

uepp

linking knowledge and action



Department of
Urban & Environmental Planning & Policy
College of the Environment
Western Washington University

Newsletter Spring 2026

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A Word from the President..... 3
- High Demand for UEPP Programs..... 3
- UEPP in the Community..... 4
- UEPP Action Research Briefs..... 5
- Excellence @ UEPP 6
- Welcome to UEPP!..... 7
- 2025 Graduation Celebration 8
- Forthcoming Events & Useful Links 9



The mission of the UEPP department is to deliver quality professional education, applied research, and community engagement that connect knowledge and action to address two of today's major imperatives:

environmental justice and sustainability
and
equity and opportunity for all



UEPP Degrees

Urban Planning and Environmental Sustainability, MA

Urban Planning, BA
 Urban Sustainability, BA
 Environmental Policy, BA
 Natural Resource Management, BA (Ext.)

Urban Planning major re-accredited for 7 years



In November 2025, WWU’s Urban Planning major was re-accredited for seven years by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), which noted that the program:

“has an exemplary record, the accreditation period granted is the longest term possible under current PAB rules.”

UEPP Master’s Degree

In Fall 2025, UEPP welcomed the first cohort of its new Master’s degree

Urban Planning and Environmental Sustainability, MA.

Learn more about the Master’s degree [here](#).



More UEPP here

A Word from the President

As we start 2026, I am inspired by the university’s focus and success in delivering on its education mission and advancing its core priorities of inclusive student success, increasing Washington impact, and enhancing academic excellence. I deeply value the Urban and Environmental Planning and Policy (UEPP) Department’s essential contributions to education, public service, sustainability, and community engagement. WWU has long emphasized experiential learning that connects scholarship with real world impact — and UEPP excels in delivering on this commitment.



Planning education at WWU has a distinguished legacy, with planning degrees offered for more than 45 years. Building on this foundation, UEPP became a standalone department in 2021, affirming the growing importance of planning and environmental policy in our region and beyond. In fall 2025, we also welcomed the inaugural cohort of the Master’s in Urban Planning and Environmental Sustainability.

Our accredited undergraduate Planning major continues to thrive with a recent seven-year reaccreditation, reinforcing the strength of its curriculum and outcomes. UEPP students are already making an impact across Washington, assisting communities like Ferndale, La Conner, Everson, and Nooksack with comprehensive plan updates that guide decisions about housing, transportation, land use, and sustainable growth. These applied projects not only serve our partners but give students invaluable professional experience that prepares them for careers in planning and public service.

The department’s work has also been recognized by the state legislature: the 2023–2025 biennium budget provided \$200,000 to support cities and counties with their comprehensive plan updates, a testament to UEPP’s value in shaping resilient and inclusive communities. The success of UEPP efforts led the state legislature to continue its support in the 2025-2027 budget with an additional \$355,000 for planning projects. With doubled student enrollment, strong community partnerships, and a clear vision for the future, UEPP is a vital contributor to WWU’s mission and to the health and sustainability of communities statewide.

Sabah Randhawa
 WWU President

High Demand for UEPP Programs

According to Dr. Kamel, UEPP Department Chair, demand for all UEPP programs continues to grow. The accredited Urban Planning major is nationally recognized for its excellence and draws students from across the state, nation, and the world. Environmental Policy and Urban Sustainability majors also continue to grow and attract students nationwide. UEPP programs emphasize linking knowledge and action in curricula that integrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students also have various experiential learning opportunities such as professional internships, applied and research projects, and study abroad courses. The high quality of students, the dedication of staff and faculty, community partnerships, and state support strengthen our collective resolve to maintain academic excellence and prepare our students for successful and fulfilling lifelong careers.

UEPP Honors



UEPP Professor and, Sustainability Engagement Institute Director, Dr. Wang received the 2025 Outstanding Faculty Leadership Award.



Dr. Hollenhorst, UEPP Professor Emeritus and College of the Environment Dean Emeritus received the 2025 Carl H. Simpson Bridging Award.

Did you know?

Western offers one of **only 16 accredited** undergraduate **Urban Planning** degrees in the nation? Find out more about UPSD [here](#)

UEPP in the Community

Your Voice in Olympia Planning Workshop

Senator Jesse Salomon and Commerce GMA Managing Director Dave Andersen joined planning officials and professionals at a workshop organized by the WA APA Legislative Committee and supported by Dr. Kamel and UEPP students.



Indigenous Housing Summit

Dr. Miller convened Tribal representatives from across the state, along with housing professionals, community members, and students, to address housing strategies for Washington’s Tribes. The summit published this [report](#).



City of Ferndale Planning Studio

The City of Ferndale engaged UEPP faculty and students in a yearlong planning studio to update its comprehensive plan. Studio reports included [analysis](#), [plans](#), and [implementation strategies](#).



