidates for SOP undergraduate programs. The first iteration of this program took place at Hughes in March 2016. It consisted of five meetings, spanning three weeks, with junior-year high-school students in the context of a STEM-focused class and with the assistance of the classroom teachers.

In the first meeting, the majority of students, divided into teams, suggested that one immediate concern was the state of their detached sports field and the long path they had to walk to reach it. The planning activity that the students undertook was divided into four phases: Process, Knowledge, Proposal, and Presentation, almost evenly divided across four meetings (Figure 1). The initiative culminated with a final presentation to school leaders. Throughout the activity, the SOP team decided to use words and concepts like Community Empowerment and Engagement, Plan (with the meaning of organizing and thinking in advance), Design Issues, and Urban Conditions, among others, that seemed to both motivate and be easily understood by the students.

*City Transformers*, designed by a 2017 UC MCP graduate, is a week-long summer camp that took place in June 2017, 2018, and 2019. The camps, targeting rising 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> graders, were week-long explorations of cities and how they work through hands-on activities, guest speakers from the planning community, and site visits. The mission of the 2017 *City Transformers* camp was to teach participants about what it takes to positively change a community and create livable, sustainable cities. It built upon the learning outcomes of the *ACE* program, remaining focused on empowering students



**Figure 1.** ACE student engagement three-week process. Source: Authors, 2017.

with a voice and exposing students to planning as a potential career. In 2018 the focus of the camp was on urban changes due to autonomous cars; 2019's focus was on urban design and digital design skill development.

While *ACE* focused on engaging students in the planning process, *City Transformers* chose to expose youth to various types of planning. This focus allowed campers to understand a wider breadth of career options within planning. Campers met with public- and private-sector planners involved with land use, real estate development, natural environment, transportation, housing, and public space/arts. These professionals and community members acted as co-facilitators for the camp, together with the primary facilitators who were recent MCP graduates and current graduate and undergraduate students.

### **Impact and Outcomes**

From the eight examples of DPLPs at North American universities discussed above, only the Y-Plan initiative at The University of California has reflected and shared the outcomes of their initiatives (see McKoy & Vincent, 2007; McKoy *et al.*, 2015). To contribute to the scarce literature on DPLPs the authors will present and discuss hereafter the outcomes of the University of Cincinnati's *City Transformers* summer camp initiative. Measurable outcomes are largely based on camper feedback – they were given three opportunities to evaluate *City Transformers*: i) formal pre- and post-surveys, ii) an anonymous feedback box in the camp classroom, and iii) a daily anonymous reflection board used by all campers. The latter two allowed campers to provide daily feedback on what they learned and what they still hoped to learn by the week's end. Each camper wrote their thoughts on post-it notes and adhered them to a large board, which were reviewed at the end of each day. Pre- and post-surveys were implemented to measure

campers' knowledge of planning at the beginning and end of the camp week. Questions included: What is urban planning? What is sustainability? Why is urban planning important? What skills did you gain from camp? These surveys also included questions to get to know the campers and solicit their feedback.

Campers began all three sessions of *City Transformers* with a general interest in cities and professions allied to planning, such as architecture and engineering. However, by the end of the week, campers emerged with a deeper understanding of urban planning concepts and the planning career field. Many of the campers confessed that they were not aware that urban planning was a job option, thinking that only architects and engineers designed cities. Campers learned how urban planning is connected to engineering, architecture, environmental studies, and even graphic design. This understanding illuminates urban planning as a potential career path for these campers. Campers also demonstrated an understanding of basic planning competencies and types of planning. One camper wrote, 'Not only does city planning take time, but it also takes extreme attention to detail and creativity.' Campers were able to articulate their perceived importance of urban planning, writing that it 'makes cities livable for people from all different backgrounds,' 'protects [the] environment', and 'builds community.' Some students made particular note of the importance of community, as an exemplary response to the question of why urban planning is important ponders 'Who's gonna reach out to people, helping their neighborhood if we don't have urban planners[?]' Campers also mentioned gaining teamwork and collaboration skills and appreciated the outcome of the camp. One camper in their reflection essay articulated: 'I will use the skills that I learned from the camp to work better with other people. I learned how to work with people that I just met and that had different opinions from me. The information I've learned will also make me think about the world differently.'

