

Greeting from the URSI Chairperson



Dr. Tony Filipovitch

When I started out to write this note, I had to ask Rita, “What *did* we do last year, anyway?” The more I pawed through my notes, the more I realized how much the Department has been building the foundation for exciting changes.

The numbers are good. Our enrollments are up. We have seen steady growth over the last several years, in all areas (gen ed, undergrad, and grad). Our course enrollment and majors are up; we now admit about 25 grad students a year, and about 18 undergrads each year. But we continue to place 90% of our graduate majors in the field (or further study) and 75% of our undergrads. Our course evaluations are above the University norm, and we do 10-20 community-based projects each year. We also received about \$120,000 in grants and \$25,000 in contributions last year.

Last Spring, George Latimer and Craig Waldron were the site visitors for our program review, which we do every 5 years. It was an exciting process, and they gave us good advice. Among their recommendations were that the Institute should consider going for national accreditation (probably from NASPAA, for city management, first; and then AICP for planning), and that we should seriously explore offering a doctoral program. This would require long-range planning and is far from certain, but we have begun initial conversations with Public Administration.

When *you* come to visit us (please do—we are always looking for “real world” guest speakers for our classes and, besides, we just miss your faces), you’ll see some changes in our space. We created additional offices, so most of the faculty are in the office suite, or across the hall—you should see what Jan has done to Roger’s “cave.” In the process, Rita got *real* furniture, selected by *her* for *her* needs. She looks like the captain of 747, surrounded by all that technology.

But even if you don’t visit us in person, you can still “drop in.” URSI has moved into the digital age. By the time you get this, our website will have been updated—all of our syllabi will be online, a number of new initiatives will have a home there, and the website will serve as “information central” for URSI’s outreach activities. We also have a server that hosts digital images of many of our slides. You can view them at <http://aytch.mnsu.edu/>.

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URSI UPDATE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE

Urban &
Regional Studies
Institute

SPRING 2006



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We are also re-casting our faculty. Raymond has settled in as our environmental planner, and his “Environmental Planning” and “Sustainable Communities” courses are a hit. Beth Wielde completed her first year as a pre-doctoral fellow in the department—she has been teaching a gen ed course on urban design and history, as well as Historical Preservation and Downtown Redevelopment. We are hoping to convert her position into a regular, full-time slot. Beth and Raymond have been encouraging us to develop a more global outlook in the program (Raymond is working on some grants to bring international students here, and to get our students to Ghana).

And, speaking of grants...URSI continues to win the HUD Fellowships. This year our grant was ranked the highest in the nation. This year's fellows are Angel Pate (Southern University of New Orleans), Leslie Chiemielewski (St Cloud State University), and John Considine (Minnesota State Mankato).

Over the summer, URSI and Region IX signed an agreement with the State of Minnesota to take over the Local Planning Assistance Center (the Center was not included in the Governor's budget proposal). We will be making the books and reports of the Center available through Minnesota State Mankato's library, and jointly will be providing technical assistance to communities throughout Greater Minnesota. Look at the website, linked to URSI's website.

It was a good year for me, personally, too. The University honored me with the Claire E. Faust Public Service Award this Fall, and the Department honored me by voting me a second term as Chair. I published an article, “Assessing the fiscal impact of local development: A Survey,” *ICSC Research Quarterly*, 2004, 11(4), 27-34, and had several other manuscripts accepted for publication soon.

Keep us in mind in the coming year. Not only are we looking for guests in our classrooms, we are always looking for interesting community-based projects and internship and employment opportunities for our students. And, as you are able, remember us in your giving plans. It is your gifts to the Institute that have enabled us to send students to regional and national conferences, to provide scholarships and awards to our high-achieving students, and to provide seed money to the faculty for new research and service initiatives.

Tony Filipovitch,
Institute Director



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Staff Updates



David Laverny-Rafter has been on sabbatical during the 2005-2006 academic year. During this time, he will be researching and analyzing the impact of the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) route in Minneapolis. Specifically, he will be examining how LRT has changed travel behavior among residents living within 1/2 mile of each of the major LRT stations. The study will also document whether LRT had promoted more transit, bicycle, and pedestrian trips and why. In addition, Dr. Laverny-Rafter has been granted a Fulbright Senior Scholar award and in May, 2006 hopes to visit Ireland and conduct comparative research of LRT planning in Ireland and U.S.

Over the last two years, Professor Laverny-Rafter has focused his research and teaching on sustainability planning and made a presentation at the 2004 MnAPA conference and will present a paper at the international American Evaluation Association conference in Toronto on evaluation sustainability plans.



