

## UrbanPlan at the University An Overview for Professors

### University Program at a Glance

**Objective:** Professional development

**Students:** Typically undergraduate or graduate students with real estate or land use focus

**Courses:** Typically planning, architecture/design, real estate development, real estate finance, law (real estate), sustainability

**Number of UrbanPlan classes:** Varies with class length and student profile - minimum of 5 classes

**Optimal timing:** Variable; depends on class curriculum.

**Most effective class size range:** 15 – 30

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### Bringing UrbanPlan to the University

- UrbanPlan is a pedagogical partnership between a professor and the local ULI District Council's land use practitioner members.
- UrbanPlan typically runs as a unit within an existing course, but has also been offered as a stand-alone practicum. It is suitable for several types of courses in disciplines including architecture, finance, real estate development, city & regional planning and real estate law.

### Why do professors introduce UrbanPlan into their curricula?

**UrbanPlan** moves students from their theoretical and ideological understanding of their discipline to the practical realities and demands of the development team and process.

*UrbanPlan distills and transmits the essence of the development process more effectively, more comprehensively, in less time, with more lasting results than any other program suitable for a classroom environment.*

David Green, Professor of Architecture, Georgia Tech; Principal, Perkins + Will, Atlanta, GA

*Every City & Regional Planning student should take UrbanPlan. Understanding **markets** and **risk** make planners better communicators with developer partners. For MBAs - understanding social and political influences help developers manage risk more effectively.*

Mark Rhoades, AICP, past Planning Manager, City of Berkeley, CA; Partner, Citycentric Investments, Oakland, CA

*UrbanPlan offers a framework to examine the interdisciplinary nature of the real estate development process and the various forces that influence the built environment. The feedback provided by industry practitioners throughout the process is invaluable and forces students to expand their critical thinking skills in a way that could not be replicated by other means.”*

Dustin Read, J.D, Associate Director, Center for Real Estate, University of North Carolina-Charlotte.

*UrbanPlan helped my students internalize the complex, interrelated, economic, and political aspects of public/private development and introduces the concept of risk.... The UP “roles” forced students to experience the impact of each development decision and tradeoff through the lens of a particular stakeholder: developer, politician, neighborhood group. That will have a positive impact on the communities where they will work.*

Hilary Nixon, Ass. Professor, Urban & Regional Planning, San Jose State University

**Students** report that their UrbanPlan experience is one of the most valuable educational takeaways for their professional careers. They have been powerful advocates for adding UrbanPlan to their core curriculum.

**Professors** agree that UrbanPlan **quickly** and **powerfully** addresses four significant voids in the professional preparation of future land use professionals.

1. **Lack of practical experience in multi-disciplinary teams.** UrbanPlan prepares students for the reality and challenge of the multi-disciplinary teams, the client environments in which they will actually practice, and land use problems as they present in the “real world.” Practical real, dynamic, frustrating – UrbanPlan requires them to see where practice collides with theory, ideology or modeling.
2. **Lack of a practical understanding of and respect for the complex market and non-market forces that impact development and how each professional discipline contributes to a buildable, sustainable solution.** Through role assignments that are different from their academic field of study, students are forced to understand **risk**, the approaches, pressures and issues of the other disciplines on a development team. For example, architecture students are assigned the role of Financial Analyst or Marketing Director; finance students are assigned the role of Site Planner or Neighborhood Liaison.
3. **Lack of critical thinking – optimizing the opportunities presented by outside speakers.** After completing UrbanPlan, students are able to think more critically about their course material and ask more penetrating questions of land use professionals who speak in their classes.
4. **Weak skills in articulating and advocating for their vision to colleagues outside their academic discipline as well as to “real” clients.** UrbanPlan success requires cogent presentations to a “real” client based on client needs, goals and objectives, rather than presentations to “peers” or judges from the student’s own discipline. The student must effectively articulate the vision and benefits of her/his proposal in the language of the client, not in professional jargon, as that “real” client may have rejected, or may not be aware of, a trend, philosophy, or ideology current in the student’s finance, urban planning, or architecture department.

**Additionally**, UrbanPlan provides **professional opportunities** for students. They interact and

develop relationships with leading real estate practitioners in their community who act as classroom “facilitators” and “city council members.”

