LOOKING TO 2026

A Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Urban Planning Program
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PREAMBLE

In May 2016, the George Washington University’s Sustainable Urban Planning Program completed its fifth academic year. The goal from the beginning has been to create an enduring program engineered to rise to—and remain at—the very top of the planning profession. Initial development of the program began in 2010 and it was implemented with the hiring of the director at the end of that year. The set of faculty came together as the program matured between 2011 and 2013; the Sustainable Urban Planning Student Organization was chartered in early 2012; and the first master’s degrees were conferred following the fall 2013 semester. In this short time, the Sustainable Urban Planning Program has ascended high—by way of a collaborative building process that has engaged its faculty and students; its peers at universities worldwide; the planning profession, nationally and internationally; and, increasingly, its alumni.

Long-term visioning for the Sustainable Urban Planning Program commenced in 2013. Its mission, objectives, and core values were formulated in that year; vetted internally through late 2014; and finally made public in early 2015, via the program’s website. The process yielding this document was initiated shortly thereafter, when the director worked with the leadership of the College of Professional Studies, in which Sustainable Urban Planning is situated, to carefully consider the program’s long-term prospects. That step led, first, to a thorough market analysis, conducted by an external consulting firm, and, next, to a rigorous internal evaluation that placed the Sustainable Urban Planning Program on track to start pursuing accreditation from the Planning Accreditation Board in 2016. Actual strategic planning began in mid-2015 in the form of one-on-one conversations that the program director held with the college leadership; program faculty, students, and alumni; members of the profession; and faculty from peer programs. The process culminated—after the Planning Accreditation Board responded affirmatively to the university’s letter of intent—in a series of strategic planning sessions that involved as many stakeholders as possible, including nearly all faculty, most students, and a number of alumni. The result is this document, “Looking to 2026: A Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Urban Planning Program,” which is a collaborative document articulating the evolution of the Sustainable Urban Planning Program over the past five years and its actions and ambitions for the next ten.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents a strategic plan for the George Washington University’s Sustainable Urban Planning Program (SUP) through 2026—and explains how the program’s goals and ambitions will be met.

The mission of SUP is to train the next generation of leaders in the field of urban planning. The program does this by making the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental sustainability the focus of planning in order to achieve competitive, inclusive, and ecological cities. The impact of SUP is measured by its success in elevating the field of urban planning as a force for addressing the problems that humanity must face in the oncoming future of anthropogenic climate change.

The strategic planning process identified a salient strength and opportunity, which may alternatively be viewed, respectively, as a weakness and threat. The strength is that the SUP director operates with considerable autonomy and is empowered to take a range of actions on behalf of the program. The weakness is that SUP is a small, revenue-driven program that must operate within its economic constraints. Meanwhile, as an active member of the George Washington University’s Sustainability Collaborative, SUP has the opportunity to be among the university’s crown jewels. However, SUP must remain cognizant of the threat posed by the fact that it is not an essential function of the university and, therefore, must distinguish itself as an unquestionably exceptional program in order to remain valuable.

In just a few short years, SUP has accomplished what might reasonably be expected of a small- to mid-sized department of full-time faculty. The program’s immediate goals are to attain accreditation through the Planning Accreditation Board and secure upward trends in enrollment, quality, and financial stability. Looking toward the future, SUP will move to establish: a travel assistance fund for students who present their work at the national meetings of the American Planning Association and/or the meetings of the Associated Collegiate Schools of Planning; a new concentration focused on sustainable urbanization in Asia; a professional advisory board no later than January 2017; a second faculty full-time equivalent; and merit-based scholarships for students from least developed countries. These specific actions will be taken in order to ensure SUP’s place at the George Washington University for the long-term and position it in the top tier of urban planning programs by 2026.
The Sustainable Urban Planning Program (SUP) was founded in 2011 as part of a holistic effort to make the George Washington University (GW) a leader in sustainability. That holistic effort has since been consolidated under the cross-campus Sustainability Collaborative. Because urban planning is an applied field, the new program was based in the College of Professional Studies (CPS)—the college at GW whose mission it is to train practitioners through an innovative model that couples rigorous academic learning with immersive professional engagement. Within the frame of GW, one of the nation’s premier universities, and CPS, the university’s powerful incubator of top-line practitioners, SUP offers a world-class graduate education that is responsive to the needs of working professionals and to the demands of job markets it serves.