New Orleans Devastation: An URSI Student's Home City Experience

by Angel Pate, URSI graduate student

I was born and raised half of my life in New Orleans. My parents divorced when I was eleven, and did not return to New Orleans until I was twenty-six. I had a choice, stay in Texas or go back home to New Orleans; I returned home.

There is no other city like New Orleans; it is rich with culture and heritage. It is nicknamed "the Big Easy", because it has a laid back easy rhythm to it. People are friendly, hospitable, and fun. Nobody really takes anything too seriously, and it is all about socializing and gathering. That is why it is so difficult to explain this tragedy. When the city was told to evacuate on the weekend before the storm hit, the warnings were unlike any other hurricane warnings we have ever received. The mayor and city officials were saying things like, "Get the hell out of this city," "You would be a damn fool to stay," and "If you stay go get an ax and a pick, so that you can chop yourself out of your attic."

We get hurricane warnings every summer, but this time it was unusual. The predictions were accurate, saying the city would flood and levees would be breached. They were right. The media covered the stories of those people who either could not evacuate because they lacked transportation, or those who just did not believe it would get so bad. My mother and I evacuated to her home city of Beaumont, Texas (where the 2nd hurricane hit, RITA). My sister who lived in one of the hardest hit areas (Lower Ninth Ward) and my father who lived on the West Bank decided to stay behind and weather the storm. My father was okay. My sister, on the other hand, was not. The levee broke in her area first and on the morning of the storm. She contacted us via cell phone and said the water was up to the top step on the second level of her two story home, then her cell phone died. We thought she was going to drown until she called us two days later and told us a boat came by and rescued her and she was with the evacuees



Student Angel Pate stands next to homes damaged in Hurricane Katrina. The marks on the garage lie near the high water level.



Angel Pate

at the New Orleans Convention Center. My family is okay, everyone just went through a terrible ordeal, not knowing how much damage our homes received until recently. My home underwent 3 to 4 feet of flood waters, my sister's home received 20 ft., and my parent's home only received wind damage.

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Staff Updates

Miriam Porter

continues to share her research on civic engagement with worldwide audiences. She presented a paper "Civic Engagement at the Local Level of Government" at Cambridge University, United Kingdom, in August 2005 for the International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities. After presenting at the conference, Miriam and her family toured England and Wales. She was able to connect with her family ancestry and also visit her English relatives. She stated "It was the best of times."



Miriam Porter

Miriam was also invited to speak at the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Conference which was held in Minneapolis this year in September. Her session was titled "From the Pub to the Coffeehouse: Tapping into Informal Networks." The session's focus was ways to engage people in public policy discussions by going to places where they come together informally. David Borak, Track Manager, Annual Conference, stated "...the session was one of the more interesting sessions we've had at the conference and (Miriam's) work and dedication helped make that possible."

Miriam has been a member of ICMA for 20 years and was delighted that the conference was held in Minneapolis. She stated it was a good opportunity to introduce her students who were able to attend the conference to her former colleagues in the field to help them begin their career networking. Miriam continues to serve on the ICMA Task Force on International Affiliations.

Earlier this year Miriam and David Laverny-Rafter co-taught the Urban Studies Studio. The studio project was conducting resident satisfaction surveys for the City of Mankato

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"Preserving the Past, Building for the Future"

by Dr. Janet Cherrington, Associate Professor
Minnesota State Mankato, Urban & Regional Studies Institute

Does your community have a plan to drive media coverage by proactively promoting and marketing it as a great place to visit, to live, to open a business? This was the focus of a combined Urban and Regional Studies joint graduate Management Seminar class (URSI 653) and undergraduate Community-Based Problem Solving class (URSI 4/585) in the spring 2005 semester at Minnesota State University. Designed with the purpose of increasing public and non-profit managers' overall understanding of media relations, the curriculum included lectures, readings, and case studies with class discussions. Students also heard from numerous guest speakers who discussed their own experiences and offered tips for dealing with the media. Speakers ranged from an assistant city administrator and public information officer responsible for "getting the word out;" to a radio broadcaster and newspaper editor advising on public service announcements and press releases; to a marketing/communication director and a private marketing group CEO discussing media campaigns.



Janet
Cherrington-Cucore

A key outcome of the class was experiential learning on how to create a brochure to promote tourism and growth for a city. Under the direction of the author, URSI student teams researched, wrote, and gathered photos as part of a citywide branding and marketing campaign. Under the direction of South Central Technical College graphics instructor Neil Nurre, Applied Production teams designed and printed a 12-page full color brochure. A visit from the city administrator, Clinton Rogers, early in the semester provided students with a clear understanding of community amenities. It also gave them the opportunity to "brainstorm" ideas and build around the brochure theme: "Preserving the Past, Building for the Future." Throughout the project, the author also collaborated with Rogers.

