The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) is home to the Urban Planning Student Association (UPSA). UPSA represents graduate and non-degree students pursuing a Master's degree or a Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning at UTSA. The association was formed in August of 2011 by its seven founding members. By its second year UPSA membership had doubled. UPSA’s mission is to encourage all UTSA College of Architecture, Construction, and Planning graduate and non-degree seeking students to participate in extracurricular activities, promote planning efforts and education, and strengthen connections amongst planning professionals. UPSA’s hope is that it provides a supportive platform for planning students and provides a space for students to explore new ideas in the planning of cities and regions.
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The **UPSA** Board is further supported by student members serving under special committees appointed by the Board. The current membership roster registers over 30 students across varying disciplines of study. In addition to planning students, the current **UPSA** membership roster includes architecture, interior design, public policy, and geography students. **UPSA** purposefully seeks out and promotes the **UTSA** Masters of Urban and Regional Planning program to an array of disciplines in an effort to promote the practice of planning.
Since **UPSA's** formation, members have come together to lead and contribute to various community projects. The organization has been actively involved with the San Antonio community in events such as the Team Better Block at the Broadway and Jones renovation and at Alamo Plaza. Additionally, **UPSA** has worked in conjunction with the Green Space Alliance to help build community gardens. **UPSA** members also continuously volunteer and participate in San Antonio’s Siclovia; an event geared toward street activation by way of creating a safe place to explore the City of San Antonio in a car-free environment. **UPSA** members also consistently assist in the planning and production of area planning related conferences through volunteerism and speaking engagements.
UPSA is continuously committed not only to the San Antonio community which hosts our program, but also to serving its university community. UPSA has developed a strong relationship with the UTSA Office of Sustainability to continue planning efforts through sustainable practices. UPSA members worked closely with the Office of Sustainability to implement a memorial bike trail and bike repair shop to honor the death of community cyclist and activist, Tito Bradshaw. The Office of Sustainability has also approached UPSA members to contribute to its efforts to promote a walkable campus through walkability audits and has asked UPSA to contribute their knowledge of parklet design to contribute to its winter park space project.
In addition to assisting in the development of planning professionals, UPSA is developing and supporting the emergence of passionate planning leaders. UPSA whole-heartedly supports and promotes the vision of the American Planning Association (APA) and seeks to work under the guidance of APA. The current UPSA President currently serves as APA Latinos and Planning Division Student Representative, Southern Region and was elected to serve as incoming APA Student Representatives Chair, as well as serve as an emerging planning leader of the APA Texas Southwest Section. UPSA’s Professional Development Chair serves as APA Texas Southwest Section Treasurer and UPSA’s Media Coordinator was heavily involved with the APA Texas Chapter conference planning committee. A number of UPSA members are also heavily involved in their respective divisions and eagerly volunteer to assist in any capacity available. The relationships between UPSA members and APA do not end at graduation; past UPSA members continue leadership roles both locally and nationally within APA.
To solidify planning relationships, UPSA works closely with the APA Texas Southwest Section to host its annual speed-networking Spring mixer. UPSA’s mixer allows members to maximize personal interaction with planning professionals, gain valuable industry insight, and advance career opportunities. The members of UPSA recognize the value of APA’s knowledge and relationships and work diligently to strengthen the relationship between APA and UPSA.
The relationships UPSA develops with APA and planning professionals does not only extend to networking opportunities, but to provide practical planning experience and knowledge to its members. UPSA holds monthly member meetings featuring various professionals from extensive planning related backgrounds in an effort to develop well-rounded planning professionals in our members. The UTSA planning program also continuously seeks out the input of UPSA members to design planning projects. Through the UTSA planning program, UPSA members have been involved in assisting rural Texas communities in their planning efforts, contributing to the archival documentation of the urban form of a historic San Antonio neighborhood association, and collaborated with architecture students in the study and analysis of reconnecting San Antonio’s downtown center.
UPSA members continue community relationships and plan member-led field trips with community organizations to explore planning practice; most recently UPSA members were invited to tour the expansion of the San Antonio River hosted by the San Antonio River Authority. In addition to planning education, UPSA members include a visiting Fulbright scholar from Bahrain, whose contributions to UPSA have expanded the planning thinking of UPSA beyond local planning to global planning.

The members of UPSA are consistently dedicated to promoting planning practices and education to the City and University through hands-on community involvement and continuously seek engaging practices to visibly promote the UTSA planning program. UPSA and its members are exemplary, well-rounded planning students, professionals, and leaders and embody the APA standards of Outstanding Planning Student Organization.
OUTSTANDING PSO AWARD SUBMISSION

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

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