

## **OMNIBUS INDIVIDUAL ASSIGNMENT FEEDBACK**

I'll first make some broad remarks and then turn to general comments on the approaches taken to each of the component questions in the Individual Assignment. Following this are my comments on your own web site. My comments are based on the goals and assessment criteria that were identified in the assignment.

### **GENERAL FEEDBACK**

Given that this was the first time that many of you were building a web site, the products that you have produced are extremely well structured and presented. Some people went to a great deal of trouble to include imaginative photographs, diagrams, quotes and cartoons that splendidly enhanced the attractiveness of the site. In most cases the navigation was clear and easily followed. In all cases I found it best to read and comment on your materials in the following order:

- Home Page
- Previous Training and Experience & CV
- Personal Principles and Strategies
- Personal Development Strategy
- Other pages to which I had not yet been led

In general there was very good, and sometimes excellent, use of the assignment to reflect on previous training and experience in relation to developing your studies and career as a sustainability planner; and to articulate evolving ideas on principles and strategies for guiding your practice and continuing capacity development. Some of the components were outstandingly thoughtful.

I greatly appreciated the depth and breadth of your thoughtfulness and candour in your self-assessments and reflective commentaries. Your pages gave me insights that I have never previously had on the rich diversity of perspectives among an incoming SCARP class. I also found out some of what was working well for you and what was not. It will help me immensely in revising the content and approaches in ways that are more productive in future years. I particularly appreciated the most constructive suggestions that some of you made on ways to enhance the content and learning. Thank you.

The following sections elaborate on the above comments by addressing responses to each of the component questions of the assignment. They indicate in point form what I was looking for in terms of basic content and high quality and include some of the great ways in which people created thoughtful and informative material.

#### **HOME PAGE**

- A good first impression: attractive presentation, clear layout and relatively concise.

- Reading the main text clearly introduced the person who prepared the site; its purpose within the context of the course on sustainability planning; and how it was organized by major pages to address the specific components of the assignment.
- It was most effective to capture the reader's attention with the title or opening sentence.
- The words and phrasing chosen for the Home Page set the tone immediately.
- Referring to the navigation immediately made sense from the wording used and introduction in the text.
- Good use of links in the text to lead to further information in attachments, on further pages of the site and on sites elsewhere.
- Imaginative use of quotations, pictures and graphics that amplify impressions created by the text.
- I looked to find similar qualities on succeeding pages of the site and a consistency in page style and layout; this looked appealing and made it easier to quickly understand how the pages were structured.

## **PREVIOUS TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE & CV**

*An assessment of your previous training and experience and how you can build upon it in light of your emerging ideas for a career as a sustainability planning practitioner. You might find it useful to develop an initial draft of your CV as a way to provide a summary of your previous training and experience.*

*A draft of a CV for seeking employment relating to planning practice.*

- It worked best for me when the information on this page easily continued on from the introduction on the preceding Home Page and began by indicating what will be found below on this page.
- I found it worked particularly well for me when this page was used to summarize the specifics of training and experience that were relevant to the sustainability planning focus of the site and either attached a CV or put it on a web page so as to provide broader and more specific background.
- Those that relied solely or predominantly on a CV did not provide me with as ready and complete access to understanding their background. It relied more on me to interpret the important information rather than conveying it to me directly and unambiguously.
- A clear series of headings on the page that quickly made evident the content and structure of the page was most helpful; much more effective than merely using paragraphs of flowing text.
- Pictures relating to the ideas and stories in the text greatly enhanced the presentations.

*Page Focused on Previous Training and Experience*

- I particularly appreciated those who used a page to reflect in some detail on their Previous Training and Experience.
- Telling stories about experiences that have led to your interest in planning and sustainability was most effective, particularly when it brought out your passions and doubts. I particularly appreciated your honesty and candour.
- Some people most effectively used tables and other formats to summarize the details of past courses and informal learning, and to relate these experiences to how they have contributed in building your potential as a planner, in particular a sustainability planner.
- Some of those who had no previous formal training relating to sustainability planning very informatively explored how their experiences had given them useful background upon which to build in the course.
- Particularly impressive were the efforts to mine apparently unrelated training and experiences for comparative advantages that could contribute to the development of sustainability planning studies and careers.
- Often informal training and broader life experiences contributed significantly.
- A few people explored in detail their past experience with sustainability giving details about how they had unfolded and concluding with reflections on how well they had worked for them.
- A number of people used this page to elaborate on important details such as their passions, people who had influenced them greatly, events that had been significant in shaping their thinking and their future aspirations for their career and life.
- Whatever was talked about it was important that it be related to developing your capabilities to become a planner, one concerned with sustainability.
- An effective way to conclude was with a summary assessment of knowledge and skills at the beginning of the course and key points on how you hoped to be able to develop your capacity through your studies at SCARP and afterwards through continuing professional development - the stuff of the following pages.