It is without question that the landscape of higher education is changing dramatically and definitively—academic units of all kinds, in private and public institutions alike, face the problem of delivering high-quality education efficiently and cost effectively. For students, legitimate concerns about the value of degrees loom large and so, too, do the odds of evermore competitive job markets. In urban planning, these challenges are compounded by rapidly growing pressures on the field and its need to evolve in order to address new and complicated problems—such as global warming—without losing touch with its distinguishing traditions. Gone are the days when planning programs can stay relevant while remaining tied to an outmoded past: in order to be impactful, they must keep in contact with the profession and evolve at a pace that matches its needs. SUP was designed for this new environment and, indeed, has thrived in it.

In just a few short years, SUP has accomplished what might reasonably be expected of a small- to mid-sized department of full-time faculty—but now the program faces a new challenge: securing its place at GW for the long-term. As a next step, SUP seeks an external evaluation from the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) in order to join the family of programs that form the academic main of the field. Once/if granted candidacy status by PAB in January 2017, SUP must maintain a dynamic equilibrium—with upward trends in enrollment, quality, and financial stability—that will enable it to become accredited in January 2019. Looking
beyond accreditation, SUP aspires to enter the top tier of urban planning programs. Simply put, SUP’s goal is to be the program of choice for leading students who seek to address global problems by driving the planning profession deeper into the arena of sustainable development. This objective is commensurate with GW’s preeminent reputation—plus the university’s own strategic goal of becoming a truly elite institution of higher education.1

The mission of SUP is to train the next generation of leaders in the field of urban planning. Specifically, the program makes the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental sustainability the focus of urban planning in order to achieve competitive, inclusive, and ecological cities. The Sustainable Urban Planning Program—which awards a master’s degree, plus two graduate certificates—meets its objectives by graduating practitioners who work in sustainable development, both nationally and internationally.2 In doing so, SUP aims to significantly expand the reach of the planning profession by placing its students and alumni in positions traditionally dominated by practitioners of the natural and social sciences. Above all, SUP seeks to be known for its primacy in climate change adaptation and mitigation—by training planners to address the consequences of global warming. The impact of SUP is measured by its success in elevating the field of urban planning as a force for addressing the problems that humanity must face in the oncoming future of anthropogenic climate change.

The Sustainable Urban Planning Program’s mission and ambitions are formidable. How will they be met? This document responds to the question by presenting a strategic plan for achieving the SUP’s ambitions. The plan is a multi-pronged framework for fulfilling the program’s vision through 2026. Specifically, the plan: details the SUP paradigm; sets out the program’s core values; identifies and addresses salient strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; and calls for several clear actions, with attention to their financial implications. The objective is nothing less than greatness: a dynamic, enduring program engineered to remain at the very top of the planning profession. The plan for getting there was developed through a formal process—with the input of faculty, students, alumni, university administrators, and a panel of distinguished external reviewers—and is articulated under the auspices of the GW and CPS strategic plans. This is a consensus document that synthesizes the thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, and aspirations of many. It defines SUP and sets a course for the future.

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2 A master’s of professional studies (MPS) in Sustainable Urban Planning and graduate certificates (GCs) in Sustainable Urban Planning and Climate Change Management and Policy.
The GW strategic plan is built around four key themes: (i) innovation through cross-disciplinary collaboration; (ii) globalization; (iii) governance and policy; and (iv) citizenship and leadership. Within this frame, the CPS strategic plan articulates three goals relevant to SUP: (i) fostering cross-disciplinary programs to better prepare students and enhance competitiveness; (ii) developing and implementing a set of core competencies that meet the highest standards of scholarly and professional practices; and (iii) providing the necessary tools for students’ career success and implementing measurement tools to assess such success. Each of GW’s four themes are fundamental to the SUP paradigm and the three CPS goals are all implemented by the program. Moreover, the program actively contributes to GW’s holistic mission of being a leader in sustainability.

