



Department of Urban and Regional Planning Strategic Plan 2025 to 2030

Jackson State University

Academic years 2025–2026 through 2029–2030



September 2026

Berneece S. Herbert, PhD
Department Chair
Berneece.Herbert@jsums.edu

Contents

Contents.....	1
PURPOSE AND DIRECTION	2
Message from the Chair	2
DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE AND ORGANIZATION	4
Planning education and program scope.....	7
Mission, vision, and core values	9
PLAN DEVELOPMENT, REVIEW, AND CONSULTATION.....	11
Strategic context and lessons learned.....	13
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND SIGNATURE AREAS.....	14
GOAL 1: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP	16
GOAL 2: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, GRADUATION, AND CAREERS.....	18
GOAL 3: INNOVATIVE AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM.....	20
GOAL 4: RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND EXTERNAL FUNDING.....	22
GOAL 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC IMPACT	23
GOAL 6: SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	24
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND OPERATING RHYTHM.....	25
Resources, governance, and accountability.....	26
Performance indicators and measurement.....	28
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.....	32
PAB ALIGNMENT AND EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS	33
APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT AND RECONCILIATION	35
APPENDIX B: CONTINUITY OF GOALS	37

PURPOSE AND DIRECTION

This plan guides the Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) over five academic years, from 2025–2026 through 2029–2030. It connects graduate education, applied research, professional preparation, and community partnerships to prepare planners and scholars who advance equitable, resilient, and sustainable communities.

The Department will concentrate on student recruitment and completion, demonstrable learning, sustainable research capacity, and documented public benefit. Six goals establish measurable objectives, accountable roles, and an annual cycle of assessment and improvement. Targets become departmental commitments through the review and adoption process.

Planning milestones

The 2025–2026 year forms the opening implementation period. This September 2026 revision provides for a documented review of that year, baseline reconciliation and adoption during 2026–2027, a midterm review by June 2028, and final evaluation and a successor plan by June 2030.

Six strategic goals

- Academic excellence and leadership
- Recruitment, retention, graduation, and careers
- Innovative and inclusive curriculum
- Research, scholarship, and external funding
- Community engagement and public impact
- Supportive and inclusive learning environment

This revision aligns the plan with PAB Accreditation Standards and Criteria, particularly Standard 1 on Strategic Planning and Progress. PAB alignment concerns the professional master's program; departmental goals also cover the PhD and shared activities.

Message from the Chair

Welcome to the Department of Urban & Regional Planning (DURP) at Jackson State University. First created in the 1998–1999 academic year, DURP remains the only planning degree-granting program in the State of Mississippi. The Department of Urban & Regional Planning has a long and proud history of teaching, research, and community engagement.

Our mission is to educate and prepare diverse students to become skilled, ethical, and engaged planners, scholars, and leaders. Through rigorous instruction, applied research, experiential learning, and community partnerships, we build the knowledge and professional capacity needed to advance equitable, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities in Mississippi, the Deep South, and beyond. That commitment begins with the students who come to us from many academic, social, economic, and geographic backgrounds, and it extends to the communities whose futures they will help shape.

The mission is supported by exceptional faculty in the Department. DURP's faculty very much represent the forefront of the urban and regional planning field and are people doing extraordinary things resulting in a Department that reaches far beyond the walls of Jackson State University to improve people, places, and spaces throughout our community and the region, providing high-quality training of the next generation of planners, leaders, and decision-makers.

Planning education has a public purpose. Our work in Rolling Fork's disaster recovery and Jackson's flooding and water infrastructure challenges brings that purpose into focus. Students and faculty work alongside residents and practitioners to understand conditions, assess choices, and prepare plans that communities can use. These relationships connect the classroom to the decisions that shape everyday life.

Our ambition is to become a nationally recognized model for HBCU planning education, grounded in rigorous scholarship, ethical practice, and the priorities of Mississippi and the Deep South. Achieving that ambition requires teamwork, clear responsibilities, and a willingness to use evidence to improve. This plan gives faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners a common framework for that work and sets a shared direction for 2025–2030. We will strengthen the path from admission to graduation, prepare students for professional leadership, broaden faculty participation in research, and document the value of our work to communities. We will build on our accomplishments while addressing persistent challenges in enrollment, affordability, graduate follow-up, and professional certification.

We invite you to learn more about our outstanding programs in the Department of Urban & Regional Planning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Berniece S. Herbert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Berniece S. Herbert, PhD
Department Chair

DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE AND ORGANIZATION

Departmental profile

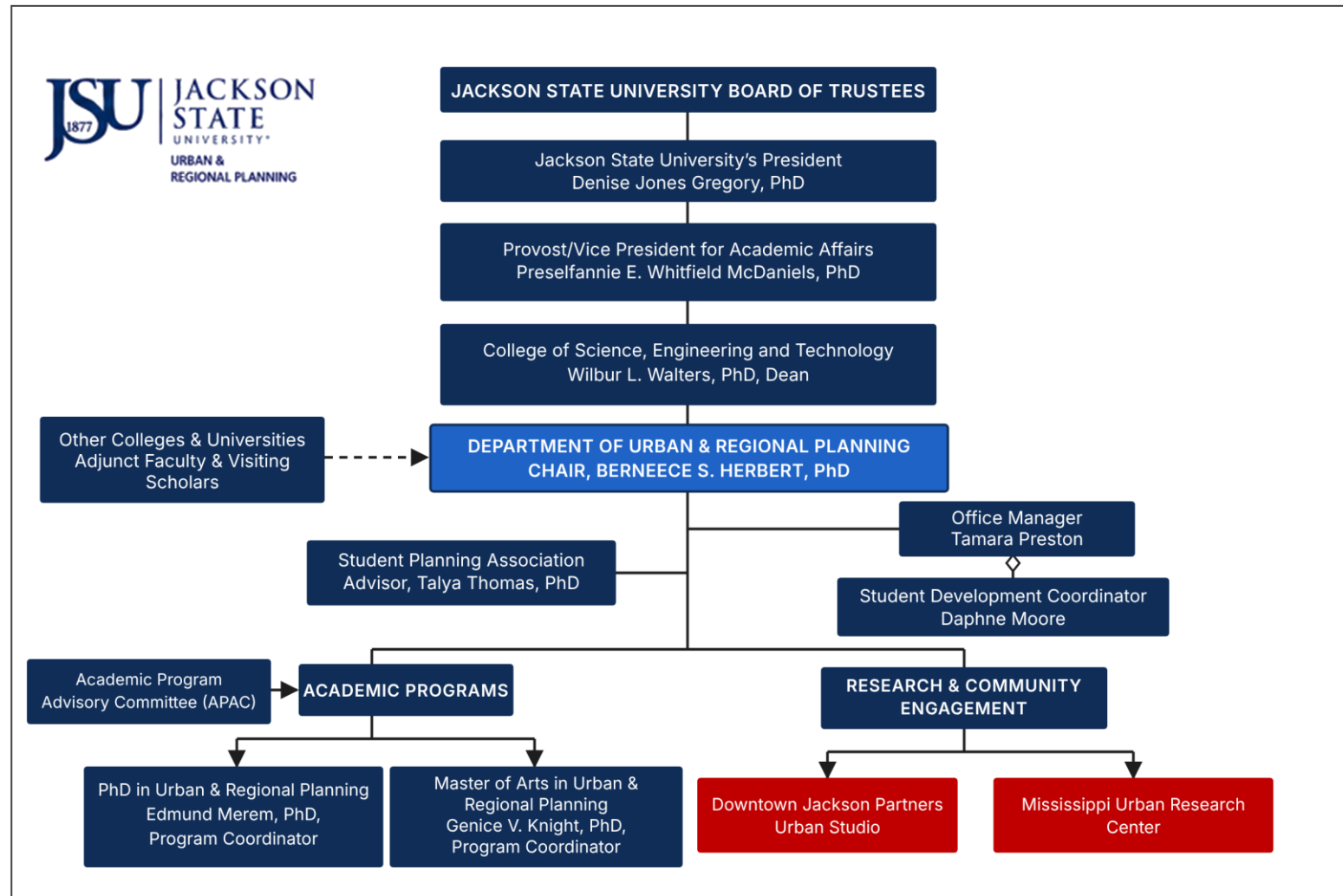
DURP's HBCU identity and urban mission inform its commitment to widen participation in planning and strengthen communities' capacity to shape their futures. The Department offers professional master's education and doctoral preparation in planning. Its academic foundation and 2025–2026 profile are summarized below.