#### *CV Attached or As Web Page*

- I read your CVs for their structure and content both for general use and for seeking employment relating to planning practice.
- The appropriate content of a CV varies considerably with the author, where they are at in their education and career development, and the immediate purpose of the CV. It is wise to customize your CV to most advantageously present the information about you that is relevant to the specific application (e.g. seeking a particular job or applying for a specific scholarship etc).
- A few people most informatively included a discussion page about how they customize their CV for differing situations.
- I have made comments in my feedback to each of you that respond to what I know about you specifically and in light of information that you provided on a separate page discussing your previous training and experience. Here are some general comments that I made for several of your CVs.
  - Customize for the specific application (i.e. in this assignment situation, applying for planning related employment).

- At this early stage in developing your career you might want to start with a brief statement of your career objectives or aspirations.
- If it is included, personal information usually comes next (e.g. place and date of birth etc)
- It is common for this to be followed with your education beginning with the most recent, and indicating any degree that is in progress.
- Include titles of any thesis or final research project.
- Include titles of your courses if that would be influential in the context.
- It is good to follow this with a list of memberships, particularly those that are professional and relate to the specific application (e.g. Student Member CIP).
- If it is a situation where you have previous work experience that would be particularly influential in the application context, you might want to lead with it before education.
- Include a short description of your responsibilities and achievements in each position; customize it to the application.
- Wherever you locate your employment record and work experience make sure you add information about experience you have developed as a volunteer both in student and other organizations outside the university.
- In this instance I particularly appreciated the ways in which training and experience relating to sustainability was brought out.
- If you choose to present the information under headings that result in your various skills being dispersed, it helps to have a place where you present a consolidated listing of your skills, putting them into sub-groups if appropriate (e.g. computing, languages etc).
- Another consolidated list can usefully focus on awards, recognition and achievements.
- Have a section on languages and travel as appropriate.
- Include any publications with appropriate bibliographic citation.
- Have a separate section on reports.
- Include any conference presentations.
- Include information about your facilitation experience and, more generally, organizing and conducting participatory and planning processes.
- List projects conducted in classes when they can show you have experience and knowledge that might not otherwise be evident.
- In general you should capitalize on anything that would enhance your resume in relation to the particular application. However, don't add things that are relatively trivial or insignificant, that might detract from other items on the resume. Be prepared to cull selected items that are inappropriate to the application of the moment.
- As you add more significant and substantive items to your CV with growing experience, edit out those that are no longer as important. Keep it focused and no longer than effective.
- Sometimes it is a judgement call as to whether you include information that is not obviously immediately applicable. For example, details about

your non-professional interests and achievements. Personally I always like to be able to read such details because it tells me about the individual's other dimensions.

- I always find it useful to see who the referees are because it adds to my information about the individual and what further I might be able to learn about them.
- Be sure to use good explanatory headings to guide readers quickly and clearly through your CV; they may be reading hundreds of them.
- If you are going to post your CV on line or transmit it as a digital copy then adding appropriate links makes good sense.
- You might want to create a web site that contains more detailed information about you. This enables you to keep the CV briefer and to greatly expand on what you might want to convey to the reader, including your multimedia, video and web skills.
- Finally, ask friends to read over your CV and give you feedback on their reactions to it. And make very sure that there are no typos.

## **PERSONAL PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES**

*A statement of the personal principles and strategies that will guide your development as a sustainability planning practitioner.*

*What is a Principle? A Strategy?*

- People's approaches to this page depended in large part on their interpretation of the word "principle".
- It was particularly helpful when people begun by explaining how they conceive of "principles" and "strategies" in the context of the page.
- They variously identified "principles" that stretch across an ends-means chain with fundamental objectives that were abstract, high level values at one end (e.g. fairness) and instrumental objectives that were relatively concrete means at the other (e.g. ensure all voices are heard).
- Thus at one extreme some took it as referring to fundamental values, morals or ethics.
- One person actually discussed the Latin root of morals and Greek root of ethics, and differences between these words. If you would like to understand more about the meanings of these words and distinctions between them, a short basic discussion can be found on a site that focuses on persuasion [http://changingminds.org/explanations/values/values\\_morals\\_ethics.htm](http://changingminds.org/explanations/values/values_morals_ethics.htm)  
For a little more detail that provides a sense of the complex ongoing debates see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morality> .
- People who approached principles from this more abstract and theoretical perspective identified fundamental values, morals and ethics such as equity, fairness, justice, democracy, empowerment, inclusivity, integrity, honesty, virtue, self-respect, respect, empathy, compassion and sustainability.
- At the other extreme people interpreted "principle" as being best practice approaches employed in planning (or sustainability planning) that tended to be the

instrumental objectives or the means used to meet more fundamental objectives. These therefore tended to be the "strategies" for pursuing the "principles".

