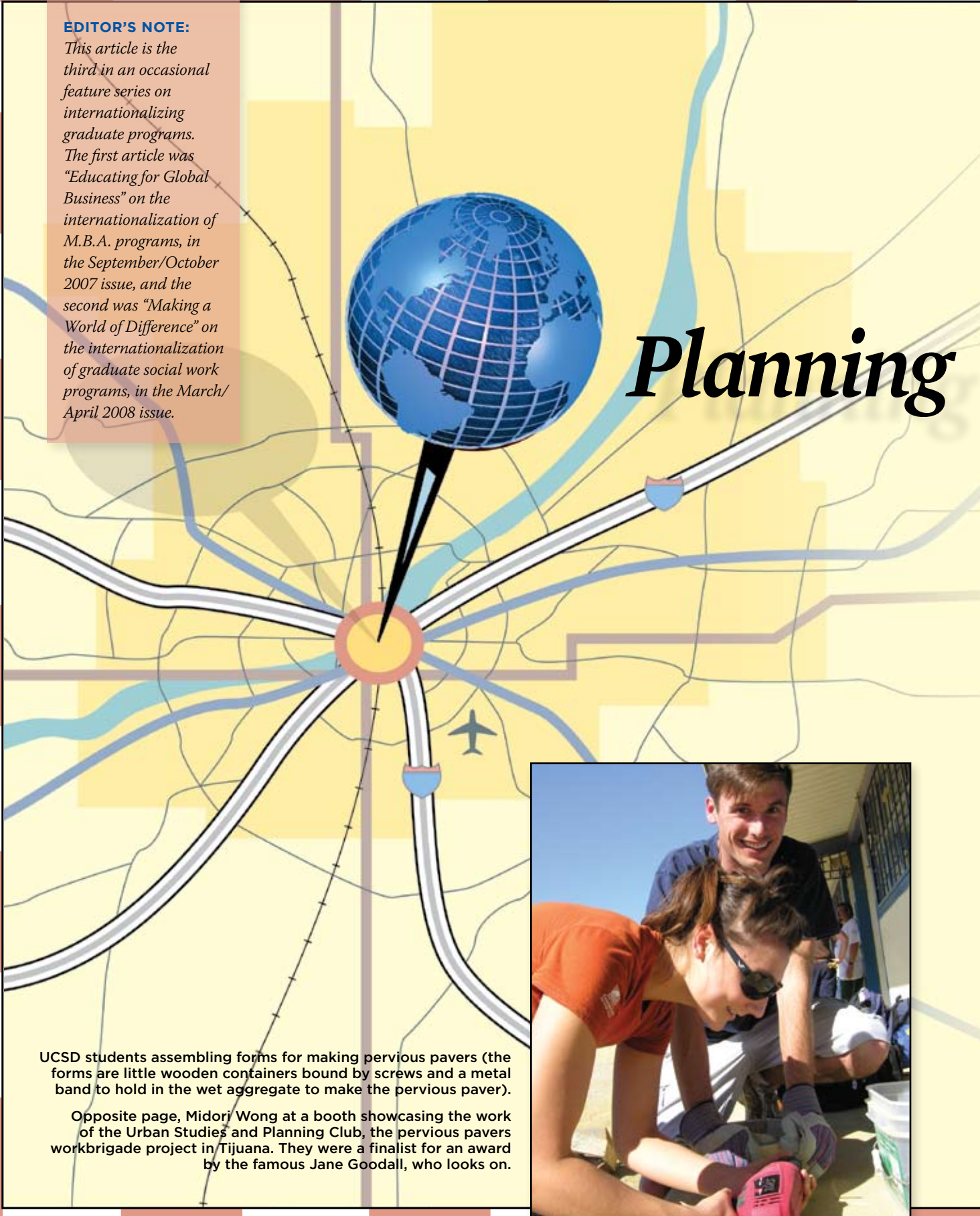


EDITOR'S NOTE:

This article is the third in an occasional feature series on internationalizing graduate programs. The first article was "Educating for Global Business" on the internationalization of M.B.A. programs, in the September/October 2007 issue, and the second was "Making a World of Difference" on the internationalization of graduate social work programs, in the March/April 2008 issue.

