



## Emerging Urban Knights Planning Association Technical Skills Workshop Series

2015 Outstanding PSO Award  
Best Practices



## **Best Practices**

The Emerging Urban Knights Planning Association (Urban Knights), the student planning organization of the University of Central Florida (UCF) is submitting Technical Skills Workshop Series for consideration of the APA Outstanding PSO – Best Practices Category.

Established in 2013, the Urban Knights strive to develop a collaborative environment for UCF students and practitioners interested in fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of urban planning. The organization is a vehicle for faculty – student communication and the transition from student to professional. Since inception, the organization has organized tours of prominent Central Florida developments, attended the National APA Conference and Florida APA Conference, volunteered with local governments and organizations, hosted networking events, and organized extracurricular educational opportunities.

The Technical Skills Workshop Series is an educational seminar designed for students to learn hands-on technical skills successful planners need. Workshop topics supplement theories learned in the classroom and introduce students to opportunities in the field. These trainings fill the gap between academia and practice and are taught by Central Florida professional planners, helping students build a professional network.

<b>Application Package Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
PSO Representatives	3
Event Description	4
Process and Success	5
Event Pictures and Materials	6
Letters of Recommendation	10

## Planning Student Organization Representatives

Emily Hanna

David McMahan

### Contact Information

**Mailing Address:** 2421 Lake Street  
Deltona, FL 32738

**PSO Representative Contact:** Emily Hanna  
[EmilyHanna05@gmail.com](mailto:EmilyHanna05@gmail.com)  
407-617-4321

**PSO Representative Contact:** David McMahan  
[dmcmaham@knights.ucf.edu](mailto:dmcmaham@knights.ucf.edu)  
407-375-6004

## **Event Description**

Planning is a highly professionalized field, which challenges emerging professionals to possess the skills necessary for success at the onset of their career. With this in mind, the Urban Knights connected with the vibrant Central Florida planning community to help students develop the skills required for success prior to entering the job market.

The Urban Knights Technical Skills Workshops are a per semester series, the first was held in the Spring 2014 semester and second in the Fall of 2014. Workshops are held for one to two hours on specialized themes that are a mix of professional development and planning technique, taught by local practitioners. All sessions are held on-campus, either in conjunction with a graduate course or independently. Topics have included Wetland Mitigation, the AICP Code of Ethics, Professional Presentation Style, Site Plan Review, a Résumé Clinic, Urban Design in Disadvantaged Communities, and Sketch Up. Graduate and undergraduate students attend these workshops and gain technical knowledge, form an understanding of what professional planners do in their field, and build a professional network base.

The Technical Skills Workshop Series fosters partnerships among students, UCF faculty, and several local professional planning organizations. In particular, the Orlando Metro Section of FL APA was instrumental in working with the Urban Knights on implementing the Technical Skills Workshops Series by suggesting speakers and having selected workshops count for CM credits for AICP certified professionals. The Orlando Metro Section of FL APA, Florida Young Planners Group, and Florida Planning and Zoning Association worked with the Urban Knights to construct, host and teach some of these workshops for students, granting UCF students the opportunity to build a professional network base. At the end of the semester series, the Urban Knights host a Mentor Mixer for students, faculty, and local practitioners to interact in an informal setting.

## **Process and Success**

When the Urban Knights formed in 2013, the organization's goals were to connect with local professional planning organizations and assist with creating educational opportunities outside of normal coursework for students. The Technical Skills Workshop Series was the organization's first project in effort to achieve these goals. Choosing topics for the workshops was a collaborative process between students and Central Florida professionals. First, students were surveyed concerning what their interests were and what they would like to learn more about. The Urban Knights then addressed the professional planning community and asked what skills students entering the field need. All ideas for topics were considered and students then reached out to targeted professionals either associated with the APA FL OMS chapter, practitioners met during internships, or faculty connections to find speakers to volunteer their time to teach a workshop. Implementation of the workshops was completed entirely by the students of the organization by producing and circulating flyers, reserving classroom space, and coordinating with the designated speaker for date and time.

The Spring 2014 workshops were held once a month on days that worked for both the presenter and the students. The Spring 2014 workshop series was successful; however, attendance faltered as some students could not attend due to class conflicts or other obligations. The Urban Knights evaluated this issue and restructured the program for the Fall 2014 series, where workshops were hosted in one intensive week. The Urban Knights asked faculty to devote ninety minutes of class time to a technical skill during a specific week and open the room to other students. During the week of September 15-18, 2014, faculty integrated a workshop into their course schedule and opened the classroom to all students. This workshop style was tremendously successful in boosting attendance and increasing faculty involvement.

The success of the Urban Knights Technical Skills Workshop Series can be found in the attendance rates, student surveys, the faculty who became involved with the organization, and the local practitioners who were introduced to potential interns and new hires. The series is a replicable event, intended to be built and improved upon each semester.

## Event Pictures







## Event Materials

# URBAN KNIGHTS TECHNICAL SKILLS WORKSHOP SERIES

Monday, September 15, 2014

## Site Plan Review

Time: 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Location: HPA 1 104 (Planning Methods Class)  
Classrooms Invited: Sustainable Transportation and Information  
Systems to Public Managers and Planners



Tuesday, September 16, 2014

## Sketch - Up

Time: 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Location: Classroom Building 1 room 113  
(Land Use and Econ Class)  
Classrooms Invited: Intro to Urban Planning



Wednesday, September 17, 2014

## Wetlands Mitigation

Time: 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Location: HPA 1 room 117  
Classrooms Invited: none



Thursday, September 18, 2014

## LEED Design Workshop

Time: 6:00pm-7:30pm

Location: HPA 1 room 111 (Capstone Class)  
Classrooms Invited: Urban Design



Friday, September 19, 2014

## Mentor Mixer

Time: 5:30pm to 8:30pm

Time: 5:30pm to 8:30pm  
Location: Ember  
Everyone is invited to attend!