- Or as one person phrased it, they are the "operating principles" for pursuing the "maxims".
- People's individual responses to this question varied from being clustered at one extremity of the ends-means chain or the other or to include items from across the chain. The responses were thus very mixed and the best way to understand this is to look at the varied content and examples on people's pages.
- The number of principles identified varied from a low of 3 to a high of 22.
- Most people importantly spoke to the fact that the principles not only guide their practice of sustainability planning but also more broadly all their work and life.
- Related to this people identified the key role that principles play in shaping Personal Development (the subject of the next page).
- More people could have talked about their concept of sustainability, sustainability principles and sustainability strategies and linked this to the ideas explored in the readings and class discussions.

#### *Attributes of Stronger Responses*

- Including reference to authors who talk about issues relating to principles and strategy or provide guidance as to how to approach the issue (e.g. Lang and Taylor's *Developing Artistry in Practice*; Gardner's *How Leading Professionals Act Responsibly*).
- Talking about role models or people with whom you have worked who have influenced your thinking on principles and strategy.
- Providing a list of Principles and linking them to Strategies for pursuing them; tables supported this well.
- There were also a few really imaginative diagrams created.
- Having a short statement of the Principle that made it easy to recall.
- Beginning with a definition of the principle; which could include a quote and/or reference to the author.
- Providing a short discussion that elaborates on the principle; this could be enhanced by an example and or the provision of a link to where more information could be found.
- One person most effectively created different choice/action scenarios and then outlined how they would choose or act as guided by their principles and strategies.
- A few people commented on the challenging task of being successful in pursuing the fundamental principles they had listed in any meaningful sense given the challenging realities of the world of practice. The most impressive responses to this characterized the principles as fundamental values to be aspired to through choosing strategies appropriately and becoming as effective and efficient as possible in the practice of sustainability planning. All the while remembering that compromising among principles may well be unavoidable.
- Some people referred to Pearce and O'Riordan's distinctions between weak and strong sustainability in terms of principles and strategies.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

*A personal development strategy that includes your evolving thoughts on courses, an internship, project or thesis research topic and, beyond SCARP, further studies and skills development.*

*This draft will be used to initiate a discussion between you and your Program Advisor reviewing your experiences to date in the SCARP program and your preliminary thoughts on the rest of your program. You are encouraged to also consult with any other faculty member or person whom you feel might be particularly appropriate given your evolving interests. You are expected to have met at least once with your Advisor before the submission of your final draft. It is recommended that you make an early appointment to meet with your Advisor as they have very full schedules and that you provide them with your initial draft with adequate lead-time for them to read it in advance.*

- The introduction to this page worked best when it clearly took off from the presentation of previous training and experience and provided a link back to this.
- If it had not appeared earlier this was the place to summarize goals relating to your career and personal ambitions that provide the context for your Personal Development Strategy relating to sustainability planning.
- It was particularly effective when people indicated what they expected to be doing in completing the program for their degree and in getting their subsequent career underway; this established both opportunities and constraints for advancing sustainability planning capabilities .
- A summary statement of what you felt were your strengths and weaknesses in sustainability planning by the end of Omnibus set the stage well for discussing your strategy for further development.
- A few people usefully commented on subjects or perspectives that the course had not contained and that they would want to add (e.g. planning processes and techniques appropriate to differing cultural and social contexts). These comments were useful for me to be able to consider in thinking about revisions to Omnibus next year.
- A substantial number of people most effectively organized the details of their Development Strategy by setting out the courses that they were thinking of taking through to the end of the degree. Where there were uncertainties, alternatives or a Plan B was usefully identified, as well as professors and practitioners who might be consulted.
- Most people recognized the advantages of organizing an internship for the upcoming summer that would hopefully lead into selection of a project or thesis research topic before the beginning of their second year.
- A substantial number of people attached an outline of a research topic that they had prepared for a fellowship application at the beginning of term and/or to begin exploration of a potential topic.
- Many people were still exploring alternative research topics.

- A number of people indicated that they would be willing to undertake an unpaid internship or work in order to gain experience and assistance in identifying a potential research topic.
- There were a wide variety of additional options identified for inclusion in the development strategy. Here is a list of some of them along with examples that were included with them:
  - Practicing every day and volunteering (e.g. seeking opportunities to facilitate in class and locally).
  - Finding a mentor (e.g. link this to search for an internship).
  - Getting involved in volunteer activities that provide experience (e.g. organizing PlanTalk, advocating for the UBC Farm).
  - Targeting further formal training for after the degree is completed (e.g. SFU courses and gaining specific software skills).
  - Joining professional organizations (e.g. CIP, APA).
  - Attending conferences (e.g. Land Summit at Whistler this May).
  - Continuing their web site.