**NOTE:** UrbanPlan’s value and intent is not as a studio/design project, a financial case study, a community needs assessment/mapping project, etc. and should not be implemented if the professor is seeking a problem or project-based curriculum that will achieve those outcomes. That said, UrbanPlan is often used as an introductory exercise to prepare students for such projects.

The greatest challenge for the professor is to drive his/her students to focus on the problem and intended lessons of UrbanPlan. Students will consistently attempt to turn UrbanPlan into an exercise related to their academic discipline, missing the key lessons and insights that UrbanPlan offers. ULI’s most skilled facilitators are critical to supporting the professors in this effort.

Twenty universities nationwide offered UrbanPlan during the 2019-2020 academic year, including the following in this region:

- University of Pennsylvania
- Georgetown University
- George Mason University
- University of Baltimore

### **How Does UrbanPlan Work in the University Classroom?**

Student development teams respond to a “Request for Proposal” for the redevelopment of an urban neighborhood that has been devastated by fire. Each team member assumes one of five roles: finance director, marketing director, city liaison, neighborhood liaison, or site planner. Through these roles, students develop a visceral understanding of the various market and non-market forces and stakeholders in the development process. They must reconcile the often-competing agendas to create a well-designed, market responsive, and sustainable project.

Teams address challenging financial, market, social, political, and design issues; develop a proforma and three-dimensional model of their plan; and present their proposal to a “**City Council**” of ULI members that awards the development contract to the winning team.

**At strategic times** during the project, land use professionals, who have attended a full day of UrbanPlan volunteer training, interact several times with the student teams.

“**Facilitators**”- Through Socratic interaction, UrbanPlan volunteers challenge the students to think more critically about the UrbanPlan issues and the specific responsibilities of their “role” (Financial Analyst, Marketing Director, Site Planner, City Liaison, Neighborhood Liaison).

“**Presenters**” - UrbanPlan volunteers engage in interactive discussion with students on their own project work or professional challenges and, how these relate to issues and decisions the students are struggling with in UrbanPlan.

“**City Council**”- UrbanPlan volunteers hear student presentations, engage and challenge their proposals as in an actual city council hearing, and award the development contract to the winning team.

## **Curriculum & Format**

The UrbanPlan curriculum is constant through student profiles and disciplines. The format may change depending upon the following:

- Student level (i.e., undergraduate or graduate students)
- Class size (recommended minimum class size is 15 students/maximum 30)
- Class meeting schedule and class length (UrbanPlan segment = typically 4-6 classes plus presentations)

ULI works with each professor and District Council representative to help create a workable format that ensures the intended outcomes.

## **Training**

- Professors attend a ULI member training (6-8 hours) and an additional half-day training session. A virtual training module will be available mid-summer 2020.
- Potential professors are encouraged to observe UrbanPlan in action at another university or high school in their area, if possible.

## **Materials & Costs**

- Materials
  - UrbanPlan Handbooks – one per student
  - Site plans - one per team
  - UrbanPlan Lego building kits- one per team
  - Exercises/assignments
  - UrbanPlan financial model (MS Excel or Google Sheets)
  - UrbanPlan site builder tool
  - Award to winning team
- Typically, the costs are borne as indicated below; however, each District Council will work with the professor/university involved to confirm costs and responsibilities.
  - UrbanPlan Handbook - Provided as PDF for University or external vendor to print. Students purchase as course “reader.” ULI has a relationship with FedEx to print the handbooks. The District Council may elect to order the handbooks through the existing ULI contact and be reimbursed by the University. Depending on the vendor, the cost ranges from \$10-\$30.
  - Site plans – Loaned by ULI as PDF for University to print on foam core
  - Lego kits – Loaned by ULI University purchases (approximately \$250 per kit)
  - Exercises & assignments – Provided free of charge in electronic form to professor by ULI District Council. Most professors put these on-line for students for students to download.
  - Laptop computers – Student use their own computers.
  - Financial Model program – Spreadsheet provided to professor by ULI for distribution to students via Excel or Google Sheets.
  - Site Builder tool – Software tool for two-dimensional modeling provided free of charge by ULI for distribution to students. Students may also use SketchUp for three-dimensional modeling.
  - Award to winning team – Typically, the ULI District Council provides an award, such as a voucher to attend a ULI District Council program free of charge.

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