Area	Departmental foundation
Institutional home	Jackson State University; College of Science, Engineering and Technology (CSET); downtown Jackson instructional location since 2015.
Graduate degrees	Master of Arts in Urban and Regional Planning, a 49-credit PAB-accredited program; PhD in Urban and Regional Planning, a 48-credit program.
Concentrations	Community Development and Housing; Environment and Land Use; Urban Design.
Academic and student support	Department Chair, master's and PhD coordinators, faculty advisors, office and student-development staff, and the Student Planning Association.
Community and professional connections	Academic Program Advisory Committee (APAC), alumni mentoring, the Urban Studio, and collaboration with the Mississippi Urban Research Center and community partners.
M.A. enrollment, AY 2025–26	18 students (15 full-time, 3 part-time)
PhD enrollment, AY 2025–26	36 students
Instructional faculty	11 (full-time, part-time and adjunct)
External awards, 2019–2026	23 contracts and grants, about \$17.25 million

Leadership and organization

The Chair reports to the Dean of the College of Science, Engineering & Technology (CSET). The MA program is coordinated by Dr. Genice V. Knight and the PhD program by Dr. Edmund Merem; Dr. Talya Thomas advises the Student Planning Association. Ms. Tamara Preston (Office Manager) and Ms. Daphne Moore (Student Development Coordinator) support operations. The Academic Program Advisory Committee (APAC), revived in 2025, brings practitioner and alumni judgment into the Department, and the Urban Studio with Downtown Jackson Partners and the Mississippi Urban Research Center anchor applied work within the Department.

DURP ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



The Chair assigns annual implementation responsibilities in consultation with faculty, program coordinators, and staff. The accountability matrix in this plan identifies functions; the annual work plan records the individual responsible for each function. Functional roles named in this plan, including the Professional Development Officer, alumni liaison, assessment lead, research lead, community-engagement lead, and website lead, are assigned the same way.

Planning education and program scope

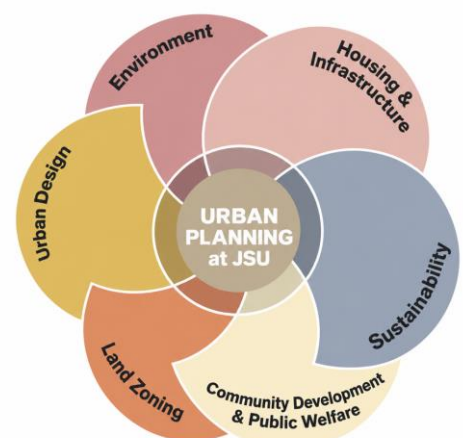
Urban and Regional Planning at JSU

DURP offers two collaborative, multidisciplinary graduate programs focused on systematically planning for the future of cities, neighborhoods, and other areas.

Urban and regional planning focuses on designing and managing development in urban and rural areas to improve living conditions and residents' quality of life.

The field encompasses the preparation of plans and the regulation and management of towns, cities, and metropolitan regions. It organizes socio-spatial relationships across different scales of government and governance.

The field combines elements of geography, architecture, sociology, economics, and environmental science to address complex issues related to land use, transportation, housing, environment, and public spaces.



- Land Use Planning: Determines how land should be used and managed to balance housing, commercial, industrial, and recreational needs.
- Environmental Sustainability: Integrates environmental considerations into planning to ensure long-term sustainability and resilience.
- Economic Development: Stimulates economic growth and ensures that development benefits the community.
- Social Equity and Community Engagement: Ensures that planning decisions are fair and inclusive, addressing the needs of all community members.
- Urban Design: Focuses on the physical layout and aesthetic aspects of cities and towns.
- Regional Planning: Addresses broader spatial issues that span multiple jurisdictions or regions.

DURP Programs

MASTER OF ARTS IN URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING

The Master's in Urban and Regional Planning at Jackson State University is a student-centric program designed to empower students to actively engage with and contribute to identifying communities'

needs and proposing innovative solutions while fostering a positive personalized learning experience. The program goals are to:

- ✓ Provide students opportunities to participate in community-based projects, internships, and planning initiatives that address local and regional issues.
- ✓ Educate and train students to pursue exciting careers in fields such as community development and housing, environment and land use, and urban design.
- ✓ Provide students with the skills and knowledge to lead and contribute to improving urban and regional environments.

MA Student Learning Outcomes

1. Students will apply quantitative and qualitative skills to design plans and create strategies for implementation.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to lead and productively participate in groups in diverse settings.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of planning when solving problems and making decisions.

PAB Accredited – 49 credit hours

- Core Courses: 16 hrs.
- Concentration Courses: 15 hrs.
- Planning Electives: 9 hrs.
- Thesis/Non-Thesis Electives: 6 hrs.
- Internship: 3 hrs.

Thesis - (6 hours) The candidate electing to write a thesis will select an area of interest within their major field. The thesis will be directed by the student's major advisor, with the approval of the student's thesis committee. There is a two (2) year limit on completing the thesis.

Non-thesis Electives (Additional Coursework)-(6 hours). The student, in consultation with advisor will select two additional courses to extend, expand or supplement their area of concentration.

DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The doctoral program in Urban and Regional Planning emphasizes a holistic approach to urban and regional planning, prioritizing students' needs and perspectives and active participation, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application, focusing on sustainable development, social equity, and collaborative problem-solving. The program goals are to:

- ✓ Train graduates to develop and implement strategies and policies to improve the quality of life for residents while balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations through creating well-organized, functional, and resilient spaces that support the diverse needs of communities.

- ✓ Provide a quality educational experience, built upon the pillars of success - student-centeredness, teamwork, and the pursuit of excellence, that emphasizes the diversity and complexity of today's world.
- ✓ Develop responsible leaders who are capable and willing to seek solutions to human, social and technological problems, with special emphasis on those relevant to the metropolitan and urban areas of developed and developing countries.

PhD Student Learning Outcomes

1. Urban & Regional Planning doctoral students will be able to critically apply knowledge of planning movements and theories to generate new ideas to address fundamental planning problems.
2. Urban & Regional Planning doctoral students will be able to apply advanced quantitative and qualitative analysis to address current planning problems and make decisions.
3. Urban & Regional Planning doctoral students will be able to apply knowledge of the planning functions of communities and institutions and assess the impact of their research on society.

Doctor of Philosophy in Urban & Regional Planning

48 credit hours (minimum)

- Core Courses: 15 hrs.
- Concentration Courses: 12 hrs.
- Electives in Planning: 9 hrs.
- Dissertation: 12 hrs.

Mission, vision, and core values

Mission

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning at Jackson State University educates and prepares diverse students to become skilled, ethical, and engaged planners, scholars, and leaders. Through rigorous instruction, applied research, experiential learning, and community partnerships, DURP develops the knowledge and professional capacity needed to address urban and regional challenges and advance equitable, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable communities in Mississippi, the Deep South, and beyond.

Vision for 2030

DURP will be nationally recognized as an HBCU planning department that connects strong professional and doctoral education with justice-centered research and community practice. Its graduates and partners will use planning knowledge, technology, and collaborative leadership to improve infrastructure, housing, environmental conditions, and economic opportunity, particularly in communities that have historically received insufficient investment.

Core values

Value	Commitment in practice
Excellence in education and practice	Set high expectations; assess learning and performance; use results to improve.
Diversity, inclusion, and representation	Expand access and belonging while preparing graduates to work across different experiences and perspectives.
Community engagement and empowerment	Define projects with communities and return useful knowledge and planning products.
Equity, advocacy, and justice	Examine who benefits, who bears costs, and whose priorities shape planning decisions.
Creativity, innovation, and leadership	Combine critical inquiry, technical skill, and collaborative problem solving.
Integrity, ethics, and responsibility	Practice transparency, accountability, sound research, and responsible use of data and technology.