Despite sustainability being a focus in only the 2017 and 2018 *City Transformers* session, students across all years tied urban planning to sustainability in their post-camp surveys. Campers in 2017 demonstrated a clear understanding of the urbanized future of humanity, as well as the need to create habitable urban spaces, saying about urban planning that 'It is so important because it is the future of most of the world' and that sustainability is important because 'it will keep everything intact and more people will stay.' In 2019, they answered the first question about the importance of urban planning with 'it is a great way to improve the cities that we live in, especially by using sustainability tactics,' and 'because plans can be made to improve communities to make them more livable and sustainable.' They also included sustainability in their definitions of urban planning, saying that it 'means finding ways to improve cities so that they are more sustainable in the future' and 'planning sustainable compact settlements' as well as 'the design of cities so they can become more efficient, wealthy, and sustainable.'

From the surveys, the intense introduction to urban planning successfully transmitted a nuanced knowledge of the field to campers and increased their interest in it. At the conclusion of the 2017 camp, three campers explicitly expressed interest in urban planning as a career option and the SOP as a potential college choice. One camper scheduled a meeting with the SOP's Bachelor of Urban Planning program director to discuss the program and then enrolled in the 2018–2019 freshman class at DAAP; subsequently, she was one of the three student leaders of the 2019 *City Transformers* camp. Two 2017 campers returned to attend the 2018 camp where survey results show

that six of nine campers indicated that they would most likely or definitely take a class related to urban planning in college. While there were no returning 2018 campers in the 2019 session, seven out of ten indicated that they were likely or very likely to take a class related to urban planning in college.

Although it cannot be said that the *ACE* initiative or the *City Transformers* camps have had any significant role in enrollments in the period between 2016 and 2020, there was during that time, however, an increased number of freshmen coming straight from high school – a large increase in 2018 which has remained steady in 2019 – but, it has to be noticed, without any effect on diversity. Overall, we conclude that the primary effective goal of these UC initiatives, as well as of the other DPLPs, is to produce awareness of planning as a profession among youth; a secondary goal, even if relevant and vital for the university organizers, is to increase the enrollment in planning programs.

## Discussion and Conclusion

DPLPs are being instituted by professional organizations, non-profits, and universities to introduce youth to the design and planning professions. As evidenced by the diversity of DPLPs shown in [Table 1](#), there are a number of questions to be asked when crafting these programs, particularly those about student age and program leadership. For instance, design leadership provided by these programs raises questions about whether trained primary-level educators or professional design experience among program leaders is critical. All of the DPLPs at universities were led by designers and planners, including faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni. All program leaders were thus familiar with basic design language and planning-specific terminology, goals, and objectives. For the UC *ACE* program, the assistance of classroom STEM teachers was vital to ensuring success. The mixture of faculty, alumni, high-school teachers, and student leaders provided for a positive and flexible response to changing pedagogical and behavioral needs amongst student participants. A caveat that must be mentioned, which came up in many of the case studies of other university planning program initiatives, is the degree to which they are highly dependent upon volunteers and outside funding. Few of the profiled DPLPs, including UC's, are fiscally solid; many are so tied to the goodwill and interests of a single individual, that should the person move on, they would quickly be terminated.

DPLPs take vastly different approaches to student engagement that should be investigated for knowledge transfer and value assimilation. This is especially so with the variation in age ranges of students, which suggests a lack of knowledge about what age group is most responsive to DPLPs. The UC *ACE* and *City Transformers* programs both focus on middle- and high-school-age students. Program outcomes confirm that students in this age range, 13–18 years, chosen partly for convenience as both programs take advantage of existing partnerships, can comprehend the multifaceted nature of urban planning processes. Their understanding was confirmed by both teachers and parents. Nonetheless, while a number of DPLPs focus on middle- and high-school aged students (24 out of 40), this should not be assumed to be the prime age for DPLPs in the absence of evidence. This wide-range of targeted ages draws attention to a need to understand how early to integrate design and planning into children's curricula and the best methods for implementing DPLPs to different age groups in the short term versus long term.

