

2024 – 2025

School of Planning Report to Faculty of Environment Council/AGM

Overview:

It's been a very good year for the School of Planning. Members of the School continue to be highly productive in scholarly research as well as more applied work with community groups, governments, and the private sector. The School has delivered courses and supervision to more than 670 undergraduate students and 170 graduate students within our own unit, and many more across the University and broader academic community. Our projected Fall 2025 undergraduate and graduate program enrolment numbers look very positive.

Over the past year, members of the School have focused attention on launching our revised undergraduate program, began a comprehensive review of our Master's programs, and refined various administrative processes to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Outward efforts include knowledge dissemination, professional development opportunities for the profession, media engagement, and working with governments and international and national advisory bodies.

Our faculty have frequently engaged with the community on high-profile issues such as planning for climate change, affordable housing, climate-friendly urban development, planning with Indigenous communities, and social equity in planning. We continue to work diligently on identifying and carrying out action items around equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice in line with the School's statement of values.

Moving forward, the School will support and help to advance the Faculty's very promising "Environment in 2035" initiative, the university's dynamic "Waterloo at 100" strategic plan, and the Future Cities Institute (FCI). In the spirit of internationalization, the School is now a member of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP), and our faculty are active with international agencies such as UN-Habitat and the Commonwealth Association of Planners. With this context in mind, we will continue to build and expand our connections to the Planning practice community, and contribute to the advancement of Planning education, research, and practice in Canada and overseas.

Sincerely,



Mark Seasons, PhD FCIP RPP
Professor & Director

Our People:

The School has 5 staff members and 21 faculty (3 of whom are joint appointments with other departments/programs and 1 colleague is serving in a full-time administrative position). We currently have about 680 undergraduate students and 160 +/- graduate students.

Current School administrative positions are held by:

- **Mark Seasons**, Director
- **Jeremy Pittman**, Associate Director, Graduate Studies
- **Jennifer Dean**, Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies
- **Katherine Perrott**, Associate Director, Professional Practice
- **Carrie Mitchell** completed her role as Associate Director, Undergraduate Studies on April 30, 2025.

The School's faculty continued to support the broader University community by serving in administrative positions:

- **Michael Drescher**, Director, Heritage Resources Centre
- **John Lewis**, Director, Indigenous Faculty Relations
- **Leia Minaker**, Director, Future Cities Institute
- **Clarence Woudsma**, Co-Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs

Planner-in-Residence:

Each year, the School of Planning hosts a Planner-in-Residence, an expert who teaches and conducts seminars. The program gives students and faculty the opportunity to interact with professionals who are leaders in their field. The Planner-in-Residence program is funded by the University of Waterloo Planning Alumni of Toronto.

For the 2024-2025 academic year, the Planner-in-Residence was Jason Thorne, the incoming Chief Planner for the City of Toronto. He delivered PLAN 403 in the winter term to our 4th year undergraduate students and interacted with the School community in various other ways throughout the year. Jason is a Registered Professional Planner with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, and he is a Full Member of the Canadian Institute of Planners.

Staff Colleagues:

We thank all our exceptional staff for their continued hard work and outstanding contributions to the School. School staff deliver high quality service and work collectively to ensure smooth School operations. Our valued staff members include: Sheree Solomon (Academic Services Manager), Tracey Beirness (Graduate Program Administrator and Scholarship Coordinator), Jessica Huang and Neda Gohardehi (Undergraduate Program Coordinators and Advisors), and Ashley Wagner (Administrative Coordinator).

Sessional Instructors:

Sessional Instructors are valued contributors to our work in the School. They cover core, practice-oriented course delivery and fill in during faculty leaves. As a professional School, we also enhance our curriculum by hiring several sessional instructors to offer courses taught by leaders in the profession. The School wishes to acknowledge the sessional teaching contributions of the following planning professional colleagues – they have done a really fine job of providing us with a practice perspective on planning, and doing so in a highly creative, accessible manner:

Fall 2024: Dana Anderson and Sean Hertel (PLAN 721, Advanced Planning Project Studio); James Parkin (PLAN 417/PLAN 686, Aggregate Resources), Margaret Bakelaar (PLAN 451/674, Environmental Planning in Rural and Regional Systems); Samantha Leger and Eunice Wong (PLAN 309/646, Site Planning and Design Studio); and Shahab Valaei Sharif (PLAN 320/GEOG 319, Economic Analyses for Regional Planning).

