

**SPECIAL REPORT**

of the

**ACADEMIC PRIORITIES, GRADUATE AND  
PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCILS**

concerning a

**DUAL MASTER'S PROGRAM:  
MASTER OF REGIONAL PLANNING (MRP)/  
MASTER OF SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE (MSS)**

Presented at the  
756<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate  
March 10, 2016

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ACADEMIC PRIORITIES COUNCIL

At its February 25, 2016 meeting, the APC voted to endorse proposal 2146 for creation of a Dual Master's Degree program resulting in a Master of Regional Planning and a Master of Sustainability Science Dual degree. The program enables students to earn the Master of Sustainability Science and the Master of Regional Planning within two years (plus summers) of full-time study. "The MSS core curriculum is designed to provide students with a strong analytical foundation, applicable to a range of sustainability issues. The MRP core focuses on combining theoretical, historical, social, political, and technical dimensions of planning practice with strong emphasis on practice through studio and service to area communities. This two+ year dual-degree program would offer its students a rich educational experience in many areas of science, management and planning, including infrastructural development, systems analysis and implementation, science policy and planning, information technology, and sustainability tools and techniques."

GRADUATE COUNCIL

The Academic Standards and Curriculum Committee (ASCC) met on February 3, 2016 and reviewed the proposal for a Dual Master's Program: Master of Regional Planning (MRP)/Master of Sustainability Science (MSS). The ASCC recommended this proposal for approval.

At its meeting on Wednesday, February 10, 2016, the Graduate Council unanimously approved the Dual Master's Program: Master of Regional Planning (MRP)/Master of Sustainability Science (MSS), Proposal #2146 in the Course and Curriculum Management System.

PROGRAM AND BUDGET COUNCIL

The Program Subcommittee of the Program and Budget Council met on February 10, 2016, reviewed the Dual Master's Program: Master of Regional Planning (MRP)/Master of Sustainability Science (MSS) proposal and recommended it for approval.

At its meeting on February 17, 2016, the Program and Budget Council unanimously approved the Dual Master's Program: Master of Regional Planning (MRP)/Master of Sustainability Science (MSS), Proposal #2146 in the Course and Curriculum Management System.

**MOTION:** That the Faculty Senate approve the Dual Master's Program: Master of Regional  
18-16 Planning (MRP)/Master of Sustainability Science (MSS), as presented in Sen. Doc.  
No. 16-041.

**Proposal for Dual Degree Program  
Master of Regional Planning (MRP) / Master of Sustainability Science (MSS)**

The Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning Department's Master of Regional Planning Program and the Environmental Conservation Department's Master of Sustainability Science Program propose to offer a dual degree program for students to earn the Master of Sustainability Science and the Master of Regional Planning within two years (plus summers) of full-time study. The professions of planning and sustainability science are intertwined in numerous ways. Many positions in government and in the private and nonprofit sectors can best be filled by persons who possess the technical knowledge and skills of systems analysts, consultants and planners. For example, sustainability planners in local governments often aspire to be researchers/analysts within government agencies and organizations. Conversely, sustainability analysts, especially in rapidly growing enterprises or organizations, may be hampered if they cannot exercise the skills to formulate and implement plans in a municipal or regional context. This connection is already reflected in the fact that there is a high degree of crossover between MSS students in the urban sustainability concentration taking LARP courses as well as MRP students in the environmental concentration taking ECO courses. Prospective students have expressed a great deal of interest in this potential combination.

The joint degree program would be one of only a handful in the nation. It permits the mastery of core knowledge and skills in both areas in two years (plus summers) or less, instead of the three years or more that would otherwise be required. It does so by eliminating duplicative coursework in research methods and general electives. Students will spend two semesters of full-time study in each program, and then distribute remaining coursework between the two programs.

The MSS core curriculum is designed to provide students with a strong analytical foundation, applicable to a range of sustainability issues. The MRP core focuses on combining theoretical, historical, social, political, and technical dimensions of planning practice with strong emphasis on practice through studio and service to area communities. This two+ year dual-degree program would offer its students a rich educational experience in many areas of science, management and planning, including infrastructural development, systems analysis and implementation, science policy and planning, information technology, and sustainability tools and techniques.

The MRP/MSS degree program will provide its graduates with comprehensive education for professional careers in systems policy, management, development and planning careers at the national, state and local level. Students must apply to, and be admitted to both programs, and must meet the satisfactory academic progress requirements of each program. Prior to admission, students are encouraged to complete an introductory course in statistics (or equivalent practical experience) and an introductory course in ecological science.