Acknowledging the need for further research on how to best formulate effective DPLPs, this paper nevertheless suggests that some findings should be kept in mind when creating similar programs. First, findings from this paper show that DPLPs can provide vital proximal contexts that can shape the career preferences of youth. DPLPs create opportunities to expose youth to activities and professionals that can build their interest in urban planning. DPLPs will need to make explicit career awareness an aim as these experiences form part of the collective basket of awareness that may eventually shape career choices. DPLPs are thus critical for addressing a lack of professional awareness and interaction with urban planning professionals. Through DPLPs, schools of planning are provided with situations to consciously educate youth about planning as a career choice that deals with particular skill sets. This is indeed a starting point to increase awareness about the profession.

This paper also shows that one way to educate high-school students outside their K-12 core curriculum is to creatively design programs about problems relating to their experiential environments. Proximity to real-world situations (whether existing or hypothetical) helps build interest and create experiences with which youth can easily relate. Student participation in the identification of these proximal real-world situations is thus critical in developing programs that are of interest to them, that relate to their passions, and form part of their everyday experiences. Deliberations with students and the building of partnerships with high teachers, alumni, and support from faculty and students are critical factors for supporting DPLPs.

Secondly, the brief review of DPLPs reveals that these efforts substantively expose children to the skills set that undergirds the urban planning profession such as public speaking, policymaking, budgeting, negotiation, research, critical thinking, and writing, among others. Through effective collaborations with high schools and teachers, many of the subjects undertaken by students in high schools can be enriched with planning knowledge. Often, the planning profession ends up being co-opted into different disciplines such as architecture and engineering; other times, it is lost entirely. Hence, a professional demystification is needed for planning. This is paramount in that students who may be interested in further developing these skills may end up in a career discipline other than urban planning.

Finally, the literature, as well as the initial stages of interactions between teachers and key persons about the challenge of diversity in the planning profession and declining enrollments, show that there is a low-level, and in some cases absence, of awareness about the planning profession. Our research demonstrates that the majority of schools that train planning professionals do not exert much attention towards increasing awareness about the profession. Beyond the information on national planning associations, only 14 of the cases identified in this paper are initiatives that originate from 10 schools of planning. Here, the planning profession can take some lessons from architecture. As the PAB report suggests, architecture, like planning, is experiencing a decline in enrollment. The difference is that the short review of DPLPs shows that most of the non-academic initiatives originate within the architecture profession. For a profession that prides itself on its ability to facilitate change in the built and natural environment, it is more than imperative that the planning profession takes the lead in these initiatives. APA and ACSP are not leading the initiatives to increase awareness of the profession; they are, however, perfectly positioned to connect interested practitioners and academics, supply them with the needed skills and toolkits, support existing initiatives with funding and other needed resources, and increase awareness on a larger stage.

For many of the DPLPs in North America, these initiatives are not regularly repeated; in fact, many are ad hoc, intermittent, and discontinued due to their volunteer nature. As a result, it is not surprising to find that while the potential exists for DPLPs to contribute to student enrollment, no clear evidence exists compared to other initiatives in other disciplines such as STEM programs. Nonetheless, without the first step of planning education awareness, the enrollment contribution will not emerge. The paper thus argues for a conscious effort to increase the awareness of planning among students and teachers of high schools. It also calls for an increase in the role that planning schools play in initiating and implementing DPLPs. This will help create the needed proximal contexts that are vital influencing factors in shaping the career choices and preferences of youth, particularly in choosing urban planning as a career choice or preference. As DPLPs become standard initiatives, further discourses will emerge that will provide frameworks to understand their contribution to student enrollment.

## Notes

1. The discussions here are based on information derived from email and telephone conversations with key persons related to the programs at the various institutions. These conversations took place in 2019.

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