Program scope and institutional alignment

The plan covers the master's and doctoral programs, the Urban Studies courses and recruitment pathways that feed them, faculty and staff development, research, and public service. Master's education emphasizes professional planning competencies and applied practice; doctoral education emphasizes original scholarship, advanced inquiry, teaching and research leadership. The plan advances JSU's urban mission and CSET's commitments to education, research and service, and it refines the mission and values stated in the PAB self-study (Standard 1.A).

Diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice

DURP understands diversity as the range of identities, experiences, perspectives, and backgrounds represented in planning education and practice. This includes race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, gender, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability and ability, educational attainment, first-generation status, beliefs, culture, tribal affiliation, nationality, immigration status, political beliefs, and veteran status. Diversity recognizes varied identities and experiences; equity addresses barriers to opportunity; inclusion brings diverse perspectives into decisions; social justice addresses unequal resources, voice, and environmental burdens. These principles inform all six goals and the Department's teaching, research, operations, and community practice.

Equity means identifying and reducing barriers to access, resources, learning, advancement, and professional opportunity. Inclusion means creating a climate of belonging and ensuring that students, faculty, staff, and community partners can participate meaningfully in decisions. Social justice means examining and addressing unequal power, opportunity, investment, and environmental burdens, including planning's role in producing or correcting those conditions.

These definitions guide objectives 2.1 and 2.5 on access and support, 3.4 on curriculum, 5.1–5.5 on community partnerships, and 6.1–6.3 on experience and mentoring. The faculty diversity and development commitments under Goal 1 extend the same framework to recruitment, retention, development, and advancement.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT, REVIEW, AND CONSULTATION

Plan development is an iterative departmental process that connects evidence, faculty judgment, student experience, and stakeholder priorities. This revision draws on earlier strategic plans and the September 2026 PAB draft self-study. The process below documents, reviews, and refines the original 2025–2030 plan and establishes the remaining consultation and adoption steps.

Evidence and initial drafting: The Chair and faculty reviewed prior-plan attainment, enrollment and completion, learning assessments, faculty scholarship, external funding, student support, and partnerships through fall 2025 and spring 2026 retreats and departmental meetings. Faculty considered the mission, vision, signature areas, curriculum, research, and proposed targets. APAC members, students, and alumni were invited to meetings in spring 2026 and encouraged to provide input, which resulted in significant revisions.

Chronology of recent departmental review

December 8, 2025: The meeting addressed preparations for the upcoming retreat, spring scheduling, academic program modifications, proposed hybrid delivery model, stakeholder participation in updating the strategic plan, and enrollment challenges. Faculty also discussed curriculum mapping, student policy manual revisions, and self-study preparation, with assignments and deadlines.

January 8, 2026: The meeting began with faculty updates and the group reviewed departmental progress, including holiday break activities, upcoming retreat plans, and strategic initiatives for improving collaboration and documentation of office hours. Key administrative tasks were outlined, including deadlines for self-study report drafts, student policy manual updates, and the reconstitution of APAC, with emphasis placed on integrating new technologies like AI tools into the curriculum while maintaining academic standards.

February 2, 2026: Faculty reviewed the meeting agenda, prior minutes, and distributed PAB public information. Dr. Herbert requested corrections be submitted to Ms. Preston. Discussion covered student achievement, self-study responses and evidence, student materials, semester activities, and spring conferences. Faculty were asked to update website and accreditation biographies, CVs, and portfolios and become familiar with the Slate system.

March 2, 2026: The meeting focused on preparing for the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) review of the Master's program. Faculty members were instructed to create abbreviated CVs for PAB submission and update their full CVs for the website, with emphasis on maintaining both professional and academic achievements while focusing on the past 7 years of work. The group reviewed the department's strategic plan and website content, identifying numerous areas needing updates including faculty bios, photos, and CVs, with Dr. Herbert planning to work with Makenna Collins (MA student representative) to help coordinate these updates by the end of March. The discussion also covered the need to update

the student handbook with new information about dissertation processes and remove outdated requirements like the GRE, while emphasizing the importance of documenting professional activities and achievements through photos and written evidence for the PAB review.

April 8, 2026: The meeting focused on the curriculum map and selection of the version to use.

May 5, 2026, retreat: The May 5 DURP retreat was organized primarily around reviewing and strengthening the PAB self-study report. The agenda included a spring semester wrap-up, review of data tables, and faculty-led discussions of five standards: strategic planning, students, faculty, curriculum, and governance. Each standard lead was asked to explain the criteria, present drafted responses, and identify supporting evidence for faculty and staff review. Evidence included website links, student work and rubrics, conference participation, and performance metrics. The retreat concluded with a discussion of evidence gaps and next steps.

September 4, 2026: The Friday meeting focused on PAB reaccreditation and the three documents discussed. Self-study review: Program strengths and areas requiring additional evidence across strategic planning, student outcomes, faculty, curriculum, and governance. Particular attention centered on reconciling inconsistent enrollment, graduation, employment, faculty workload, and student–faculty ratio figures and completing missing documentation. Faculty records: Review of abbreviated CVs, including qualifications, teaching assignments, scholarship, grants, and professional service. The documents identified incomplete entries, inconsistent credentials and appointment information, duplicate publications and awards, and items requiring reclassification or verification. Curriculum alignment: Review of URP 500, History of Planning, as an example of connecting course content and assessments to PAB requirements, including planning history, equity and social justice, professional ethics, communication, and responsible use of artificial intelligence. The central focus was strengthening the accuracy, consistency, and completeness of the department’s accreditation materials.

Stakeholder consultation

The Department will continue to seek input from current master’s and doctoral students, the Student Planning Association, alumni, the Academic Program Advisory Committee, employers, planning practitioners, community organizations, public agencies, and university partners. Consultation will address student preparation and support, workforce needs, curriculum relevance, research priorities, community benefit, and opportunities for collaboration.

Methods for fall consultations will include facilitated discussions, advisory meetings, and focus groups. Participation will include communities affected by departmental projects and groups whose perspectives may be missed through existing networks. The Department will summarize recurring themes and document how feedback is incorporated into the plan.

Continuing participation

Students and the advisory committee will continue to contribute to annual reviews. Faculty and staff will consider performance evidence at the annual planning retreat and recommend changes to strategies, sequencing, or resources. The Department will communicate an annual progress summary to stakeholders and invite feedback on results and emerging needs.

Strategic context and lessons learned

The prior assessment documents strengths and unfinished work across the Department's five earlier goals. The original goal-level summary records 45 of 69 items met, 15 partly met, 8 not met, and 1 not measurable, or 87.0% met or partly met. A direct count of the detailed assessment ratings shows 45 met, 17 partly met, 6 not met, and 1 not measurable, or 89.9% met or partly met; full attainment is 45/69, or 65.2%. Appendix A preserves both counts pending reconciliation.

What the evidence indicates

- Student counts matter alongside rates. Small cohorts make percentages volatile; report retention and completion with numerators, denominators, and cohort years.
- Admission does not guarantee enrollment. The data show that 43 of 62 admitted students enrolled across AY 2019–2020 through the reported 2025–2026 intake, a 69.4% yield. Investigate the 19 non-enrollments; cost is a possible cause, not a verified explanation for every case.
- Research capacity needs broader participation. Distribute proposal leadership, build faculty teams, and connect research funding with student support.
- Graduate follow-up needs improvement. Resolve unknown employment outcomes and prioritize certification through the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).
- Growth must fit institutional capacity. Strengthen existing pathways, articulation, certificates, and workforce-related offerings, subject to feasibility and approval.

Assets and opportunities

DURP brings an HBCU perspective, longstanding community relationships, applied studios, faculty research, professional service, graduate mentoring, MAPPS alumni mentoring, and an advisory committee. Work on flooding, water infrastructure, disaster recovery, neighborhood revitalization, energy, and workforce development connects teaching and scholarship with public needs. The Department will assess emerging opportunities against enrollment demand, affordability, faculty workload, funding continuity, and institutional priorities. It will favor activities that strengthen existing programs and demonstrate student or community benefit.