The College of Professional Studies is organized around an innovative model keyed to the needs of working professionals and the job markets its various programs serve. The college is built on a framework that leverages Washington, DC’s deep pool of intellectual talent to form programs whose faculty are mostly based outside of GW. Each CPS program employs one full-time director, who serves as both an administrator and faculty member. There is no tenure in CPS, but program directors work on rolling multi-year contracts and faculty are effectively tenured into their courses through union rules that guarantee the right of first refusal after they are vested. In many ways, this approach represents a vanguard of graduate education, though it should be clear that location matters: such a model would not be possible without the many experts working in the region’s elite public, private, and non-profit organizations who might otherwise be stationed at universities.

In terms of strategic planning, the challenge for SUP since the beginning has been to develop a business model that capitalizes on the dynamism of CPS in order to meet the very high standards of GW and, ultimately, the demands of national and international job markets. As SUP has matured, it has excelled through the CPS framework and achieved a level of success commensurate with the expectations of GW. The Sustainable Urban Planning Program is perhaps unique among

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4 The fourth goal identified in the CPS Strategic Plan is ensuring excellence in delivering an online teaching and learning experience, but SUP does not presently employ online education. It is, however, looking into executive training courses and other opportunities that might be web-based in years to come.
FIGURE 1 GW AND SUP ORGANIZATION CHARTS
planning programs—with a novel paradigm that works to great effect.

Generally speaking, universities are organized in a corporate-style hierarchical structure. In the case of GW, there is the university itself, governed by the board of trustees, under which are the offices of the president, provost, and college deans. This hierarchy is displayed in the leftmost part of Figure 1, which places the director of SUP in a linear chain of command directly accountable to the CPS dean and higher offices. The director serves as the chief operating officer, who remains accountable to the institution and must make decisions that are both subject to the GW hierarchy and responsive to the day-to-day needs of SUP. This is the typical role of a departmental administrator: acting as an interlocutor, manager, and facilitator between the unit, the college, external partners, and the university as a whole. The main part of the figure illustrates that the organization of SUP itself is not hierarchical. Rather, it is a community of scholarship that circulates around four anchors, composed of the: director; faculty; students; and alumni. While the SUP director is obviously part of the GW chain of command, the individual engages—subject to the responsibilities and constraints of the office—with the program in a collaborative manner. Communication, or the flow of ideas, happens around the periphery of the circle while influence, or say over what SUP is, happens toward the center of the circle.

The SUP paradigm differs from the familiar hierarchical structure in the important sense that, within institutional constraints, the director engages not only in an administrative capacity, but as a collaborator among faculty, students, and alumni—all of whom contribute to making the program what it is. Faculty meet regularly and the students and alumni, who are organized, respectively, via an elected government and an appointed board, have seats at those meetings. The Sustainable Urban Planning Student Organization, or SUPSO, was chartered in March 2012 and annually elects board members. The government is, among other things, a venue for democratically communicating the will of the student body—ranging from new initiatives to grievances. The initial alumni board was appointed by the director in December 2015 with three members representing the master's degree and a member representing each of the two certificates. The board is a focal point for alumni engagement and responsible for advising the director—and other constituents—on legacy decisions for the program.

The dynamism of SUP is that it marshals Washington, DC’s rarified professional environment to form a graduate program comprised of faculty
who are primarily external to GW. The SUP faculty—all of whom are attached to the program for the long-term and teach either one or two classes annually—hold important positions in government, private sector, and non-profit organizations. (Importantly, given the program’s mission, two SUP faculty are lead authors on the 5th [2014] Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and a third is a reviewer.) Advising responsibilities are broadly distributed across faculty—all of whom have strong ties to academia and are leaders in their respective fields, nationally and/or internationally—giving students the opportunity to learn from different kinds of mentors who work in different areas of the field. The faculty bring to GW extensive professional networks and often serve as conduits to the job market, enabling students to grow into their careers in an organic manner. This framework works, first, because of SUP’s location in Washington, DC and, second, because of the organizational structure shown in Figure 1. These two features are what make the SUP paradigm so powerful.

