

Date: Sept. 18, 2009  
To: PIBC Council  
From: Penny Gurstein, SCARP Director  
RE: SCARP Strategic Planning

### **Context**

***New Director and Strategic Planning:*** While I was the Acting Director (2007-08) I submitted a proposal to the University for funding to undertake a strategic planning process. This was successful, although less than requested. The funds have supported student research assistants, feedback activities and re-development of the SCARP website. When I became Director in July 2008, I asked Tony Dorcey to chair a Strategic Planning Working Group (SPWG) that included myself, another faculty member and representatives of the masters and doctoral students. This group began meeting weekly in September 2008 and has led the strategic planning activities during the past eight months.

***Initial Strategic Planning:*** The SPWG decided to create an ongoing strategic planning process for the School rather than just undertake the development of a one-shot strategic plan. It was conceived as a process that would lead to decisions and actions as it progressed and as early as possible. The decision to establish a SCARP Advisory Council was seen as being an important way to obtain advice and guidance from experienced practitioners and academics on the development of the School and its activities on a continuing basis and in support of the strategic planning.

During the fall 2008 the emphasis of the strategic planning was on identifying the issues to be addressed by discussions with faculty, students, alumni and practitioners. This included meetings with faculty, existing students and PIBC Council, and conducting a SWOT analysis through a web site and selected follow-up surveys of students. In the second term the emphasis was on advancing the discussion of the major issues identified and potential ways of responding to them. Key activities included running two World Cafes on two major issues and a student led symposium. Throughout the year the two student research assistants have assisted in compiling information and analysis of potential responses to identified issues. One major focus was on collecting comparative information on the Masters degree programs of other planning schools in Canada and selected US schools comparable to SCARP.

***Establishing Committees and Taking Action:*** As the discussion of issues developed during the fall it was recognized that there were a number of key issues that needed concerted effort and early actions. Committees were established to lead this work including:

- ***Consolidating SCARP's spaces*** (Chair Penny Gurstein): In the Spring 2008 it became evident that it might be possible to deal with some of the School's serious space inadequacies by collaborating with SALA (School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture) in building new space. This opportunity has advanced surprisingly well. A campaign

committee was established in July 2009, a campaign strategy is being formulated and initial contacts for fund raising has started.

- **New SCARP Web Site** (Chair Maged Senbel): Numerous concerns were expressed about the outdated functionality and inadequate content of the School's web site. It was decided to design and build a completely new one. The website has been functioning since July 2009. In addition to the re-design, a new SCARP logo was designed.
- **Teaching, Learning and Curriculum** (Chair Nora Angeles): A large number of issues identified during discussions related to teaching, learning and curriculum. It was decided to create a committee responsible for addressing these issues on a continuing basis. Beginning in the Winter 2009 procedures were created and implemented for reviewing course syllabuses and student evaluations; conducting peer reviews of teaching; assessing student advising; supporting doctoral students in gaining teaching skills and experience; and mentoring faculty development. Getting underway is work on the structure and content of SCARP's Masters degree program and planning pedagogy.
- **Professional Development Program** (Penny Gurstein): Early discussions identified the need for enhanced opportunities for professional development by students. A series of opportunities were created by identifying training already being offered on campus and by organizing additional SCARP lectures and workshops that were delivered by practitioners who volunteered their assistance. An course is being designed for inclusion in the regular course offerings the Winter or Spring 2010 long with continuing lectures and workshops.
- **Summer Institute:** In addition, to professional development courses oriented to SCARP students we are also developing a Summer Institute which we anticipate having every second year in late June oriented to mid-career professionals where we offer a two-week course culminating in a Certificate in Sustainable Urbanism. The first institute is being planned for June 2010 with Larry Beasley, Special Practice Professor at SCARP, taking the lead.
- **SCARP Advisory Council:** It was recognized in the Strategic Planning process a need to have an advisory body of external members of the planning and academic communities to advise the Director on all issues related to development of the School. The SCARP Advisory Council was formed in April 2009.
- **Other Initiatives:** Besides these new initiatives that have been formalized in committees, we are working on encouraging interdisciplinarity through the development of joint degree programs (MA(Planning)/MAPPS (Master in Asia Pacific Policy Studies)) and a joint Master of Urban Design between SCARP and SALA (School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture) that are under development; and community- and practice-based learning through the development of field studios.

### Major Findings from SWOT and Discussions to Date

The feedback we have received strongly reconfirms the School's focus on sustainability and the democratization of planning.

**SCARP Mission:** To advance the transition to sustainability through excellence in integrated policy and planning research, professional education and community service.

**SCARP Vision:** Sustainability through the democratization of planning.

At the same time there are many ideas and suggestions for how the pursuit of the Mission and Vision can be greatly enhanced. As described above we have already begun to act on some of these. Going forward we are focusing on the following question relating to SCARP's teaching, research and service activities.

How can we strengthen and advance the School's focus on putting knowledge into action in environmental, economic and social sustainability planning?

Analysis of findings from the two World Cafes and the Symposium in the Winter 2009 has been done. This together with the review of other planning schools' programs and new ideas on planning pedagogy will provide a basis for advancing strategic planning in the coming year.

### **Upcoming Key Issues and Actions on Them**

In shaping the strategic planning agenda we have thought in terms of three time frames - the near, medium and longer term. Our present perspective on priorities include:

#### ***Near Term - Next Year***

- Preparing and Conducting PAB and CIP Re-Accreditations
- Implementing Masters Curriculum Revisions
- Reviewing Masters Degree Program
- Implementing Doctoral Student Teacher Training
- Reviewing Mandate of SCARP's Centre for Human Settlements
- Planning and Fund Raising for New Building

#### ***Medium Term - Two- Three Years***

- Implementing Revisions to Masters Degree Program
- Developing Faculty Hiring Strategy

#### ***Long Term - Beyond Three Years***

- Recruiting New Faculty

The re-accreditation processes are a major focus of attention in the upcoming year. The self-assessment report for the US Planning Accreditation Board's review, which is the basis for a site visit scheduled for November 2 to 4, 2009 was submitted in July 2009. The CIP site visit will follow in early 2010. The self-assessment report contains a detailed summary of the School's performance since the last reviews five years ago and a perspective on future developments based on the strategic planning to date. The re-accreditation processes involve an immense amount of work but they create an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of the School's program and obtain advice on future priorities from external practitioners and academics with great experience in planning.