Planning



UCSD students assembling forms for making pervious pavers (the forms are little wooden containers bound by screws and a metal band to hold in the wet aggregate to make the pervious paver).

Opposite page, Midori Wong at a booth showcasing the work of the Urban Studies and Planning Club, the pervious pavers workbrigade project in Tijuana. They were a finalist for an award by the famous Jane Goodall, who looks on.



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD: KEITH PEZZOLI

Urban planning is an international profession and practice, with many countries having a long history of community planning. In recognition of the profession's growing global impact, urban planning graduate education programs in the United States are internationalizing their curricula to enable future urban planners to work effectively anywhere in the world.

BY DARLENE BREMER

Tomorrow's Urban World

ASHLEE MCLAUGHLIN could have chosen any urban planning master's program in the United States. But she didn't. Instead, she chose to enroll in a specialized international urban planning program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC).

"Working in El Salvador as a Peace Corps volunteer and in Mexico has helped me gain a deeper understanding of the different ways communities and populations settle and organize according to their geography, governments, and culture," she notes. The time McLaughlin spent overseas with friends, acquaintances, and interviewees, she says, added a depth to her research that she could not have obtained or understood as well through only statistics or other quantitative data.

Her international experiences in the UIUC master's program has enabled McLaughlin to live in different communities, has broadened her view of human behavior, and strengthened her ability to understand different planning theories and practices more effectively and creatively in various contexts.

Ashlee McLaughlin is not alone. An increasing number of students are enrolling in the growing number of urban planning graduate programs with international components as the profession adapts to the global economy.

Trends in Internationalization

Master's degree programs in urban planning require students to choose a specialty, such as growth management, transportation, environmental issues, economic developing, or



housing. "We find that international specializations are the fastest growing, with American students expressing growing interest in studying and working overseas and an increasing number of foreign students coming to the U.S. to study," observes Petra Doan, associate professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Florida State University (FSU), Tallahassee. Economic and social globalization, Internet communication, and instant media are major contributors to the increased understanding that what happens overseas truly affects the United States in terms of labor, commodity, and financial flows. "There is a growing number of people throughout the U.S. interested now in how the rest of the world works and in learning about how other cultures perform urban planning and how those lessons could even be applied in the U.S.," Doan adds.

According to Vicente Del Rio, professor in the City and Regional Planning Department of the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, concerns such as global warming, environmental impacts, alternative energy, natural resources, tourism development, and economic globalization are moving most planning programs toward a more global focus in two basic ways. First, he observes, by opening more opportunities to international students and exchange programs. “Secondly, by offering more international education opportunities for students to work in the field of international development and to travel abroad,” Del Rio adds.

Another trend in the internationalization of urban planning programs is an increased focus on engaging new technology, such as geographic information systems (GIS), which allows planners to digitally map areas. “Planners need such technology to be innovative in discerning patterns in crime, changes in land use, and other variables to analyze statistical models of the physical environment and adapt plans to the needs of the community,” says Annette M. Kim, assistant professor in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge.

The emergence of cross-program interest groups that promote global mindedness in urban planning is a key indicator that educational programs are recognizing the value of and the need to offer students international experiences and perspectives during their educational careers. For example, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), which is the United States’ main professional organization of planning schools and one of 11 such organizations worldwide, has joined in the Shanghai Statement. “The Statement stresses the promotion of mutual understanding and cooperation and recognizes how economic globalization and information exchange is the general trend of social development today,” says Keith Pezzoli, director of field research and professor of urban studies and planning at the University of California, San Diego. ACSP is also involved in the Global Planning Educators Interest Group (GPEIG), which consists of planning educators who are trying to ensure that global issues remain in the forefront of research and academic planning, according to Doan. The model, Doan observes, has historically been for students to come to the United States to study planning. “However, many of today’s global planning educators are more interested in collaborative exchange of information,” Doan says. As the cochair of GPEIG, Kim has seen the membership double in the last couple of years with more members wanting to focus on the politics and ethics involved in