Continuity with earlier plans

Six new goals retain earlier commitments to academic leadership, student success, curriculum quality, research, and public service. Goal 6 brings learning climate, teamwork, mentoring, and professional development into a distinct area of accountability. The Department will carry forward relevant commitments through one set of objectives and one annual work plan.

Earlier 2020–2025 departmental goals (Vision 2021)

- Goal 1. Further strengthen the development of a highly knowledgeable community that supports practice and leadership in the field of Planning.
- Goal 2. Attract, retain and graduate a diverse cadre of students who are efficiently prepared to meaningfully contribute to the Planning profession, and compete in the global marketplace.

- Goal 3. Evaluate and enhance program curricula to effectively prepare graduates to appropriately respond to evolving planning and development issues and help build sustainable and resilient spaces and communities.
- Goal 4. Continue to pursue research and grant/contract opportunities that support the DURP mission as well as expertise of faculty.
- Goal 5. Increase public service and civic engagement activities of faculty and students to promote civic mindedness for social justice and community empowerment.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND SIGNATURE AREAS

Condition	Strategic response
Persistent recruitment challenges and student financial need	Build measurable recruitment pathways; connect admission, advising, financial support, and career preparation.
Research and student support concentrated among a small number of faculty	Broaden proposal leadership, support collaboration, and diversify funding sources.
Rapidly changing professional competencies	Refresh GIS, spatial analytics, AI, resilience, infrastructure, and economic development content while sustaining planning foundations.
Extensive community activity but uneven outcome measures	Track partner-defined usefulness, implementation, and follow-up alongside project counts.
Inconsistent baselines and assessment definitions	Certify a common data register; distinguish programs, cohorts, funding shares, and reporting periods.
Need to sustain teaching and mentoring capacity	Protect advising time, monitor workloads, and prioritize essential staffing and learning resources.

Three signature areas

The following common set of signature areas organizes research and practice across existing concentrations. Faculty will confirm leads by June 2027 and establish the areas by June 2028. They do not create new credentials or replace foundational planning knowledge.

Signature area	Focus
Climate equity and resilience	Flooding, water systems, environmental justice, disaster recovery, climate adaptation, and resilient infrastructure.

Signature area	Focus
Spatial analytics and emerging technologies	GIS, GeoAI, responsible AI, spatial planning, urban design, and data-informed decisions.
Inclusive economic and community development	Housing, community well-being, equitable neighborhood investment, energy and maritime workforce development, and regional economic opportunity.

Public engagement, qualitative inquiry, ethical practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration connect all three areas. Each area will link student learning to a research agenda and a community or professional need.

Themes connecting teaching, research, and practice

The original thematic framework emphasizes Healthy, Equitable, Inclusive, Resilient and Smart (HEIRS) Communities. Its five themes are Food Systems and Community Health; Social Innovation, Equity and Community Engagement; Climate and Environmental Justice; Economic Development and Globalization; and Housing, Smart Infrastructure and Urban Form.

The framework includes transportation and mobility choice; equitable schools and public facilities; affordable housing; an active downtown; complete streets; parks and open space; emergency preparedness and resilience; buying local; workforce development; entrepreneurship and innovation; public safety; food security; arts and culture; access to health care; renewable energy and energy justice; and air and water quality and sustainability. These topics continue within the three signature areas rather than constituting separate degrees or additional strategic goals.

GOAL 1: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Advance academic excellence and leadership in planning education.

ID	Objective and target
1.1	Increase verified scholarly and professional visibility outputs by 25% over the certified baseline by June 2030.
1.2	Establish three signature areas with designated faculty leadership by June 2028; confirm leads by June 2027.
1.3	Engage at least 80% of students annually in professional organizations, conferences, workshops, or related development activities.
1.4	Host or co-host at least one public symposium, lecture series, workshop, or professional event annually.

Implementation strategies

- Organize invited speakers, student presentations, collaborative projects, and proposal development through the signature areas, with CSET, other JSU units, planning organizations, and HBCU planning programs.
- Publish an annual scholarship and impact digest covering completed work, graduate contributions, and partner outcomes. Pair travel support with learning goals and opportunities for students to present.
- Offer accessible local and virtual activities. Sustain faculty leadership in professional organizations and use those relationships to expand student participation.

Accountability and evidence

Lead: Department Chair (SPA advisor for objective 1.3); supported by signature-area leads, program coordinators, the Professional Development Officer, and SPA advisor.

Evidence: Verified output log, event programs, faculty work plans, and unique-student participation records. Report publications, presentations, invited lectures, recognitions, and leadership appointments by category.

Faculty diversity and development commitments

To implement Goals 1 and 6 and address PAB Standards 1.A.3, 3.B, 3.G, and 5.E, the following measurable actions are proposed for adoption. The Chair will record them in the annual work plan and dashboard alongside the existing numbered objectives.

Action	Measure and schedule
Faculty diversity review	By June 2027, complete a confidential faculty demographic and recruitment-pool review, identify underrepresentation and barriers, and approve context-specific recruitment and retention goals. Update annually.
Inclusive recruitment	For every authorized search, document outreach through at least three relevant recruitment channels, consistent selection criteria, applicant-pool review, and search outcomes. Evaluate each search after completion.
Mentoring and advancement	Offer structured mentoring to 100% of assistant and associate professors annually, document participation and at least two mentoring contacts per semester for participants, and review access to research, teaching, and advancement support.
Faculty development and climate	Offer every faculty member at least one professional-development opportunity each semester. Review participation, climate feedback, retention, promotion, and workload annually; record an action owner and follow-up date for each identified barrier.

GOAL 2: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, GRADUATION, AND CAREERS

Recruit, retain, and graduate a diverse and well-prepared student body.

ID	Objective and target
2.1	Increase enrollment of underrepresented, first-generation, and historically underserved students by 20% over the certified baseline by June 2030.
2.2	Maintain at least 85% annual retention and at least 75% graduation within the approved program completion window.
2.3	Ensure 100% of graduates complete an internship, practicum, studio, community-engaged project, or other substantive applied learning experience.
2.4	Achieve 90% employment and/or further graduate-study placement within six months of graduation by June 2030; monitor annually.
2.5	Increase annual scholarships, assistantships, fellowships, and other student financial-support dollars by 30% over the certified baseline by June 2030.

Implementation strategies

- Contact admitted students within two weeks; connect them with a student or MAPS mentor and communicate aid decisions before enrollment deadlines. Track inquiries, offers, enrollment, and reasons for non-enrollment.
- Maintain named recruitment contacts at JSU, partner HBCUs, and regional institutions. Document at least two recruitment pathway arrangements by June 2028; community-college pathways must include bachelor's completion before graduate entry.
- Provide degree maps, advising, financial-support information, and semester progress reviews. Use the Graduate Success Hub and dissertation support to address delayed milestones.
- Maintain employer and internship relationships, portfolio reviews, and graduate follow-up at six and twelve months. Include assistantships in eligible proposals and pursue scholarships and alumni support.

Accountability and evidence

Lead: Master's and PhD coordinators; Chair for recruitment partnerships and aid; student-development staff for yield and graduate follow-up.

Evidence: Admission and census records, cohort files, degree audits, applied-learning records, financial records, and graduate follow-up. Report degree programs separately and deduplicate students across overlapping population categories.

For objective 2.2, the master's completion measure will use graduation within four years for PAB reporting; doctoral completion will use the approved institutional window and be reported separately. Retention reports will distinguish the PAB first-year-to-second-year return measure from any internal measure that also counts early completers. The 90% six-month employment and/or further-study target

remains an internal strategic measure; the one-year employment measure required by PAB will be reported separately for all master's graduates.

GOAL 3: INNOVATIVE AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

Strengthen curriculum and pedagogy in response to assessment, professional practice, and workforce needs.

ID	Objective and target
3.1	Complete comprehensive curriculum reviews by June 2027 and June 2030, using assessment evidence and student, alumni, practitioner, and employer input.
3.2	Map and assess competencies in spatial analytics, responsible AI, climate resilience, infrastructure and energy systems, economic development, and public engagement by June 2028; review annually thereafter.
3.3	Develop, revise, or implement at least three courses or major curricular components in emerging areas by June 2028.
3.4	Ensure 100% of offered courses explicitly address diversity, equity, inclusion, or social justice through appropriate outcomes, content, assignments, or projects; audit annually.
3.5	Ensure at least 75% of offered courses incorporate substantive applied or project-based learning; audit annually.

