



CDWSP CENTRAL

Nurturing the Next Generation of Community Development Professionals

CDWSP Promotes Minority Recruitment

"Ultimately, Clemson's Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) program attracts prospective students who are interested in its high quality, technically oriented curriculum; the potential award of a CDWSP grant or similar funding assistance; and the program's success in graduating and placing students in the planning profession," says Dr. M. Grant Cunningham, Clemson's CDWSP coordinator. "And minority and economically disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities, currently enrolled in the MCRP program were identified through our comprehensive recruiting process," he continues.

Recruitment and Student Selection

"Student recruitment for the MCRP program follows a year-round schedule of rolling admissions," says Cunningham. "When they inquire about the program, prospective minority students are encouraged to apply and to identify their ethnicity on their admissions application, though

it is not required. Then they are monitored throughout the process. In this manner, a pool of minority individuals is established," he adds.

"First, prospective students are identified through general recruitment activities initiated by the graduate school at Clemson University, including campus visits by prospective students and referrals from colleagues in the field, and they are targeted to receive specific promotional material about the MCRP program," says Cunningham. The graduate school then works in collaboration with the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture and the University's Office of Access and Equity to provide recruitment opportunities and financial support for minority graduate students. "The graduate school and the Office of Access and Equity participate in recruitment of prospective students from HBCUs, support the planning department's efforts to bring prospective graduate students to

campus, work with the department to provide financial assistance to eligible students, and provide professional development support for enrolled graduate students, who make presentations at conferences," adds Cunningham.

Moreover, when selecting individuals to participate in CDWSP, the Department of Planning and Landscape



Grant Cunningham, CDWSP Coordinator

Architecture considers the extent to which each student has demonstrated the following:

- Financial need based on Clemson University's Financial Aid Office guidelines.
- An interest in, and commitment to, a professional career in city planning (as part of the application for enrollment, each student submits a one-page description of their career goals and a statement of interest.).
- The ability to satisfactorily complete work placement and academic responsibilities under CDWSP.

"Potential CDWSP participants are consulted to determine their financial status and their interests in pursuing employment in the field of planning and community development after graduation," says Cunningham. "They are informed that they must make a good faith effort to

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Cooper Library, Clemson University.

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obtain employment after graduation with a unit of state or local government, a Native American tribe administering community development programs, or a nonprofit private organization that receives community development funds, and they must remain employed for at least 2 consecutive years," he continues.

Coping with Adjustment Problems

"It is not uncommon for students to experience problems adjusting to a new environment and a new course of study. However, the depth of the problems depends on the individual. Factors such as maturity, age, outside responsibilities, and background, come into play," says Cunningham. "As a minority faculty member and a long-term resident of the area, I hope I am a source of support and counsel for all students, including minority students," he adds.

According to Cunningham, Clemson has offices, programs, and activities to address various students' needs. "The problems some students may have with coping or adjusting to a new environment is expected to some extent, and I believe the university makes an effort through its programs to remedy these situations. Additionally, organizations such as the Black Graduate Student Association create avenues for minority graduates students campuswide to interact and the various black Greek letter organizations provide events that may be familiar to many," says Cunningham.

The Impact of Minority Recruitment

According to Cunningham, minority recruitment activities, such as the use of CDWSP funds, have been positive for Clemson because it contributes to the university's efforts to increase minority



Tillman Hall, Clemson University.

graduate student enrollment in all academic programs, particularly, in the MCRP program, a discipline not often pursued by minority students. "Also, the funding assistance is significant because this is not a large program in terms of the overall numbers of students, which range from 15 to 20 enrolling each year," says Cunningham.

"Certainly, I believe that the impact on the participating students has been significant since they selected this program over other potential opportunities," says Cunningham. "They recognized the strengths of the program. They are provided an excellent education in planning from a top university. After graduation, their options in the planning profession are greatly enhanced with a Clemson degree. Our graduates have a high success rate in finding employment in their field a short time after completing the program," he adds.

"Diversity is always an issue for institutions like Clemson University, a state-supported public school," says Cunningham. "Efforts to address diversity have the long-range effect of creating opportunities for both majority and minority students to interact and establish relationships."

For more information on minority recruitment for Clemson's CDWSP, contact: Dr. M. Grant Cunningham, HUD CDWSP Coordinator, Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture, 131 Lee Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina 29634-0511; phone: (864) 656-1587; fax: (864) 656-7519; e-mail: cunninm@clemson.edu. 🌸

Graduate Praises Minority Recruitment and CDWSP

"The recruitment process and its notable city and regional planning program were two of the main reasons why I chose to enroll at Clemson University," says



Robyn Eason

Robyn Eason, a recent graduate of Clemson's MCRP program. "I was impressed because I was contacted by telephone by one of the professors at Clemson to discuss my application, aspirations in the planning field, and why Clemson was such a great choice," she adds. I remember a lengthy conversation that gave me a greater insight into the program, how I could tailor the program to fit my needs, why Clemson's campus was a great place for graduates, and why I should take the time to visit the campus for a better look. This was all before Clemson mentioned the HUD scholarship, which was like icing on the cake," she adds.

According to Eason, her recruiter took the time to explain the entire scope of the CDWSP scholarship, including the amount, its duration, the internship requirements, and what it covered in terms of personal needs such as books and conferences. "Therefore, the active recruitment in addition to the great financial assistance facilitated and solidified my decision to attend Clemson University," says Eason.