Ashlee McLaughlin with her colleague in Mexico, Miguel Guiot, who works for the federal land regularization commission.

working globally and in determining how to be responsible planners in different cultural contexts where the ideas of what makes a good planner or a good society can be different than in the United States. “It’s encouraging to see interest in global planning issues increase, as well as the recent growth in ethnic and gender diversification in the faculty at planning schools,” she observes. Kim attributes some of this evolution to the fact that faculty in planning schools are currently in the midst of a generational turnover, with younger professors and teachers tending to be more diverse and globally minded.

Another initiative gaining ground is the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN), which includes planning education associations from the United States, Canada, Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Australia (with some efforts being made to create one in the Middle East). “The goal is to have a world congress of planning schools approximately every five years to exchange ideas, collaborate, discuss research, and further the global dialogue among planning academics and professionals,” Doan explains.

“There has definitely been a shift in the focus in recent years toward global issues as planning educators and professionals have realized the effect global events and markets have on local development issues.”

In addition, there have been increased efforts by educational institutions to promote more education abroad programs to enable a richer flow of information between programs around the world. “Schools have recognized that working in overseas situations requires that students get training in multicultural understanding and sensitivity,” Pezzoli adds. This recognition is driven by the intensification of worldwide economic relationships, as well as the need for people and countries to work together to address environmental and sustainability issues; the increased influence of global forces and the dynamics of science, communication, arts, and health; the increases in population growth and changes in demographics; the free flow of communication; and the ability of more people to travel freely today. “There has definitely been a shift in the focus in recent years toward global issues as planning educators and professionals have realized the effect global events and markets have on local development issues,” he says.

Decades ago, according to Faranak Miraftab, associate professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, international development planning was concentrated in a single course. “Now, with the increased interest, attention, and understanding of the importance of international planning, it is rare to find a course that doesn’t include an international component,” she observes. Global issues and concerns, therefore, now span the entire curriculum as institutions have realized the importance of including an international perspective that provides students with the tools required to work in a global environment. In addition to changes in curriculum, more faculty are now performing comparative research overseas, according to Paul Smoke, professor of public finance and planning at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University, as well as an increased number of internships for students with international agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). “There are also a number of planning schools that are arranging international experiences for students, such as exchange programs, summer courses at overseas universities, or an international project for students’ theses or end-event projects,” he adds.

Research Triangle Institute International (RTI), Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, is a not-for-profit research and consulting organization that provides innovative research and technical solutions to health, education, democratic governance, economic social, energy, and environmental issues. RTI expanded into the area of global urban development in the 1980s to respond to the U.S. agenda of addressing development concerns. The organization’s first international project

What Is Urban Planning?

PLANNING, ALSO CALLED URBAN, CITY, OR REGIONAL PLANNING, is a dynamic profession that improves the welfare of people and their communities by creating more convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive places for present and future generations to live. According to the American Planning Association, Chicago, Illinois, planners work in rural and suburban areas, as well as in large cities around the world. Planners work for nonprofit and nongovernment agencies, within the private sector, for multidisciplinary consulting firms, and must be able to interact effectively within national and local governments.

Planning is a highly collaborative field and most urban planners perform work in one or more particular fields of specialization, including community development, land use, transportation, natural resources, economic development, housing, historic preservation, sustainability, and community activism.

involved working with local governments in Ghana to improve the quality of city services and to open up opportunities for citizen feedback. According to Myles Elledge, senior director of RTI’s International Development Group, urban planning education has shifted its focus toward increased internationalization as the world has become more urban and as economic, social, and demographic changes have become more significant in the world’s cities. “Projections are that up to 70 percent of the world’s population will be centered in urban areas by 2030 and the highest rates of urban population growth will be in the cities of Asia and Africa,” he says. While traditional urban planning focused on a city’s lay-out and infrastructure, today’s internationalized urban planning requires more of a focus on economic and social dynamics. “The field

has evolved to become more comprehensive in its approach and now considers more than just infrastructure, but includes economic, social, health, and environmental issues,” Elledge explains.