Among the brochure features are numerous maps: streets within the city, a centerfold aerial photo providing a birds-eye view of city development, and a state map showing Janesville's relative location and drive-times to larger locales. Numerous color photos depict town amenities including schools, churches, historic homes, parks, and the 9-hole golf course. Other sections include a community profile narrative and information on schools, housing, employment, recreation, and tourist attractions/events. A detailed city directory also identifies elected officials, city staff and departments, as well as city and county services.

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Staff Updates

the School District. At the conclusion of the successful studio, she co-authored an article titled "Residents give Mankato high quality of life rating in Citizen Satisfaction Survey" with Shelly Schultz, Public Information Director of Mankato. The article appeared in the City of Mankato's City News in April of 2005.

Dr. Raymond Asomani-Boateng was educated in Ghana, Canada, and the United States. He earned his Ph.D. in Environmental Planning from the University of Waterloo in Canada. He is now in his second year at Minnesota State Mankato and teaches: Environmental Planning, Planning Process and Theory, Sustainable Communities; Introduction to the City and Geography of Africa. Raymond has worked and published on urban agriculture; municipal solid waste management; organic solid waste composting; and African indigenous urban forms. He has published in internationally renowned journals like Habitat International, Third World Planning Review, and Journal of Environmental Systems, Bicycle, Warmer Bulletin and Water Resources Outlook.

In 2004, Dr. Asomani-Boateng was among a panel of experts selected to review the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report commissioned by the United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. He advises the Metropolitan Department of Food in Accra, Ghana on urban agriculture and waste issues. During the summer he was awarded a faculty research grant to pursue research on Market and Commodity Queens, and the management of market food waste in Accra, Ghana. His market waste research has attracted a lot of attention from the city authorities and the media in Ghana. He was interviewed on Ghana's national television (GTV). At Minnesota State Mankato Raymond is engaged in the sustainable campus project working to develop a waste management plan for the dorms at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

"Preserving the Past, Building for the Future" continued from page 4

Early in May the students officially presented the brochure and explained their project to the Janesville City Council. Council members were pleased with the effort and Mayor Alvin Grams said "With a brochure like this, I'm sure it will create more interest." A key accomplishment of the Janesville publication was earning the permission to use the "Explore Minnesota" logo. Mr. Bob Erler, Advertising/Public Relations Manager of the state's Explore Minnesota Tourism Program, called it "...a great project for the students and a valuable tool for the community." Because students' research, writing, and editing were part of a "learn-by-doing" educational experience, the author calls the project a "win-win" for everyone. Students got a "real-world" experience and Janesville got a promotional tool for the cost of the printing plates. Michael Cooper, Interim Minnesota State Mankato Marketing/Communication Director, described the project as "...another example of the town-gown partnerships that are being forged between Minnesota State Mankato student research teams and business, industry, and government." The Janesville publication will be available at government, business, and chambers of commerce in south central MN as well as the southern metro suburbs of Bloomington and Burnsville.

This is the second collaborative URSI/SCTC applied learning community project undertaken. In 2003 a brochure for the city of Saint Peter was created under the direction of the author and SCTC graphics instructors Gale Bigbee and Liz Madsen. The brochure entitled "Building Communities...It's No Small Chore," however was quite different. It specifically highlighted the importance of professional city management with color photos of sites within the city before and after the 1998 tornado. Narrative described the significant strides made by Saint Peter in the five years following the disaster.



Students of Management Seminar and Community-Based Problem Solving explore media relations during the Janesville project. Pictured Back row, L to R: Roshan Bhandari, Suzanne Coulliard, Jacob Helton. Front row: Kelly Deter, Patrick Waletzko, "Dr. J" Cherrington, Jamie Lind, Jeanne Zwart. Not pictured: Lisa Hughes, Kim Thompson, Steve Scheurer.

The following URSI students participated in this project: Roshan Bhandari, Suzanne Coulliard, Kelly Deter, Jacob Helton, Lisa Hughes, Jamie Lind, Steven Scheurer, Kimberly Thompson, Patrick Waletzko, Jeanne Zwart.

(The above article appeared in the 2005 Minnesota Women in City Government 2005 newsletter).

Staff Updates

Instructor **Beth Wielde** continues to make progress on her doctorate of Public Administration at Hamline University in St. Paul. She expects to complete the degree in 2006. Wielde has made presentations at one state conference and one regional conference based on her dissertation work, "Wonks and Warriors: Popular Culture Film Portrayals of Public Officials." In April, she will co-present the work at the Southwestern Political Science Association conference in San Antonio.

She has also submitted an article for publication on the topic. Wielde also works for the City of Eagan Parks and Recreation Department as a Research and Special Projects specialist, assisting with planning, grant writing, policy development, and market analysis. In between course work, working with the City of Eagan, and course preparation, she is planning her March wedding and working on a second article for publication consideration.



