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Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Assembly of the
Academic Senate
Faculty Representative,
UC Board of Regents

Academic Senate

Office of the President
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

senate.universityofcalifornia.edu

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February 4, 2025

Katherine S. Newman
Provost and Executive Vice President
University of California

Re: Approval of Master of Urban Studies and Regional Planning (MURP) at UC San Diego

Dear Provost Newman:

In accordance with the Universitywide Review Processes For Academic Programs, Units, and Research Units (the “Compendium”), and on the recommendation of CCGA, the Academic Council has approved UC San Diego’s proposal to establish a Master of Urban Studies and Regional Planning (MURP).

Because this is a new degree title, and the Assembly of the Academic Senate is not meeting within 30 days of CCGA’s approval, Council must approve the program per [Senate Bylaw 125.B.7](#).

I am enclosing CCGA’s report on its review of the new program, and respectfully request that your office complete the process of obtaining the President’s approval.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Academic Council

cc: Academic Council
Institutional Research and Academic Planning Analyst Procello
UCSD Senate Executive Director Hullings
Executive Director Lin



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COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE AFFAIRS

James Bisley, Chair
jbisley@mednet.ucla.edu

December 16, 2024

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Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Academic Senate

Dear Chair Cheung,

On December 4, CCGA met and reviewed the proposal from the San Diego division for a Master of Urban Studies and Regional Planning. Via email vote the following week, the proposal was approved 9-0-2.

UC San Diego’s Department of Urban Studies and is proposing a new Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) with Professional Degree Supplemental Tuition (PDST). The Department of Urban Studies and Planning is the only unit on campus that teaches courses in urban and regional planning. It routinely serves UC San Diego graduate students who enroll in their undergraduate courses. A professional master’s degree program will increase their capacity to serve the region, state, and society in general.

The program’s curricular priorities include planning for social and spatial justice; planning for climate change mitigation and adaptation; and multinational planning to address problems and opportunities that are not contained within national borders. These are planning challenges that will grow in importance this century. They are also strategic priorities for the School of Social Sciences, the campus, and the state of California. Furthermore, they are among the most urgent planning challenges in UCSD’s ecologically diverse border region.

The MURP program proposes a two-year course of study, comprising seven foundational courses in histories, theories, and methods of planning, along with additional required training in research methods, planning-relevant aspects of human settlements, a practicum course in planning or design, and elective courses. Every student is required to complete either a master’s thesis or a capstone project.

No net new resources are requested by this proposal beyond those that can be sustained by the program budget itself, which, is projected, will achieve positive annual net revenue in year three, and fully recoup startup costs by year four, with ample provision for financial aid to offset PDST for 40 percent of each cohort.

CCGA secured four reviewers for this proposal. All reviews were favorable, and the reviewers found strong value in - and need for - the program. All four commented on the comprehensiveness of the curriculum, quality of the faculty and department, and the geographic need for the program.

The reviewers did provide a few comments the department should take into consideration as it moves forward. These are detailed in the Lead Reviewer's report, attached.

As you know, CCGA's approval is the last stop of the Academic Senate side of the systemwide review and approval process except when the new degree title must be approved by the Academic Council. I submit this for your review; please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions regarding the proposal.

Sincerely,



James Bisley
Chair, CCGA

cc: Academic Senate Vice Chair Palazoglu
Academic Senate Executive Director Lin
Academic Senate Assistant Director LaBriola
CCGA Members
Academic Planning and Research Analyst Procello
UCSD Interim Dean of the Graduate Division Kim
UCSD Senate Executive Director Hullings
UCSD Senate Associate Director Hill

Synopsis of reviews for the Master's in Urban and Regional Planning program at UCSD

The program reviewed favorable reviews for the launch of the program. The reviewers all found value and need in a strong program at UCSD to meet the growing workforce demand. A brief synopsis of program strengths as well as recommendations from the reviews are provided here.

Program strengths

Curriculum

- Reviewers opined that the proposed curriculum included a comprehensive set of core courses that are fairly common for most MURP.
- Some reviewers were glad to see the more flexible set of offerings versus 'concentrations' that are siloed and may not allow for breadth.
- They also commented on some of the non-traditional/innovative offerings that may be pertinent to planning (e.g., hazards, crime/justice) that may eventually yield a distinct character of the UCSD MURP program.

Faculty Expertise

- UCSD is well positioned to run this program as they have strong junior and senior faculty.
- While there is a higher share of faculty with degrees from non-planning programs compared with other MURP institutions, the balance of faculty is well suited to deliver a program to train planning for problems of today and the future.

Geography

- Likewise, the San Diego metro could benefit from the placement of MURP students and perhaps MURP students fluent in border-planning issues could be novel for MURP programs.
- While there are MURP programs at three other UC's and 5 other Universities in the state, there appears to be a reasonable argument for demand exceeding supply and for the UCSD program to deliver on the training.

Areas for improvement and other considerations

Curriculum

- The capstone component might require more thought and preparation to ensure students are successful. Since employers want experience before hiring, building a traineeship into the program may help increase the success rates of student placement.
- One reviewer suggested that MURP would benefit from having more intentional communication and mediation training as part of the curriculum. This may be a distinct difference from practitioners and academics in terms of training.

Budgetary/capacity issues

- MURP estimates about 20% international students in the program, which is about double what other MURPs at UC's have. This may need to be considered in developing a right size program from a budgetary perspective.
- Starting a MS will require many new courses that may impact the broader ecosystem of departmental teaching needs. It would be useful to elucidate how the courses will be offered from the perspective of faculty load.
- Reviewers commented on the management needs for overseeing the MURP. Will this be part of the graduate group chairs position, or rather will there be a separate individual to manage the activities of MURP?

Program novelty and demand

- Given that this proposal would be the 9th MURP in California, the program should continue to evaluate ways in which it can not only meet the demand in the state, but also consider capitalizing on the interdisciplinary expertise of the faculty to attract students to MURP that might not have considered planning.