Developing International Curricula

FSU has had an international component to its urban planning graduate program since the late 1980s as more students became interested in global issues and because the planning profession was already beginning to require international experiences in prospective employees’ resumes. The University’s first foray into the international area was a joint program with the Peace Corps called the Master’s International Program. Students take a year of courses at FSU before volunteering for two years to perform urban planning work and then return to the university for another semester or two of course work. “When these students graduate, they already have two years of international experience, along with a professional degree that allows them to work anywhere in the world,” observes Doan. The most challenging aspect of developing international course work, Doan adds, is understanding the local context of planning, the legal framework involved, and the influence a planner may or may not have in different countries. “When developing international curricular components, it’s important to extract from U.S. courses what is really essential and then put it in a context that relates to the needs of a specific area.”

In an effort to broaden its international focus, FSU is examining expansion of its capstone projects into

Central America and is exploring increasing ties to the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana, with the goal of offering the opportunity for U.S. students to work with both Mexican and Ghanaian students to solve urban planning issues in a developing country context. Furthermore, FSU is interested in strengthening its collaborative efforts with the United Nation’s sponsored Alliance for Civilizations and other universities overseas. “It’s important to further global dialogue to promote understanding between different social, religious, and political groups around the world,” Doan says.

California Polytechnic master’s program in urban planning has also had an international component since the 1980s. “Since its formative years, the department has included faculty from places such as Hong Kong, the former Yugoslavia, Egypt, Turkey, Ghana, and I am from Brazil,” says Del Rio. Today, the university offers U.S. students international-focused classes and case studies and opportunities to participate in exchange programs in Mexico, Brazil, Switzerland, and Honduras. “We also organize international events and have visiting faculty and students from overseas as much as possible,” he adds. Del Rio believes there are three major areas to consider when developing new courses and international experiences for students. The first, he says, is to open up the curriculum to classes that address development and issues that have international repercussions, such as global warming and the globalization of the economy. The second is to invest in exchange programs with other countries, which leads to having students travel back and forth, joint research, and international visiting faculty. “The third component is to attract an international faculty and student body.”

An international focus in urban planning at MIT dates back to the late 1960s when the Special Program for Urban and Regional Studies of Developing Areas (SPURS) program was launched, which brought international fellows from developing countries to MIT to both learn and teach informally. “MIT began its expansion into international curricula when it recognized that planning education had been focused more on architecture and physical planning and that it was becoming necessary to strengthen the intellectual base of urban planning and root it in the social sciences and humanities,” Kim explains. MIT is currently furthering its efforts for increased internationalization of urban planning education by setting up cooperative agreements with about 10 overseas universities, including



UCSD urban planning graduate students get “hands-on” experience as part of their fieldwork in Tijuana.



Students from UCSD Urban Studies and Planning Program's Student Club working on the pervious pavers on the elementary school playground of the Colonia San Bernardo, a low income neighborhood in the Los Laureles Canyon Project area.

those in Portugal, Singapore, and England, for student exchanges, to engage in collaborative research, and to help develop overseas universities' science and engineering schools. In addition, the MIT/Tsinghua University Urbanization Laboratory (UrbLab) creates a structure for exploring design and development issues posed by the kind of rapid urbanization now being seen in China and for inventing new models of city form and function to accommodate breakneck growth without sacrificing livability. "No one can escape the need for offering international experiences as the world is so interconnected that the ability to understand other cultures and societies is essential to accomplishing any goal," Kim observes.