The key to understanding the effectiveness of the paradigm is knowing that, in as much as possible, SUP operates as a community of scholarship founded on collaborative and consensus building principles. Each of the four anchors invests energy, making the whole greater than the sum of the parts. The individuals that make up the organization engage, because, to use language derived from the strategic planning sessions, they are drawn to the opportunity of participating in a vibrant, nontraditional academic structure. The faculty feel unbound by departmental strictures and free to teach state-of-the-art ideas and methods relevant to the modern profession. Students come to SUP because it is actively planning into the twenty-first century by loosening outmoded ties to the past. In short, the program excels because it is an organization that, by design, inspires and empowers those within it. In this way, SUP is helping to transform graduate education even as it expands the boundaries of the planning profession.

Pedagogically, SUP addresses everything expected of an urban planning program—focused though the lens of sustainability, which runs through the program from start to finish. This focus is illustrated in Figure 2, which—flowing from top to bottom—shows that sustainable urban planning is achieved by taking the field of urban planning and casting it through the nexus of a lens proportioned on the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. In this way, all of planning—whether for climate change, development, transportation, or anything else—is studied from the three perspectives. This is a rich

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1 Two SUP faculty also hold appointments in other colleges at GW, Business and Engineering.
pedagogy that is qualitatively different from other planning programs. The objective is to achieve competitive, inclusive, and ecological cities and, as shown in the stylized outcomes displayed in Figure 3, these ends can—and do—compete with each other. Still, the role of SUP is to keep the field trained on the nexus, so that a graduate working primarily in, say, the environmental arena retains an appreciation for the economic and social arenas—and so on. The definition of sustainable urban planning does not drift, even as individuals pursue different manifestations of it.

Finally, it is important to highlight how the program fits within GW and advances the university’s holistic mission of being a leader in sustainability. Specifically, SUP is a key component of the Sustainability Collaborative, a horizontally-organized superstructure—situated in the office of the provost—that collects and focuses GW’s research, academic, operational, and public engagement activities in sustainability under a single umbrella. Sustainability is one of GW’s nine core values and, including SUP, there are: 38 sustainability-related degree programs; 200 faculty

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**FIGURE 2 DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN PLANNING**

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Among other achievements, GW has been awarded a Gold Rating by the Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education and designated as a Green Ribbon institution of higher education by the United States Department of Education.

Specific SUP faculty are identified as core members of the Sustainability Collaborative and they pursue research and funding opportunities within its frame. Moreover, all SUP courses are listed within the GW course catalogue under the SUST Attribute, which makes them visible to students—across all schools, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels—seeking sustainability courses and/or advisors. While SUP is a graduate program, the SUST Attribute indicates the program’s courses may be approved for undergraduates pursuing GW’s recently-established interdisciplinary minor in sustainability. The Sustainability Collaborative has established GW as a proven leader in sustainability and SUP has been—and will continue to be—an active contributor to the effort.⁶

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⁶ Among other achievements, GW has been awarded a Gold Rating by the Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education and designated as a Green Ribbon institution of higher education by the United States Department of Education.
CORE VALUES

What values define an SUP education? The Sustainable Urban Planning Program was founded on the idea that students—working with an interdisciplinary set of faculty—are what make graduate programs great. With that in mind, SUP adheres to a belief in student empowerment and is governed by six core values:

ACTIVE LEARNING empowers students by giving them shared responsibility for their work inside and outside of the classroom. It makes students drivers of the learning experience and means that they take joint ownership over the goals, processes, and outcomes of their education. The following are examples of how active learning is implemented within SUP:

- A commonality among SUP students is their interest in pursuing sustainability through the planning profession—but no two students are the same, so with close support of the faculty, they set individualized learning goals.
- Through SUP’s rich intellectual tapestry, students and faculty learn from one another, making it a true community of scholarship.