Life in the Studio

The City of Mankato continued the tradition of using Minnesota State Mankato as a resource to ask its residents about their experiences living in the community. The City of Mankato collaborated with Mankato Area Public Schools and commissioned the Urban & Regional Studies Institute at Minnesota State University, Mankato to conduct a 54-question survey of residents and interview leaders of local community organizations.

In Fall 2004, Urban Studies graduate students Lisa Hughes, Ben Baker and Nick Koktavy spearheaded the effort under the direction of faculty Dr. Miriam Porter and Dr. David Laverny-Rafter. Residents were randomly selected to participate in the telephone survey, they generously gave their time and thoughtfully answered the questions. Residents often said they were happy to be asked what they thought about services.

In addition to the telephone survey with city residents, personal interviews were conducted with service-providing Mankato organizations. The organizations interviewed are stakeholders within the city and have missions to meet a variety of Mankato residents' needs. A goal of the interviews was to understand the issues facing these organizations and to identify how city priorities might interface with these organizations. Common themes surfaced from the data. These themes included: the importance of a growing economy; transportation needs; working together with the city; budget limitation and changing demographics. The data collected in the citizen satisfaction survey and stakeholder interviews is being used to develop organizational opportunities and priorities in the city's strategic plan to take Mankato into the future.



URSI Graduate Students Present at MnAPA Conference

Ellen Pillsbury and Jeanne Zwart presented their paper "Transit Needs for Low Income Families" at the Upper Midwest APA Conference in Alexandria on September 29, 2005. They were honored to participate in the inaugural MnAPA Student Paper Competition along with students from University of Wisconsin-Madison and MSU-St Cloud. Papers were selected based on research methods and submitted paper. Although they did not bring back the traveling trophy, they appreciated the opportunity to present the research and were told it was difficult to narrow the competition down to just one.

The 3-day conference offered many sessions. Pillsbury and Zwart built a strategy to attend as many sessions as possible, and found them worthwhile. Zwart says, "It was an intense learning experience and a great chance to talk with seasoned, as well as newly hired, planners from Minnesota." They were able to explore the trade show area and find a great deal of additional information and services for the planning community.

Zwart says. "It was also fun to meet all of the Minnesota State Mankato alumni, who shared their fond memories with us. We want to thank the URSI Department for the support."



Lisa Hughes URSI Graduate Student Chosen for Policy Forum Fellowship

URSI graduate student Lisa Hughes has been awarded a Humphrey Institute Policy Forum fellowship for the 2005-06 years. Lisa was nominated by Dr. Miriam Porter and the selection committee was chaired by Kate Parry, reader's representative at the Star Tribune and an alumna of the program.

In a letter to Dr. Porter, Tim Penny and Vin Weber, Sr. Fellows and Co-directors, stated "This year's selection committee faced a difficult task as the Policy Forum received nearly 70 applications. These applications came from individuals who are outstanding in terms of their talent and accomplishments as well as their leadership potential. From this applicant pool, the selection committee faced the challenge of choosing only 32 Fellows."

The fellowship entails identifying a public need specific to Minnesota, how government units could address the issue, potential partnerships and collaboration, and development of a strategy to address this need. The group is expected to reach their conclusions by late spring of 2006.

In addition to being a graduate student, Lisa is a program specialist for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development. We are very proud of Lisa.

"New Orleans Devastation" continued from page 3

I am starting over, along with 1 million other residents. It is hard and difficult to begin anew. I did not have to go through some of the ordeals that people like my sister had to withstand, like seeing dead bodies and being in convoluted areas with no water or food for days. I was able to return home on the 7th of this month. I wish I did not have to see the city in such a bad condition. The storm surge has devastated the city. It looks like a ghost town in most areas, and in other areas there is such a concentrated clean up effort that debris is everywhere. There are makeshift dumping grounds all over the city, and people are returning home to a water damaged, molded, mildewed mess. It is unlike anything you have ever seen, like a movie set; unrealistic, trees uprooted, cars flooded out and abandoned, along with empty houses and a minimum amount of people. I can't describe it, you really have to see it for yourself, in certain areas you can't even see the sidewalks or the streets, you can only see cracked dried mud, nothing is green everything is dingy and brown.

I do know that a number of New Orleans residents have relocated and decided to never go back, and a lot of residents can't wait to return home to the city. I myself have no intentions of returning, I would like the city to get back to normal, so that I can visit my friends and family who will remain residents of that great eclectic city. It is a beautiful place, funky, charming, diverse, full of culture, fun loving, artistic, it is "the Big Easy."



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URSI Roster Update

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