Implementation strategies

- Map foundational planning knowledge and emerging competencies across the curriculum. Assess learning through portfolios, applied projects, comprehensive examinations, and thesis or dissertation milestones using common rubrics.
- Teach verification of analytical outputs, privacy, bias evaluation, and responsible technology use. Pair GIS and AI with public engagement, qualitative inquiry, planning law, history, theory, and design.
- Use comprehensive reviews to assess concentrations and distinguish master's and doctoral expectations. Before proposing certificates or new delivery formats, assess demand, staffing, costs, and approvals; study a climate-resilience and geospatial-planning certificate by June 2028.
- Give every studio a live client project annually and involve practitioners in core courses. Confirm delivery arrangements against applicable institutional and accreditation requirements before implementation.

Accountability and evidence

Lead: Curriculum Committee with both program coordinators; supported by instructors, the assessment lead, students, and the advisory committee.

Evidence: Curriculum maps, syllabi, rubrics and results, review minutes, and approved revisions.
Document corrective action and reassessment when learning outcomes fall below benchmark.

Required master's courses will demonstrate coverage of PAB's guiding values: equity, diversity, social justice and inclusion; sustainability, resilience and climate justice; and professional ethics and responsibility. Ethics instruction will address the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and the American Planning Association's Ethical Principles in Planning. Curriculum maps will also document planning history and theory, law and institutions, urban and regional development, planning processes and engagement, analytical methods, and professional communication and leadership. Elective depth and breadth will complement these common requirements.

For each master's learning outcome, the Curriculum Committee will identify the required course or culminating assessment, direct evidence, rubric, benchmark, responsible assessor, collection schedule, and review date by June 2027. Every graduating student's required competencies will be assessed. Faculty will record results by outcome, compare them with approved benchmarks, identify needed instructional changes, and reassess the affected competency in the next offering. Student and employer feedback will supplement direct evidence.

GOAL 4: RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND EXTERNAL FUNDING

Expand research productivity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and funded activity that support students and public benefit.

ID	Objective and target
4.1	Increase the three-year mean of annual DURP-attributable external awards by 50% over the three-year baseline by June 2030.
4.2	Achieve a departmental annual average of at least two peer-reviewed publications or approved equivalent scholarly/professional outputs per full-time faculty FTE.
4.3	Engage at least 60% of graduate students annually in faculty-led, independent, or community-engaged research and applied scholarship.
4.4	Establish or strengthen at least five formal research partnerships with local, regional, or national organizations by June 2030.
4.5	Develop a student-centered research or applied-planning initiative by June 2029, using an approved and resourced organizational model.

Implementation strategies

- Maintain a rolling proposal calendar, internal peer review, and interdisciplinary teams. Pair early-career faculty with experienced investigators and coordinate budgets, compliance, student positions, and closeout with sponsored-programs staff.
- Build on the Department's research portfolio and signature areas to support larger collaborative proposals, assistantships, theses, dissertations, publications, and community products. Set clear expectations for supervision, authorship, and access.
- Develop the initiative through existing studios and partnerships first. Assess whether to reactivate the Center for Urban Planning and Policy Assessment, consolidate functions, or adopt another structure; implementation requires approval, staffing, space, and sustained resources.

Accountability and evidence

Lead: Chair and designated research lead; supported by faculty project leads, program coordinators, CSET, and sponsored-programs staff.

Evidence: Executed awards and amendments, attributable shares, proposal records, faculty outputs, student research logs, agreements, and approved operating plans. Report consortium totals separately from DURP-attributable funding.

GOAL 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC IMPACT

Strengthen DURP's contribution as an academic and professional partner to communities in Mississippi and the Deep South.

ID	Objective and target
5.1	Increase active community and professional partnerships by 40% over the certified baseline by June 2030.
5.2	Ensure at least 75% of offered courses provide substantive opportunities for community engagement, service learning, applied planning, or other public-facing work; audit annually.
5.3	Provide or support at least three substantive technical-assistance, applied-planning, or community-engaged projects annually.
5.4	Formalize community and practitioner advisory participation through the existing APAC structure by June 2027 and obtain input annually.
5.5	Produce and disseminate at least five significant public-facing deliverables annually and document partner use and community outcomes where evidence permits.

Implementation strategies

- Match community priorities with faculty capacity and course objectives through a project intake process. Prioritize infrastructure, environmental burdens, housing, economic opportunity, and disaster resilience.
- Agree on roles, deliverables, schedules, engagement methods, data permissions, and responsible recipients. Include partner review, accessible dissemination, and follow-up on use.
- Build on Rolling Fork recovery and Jackson water-hazard work to support communities and small jurisdictions. Coordinate through the Urban Studio, Downtown Jackson Partners, MURC, public agencies, and community organizations, with named faculty liaisons.
- Strengthen the existing advisory structure rather than establish a duplicate committee. Connect project findings with teaching, research, and continuing professional learning.

Accountability and evidence

Lead: Chair or designated community-engagement lead; supported by studio and internship faculty, the advisory liaison, project leads, and students.

Evidence: Deduplicated partner roster, scopes of work, project records, products, dissemination logs, advisory input, and partner follow-up. Distinguish deliverables from documented use and outcomes.

GOAL 6: SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Sustain an inclusive culture of teamwork, mentoring, professional development, and student achievement.

ID	Objective and target
6.1	Maintain at least 85% overall student satisfaction, measured annually with a documented survey population and response rate.
6.2	Ensure 100% of students participate in at least one substantive collaborative or team-based learning experience annually.
6.3	Provide structured faculty, alumni, or practitioner mentoring to at least 90% of students annually.
6.4	Offer at least four professional-development activities annually addressing leadership, ethics, communication, career development, technology, or related competencies.
6.5	Increase the number of unique alumni actively participating in departmental activities by 30% over the certified baseline by June 2030.

Implementation strategies

- Strengthen SPA, MAPS mentoring, peer support, and student participation in program decisions. Orient mentors and students, agree on goals, and record at least two substantive mentoring contacts each semester.
- Provide doctoral writing groups, research presentations, teaching preparation, and milestone reviews; support master's portfolios, internships, and practitioner contact.
- Offer annual AICP preparation with certified alumni and advise interested students on applicable certification pathways. Track eligibility, attempts, outcomes, and unknowns without inferring a pass rate from missing attempts.
- Use a confidential annual climate survey, discuss findings, and publish an action summary. Support faculty peer feedback and mentoring, review workloads, and pursue continuing staffing where resources allow.

Accountability and evidence

Lead: Program coordinators and SPA advisor; supported by faculty mentors, student-support staff, alumni liaison, Professional Development Officer, and Chair.

Evidence: Student and graduate surveys reported separately; unique-student teamwork and mentoring logs; professional-development records; alumni activity; and verified AICP follow-up.

Student and faculty climate findings will be considered separately. Where confidentiality permits, the Department will examine differences in advising, mentoring, financial support, participation, and completion across groups. Small-group reporting will protect privacy while still supporting corrective action.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND OPERATING RHYTHM

Implementation covers AY 2025–2026 through AY 2029–2030. The Chair will translate this schedule into annual work plans with named owners, resources, deliverables, and evidence. The September 2026 revision requires a retrospective status review of the opening year, followed by dated commitments for the remaining period.

Period	Actions and decision points
2025–2026 Opening year	Document activities and results already undertaken. Assemble historical records, review prior-plan attainment, and identify baseline gaps. Adoption, certification, and curriculum review will be reported as complete only when documented.
2026–2027 Review and establish systems	Complete faculty and departmental review, stakeholder consultation, and applicable approval. Reconcile baselines within 90 days of adoption, with approved exceptions. Confirm signature-area leads, formalize advisory participation, implement student-support systems, and complete the first curriculum review by June 2027.
2027–2028 Implement and review	Establish the three signature areas; implement at least three curricular revisions and two recruitment pathway arrangements by June 2028. Complete competency mapping and the certificate feasibility study. Conduct the midterm review by June 2028 and approve corrective actions.
2028–2029 Consolidate effective work	Develop the approved research/applied-planning initiative by June 2029, subject to resources. Expand activities with demonstrated benefits. Review staffing, student support, research participation, partnership outcomes, and progress toward end-of-plan targets.
2029–2030 Evaluate and renew	Complete the second curriculum review by June 2030. Evaluate all objectives against certified baselines and available mature-cohort data. Complete final evaluation and prepare the successor plan by June 2030; report lagged graduate outcomes in a subsequent addendum.