ADVOCACY involves using the knowledge and language of cities in an ethical manner to promote objectively desirable results—especially in the decision-making arena, and in the face of competing interests. The following are examples of how advocacy is implemented within SUP:

- The planning profession follows a strict code of ethics, promulgated by the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), which SUP supports through its courses and mentoring.\(^7\)
- Communication is emphasized throughout the program in order to give students the language—be it oral, written, or visual—needed to promote outcomes that serve the public interest.

DEMOCRACY is fundamental to planning in order to ensure that outcomes reflect the interests of the whole and not only those of a narrow constituency. The following are examples of how democracy is implemented within SUP:

- Student engagement in the steering of SUP is focused through SUPSO, a democratically elected student government chartered through GW.
- The program itself operates as a community of scholarship founded on collaborative and consensus-building principles—which are intended to carry through as students enter the profession.

\(^7\) See: https://www.planning.org/ethics/ethicscode.htm.
DIVERSITY is critical to planning education and practice alike because the field must take care to reflect the plurality of the cultures, landscapes, people, societies, and systems that it impacts—most especially with respect to underrepresented groups. The following are examples of how diversity is implemented within SUP:

- Diversity of all kinds—including age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, and more—is celebrated within SUP.
- The program explicitly teaches to diversity: inclusive cities are one of its three main objectives.

RESEARCH is the engine of knowledge creation, and the scientific method is responsible for centuries of human progress. Planners need to rely on objective research whenever possible and be not only consumers of knowledge—but, also, producers of knowledge. The following are examples of how research is implemented within SUP:

- All SUP faculty are research-productive—in terms of basic research; applied research; and/or professional research.8
- Students are actively encouraged to engage in this culture: student research has been presented at 2014 ACSP meetings; the 2015 meetings of the Washington, DC chapter of the APA; and the 2016 national meetings of APA.

WORLD ENGAGEMENT involves proactively looking outward to find opportunities to learn from and collaborate with others—nearby and around the globe. There are over seven billion people on the earth, who are becoming evermore interdependent, so planners must engage this community with the recognition that the world is growing smaller by the day. The following are examples of how world engagement is implemented within SUP:

- The Sustainable Urban Planning Program is not region-centric, or even nation-centric: it makes great use of Washington, DC—the third-ranked city by the American Council for an Energy-efficient Economy—but teaches a standard of practice that is national and international in scope.9
- The program has a well-developed study-abroad program set in Seoul, Korea10 and is in the process of developing a second study-abroad program, set on the very front line of climate change: Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Together, these values indicate that the practice of sustainable urban planning is both a humanitarian and scientific enterprise—they shape the day-to-day experience of SUP and give special meaning to being part of its community.

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8 For example, a recent (2016) article published in Growth and Change, a leading planning journal, ranks the current SUP program director among the top 25 most productive scholars of regional science—an interdisciplinary field that includes urban planners, economists, geographers, engineers, and others—globally, and in the top 10 within the United States.


10 A photograph from the program’s third visit to Seoul in the past four years is displayed on the cover.
A strategic planning process requires identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) as a means of navigating the future. Often, strengths/weaknesses and opportunities/threats are opposite sides of the same coin, so they should be viewed neither as flaws or panaceas—but, instead, as realities that must be faced in order to build and maintain an exceptional program. In the case of SUP, special attention was given to certain findings of the SWOT analysis:

**Strength: the SUP director operates with considerable autonomy and is empowered to take a range of actions on behalf of the program.** SUP operates on a low-overhead business model, keeping the program efficient and cost effective. And, because of the SUP paradigm—which empowers faculty, students, and alumni with considerable influence—a system of checks and balances exists to keep the program focused on its mission. Furthermore, advising responsibilities are broadly distributed so students have terrific access to academic and professional mentoring. Strong and energetic leadership is necessary, but that leadership need not come from a particular individual, as the SUP director is a position that can be filled by any qualified individual.