Winter 2025: Adrian Buttazzoni (PLAN/GEOG 432/HLTH 420, Health and the Built Environment); Pam Deusling (PLAN 703, Planning Professional Practice); Stephanie Mirtitsch (PLAN 483/PLAN 602, Land Development Planning), Ryan Lok (PLAN 233, Social Planning and Community Development), and Dayna Edwards (PLAN 110, Visual Communication and Design for Planners); Hadi El-Shayeb (PLAN 211 – Design Studio Foundations); Samantha Leger (PLAN 203 – Transportation Planning and Mobility); Blair Scorgie (PLAN 705 – Design in Planning).

Spring 2024: Marcus Letourneau (PLAN 414/614/REC 425, Heritage Planning Workshop) and David Galbraith (PLAN/CIVE 484, Physical Infrastructure Planning).

Program Support:

We want to acknowledge and very much appreciate the alumni volunteers who organize and run the highly successful annual UWPAT Dinner event in Toronto which has been held for a remarkable 32 years. Last year, the event attracted approximately 900 attendees. We wish to express our gratitude to the many members of the planning practice community who contribute guest lectures or participate in panels, as project mentors, or guest critics for our students' work.

Finally, we thank student members of the Association of Graduate Planners (AGP) and the Planning Student Association (PSA), the planning student associations at the graduate and undergraduate levels respectively. They continued to offer important student initiatives and programming. The AGP and PSA are a key part of the School of Planning community, and they contribute to the life of the School and student well-being and success in so many ways.

Academic Programs:

Graduate Programs

In September 2024, the School of Planning welcomed 7 new PhD students (5FT and 2PT) and 19 MA/MES (Planning) students. This brings the total number of students in our research programs to 9 students. We also welcomed 6 students to our online MPlan/GDip program, which is oriented towards working planning professionals. After Fall 2024, admissions to the MPLAN/Gdip programs were paused as we undertake a comprehensive review of the programs. This brings the total number of students in that program to 35.

Fall 2024 New Admits:

- Total new admits: 32
- PhD – 7; MA/MES – 19 FT; MPLAN – 5; GDip- 1

Fall 2024 Student Count

- Total graduate students: 150
- PhD – 47; MA/MES – 67; MPLAN – 31; GDip – 5

Scholarship and Award Recipients:

The School congratulates all our graduate student scholarship and award winners. The recipients that have been publicly announced between May 2024 and April 2025 include:

Scholarship Recipients:

Adrian Buttazoni - SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship **Matthew Chan** - SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarships—Master’s Program, **Eliza Hydesmith** - SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarships—Master’s Program, **Emma O’Reilly** – OPPI Opportunity Scholarship, **Emma Borho** – Dillion Consulting Limited Scholarship.

Award Recipients

Karsten Brix, Natalie Majda, Amanda Morielli, and Michael Ricci were awarded the PlanON Innovative Research Award; **Ryan Lok** was awarded the Amit and Meena Chakma Award for Exceptional Teaching by a Student.

Katherine Perrott, Associate Director, Professional Practice, provided leadership with support from Tracey Beirness and Sheree Solomon to promote Internship opportunities for our Year 1 MA/MES (Planning) student colleagues, and organized job search and related training initiatives. Although the job market wasn’t as lucrative in the Spring 2025 term, all our students obtained internship positions. The results have been very positive.

Undergraduate Program:

In 2024, the School celebrated 117 undergraduate students' graduation with their BES in Planning. Last September, the School welcomed 182 first-year students!

Awards Recipients:

Overall, 238 undergraduate Planning students received 387 awards/scholarships during the past academic year. There was also a total of 50 unique awards that students received funding for (either specific to the Planning program or open to any program in the Faculty of Environment or at the University of Waterloo).