Planner’s Network Conference

UEPP faculty and students joined faculty from several national and international institutions and explored innovative housing strategies at the Planner’s Network conference in Seattle.



Connections for Social Change

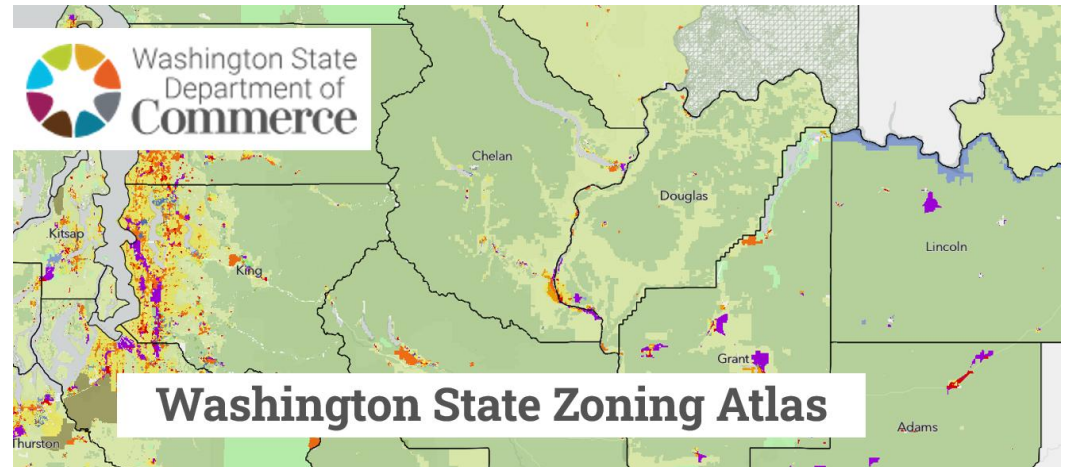


UEPP honored Rena Priest's participation with a painting of Coast Salish artist Jason Laclair.



Vincent Feliciano, Lummi Nation and Native American flute player offered "Something in the Moment" and in "The Spirit of the Work".

UEPP Action Research Briefs



Washington State Zoning Atlas (WAZA)

Dr. Laninga, collaborated with a cross-university research group and engaged UEPP students to contribute to the Washington State Zoning Atlas (WAZA). The Washington Department of Commerce atlas is available [here](#).

Connections for Social Change

UEPP organized the daylong Connections for Social Change event that bridged town and gown with the participation of about 30 university, local, and regional organizations. Hundreds of guests attended workshops, poetry, music, exhibits, documentaries, and teach-ins around issues of equity and social justice. A highlight of the event was the participation of Rena Priest, Lhaq'temish (Lummi) Nation member and Washington State Poet Laureate, who honored the event with her powerful poetry and warm conversation. This student-led event was made possible with support from WWU Tribal Relations and with funding from WWU Social Justice and Equity Committee, the Whatcom Foundation, and UEPP.

Planning Assistance Program (PAP)

Dr. Kamel and UEPP faculty and students launched a program to assist and support cities, counties, and Tribes with their planning efforts. The program provides student internships, studios, dedicated courses, senior projects, and more to cities, counties, Tribes, and communities in the state of Washington.

Point Roberts Community Development

Washington state legislature commissioned UEPP to address planning and development needs of Point Roberts. Dr. Laninga and UEPP students and faculty are engaging with Point Roberts communities to assist with the development of future plans with an emphasis on economic and environmental sustainability.

State Route 9 Corridor Study, Sumas, WA – US DOT Thriving Communities Program

Dr. Laninga and planning studio students are working with the City of Sumas and its communities to plan pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalk and corridor improvements, floodproofing, infrastructure improvements, and economic development opportunities on Cherry Str/SR 9 through downtown Sumas.

Swinomish Tribe: Seven Generations Housing

Dr. Zaferatos and planning studio students are partnering with the Swinomish Tribe to develop a housing capacity analysis on trust lands and provide an urban design study for Twiwok, a tribal village continuously occupied for 3500 years.

Student Research on Health Disparities



Madisyn Cook, UEPP Environmental Policy major worked with Dr. Abel researching historic redlining continued effect on health disparities. Cook’s research, earned her a scholarship from the Northwest Association of Environmental Professionals (NWAEP).

Denmark Sustainable Design Experience



UEPP planning students Jack Bengston, Ariadna Santos, and Ian Vega were selected to research the design and use of urban and public spaces in Denmark. The program was led by WWU Engineering & Design Department faculty in partnership with COurban Design Collective.