UIUC has what Miraftab describes as exceptionally strong international components in its urban planning graduate program. Almost all of the faculty have active research projects outside the United States, which are incorporated into their teaching, and there are education abroad and exchange programs, as well as mutual degree agreements with programs in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

"UIUC's Transnational Planning component emphasizes that problems in the U.S. are closely linked to issues around the world and cuts across all concentrations in degree programs," she says. When developing new curricula or international experiences for students, Miraftab observes that something that is often missing is the understanding of the power links between different cultures and countries. "It's very important to emphasize the development of students' critical perspectives and to ensure that they understand the historical relationships between countries and cultures and how they evolved. The

international curricula need to equip students with skills to critically examine how problems around the world are interlinked."

In an interconnected world, employers are looking for students with international perspectives, and planning schools are recognizing the need to provide those experiences. "Over time, urban planners have become more involved in governance, politics, and citizen participation, making it vital for planners to have a broader perspective beyond the physical and to have a more broad-based background than the technical," Smoke observes. When working with local populations, planners need to understand the culture, societal priorities, and political dynamics to determine what is required to successfully plan a project. "An international perspective allows planners to learn from other types of systems and apply lessons learned to potential designs," he adds. Even in the United States, with increasing immigrant populations, planners who never work overseas will still be engaging people from other countries who may have different ideas as to what is required in terms of design for the community.

Institutions Abroad

It's not only U.S. universities that have recognized the need for internationalizing urban planning programs, but foreign institutions as well. "Membership in GPEAN of such planning schools as the University of Science and Technology in Kumasi and the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico are indicators of the value overseas colleges plan on internationalization," Doan observes. According to Del Rio,



Students from UCSD Urban Studies and Planning Program's Student Club continue working on the pervious pavers on the Colonia San Bernardo elementary school playground.

most planning programs in other countries are very interested in integrating international experiences. In Europe, he says, this is absolutely the rule, particularly after the creation of the European Union (EU) eased the flow of students between member countries. For the past four years, Del Rio has been a visiting professor in the master's program at Lusofona University in Lisbon, where there is much interest in broadening students' international perspectives to prepare them to work in a global market.

Ryerson University in Toronto recently launched a new master of planning (urban development) program, scheduled to commence in the fall session in 2008. The curriculum will be centered on an innovative concentration on design approaches for contemporary metropolitan regions, through which students develop an understanding of both local and global urban dynamics. The program focuses on providing a combined multicultural and ecological framework to facilitate the study and practice of sustainable urban development. Recognizing the expanding role of urban planners, the graduate urban planning program at the University of Tokyo prepares students to deal with the inherently multifaceted, interrelated, and complex issues of urban problems around the world. The program covers land-use planning, urban disaster prevention, and transportation issues in both developed and developing countries. And the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning continues its long history of international focus with extensive links and exchange agreements with a number of leading universities in Asia, North America, and Europe where students are actively en-

couraged to take part in their courses overseas.

Planning students from other countries also recognize the need for international experiences and have chosen to study in the United States. Chandrima Mukhopadhyay received her bachelor's of architecture in 2002 and her master's in town and regional planning in 2004 from the Bengal Engineering and Science University and is now in the master's program of urban planning at FSU. "I chose to come to the U.S. because the universities here place more emphasis on the social and political aspects of planning rather than just on the physical, which is the focus in India educational programs," she explains. Having an international educational experience has enabled Mukhopadhyay to become more independent and has exposed her to new ideas, perspectives, and career options. "Teaching methods here are more biased toward dialogue rather than lecture, and I have gained an entirely new perspective for looking at similar things," she adds. Mukhopadhyay intends to return to India and work on policies of foreign investment in India's infrastructure. "Hopefully, I will return to Bengal but will choose my final location based on the opportunities and the needs of the community."