Congratulations to our undergraduate awards recipients: **Raida Chowdhury** (Academic Achievement Award), **Matthew Van Bakel** (CIP-PSTF Outstanding Graduating Student Award), **Enosh Chen** (ESRI Canada School of Planning Undergraduate Scholarship), **Matthew Britton-Whyte** (MHBC Award for Black and Indigenous Students), **Jansie Zhenxi Zhang** (Alan Weeks Memorial Award), and **Lee-Anne McLeod** (Planning Class of 1981 Award for Black and Indigenous Students).

Bursaries Recipients:

Congratulations to our undergraduate bursary recipients: **Timurul Hoque Kazi** (John Bousfield Bursary) and **Linda Evans** (Ages of Foundation Diversity Impact Bursary).

Fall 2024:

- New first-year admits: 182
- Total undergraduate student count: 678

Graduating students:

- Spring 2024: 112
- Fall 2024: 5
- Spring 2025: 91

Some noteworthy undergraduate accomplishments:

- The long-standing tradition of a student conference (Waterloo Toronto Metropolitan University Planning Conference, or WTMUPC) with the Toronto Metropolitan's Association of Planning Students (TMAPS) and the University of Waterloo's Planning Students' Association (PSA) took place in April 2024 and March 2025. This annual event continues to build bridges, providing opportunities to exchange ideas and mutual learning.
- A group of Planning students was among a delegation that visited Cape Town, South Africa in the Spring 2024 term to gain international perspectives on environmental issues.

Special Events:

One distinguishing feature of the School of Planning is our vibrant and vital connection with the practice world of professional planning; and special events are an essential contributor to the success of that connection.

Annual events included:

- School Graduation Luncheon Celebration
- School Welcome Event
- School Meet and Greet with New Graduate Students
- End-of-Term Student Critiques

Research Activities:

Faculty and student colleagues in the School continue to design, carry out, and communicate research that addresses the major issues of the day at multiple scales – the “wicked problems” of our time. Our work is inter- and trans-disciplinary, and collaborative in nature. Our researchers work with colleagues in the Faculty, across the campus, and elsewhere (including the practice/policy world). We address issues such as (among many others) the causes and impacts of the climate crisis, future cities, the vexing food insecurity challenge, ecosystem governance, the development of geo-referenced decision-making models, prioritizing social equity, planning in/with complexity, affordable housing, and planning with Canada’s Indigenous Peoples.

We pride ourselves on conducting research that is solution-oriented and that informs planning practice. Our work is published in top-ranked scholarly and practice-oriented journals. School scholars continue to perform well in Tri-Council, other domestic research funding programs and in international research funding initiatives, and they influence decision-making through high-profile media contributions

Some examples: The School of Planning’s Dr. Brian Doucet has conducted extensive research on various aspects of the urban housing challenge. Brian is also committed to creating readily accessible research outputs. His newest project is a feature-length video – “Thinking Beyond the Market: A Film about Genuinely Affordable Housing” - which explores the nature of the affordable housing challenge in communities across Canada.

In Parker and Huang (2025), Dr. Dawn Parker and colleague Dr. Y. Huang demonstrate that bike lanes don’t reduce property value - in fact, they increase values for condo housing. They also show that tree canopy and street trees add value for both single-family housing and condos. Takeaway: everyone wants and needs green around their housing!

In his paper, PhD (Planning) Candidate Alex Petric et al. (2025) demonstrates that equity-challenged groups and single-parent households are more likely to be unsuitably housed, having insufficient space for their family size. It also shows that while new construction is occurring, it’s not taking place where these unsuitably housed households live currently. These findings hold both inside and outside the light rail corridor in the Waterloo region context.

Other exciting work done by our school members is highlighted on the School’s website, under [News](#).



2024 Amit and Meena Chakma
Award for Exceptional Teaching

Dr. Jeremy Pittman Invited to Join International
Science Council's Global Roster of Experts



2024 Collage