Excellence @ UEPP 2025 Award Recipients



Laddi Quintilla
APA Foundation Diversity Scholarship
APA WA Chapter Student Scholarship



Lex Clark
APA Outstanding Planning Student
Urban Planning Outstanding Student Award



Gabrielle Emanuels
Urban Sustainability
Outstanding Student Award



Martha Macchiarella
College of the Environment
Community Service Award

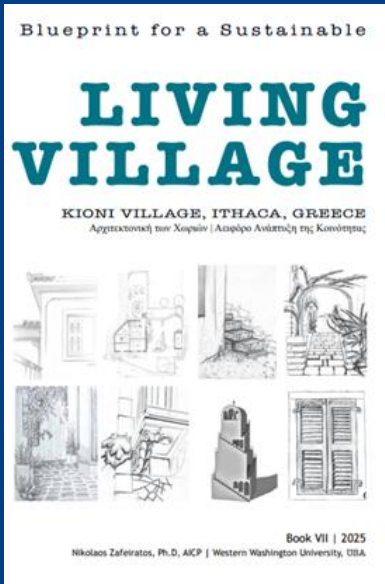


Cassidy Schneider
Environmental Policy Outstanding Student Award



Noa Simon
College of the Environment
Outstanding Environmental
Experience Award

Sustainable Development in Greece



Dr. Zaferatos completed his study “*Blueprint for a Sustainable Living Village*” from WWU’s Global Education Program in Ithaca, Greece.

Planning Stewardship and Advocacy



UEPP honors Joe Tovar, FAICP, for his contributions over more than 50 years supporting the planning profession and education in Washington and nationally.

Welcome to UEPP!



Chris Collier

Chris joined UEPP in 2025 with extensive experience in housing from his work with the Housing Authority of Snohomish County. Chris is a strong advocate for housing affordability and teaches special topics in planning related to housing in the state of Washington.



Julie Nicoll

Julie brings her expertise as legal consultant with the Municipal Research Services Center (MRSC), where she provides legal assistance and training on land use matters to government agencies. Julie previously served as a Civil Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Skagit County advising the Planning Department.



Steve Butler

Steve is a planning consultant and the Planning & Policy Director at Municipal Research and Services Center (MSRC). Steve has been involved in community planning for over 30 years and is an elected member to the American Institute of Certified Planner’s College of Fellows (FAICP).



Samantha Zee

Samantha grew up in Hilo, on the island of Hawai'i, and now works full-time at Opportunity Council and serves on the Board of Directors for the Ferndale Food Bank. Samantha focuses on community-level initiatives and teaches for UEPP “Nonprofit, Policy, and Planning for Social Change”.



Brandon Joseph

Brandon, originally from Fairbanks, Alaska, is a proud Athabascan and Muscogee Creek and contributes to the UEPP curriculum by teaching “Indigenous Placemaking”. Brandon also chairs WWU’s Okanogan Charter work group to embed health, well-being, and sustainability into all aspects of campus life.



Kate Beck

Kate teaches courses on practice-oriented planning and policy. Kate also works at Western’s Sustainability Engagement Institute. Prior to working at Western, Kate worked as a regional planner and policy researcher in public utilities and transportation.

2025 Graduation Celebration



UEPP students at graduation celebration at the Portal Container Village at the Bellingham waterfront



UEPP student club officers at graduation celebration



To support UEPP student success, scan this QR code or follow this [link](https://alumniq.wvu.edu/giving/to/UEPP) and make a gift

If you are inspired to make a lasting impact on our programs, we invite you to contact the [department chair](#) and explore additional engagement opportunities.

Forthcoming Events

[Planner’s Network Conference](#): Toronto, Canada (May 8-10, 2026)

[APA National Conference](#): Detroit, MI (April 25-28, 2026)

[APA Washington Chapter](#): Vancouver, WA (October 7-9, 2026)

[ACSP Conference](#): Pittsburgh, PA (October 8-10, 2026)

[World Planning Schools Congress](#): Helsinki, Finland (June 29-July 3, 2026)

[RC21 Urban and Regional Development Conference](#): Vienna, Austria (July 20-22, 2026)

Useful Links



Department of Urban & Environmental
Planning & Policy
College of the Environment
Western Washington University

<https://cenv.wvu.edu/uepp>



American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

<https://www.washington-apa.org/>



American Planning Association

Creating Great Communities for All

<https://www.planning.org/>



ACSP

Connecting educators,
researchers and students

<https://www.acsp.org/>

Association of Collegiate
Schools of Planning



Planning Accreditation Board

<https://www.planningaccreditationboard.org/>

Planners Network

THE ORGANIZATION OF PROGRESSIVE PLANNING

<https://www.plannersnetwork.org/>

ADPSR

Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility

<https://www.adpsr.org/>



[CUES:](#)

Club for Urban and Environmental Sustainability



Support UEPP Student Success

scan this QR code or use this [link](#) to make a gift

<https://alumniq.wvu.edu/giving/to/UEPP>

Inspired to make a lasting impact on our programs?

We invite you to contact the [department chair](#) and explore opportunities to advance our programs