Annual operating rhythm

Fall: review enrollment, retention, advising, resources, and the work plan. Fall and spring: obtain student and advisory input. Spring: collect learning results, exit feedback, and graduate follow-up. At the May

retreat: review results and approve corrective actions. By June 30: finalize the dashboard, progress report, and next work plan.

Annual targets apply during implementation and are reviewed every year. Where a measure was not collected in the opening year, record it as not assessable and establish the earliest reliable baseline; do not impute achievement.

Resources, governance, and accountability

DURP will prioritize degree completion, essential instruction, student support, and credible assessment. Expansion will proceed through approved annual budgets and documented workload assignments. The resource categories below establish an order for investment; they do not constitute appropriated funding.

Investment priority	Resource approach and responsibility
Essential operations First priority	Protect advising, assessment coordination, course coverage, accreditation documentation, and student records. Chair and program coordinators assign effort within approved workloads and identify gaps for the Dean.
Student access and completion First priority	Prepare annual requests for assistantships, scholarships, internship support, emergency assistance, and professional travel. Chair coordinates institutional requests, restricted grant funds, and development opportunities.
Faculty and staff capacity Second priority	Use a teaching and advising workload audit to justify faculty lines, administrative support, release time, and succession coverage. Chair submits a costed staffing request to CSET by the end of 2026–2027.
Learning and research infrastructure Second priority	Inventory software, computing, GIS and design facilities, accessibility needs, and equipment replacement cycles. Faculty leads develop annual maintenance and renewal requests with university technology staff.
Partnerships and expanded initiatives Conditional priority	Cost community participation, fieldwork, project coordination, and the proposed research initiative. Launch expanded activities only with approved space, staffing, operating resources, and a sustainable funding plan.

Governance

The Chair is accountable for implementation and presents the annual progress report to faculty and CSET leadership. Program coordinators own degree-specific student outcomes. The Curriculum Committee owns curriculum review and learning assessment. Faculty project leads own research and community records. The advisory committee and student representatives provide documented input; institutional bodies retain authority over budgets, personnel, and academic approvals.

Managing material risks

If enrollment falls, examine conversion rates, affordability, course scheduling, and applicant feedback before increasing recruitment spending. If grant support contracts, prioritize essential student support and funded commitments. If workloads become unsustainable, phase projects and seek staffing relief. If a partnership stalls, revise its scope and document the decision. Assign interim responsibility immediately when an implementation role is vacant.

Each funding request will state its goal and objective, full cost, proposed funding source, recurring obligations, responsible owner, expected result, and the consequence of deferral. The annual review will compare resource decisions with outcomes.

Accreditation-related operating responsibilities

The Chair and program coordinators will review faculty qualifications, instructional FTE, course coverage, advising loads, and student FTE annually. For the professional master's program, the PAB standard specifies a maximum graduate student FTE to instructional faculty FTE ratio of 10 to 1. Headcounts will not substitute for FTE; the calculation and allocation of shared faculty effort will be documented. Capacity findings will inform enrollment and staffing decisions.

The annual review will cover course access and scheduling, the use of qualified faculty and full-time planning faculty for most required courses, instructional and studio space, offices, accessibility, software and hardware, library resources, technical support, and training. The Department will document gaps and costed actions rather than assume that a partnership alone supplies adequate facilities.

The Department will maintain accessible admissions standards and financial-aid allocation criteria, current promotion and tenure policies, faculty mentoring arrangements, and student and faculty grievance procedures. It will retain confidential records of grievance types and resolutions. Faculty, including adjuncts, and students will participate in decisions affecting them through documented meetings, committees, and feedback channels.

For online or hybrid instruction, the Department will document institutionally approved student identity verification, privacy protections, academic integrity procedures, and notice of any additional verification costs at registration or enrollment. The Chair will maintain two-way communication with students, faculty, alumni, employers, practitioners, and community partners and provide regular opportunities for direct interaction.

Performance indicators and measurement

Each objective has an accountable lead function; where two functions are listed together, the first is accountable and the second shares delivery. The Chair confirms named assignments annually and designates interim coverage for vacancies. The same objective identifiers apply in goal statements, work plans, evidence registers, and annual reports.

Objectives	Accountable lead	Evidence and frequency
1.1–1.2 Visibility and signature areas	Chair	Output log; faculty leadership and area plans; annual.
1.3–1.4 Participation and public event	SPA advisor; Chair for event	Unique-student logs and event records; semester/annual.
2.1–2.3 Enrollment, retention, graduation, and applied learning	Program coordinators	Census and cohort records, degree audits and applied-learning records; annual and at graduation.
2.4 Placement	Student-development staff	Verified follow-up at six and twelve months.
2.5 Student financial support	Chair	Annual aid dollars and unique recipients; financial records.
3.1–3.5 Curriculum	Curriculum Committee	Maps, syllabi, rubrics, audits and approved changes; annual; comprehensive reviews in 2027 and 2030.
4.1–4.5 Research and funding	Chair and research lead	Awards, outputs, research participation, agreements and initiative plan; annual.
5.1–5.5 Engagement and impact	Chair or designated community-engagement lead	Partner roster, course audit, projects, advisory records and deliverables; annual.
6.1–6.4 Experience, teamwork, mentoring, and development	Program coordinators and SPA advisor	Survey and participation records; semester/annual.
6.5 Alumni participation	Alumni liaison designated by Chair	Deduplicated roster and documented activity; annual.

The Professional Development Officer supports AICP preparation and reporting within Goal 6 implementation. AICP monitoring does not create an additional numbered objective or an unsupported pass-rate target.

Measurement and annual review

Baseline and target rules

Use AY 2024–2025 as the preferred pre-plan baseline where reliable records exist. Where a metric lacks a reliable pre-plan value, certify the earliest complete year available, including AY 2025–2026, as a disclosed alternative. The baseline register must identify each metric’s period, population, numerator, denominator, source, and certification date. All end-of-plan deadlines remain June 2030; an alternative baseline does not restart the plan period.

Reconcile available baselines within 90 days of adoption. Record unresolved items with an owner and a dated corrective action. Certification will not be represented as completed until supported by an approved record. A change to a target or baseline requires a documented rationale and approval.

Measure	Definition
Retention and graduation	Report master’s and PhD results separately. Track entering fall cohorts to the next fall. Show PAB first-to-second-year return rates separately from internal rates that count early completers. For PAB, report master’s graduation within four years; apply the approved institutional window to PhD cohorts. Show counts, exclusions, cohort years, and mature observation periods.
Enrollment growth	Use a consistent census date and definitions for underrepresented, first-generation, and historically underserved students. Deduplicate the combined population and also report groups separately. Total departmental headcount is contextual, not a substitute for this baseline.
Placement	Use all graduates in the cohort as the denominator and verify employment or further graduate study within six months for objective 2.4. Separately report employment within one year for PAB, by professional planning, planning-related, and other positions. Report unknown outcomes, further study, and response rates separately.
Growth measures	$\text{Growth} = (\text{current value} - \text{baseline}) \div \text{baseline} \times 100$. Round count targets up to whole persons or organizations. If baseline is zero, approve an absolute target instead of a percentage.
Funding and scholarship	Compare the three-year mean of attributable annual awards in AY 2027–2028 through 2029–2030 with the certified three-year pre-plan baseline, preferably AY 2022–2023 through 2024–2025. Count awards once and amendments only for added funding. Count scholarly outputs once and divide by eligible full-time faculty FTE.
Course coverage	Use the same annual inventory of offered courses for Goals 3 and 5. Record substantive applied/project-based learning separately from opportunities for public-facing engagement; categories can overlap and are not additive.