Patricia Acosta is from Bogotá, Colombia and is currently studying for a master's degree in urban planning at MIT. She received a bachelor's degree in architecture at the Universidad de Los Andes in Bogotá, and a master's in urban planning at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia before working as a manager on the Bogotá Master Plan. "I decided to study abroad and chose MIT because it is the best planning school in the U.S. and very renowned in South America for its visiting consultants." Acosta chose to concentrate in international

“Students with international experience find they are more in demand, whether in the U.S. or overseas, because their exposure to diversity allows them to better understand the needs of the community.”

development because it addresses the issues of urban problems faced by developing nations. “The diversity I’ve experienced at MIT has enriched my participation in discussion and debates and has given me different views of my own experiences,” she says. Upon graduation in June 2008, Acosta plans to return to Colombia and hopes to advance into the higher levels of decision-making. “I plan to continue to work for the government and hope to work with multilateral organizations and be involved in policy decisions,” she adds.

Out in the World

Students with graduate degrees in urban planning will face many challenges wherever in the world they work. And although socioeconomic disparities are vast in many U.S. cities and language, religious, and cultural diversity exists throughout the country, planners will find the divides to be even greater overseas. According to Elledge, many metropolitan areas in the developing world have a low quality of life because of health issues and environmental and economic pressures that planners need to address. “The poor is the fastest growing segment of urban populations, which poses enormous challenges to planners to incorporate the peoples’ needs and improve their quality of life,” he observes.

Planners also face dealing with real human health issues as urban slum dwellers suffer from higher rates of infectious disease and death. “Just keeping up with providing basic services is a challenge for planners in rapidly growing cities in poor countries where only 20 to 40 percent of the population has access to drinking water, power supplies, and waste collection and treatment services,” Elledge adds. Planners in developing urban areas also need to deal with a vast range of private transportation methods, ranging from donkey carts and bicycles, to motorcycles, cars, buses, and trucks. “As the standard of living increases in an urban area, transitions happen first in transportation, requiring planners to take a forward-looking approach to addressing the issue.”

Because there is a greater probability today that planners will work in an environment outside of the United States, the field is requiring more global skills of its practitioners, according to Smoke. “Many consulting firms, NGOs, and public agencies that employ planners are performing more international work than they used to,” he observes. And international exchange, such as sister-city arrangements, where planners from different cities partner together, requires higher levels of global skills to allow planners to perform effectively on multicultural teams.

Students who receive a more international perspective of planning and that have access to experiences, models, and projects from other countries build a more knowledgeable foundation for their

careers, allowing them to work in all areas of international development. Alumni, according to Doan, are working for private firms, NGOs, state governments in the United States, and organizations such as the Peace Corps and USAID. “Students with international experience find they are more in demand, whether in the U.S. or overseas, because their exposure to diversity allows them to better understand the needs of the community.”

With bachelor’s degrees in political science, urban and regional planning, and interdisciplinary social science, Martin Laws is currently a first-year student in FSU’s master’s program in urban and regional planning. He chose the program because he had done his undergraduate work at the university and appreciated both the community-based goals of the program and the fact that students get hands-on experience with improving communities and developing relationships with the people who live there.

“I chose to concentrate on international development because of my service with the Peace Corps and also because I was familiar with students and professors who also had a similar international focus,” he explains. The international experiences Laws has had throughout his educational career and Peace Corps service has enabled him to really understand that people around the world have the same needs, desires, and aspirations for peaceful, content, and healthy lives.

“My international experiences have allowed me to view situations from different perspectives and to look beyond any cost analysis of a project to examine the needs of the community,” he adds. After graduation in 2009, Laws would like to enter the transportation planning field and work in an urban area where he can really help bring better alternatives to poor and lower-income communities. “Transportation is becoming more and more vital as fuel prices rise and energy conservation becomes more critical,” he observes.

Martin Laws and other students like Ashlee McLaughlin, Chandrima Mukhopadhyay, and Patricia Acosta are all forging a different path than urban planners of the past—they see their field through a world-encompassing lens.

The continuing globalization of communities, economics, politics, and religion have demonstrated to both urban planning educational institutions and students like these the need to embrace diversity and better understand the needs of the community if graduates are going to work on the global center stage. And today, being prepared to work in urban planning in an international context is more important than ever. **IE**

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