CDWSP Program

According to Eason, the city and regional planning program at Clemson is a solid and comprehensive program. "While it promotes a generalist curriculum, it leaves ample room for students to mold the program to fit their needs, says Eason. "For example, I wanted my primary focus to be community and economic development with a slice of real estate. Throughout my time in the program, I was able to fit in extra classes to meet those desires as well as choose internships that would complement

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UWM Strengthens Minority Outreach Efforts

In 1997 the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) won its first CDWSP grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This funding covered the tuition and provided paid internships to one student in each of the college's three community development-related focus programs—urban studies, urban planning, and public administration. Now in its third funding cycle, the college has successfully graduated five students from its CDWSP and aspirations are growing. In an attempt to bolster campus and community interest, UWM staff have begun examining ways to increase program exposure, particularly ways to strengthen their minority recruitment efforts.

According to Patricia Torres, the program's outreach manager, UWM has always made a strong effort to inform minority graduate students of available CDWSP funding. "It's always been a part of our strategy. This year," explains Torres, "the strategy is different. It's enhanced." A driving factor behind this refocusing of marketing is basic mathematics, according to Torres. "Each year, we have about 10 applicants for the program. We have a campus of about 26,000 students. For a campus this size, we'd definitely like to see more interest."

Therefore, UWM has begun a more personal approach to marketing the CDWSP. Torres says they continue to contact community-based organizations to help identify students who might be interested in pursuing graduate degrees in community development and planning. They build strong relationships with the directors of the three community development-related graduate programs, who help identify students in their classes who fit the CDWSP's minority and economically disadvantaged criteria. They also continue to distribute flyers to students and post them where graduate-level courses are held.

Staff are also trying a one-to-one approach to convince students to apply for the program. Torres and those in her office identify students who have decided not to continue their education and contact them directly. If funding is the reason they have chosen not to continue in school, staff informs these students of the CDWSP funding available through UWM. "We're offering them the opportunity [for] a full tuition, and all they need to do is apply," Torres explains.



Torres also uses relationships she has formed with community members and students. She sends e-mails and calls individuals within the community to inquire about family members or friends who might be interested in applying to the program. She also keeps in touch with students who leave their studies for various reasons. Personal telephone calls asking students if they knew that UWM offered this program often prove most successful. "Sometimes this is what it takes," Torres says. "Their families didn't go on to get higher degrees," so many students just don't consider it as an option.

Torres recently convinced a former student to apply for the current CDWSP cycle. Each time she saw him, she queried

him about his plans and whether the program would fit with those goals. Finally, he submitted an application. According to Torres, "Some kids just need you to keep on them."

One of Torres' hopes for future outreach is having alumni meet with new students to share with them the benefits they enjoyed and challenges they faced

while in the program. She has submitted this idea to HUD, hoping they will approve this as part of the program's new outreach strategy. She has also spoken with some of the students who successfully completed the program and received positive feedback from each of them.

Pa Vang is one graduate who would be willing to assist with this approach. Currently, Vang works for UWM's Center for Urban Community Development while she pursues her Ph.D. in Adult Education. With the funding from UWM's CDWSP, she earned her master's degree in urban planning in 2000. Beyond the financial support the program provided, Vang says her internships were invaluable to her education. During her time with the Institute for Wisconsin's Future, for example, she helped design and implement a statewide survey on the impact of welfare reform. "I learned how to design a useful tool and perform interviews. I also helped on projects to teach the community about how they are impacted by public policies."

Vang's internship with the Lisbon Avenue Neighborhood Association gave her experience working with geographic information systems as well as a more personal involvement with community members. During walking inspections of the

Patricia Torres (left) and Pa Vang (right).



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surrounding neighborhoods, Vang interacted with residents and gained a deeper understanding of the human aspect of her studies. “This program helped me tremendously in getting my education,” Vang explains. She acknowledges the encouragement that Torres and her staff give to students who would never have considered pursuing higher education. “There was a definite focus on being the first in your family to get a master’s degree.” Vang also expressed appreciation for the support received from staff throughout her time in the program. “We had regular meetings where everyone came together” to discuss activities, internships, problems, or any other related topics.

If Torres receives approval for having CDWSP graduates return to speak with future scholarship recipients, Vang agrees that her experience in the program is one she would gladly share. “I would be more than happy to speak with them if I’m given the chance.”

For more information on UWM’s CDWSP, please contact: Patricia Torres, Outreach Program Manager, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, P.O. Box 413, 2200 East Kenwood Boulevard, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413, ptorres@uwm.edu, (414) 229-2814. ❁

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those interests. Therefore, I got the best of both worlds—a great overview of city and regional planning, including history, the basics, design, and GIS computer mapping programs, as well as community and economic development experience,” she adds.

Finding Employment After Graduation

“Clemson’s city and regional planning program is respected nationwide. I often speak about the general curriculum fused with my interests in community and economic development, show some of the intensive individual and group projects I have done, and elaborate on my internship experiences, which are usually impressive enough for employers to ask for a second interview,” says Eason.

According to Eason, her Clemson graduate degree has generated interest from various employers, including engineering, architecture, urban planning consulting, and other firms and public agencies. “I eventually landed a job at an urban development consulting firm and have definitely been applying my Clemson education to various projects and circumstances,” says Eason. “I feel that I have been well-prepared for the professional world, in part from my general Clemson education and in part from the internship experience I gained during the program.” ❁

Robyn Eason is an associate at Bay Area Economics in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she provides market analysis, GIS and database support, and economic research to support client projects.