Measure	Definition
Partnerships and participation	An active partner has documented substantive joint activity during the reporting year. Formal research partnerships also require an agreement or approved project document. Student and alumni measures count unique participants.

Annual reporting and plan renewal

Dashboard and evidence register

Maintain one annual dashboard using the objective identifiers and targets in this plan. For every objective, record the certified baseline, current result, target, reporting period, evidence source, responsible lead, resource need, status, and next action. Use Met, On track, At risk, Not met, or Not assessable. Report counts by status; do not combine partial and full attainment without a disclosed method.

Compare annual and pooled three-year student rates, protect confidentiality in small groups, and explain changes in definitions or data coverage. Learning assessment must identify where competencies are introduced, developed, and assessed; document the instructional response and reassess when results fall below benchmark.

Graduate outcomes and AICP documentation

Track employment and further study at six months for objective 2.4, and document one-year employment separately for required PAB reporting. Use graduating cohorts with a full observation period. For AICP reporting, record eligibility under applicable pathways, verified attempts and outcomes, and unknown status separately. Do not infer success or failure from absent records.

The original plan described twelve-month follow-up as supplemental. This revision makes it an explicit reporting requirement under PAB Standards 1.B.4 and 1.D.5. The definitions and reporting windows below govern accreditation reporting, while the six-month target remains an additional strategic measure.

Required programmatic assessment measures

PAB criterion	Measure and reporting rule	Responsibility
1.B.1 Graduate satisfaction	Survey graduates 2–5 years after graduation. Report the percentage of respondents satisfied or highly satisfied with preparation for current employment, along with eligible population, respondents, counts, and response rate. Keep separate from current-student satisfaction.	Student-development staff and master's coordinator
1.B.2 Graduate service	Collect evidence 2–5 years after graduation of contributions to community needs and service to the planning profession. Record cohort, role, activity, and supporting evidence.	Alumni liaison

PAB criterion	Measure and reporting rule	Responsibility
1.B.3 Retention and graduation	Report enrollment, annual degrees awarded, first-year students returning for the second year, and master's graduation within four years; compare with program targets. Identify cohorts, counts, denominators, and observation windows.	Master's coordinator
1.B.4 Employment	Report the percentage of all graduates employed within one year in professional planning, planning-related, or other positions. Define each category using job duties; disclose unknown outcomes. Further study is a separate category and does not substitute for employment.	Student-development staff
1.B.5 AICP pass rate	For master's graduates, report the percentage of exam takers who pass within three years of graduation. Record takers, passes, cohort, window, and source; a zero-taker cohort has no calculable pass rate. Alternative credentials may supplement this measure.	Professional Development Officer
1.B.6 Strategic outcomes	Report each objective's result, extent of attainment, barriers, and actions to address barriers. Preserve baseline and target history.	Chair and goal leads

Professional planning employment involves direct planning practice; planning-related employment uses substantive planning knowledge and skills in an allied role; other employment does not meet those definitions. The Department will approve and apply consistent coding rules before calculating rates, maintain one primary category per graduate, and show counts as well as percentages. Known further study and unknown employment status will remain visible in the full-cohort denominator.

Community benefit

A deliverable is an output; its documented use is an outcome. Follow up on completed prior-year projects and record partner assessment and evidence of use. Missing follow-up is not evidence of impact. Attribute institutional or community change to DURP only where evidence supports its contribution.

Midterm and final evaluation

At the June 2028 midterm review, faculty, staff, students, and stakeholders will assess progress, feasibility, and emerging needs. By June 2030, the Department will evaluate all objectives, document achievements and unresolved gaps, and prepare the successor plan. Measures with unavoidable reporting lags, including six-month outcomes for recent graduates, will be updated in an addendum rather than extending the strategic-plan period.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Continuous improvement is an organizing element of this plan. DURP will use an intentional cycle of setting goals, implementing strategies, assessing outcomes, reflecting with stakeholders, making changes, and evaluating the effects of those changes. This process connects strategic decisions to student learning, program performance, faculty capacity, and community benefit, as required by PAB Standard 1. Completing an activity establishes implementation; subsequent evidence establishes whether the activity improved results.

Step	Departmental practice	Required record
Plan	Confirm the problem, baseline, target, intervention, owner, resources, and assessment date.	Annual work plan and measure definition
Implement	Carry out the strategy and monitor participation, access, cost, and delivery.	Activity and implementation evidence
Assess	Compare results with targets and prior results; examine learning rubrics, cohort outcomes, and feedback.	Dashboard with counts and limitations
Reflect	Faculty, students, alumni, practitioners, and partners interpret results and identify plausible barriers.	Retreat or consultation record
Improve	Approve a change to teaching, advising, recruitment, resource allocation, or partnership practice.	Decision with owner, resources, and due date
Reassess	Test whether the change improved the affected outcome during the next relevant course offering or reporting cycle.	Follow-up result and decision to continue, adapt, or end the action

Decisions and follow-through

An objective rated At risk, Not met, or Not assessable will require a dated response. Within 30 days of the annual review, the responsible lead will document the gap, likely contributing factors, supporting evidence, corrective action, resource implications, and reassessment date. Missing data will trigger a data-repair action rather than an unsupported performance judgment. The Chair will monitor open actions each semester. Faculty will approve substantive curricular changes through the applicable institutional process.

The improvement register will record the objective or learning outcome, cohort and baseline, original target, finding, consultation, action, owner, decision date, implementation evidence, follow-up measure, result, and final disposition. An action will close only when its result has been reviewed. If the intervention is ineffective, the Department will revise or discontinue it and record the reason. Targets will not be lowered retroactively to imply success; changes will retain the original target and approval history.

Applying the cycle

For recruitment, the Department may use admitted-student interviews to identify barriers, revise the timing of aid information or mentoring contacts, and compare enrollment yield in the next intake. For learning, a rubric result below benchmark may lead to revised instruction, scaffolded assignments, or additional practice, followed by reassessment of the same competency. For community work, partner feedback may lead to a different product format or implementation support, followed by a check on whether the revised product was used. These are examples of the proposed process, not claims of completed improvements.

Annual public information

By June 30 each year, the Chair and designated website lead will publish and date an accessible program performance update. It will include student achievement; tuition and fees for one academic year of full-time study; annual degrees awarded; first-to-second-year retention; master's graduation within four years; AICP pass rates for exam takers within three years of graduation; and employment of all graduates within one year in professional planning, planning-related, or other positions. The update will identify cohorts, data periods, definitions, counts, denominators, and limitations. Data will be reconciled with the self-study and institutional records before publication.

The annual progress summary will explain completed improvements, remaining barriers, and priorities for the next work plan. Current students, alumni, practitioners, faculty, and partners will be invited to respond. Graduate satisfaction and service data will be maintained for accreditation reviews, and lagged outcomes will be updated when the relevant observation window is complete. The June 2028 midterm and June 2030 final reviews will use this accumulated record to revise strategies and prepare the successor plan.

PAB ALIGNMENT AND EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

This crosswalk uses the PAB Accreditation Standards and Criteria. It locates the plan's commitments and the evidence needed to support them.

Requirement	Location in this plan	Evidence to retain
1.A.1–2 Mission and vision	Mission, vision, and core values	Adopted mission and vision; institutional alignment
1.A Stakeholder engagement	Plan development, review, and consultation	Attendance, stakeholder input, response log, adoption record
1.A.3 Goals and diversity	Six strategic goals; definitions; faculty commitments	Approved measurable objectives; demographic analysis; work plans
1.A.4 Monitoring	Performance indicators; continuous improvement	Baseline register; dashboard; intervention and reassessment records

Requirement	Location in this plan	Evidence to retain
1.B.1–6 Program assessment	Required programmatic assessment measures	Graduate surveys; service evidence; cohort, employment and AICP records
1.C Prior review findings	Review of previous accreditation findings	PAB decision; progress evidence
1.D Public information	Annual public information	Dated website snapshots and verified annual disclosures
2.A–D Students	Goals 1, 2 and 6; governance responsibilities	Admissions and aid criteria; recruitment, advising and professional engagement records
3.A–G Faculty	Faculty commitments; Goals 1, 4 and 6; resources	Qualifications; diversity and mentoring records; FTE ratio; scholarship and development
4.A–G Curriculum	Planning education and program scope; Goal 3; resources	Required-course maps; direct assessment; electives; schedules; facilities and technology
5.A–G Governance	Departmental profile and organization; consultation; governance responsibilities	Participation, communications, autonomy, policy and online-integrity records

APPENDIX A: HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT AND RECONCILIATION

The tables in this appendix document the Department's progress against the strategic plan in effect throughout the accreditation review period.