**Table 1: Outline for Master’s Students in Regional Planning and Sustainability Science  
(48 + 33 = 81 total credits for two programs completed separately)**

<p><b>Existing MRP Program (LARP)</b>  <b>7 required Core Courses (3 credits unless specified):</b></p> <p>610 Planning History and Theory          615 Planning Law          620 Quantitative Methods in Planning          625 Introduction to Geographic Information Systems          630 The Practice of Public Participation          635 Research Issues in Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning          640 Regional Planning Studio (6 credits)</p> <p>Either:          698 Master’s Project (6 credits)          699 Master’s Thesis (8-9 credits), or          3 Course Option (9 credits)</p> <p><i>Total Core Credits: 30 (Project) to 33 (Thesis/3-course)</i></p> <p><b>Concentrations: 3 Required Courses (3 credits each)</b>          Students must take two required classes within each concentration and one outside elective relevant to the concentration.</p> <p><b>A. Land Use and Environmental</b>          RP650 Intro. to Land Use          RP655 Tools and Techniques          RP553 Resource Policy and Planning          LA547 Landscape Pattern and Process</p> <p><b>B. Social, Policy and Community</b>          660 Planning with/for Multiple Publics          557 Urban Policies, or          665 Housing and Public Health</p> <p><b>C. Economic Development</b>          670 Economic Development Issues in Planning          675 Spatial Analysis and Regional Development</p> <p><i>Total Concentration Credits: 9</i></p> <p><b>General Electives:</b>          Can be taken in a different RP concentration or outside of the department.</p> <p><i>Elective Credits: 6 to 9 (Project or Thesis)</i></p> <p><b>TOTAL CREDITS: 48</b></p>	<p><b>Existing MSS Program (ECO)</b>  <b>7 required Core Courses (Including 1 that falls into each category A+B+C):</b></p> <p>691A Fall Seminar (1 credit)          691B Spring Seminar (1 credit)          697PS Perspectives on Sustainability (3 credits)</p> <p>696 Practicum in Sustainability (4 credits)</p> <p>A: Environmental Systems (3 credits)          B: Urban &amp; Social Systems (3 credits)          C: Economics &amp; Politics of Sustainability (3 credits)</p> <p><i>Total Core Credits: 18</i></p> <p><b>Concentration and Elective Courses: 5 required (3 credits each)</b>          Students must take at least 3 courses of which are within a concentration area and two outside electives relevant to the concentration.</p> <p>A. Environmental Quality          B. Sustainable Food Systems &amp; Agriculture          C. Water Sustainability &amp; Climate Change          D. Urban Sustainability</p> <p><i>Total Concentration Credits: 15</i></p> <p><b>TOTAL CREDITS: 33</b></p>
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## Proposed Dual Degree MRP/MSS

The proposed dual degree will take advantage of the already existing synergies between the two separate programs, economizing on curricula with overlapping subject matter, while using the flexibility inherent in elective concentration credits to complete all core requirements for both programs while also achieving a savings in duplicative credits.

Dual degree candidates will be required to fulfill the coursework equivalent of 36 credit hours in the MRP program and 30 credit hours in the MSS program, 66 total. Students will be required to complete the full core curricula of both programs. MSS core and program elective courses will be considered as an equivalent substitute for the nine concentration credits required by the MRP program. Likewise, MRP core and elective planning courses will be accepted as fulfilling MSS general concentration electives.

Students will also fulfill the joint requirements for MSS practicum and MRP Thesis, Project, or 3-Course Option on a topic of relevance to both programs. A student taking the MRP Thesis or 3-Course Option/MSS practicum option will receive  $9 + 4 = 13$  credits total, a student taking the MRP Project/MSS practicum option will receive  $6 + 4 = 10$  credits total.

The remainder of the minimum dual program requirement of 66 total credit hours will be filled through electives. To meet the minimum 36 credit hour requirement of the dual MRP program, students will be required to take the 24 core credits plus 6-9 thesis, project, three-course option + 3-6 additional elective credits from the MRP program (depending on whether the student opts for an MRP thesis or project). These elective MRP courses may be filled by any MRP concentration course, including concentration electives that, while closely related to planning, are often offered in other graduate departments (especially from Environmental Conservation).

The proposed MRP/MSS program complies with the university's requirements for dual degree programs and is modeled after similar and already-approved LARP programs (e.g., MLA/MRP, MLA/March, MRP/March, MRP/MPPA). It requires more than the minimum threshold 60 total credits (66); it requires at least 30 credits for each program; it requires that students take all core requirements for both programs, and thereby is still compliant with professional accreditation requirements; and there is no more than a c. 20-25% credit savings per program (66 total for the dual degree rather than 81 total separately, a savings of 15 credits), which allows students to take electives beyond core requirements.