**Weakness: SUP is a small, revenue-driven program that must operate within its economic constraints.** The viability of SUP depends upon the tuition it generates and, because it is a small, nascent program, the director must sometimes make difficult choices on short notice—for example, whether or not to run a certain class—that might be in conflict with the interests of, or limit the options of, individual faculty and students. The nature of such demands can undermine the director’s ability to participate as a coequal collaborator in the SUP community and give the impression of autocratic decision-making. The organization must remain cognizant of the fact that SUP must operate in a manner that is financially self-sufficient. This weakness would be ameliorated with the growth in size of the program.
Opportunity: as a member GW’s Sustainability Collaborative, SUP has the opportunity to be one of the university’s crown jewels. Sustainability is one of GW’s nine core values. Through the Sustainability Collaborative, GW has been awarded a Gold Rating from the Association for Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education designated as a Green Ribbon institution of higher education by the United States Department of Education due to its demonstrated leadership in sustainability. Like all organizations, universities value operations that contribute to its preeminence. As SUP continues to build upon its success, it will realize a dynamic long-run equilibrium that will help to further GW’s excellence in sustainability generally and the Sustainability Collaboratives objectives specifically. The Sustainable Urban Planning Program is young, but has already had great success in placing its students and alumni in positions traditionally dominated by practitioners of the natural and social sciences. In so doing, SUP is successfully driving the planning profession deeper into the complex arena of sustainable development.

Threat: for most universities, including GW, urban planning is optional. This very same threat is faced by many planning departments and programs: they are often small and under-resourced—and, from an external perspective, may appear duplicative of other units, such as, for example, architecture, geography, and/or civil engineering. The Planning Accreditation Board was established to help counter exactly this threat and exists to ensure that urban planning is identified as a stand-alone discipline. The PAB accreditation process will go a long way toward countering the existential threat posed by the optionality of SUP: accreditation will set the program apart from other units on campus and, through added prestige and enhanced visibility, make it that much more valuable to GW.

These are the most fundamental SWOT elements that emerged during the strategic planning process. Going forward, the viability of SUP will be enhanced by several specific actions derived from the analysis.

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The five actions identified in this section emerged from the SWOT analysis and support SUP’s core values. The first three are inexpensive, short- to intermediate-term objectives meant to help SUP better live up to its objectives. The last two are expensive, longer-term objectives that build out the program and are contingent upon attaining PAB accreditation, plus upward trends in enrollment, quality, and financial stability. The objective is to fulfill each of these actions within five to seven years, subject to financial constraints. With this in mind, SUP will move to take the following specific actions:

**Establish a travel assistance fund for SUP students who present their work at the national meetings of the American Planning Association (APA) or the Associated Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP).** One of SUP’s key ambitions is to widen the boundaries of the profession by driving the practice of urban planning deeper into the arena of sustainable development. The program can enhance this objective by encouraging its students to present their original ideas—that are the source of their success in the job market and profession—at the national meetings of the APA or ACSP. Toward this end, SUP will establish a fund yielding no less than $2,000 to be competitively awarded to students whose work is accepted for presentation at these—or other relevant—meetings. This action supports the core values of active learning, research, and world engagement.

**Establish a new concentration focused on sustainable urbanization in Asia.** Planning in the United States is, for the most part, done as a form of public policy by local governments acting under the aegis of state enabling legislation. In Asia, planning is done using different approaches and under different governance structures. While not explicitly an international development program, SUP is global in scope: most of the urbanization in the world is happening outside the nation and climate change is, by definition, a global problem. Moreover, SUP actively recruits students from Asia and, therefore, needs to immediately improve its capacity to serve Asian job markets. This action supports the core values of advocacy, democracy, diversity, and world engagement.
Establish a professional advisory board no later than January 2017. The SUP paradigm is of a program that is collaboratively governed by the director, faculty, students, and alumni—all of whom are organized to contribute. Absent from the picture, is an external advisory board composed of members of the profession who are not otherwise engaged (for example, as faculty or alumni) in SUP. This missing piece is largely owed to the youth of SUP, but now that it has matured, a professional advisory board is necessary for the governance of the program. A professional advisory board is also necessary for enabling SUP to make the type of institutional linkages that will enable the program to achieve its objective of entering the top tier of urban planning programs. Accordingly, SUP will immediately begin identifying potential members for a professional advisory board, with the goal of having the board in place by the onset of 2017. This action supports the core values of advocacy, democracy, and world engagement.