Goal attainment summary (Vision 2021)

2020-2025 goal	Items	Met	Partially met	Not met	Not measurable	Met or partially met
Goal 1 - Academic community, innovation, leadership	8	7	1	0	0	100%
Goal 2 - Recruit, retain, graduate	21	13	4	4	0	81%
Goal 3 - Curriculum	19	10	6	2	1	84%
Goal 4 - Research and funding	6	5	0	1	0	83%
Goal 5 - Public service and civic engagement	15	10	4	1	0	93%
Total	69	45	15	8	1	87%

DURP's historical assessment shows substantial progress in academic leadership, faculty development, research collaboration, experiential learning, and community engagement. Recruitment, student outcomes tracking, formal partnership agreements, and assessment documentation remain priorities. Across 69 assessment records, the detailed ratings record 45 as met, 17 partially met, 6 not met, and 1 not measurable, or 65.2% fully met and 89.9% met or partially met. The goal-level summary above records 15 partially met and 8 not met (87.0% met or partially met); the two counts will be reconciled before certification.

Goal 1: Academic community, innovation, and leadership.

DURP maintained leadership for both graduate programs, expanded instructional support, and supported faculty training in teaching, technology, and grantsmanship. Practitioner involvement strengthened instruction through local partnerships, Caltrans, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and maritime workforce programming. Curriculum revisions and the revival of APAC in 2025 strengthened academic oversight and professional engagement. Remaining needs include filling one faculty vacancy and documenting cross-listed or jointly taught courses.

Goal 2: Recruitment, retention, and student success.

The Department strengthened advising, student support, recruitment outreach, professional conference

participation, alumni mentoring, and recognition activities. SPA programming, individual curriculum plans, and the inaugural 2026 Awards and Recognition Brunch supported student engagement and belonging. However, enrollment growth and the stated retention target were unmet. The proposed undergraduate feeder degree was discontinued. Graduate placement tracking, a formal alumni association, and a DURP-hosted student conference remain incomplete.

Goal 3: Curriculum and educational quality.

Progress included revised syllabi, Urban Design curriculum development, AI-informed teaching, interdisciplinary learning, student research and presentations, professional portfolios, internships, and community-based studios. Partnerships expanded access to geospatial training and professional practice. Outstanding needs include AICP participation, formal approval of proposed concentrations and certificates, community-college agreements, consistent student participation in governance, and stronger learning and exit assessment. Exit interviews reached approximately 70–80% of graduates.

Goal 4: Research and external funding.

Faculty expanded proposal development, external funding, interdisciplinary research, and national and international collaboration. The records report five proposals and two awards totaling more than \$3 million in AY 2023–2024, alongside broader engagement with federal agencies, foundations, and university partners. Research recognition and grant-development training strengthened this work. Formalizing the MURC agreement and broadening faculty participation remain priorities.

Goal 5: Public service and civic engagement.

DURP sustained extensive applied work through Jackson creek and water-hazard research, Rolling Fork recovery planning, urban forestry internships, neighborhood revitalization, leadership forums, and professional workshops. Faculty and students remained active in APA programming and public events. Remaining work centers on formal internship agreements, an updated agency roster, documented outreach, and systematic tracking of participation and partnership results.

The assessment supports a continuous improvement agenda focused on clearer measures, verified evidence, formalized partnerships, and documented follow-up.

APPENDIX B: CONTINUITY OF GOALS

Earlier and current goals

Earlier goals as reported for 2020–2025	Current goals for 2025–2030
Goal 1. Further strengthen the development of a highly knowledgeable community that supports practice and leadership in the field of Planning.	Goal 1: Advance Academic Excellence and Leadership in Planning Education Position DURP as a justice-centered, research-intensive leader in urban and regional planning education that advances equitable, community-centered, resilient, and sustainable development.
Goal 2. Attract, retain and graduate a diverse cadre of students who are efficiently prepared to meaningfully contribute to the Planning profession and compete in the global marketplace.	Goal 2: Recruit, Retain, and Graduate a Diverse and Well-Prepared Student Body Strengthen DURP as a pipeline for a diverse planning workforce while providing the academic, professional, and institutional support necessary for student success.
Goal 3. Evaluate and enhance program curricula to effectively prepare graduates to appropriately respond to evolving planning and development issues and help build sustainable and resilient spaces and communities.	Goal 3: Deliver an Innovative and Inclusive Curriculum Continuously strengthen the curriculum and pedagogy to prepare students with the knowledge, values, and professional skills required to serve a diverse society and respond to emerging planning challenges.
Goal 4. Continue to pursue research and grant/contract opportunities that support the DURP mission as well as expertise of faculty.	Goal 4: Expand Research, Scholarship, and External Funding Increase DURP's research productivity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and external funding while translating research into knowledge and solutions that benefit communities and the planning profession.

Earlier goals as reported for 2020–2025	Current goals for 2025–2030
Goal 5. Increase public service and civic engagement activities of faculty and students to promote civic mindedness for social justice and community empowerment.	Goal 5: Strengthen Community Engagement and Public Impact Position DURP as a trusted academic and professional partner that contributes knowledge, technical capacity, and planning expertise to communities, particularly underserved and under-resourced communities in Mississippi and the broader Deep South.
	Goal 6: Foster a Supportive and Inclusive Learning Environment Cultivate a culture of teamwork, collegiality, mentorship, professional development, and excellence that supports student achievement and prepares graduates for effective leadership in the planning profession.

Comparison of earlier and revised goals

Old vs. New Goals: Strategic Framework at a Glance

The 2025–2030 framework sharpens five existing priorities and adds an explicit supportive, inclusive learning culture.

2020–2025 PRIORITY → 2025–2030
FRAMEWORK

1

ACADEMIC MISSION

Highly knowledgeable
community supporting
practice and leadership



Advance Academic Excellence & Leadership

Justice-centered, research-intensive
planning education

4

RESEARCH

Pursue research and
grant/contract
opportunities supporting
mission and faculty
expertise



Expand Research, Scholarship & External Funding

Greater productivity, collaboration,
funding, and applied impact

2

STUDENTS

Attract, retain, and
graduate a diverse cadre
prepared for the
profession



Recruit, Retain & Graduate a Diverse, Well-Prepared Student Body

Diverse workforce pipeline with
stronger student support

5

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Increase public service
and civic engagement for
social justice and
empowerment



Strengthen Community Engagement & Public Impact

Trusted partner for underserved
communities in Mississippi and the
Deep South

3

CURRICULUM

Evaluate and enhance
curricula for evolving
planning and development
issues



Deliver an Innovative & Inclusive Curriculum

Emerging technologies, resilience,
applied and inclusive learning

6

NEW PRIORITY

Not a separate goal in the
2020–2025 plan



Foster a Supportive & Inclusive Learning Environment

Teamwork, mentorship, professional
development, and leadership
preparation

Strategic shift: broad priorities → measurable, justice-centered, future-focused outcomes with explicit accountability.

Summary of strategic changes

Strategic Evolution: What Changed

The new framework moves beyond broad aspirations to explicit priorities, metrics, and accountability.

STRATEGIC SHIFT



Justice-centered identity

Academic excellence is explicitly linked to equity, resilience, sustainability, and community-centered planning.



Measurable performance

Goals now include quantified targets for enrollment, retention, graduation, placement, funding, partnerships, and participation.



Future-focused curriculum

GIS, spatial analytics, AI, climate adaptation, infrastructure, energy systems, economic development, and data-informed planning are named priorities.



Research + public impact

Scholarship, external funding, applied research, technical assistance, and community-facing outputs are treated as connected outcomes.



Student-centered culture

A new sixth goal formalizes mentoring, teamwork, professional development, student satisfaction, and alumni engagement.

2025–2030 Performance dashboard