**Table 2: Dual Degree Option – Proposed Plan**

<b>MRP Program</b>			<b>MSS Program</b>		
<b>#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Credits</b>
Core Courses (3 credits unless specified):					
651	Planning History and Theory	3	691A	Fall Seminar	1
656	Planning Law	3	691B	Spring Seminar	1
620	Quantitative Methods	3	697PS	Perspectives on Sustainability	3
625	Introduction to Geographic Information Systems	3			
630	The Practice of Public Participation	3			
635	Research Issues in Landscape	3			
675	Regional Planning Studio	6			
MRP concentration courses (covered by MSS courses)			Program Electives (3 required 3 credit courses, See list in Table 1)		
Combined MRP Thesis / Project & MSS internship					
698	Master’s Project, of	6	696	Practicum in Sustainability	4
699	Master’s Thesis	9			
<i>Total non-elective credits</i>		<i>30 to 33</i>			
MRP electives (ecological concentration)		3 to 6	MSS Electives (urban concentration)		12
<b>Total MRP credits</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>Total MSS credits</b>		<b>30</b>
<b>Total Dual-Degree Program Credits</b>					<b>66</b>

**Sample Program Timeline and Special Course Descriptions (see Table 3 for summary)**

*The First and Second Years:*

Dual Degree Students in their first year fulfill core requirements for either the MRP or the MSS program. During their second year they will attend the other program. Students can elect to take an introductory statistics course (RP 620 or equivalent) in either program during the first year. There are also a small number of elective credits available during the student’s first year in the MRP program where a student would be able to take either MSS program core courses or MRP/ MSS electives.

**Table 3: Sample Program Timetable (assumed starting in MSS, MRP Thesis Option)**

	<b>Fall Semester</b>	<b>Spring Semester</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Year:</b>	MSS Curriculum <b>(15 credits)</b> 4 MSS Courses + RP 620 Quant Methods	MSS Curriculum <b>(15 credits)</b> 4 MSS Courses + RP 635 Research Issues
<b>Summer:</b>	MSS SUMMER PRACTICUM (150 hours total):  (2 additional MSS credits may be taken in any of these semesters to reach 66 total)	4 credits = 31 total for 1 <sup>st</sup> full year
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year:</b>	MRP Curriculum <b>(15 credits)</b> 3 MRP core courses (651, 630, 675), and one MRP elective = 15 credits	MRP/MSS Curriculum <b>(15 credits)</b> 2 MRP core course (625, 656), plus either Master’s Thesis/3-course Option or MRP Project + 1 MRP Elective

**= 66 total credits over two years plus summer(s)**

*MSS Summer Practicum:*

In addition to the core requirements, the MSS requires students to complete a 150-hour summer practicum, usually in a public or nonprofit organization. The MSS practicum requirement should be satisfied in the summer between the first and second year, typically after completing the MSS coursework in the first year.

*Regional Planning Studio:*

Dual degree students will be required to participate in the regional planning studio. In the studio, students divide into teams of c. 4-5 students each and work on a ‘real’ planning project with an actual client. Contracts between the client and the studio team are signed as a means of providing a ‘real-world’ studio experience. Tasks will include data collection, analysis, and development of plan alternatives, public participation, and recommendations or plan implementation.

**Administration of Program:**

1. Applicants are required to apply to each school individually, and must meet the respective admission requirements for each program. Once admitted to both schools, a student will qualify for the joint degree program. Applicants to both programs are expected to have taken the GRE. In addition, applicants whose native language is not English must take Test of English Language (TOEFL). Students already enrolled in one of the programs can apply to the other during their first year in the program.
2. Advising: In the MRP portion of the program, students are primarily advised by the Graduate Program Director of the MRP program. In the MSS portion of the program, students are primarily advised by the Graduate Program Director of the MSS program. Students will have access to consultation advisors in both programs at all times.

**Summary of Changes:**

1. Students will complete the required 30-33 credits of the MRP program, with a total of 36 for the program. The remaining elective credits will be taken in the MSS program.
2. Students will complete 18 required credits of the MSS program, with a total of 30 for the program. The remaining elective credits will be taken in the MRP program.
3. Students in the first year of either program can apply to the dual degree program.

This proposal thus meets the overall dual degree option of a minimum of 60 credits with a total degree requirement of 66 credits (36 in the MRP, 30 in MSS). The reduction of degree credits in the combined MRP/MSS is close to the approximate 20-25% threshold requirement listed in the Dual Master's Proposal Guidelines approved by the Faculty Senate, and, in accordance with those guidelines, still requires all core courses, and only reduces credits with elimination of duplicative electives, while still allowing a student to complete the program within 2 years plus summer(s). Students in existing MRP program will be able to count 9 credits of MSS program electives as fulfilling the MRP concentration requirement. Likewise, students in the existing MSS program are able to take 2-3 courses, or 7+ credits, of electives outside of the MSS program. In this case, the electives will be taken as part of the MRP core requirements and electives. Thus, there is no reduction in core degree requirements for either MSS or MRP students. Students will, of course, have to meet all the entrance requirements of both programs and both degrees will be awarded concurrently upon completion of the 66 total credits.