Establish a second faculty full-time equivalent (FTE) within SUP. In order for SUP to grow significantly without adversely affecting quality, a second faculty FTE is required. The program director must be relieved of some of their existing responsibilities in order to effectively manage a larger student body—and, potentially, an expanded set of faculty. Sponsored research is needed and, eventually, fundraising efforts will be necessary as well. Accordingly, SUP will seek to establish a second faculty FTE as early as 2021, when the program will be ten years old. This action supports the core values of active learning, research, and world engagement. Clearly, the move will have large financial implications for SUP and will therefore be contingent on sustained upward trends in enrollment, quality, and financial stability.

Establish merit-based scholarships for students from Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Diversity and world engagement are two of SUP’s core values so, as the program grows, it must make a financial commitment toward those values. An impactful way of doing this is by encouraging leading students from LDCs—who would not otherwise have access to GW—to attend. Given SUP’s emphasis on climate change and focus on Asia, a particular region to be targeted by this action is Southeast Asia. This action supports the core values of advocacy, diversity, and world engagement. This move will have large financial implications for the program and will therefore be contingent on sustained upward trends in enrollment, quality, and financial stability.

Though not exhaustive, this set of actions captures the broad sentiment of the strategic planning sessions. Smaller actions also emerged and will be implemented as time and energy allow. While other large actions could certainly be added to the list, each of those included came up repeatedly and with much interest.

NB: The College of Professional Studies has prepared a financial analysis of this document. The cost of implementing the actions listed above is estimated at approximately $300,000 annually: $125,500 for the FTE and $165,000—or $82,500 each—for two full scholarships.

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12 Latin America and the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa are also important to this action.
In just a few short years, SUP has accomplished what might reasonably be expected of a small-to mid-sized department of full-time faculty. By 2026, the program will be 15 years old and, by that time, its paradigm will be fully realized: it will be a vibrant, collaboratively managed community of scholarship that is financially independent and secure at GW for the long-term. The ambition is a program engineered to stay at the very top of the planning profession—even as it helps to transform graduate education and expand the boundaries of the field.

The immediate challenge faced by SUP is to attain candidacy for accreditation from PAB in January 2017 and, subsequently, accreditation in January 2019. During this process and thereafter, the program must maintain a dynamic equilibrium that will enable it to enter the top tier of urban planning programs. It will take SUP at least the next five years, until 2021, to make significant progress on this path. Looking further ahead, toward the horizon of this plan, the program will stay focused on its mission of training the next generation of leaders in the field of urban planning. Its uniqueness is derived from the manner in which it makes the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental sustainability the focus of planning in order to achieve competitive, inclusive, and ecological cities. The only expansion in operations will be a concentration focused on sustainable urbanization in Asia. By maintaining a narrow resolve, SUP will lay claim to primacy in its area of specialization: planning for the oncoming future of anthropogenic climate change.

As SUP progresses in its mission, it will continue to graduate practitioners of sustainable urban planning. The impact of the program will be evermore visible as it expands the reach of the planning profession by placing its students and alumni in positions traditionally dominated by practitioners of the natural and social sciences.

Ten years from now, in 2026, SUP will be exceptional among its peers and a recognized contributor to GW’s preeminence in innovation, globalization, governance, and citizenship. The program’s mission and ambitions are formidable, but they will be met through conviction and energy. The path forward is challenging but SUP is already well on its way: five years ago, there was nothing but, today, there is an impressive record of success—and the planning profession is better off because of it.
The George Washington University does not unlawfully discriminate in its admissions programs against any person based on that person’s race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.