Planning for Lasting Relationships

Outstanding PSO Award Submission
Planning Student Organization at University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
08 December 2016
Contents

3 Entry Information

4 Project Description

6 Letters of Support
   Eric Weiss
   Breanne Rothstein
   Peggy + Otto Schmid
   Ryan Allen

12 Photos

13 Our Leadership
Entry Information

Title of Entry: Planning for Lasting Relationships
Name of PSO: Planning Student Organization at University of Minnesota – Twin Cities
Name of School: Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs
Award Category: Category A: Involvement with State Chapter or Division
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Project Description

PSO Activities

The Planning Student Organization (PSO) at University of Minnesota – Twin Cities creates many opportunities for students and professionals to foster meaningful relationships and is heavily involved with the Minnesota Chapter. PSO hosted the following events with the American Planning Association – Minnesota Chapter over the last year:

- Career panels with APA – Minnesota Chapter panelists followed by networking sessions
- Brown bag lunches with APA – Minnesota Chapter members
- Happy hours with APA – Minnesota Chapter members
- 2016 Minnesota APA Upper Midwest Conference

In addition, PSO advocates for student representation on committees and boards, and this year PSO members and students served on the Conference Committee, the Board of Directors, and held a chair position on the Sponsorship Committee. PSO members created a Student Outreach Committee for the Conference and eleven students volunteered their time to help ensure the conference ran smoothly – volunteering at the check in table, moderating sessions, organizing happy hours, and directing runners during the annual 5k. Through joint efforts with the Minnesota Chapter, seven student teams presented at the 2016 Minnesota APA Upper Midwest Conference.

PSO members contribute bi-annually to the Minnesota Chapter newsletter and attend events hosted by the Minnesota Chapter, including networking sessions, happy hours, the annual holiday party and Minnesota Twins baseball game, book club events, local tours of new development projects, and guest speaker events.

The PSO board makes it easy for students to interact with APA members, and even host webinars in conference rooms on campus so students can learn about planning and interact with professionals during their busy schedules.

Award Fulfillment

PSO at University of Minnesota - Twin Cities is extremely involved with the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association. The Minnesota Chapter Student Director and Student Representative, both board members of the Chapter, serve on the PSO board and work diligently to connect students with professionals. Once a semester, PSO hosts planning career panels, on which Minnesota Chapter members sit and answer student questions. Over 40 PSO members attended the last career panel, followed by a networking happy hour, that all Minnesota Chapter members were invited to attend. PSO leaders work frequently with the Board Members of the Minnesota Chapter to ensure that all members are invited to PSO hosted events. Additionally, PSO hosts brown bag lunches with professional members of the Minnesota Chapter. These brown bag lunches allow PSO members and students to learn from professionals about a new topic in a casual atmosphere.
Project Description

PSO at University of Minnesota - Twin Cities exemplifies best practices for involvement with the Minnesota Chapter of the APA. The PSO and Minnesota Chapter of the APA frequently collaborate on events so that students and professionals have ample opportunities to build relationships. Because of the strong connection between the PSO and leaders in the Minnesota Chapter of the APA, our students are prepared to be tomorrow’s leaders and active members of the planning profession, especially the APA – Minnesota Chapter.

Success

PSO board members work throughout the year to ensure that PSO members attend the annual Minnesota Planners Conference. This year, they created a Student Outreach Committee on which four PSO members sat, and one PSO board member served as a co-chair for the Sponsorships Committee. Eleven PSO members volunteered to help run the three-day conference, and helped ensure the event ran smoothly. More than 40 students attended the 2016 Minnesota APA Upper Midwest Conference, and met Minnesota Chapter members during sessions, tours, and a Young Planners Happy Hour planned by PSO. The Young Planners Happy Hour had over 100 attendees and will be an annual tradition at the state conference. Young planners and PSO members also made a strong showing as presenters. Seven student teams presented their work as a result of the joint efforts between the PSO and the Conference Planning Committee. Notable student contributions included:

- Land Use Equity in Minneapolis: Lessons from the Field
- Barriers to Active Living in Suburban Residential Development
- Monitoring Use of Minnesota State Trails

PSO’s work with the Minnesota Chapter and the 2016 Minnesota APA Upper Midwest Conference was extremely successful, and more students attended the conference than ever before.

Leadership within the APA – Minnesota Chapter have a strong relationship with University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. The Chapter Board hosts an annual board meeting that is open to all APA members, including students. This year, the PSO and APA – Minnesota Chapter worked in tandem to host the meeting at Humphrey School of Public Affairs, home of the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program and PSO. Several students attended and engaged in the meeting. After the conclusion of the meeting, attendees and all APA members were invited to engage in fellowship with the students in the MURP Lab, where PSO hosts its meetings. PSO hosted the APA members and attendees and ordered local African food and coffee. The event was extremely successful and promoted both APA and PSO involvement. Over the years, PSO and the Minnesota Chapter of the APA have built a strong working relationship and will continue to work closely for the benefit of its students and professionals.
Letter of Support

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
P.O. Box 64560
St. Paul, MN 55164-0560
(651) 662-8000 / (800) 382-2000

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write a letter of recommendation for the PSO as part of their nomination for involvement with the Minnesota APA Chapter. I have worked with PSO for the past few years, most closely with our annual conference this year, and am excited to continue working with them as Vice President of the Minnesota Chapter. PSO is engaged year-round in a variety of chapter activities and actively works with our board members to provide valuable professional events and networking opportunities for current planning students.

This year, the PSO was instrumental in our annual conference. Four PSO members took initiative and advocated for students’ voices in the conference planning process. The advisory committee they formed, the student outreach committee, reached out to planning students statewide to increase interest and awareness of the conference. They helped fill volunteer positions before, during, and after the conference, which helped the conference run smoothly. As a co-chair for conference planning, it was immensely helpful in my responsibilities to know I could count on the PSO. The conference would not have run as successfully as it did without the support of the PSO. The efforts of the PSO were incredibly professional, and they took their duties very seriously. Additionally, they coordinated student rooms at the hotel and carpools to and from the conference to reduce costs, making conference attendance financially feasible for more students. They even went above and beyond, asking if they could plan a Young Professional Happy Hour to create a special place and time to network among their peers in a more relaxed environment. This happy hour was well attended and received several positive comments from attendees. Thanks to the dedication and passion of the PSO, I am looking forward to this type of programming becoming an annual event at our chapter conference.

This fall, PSO held a panel for first-year students in their planning program to introduce students to the wide range of jobs and careers available to planners. I was honored to serve as a panelist. Once again, PSO was professional and accommodating. They provided transit and parking passes for each of the panelists. Questions were given to panelists in advance to allow us time to prepare and offer meaningful insights to students, which I found very helpful to collect my thoughts. This was followed by about 10 minutes of questions from the audience. The panel was attended by over 40 students, even on a Monday night! To provide networking opportunities and welcome all APA members, they hosted a happy hour mixer immediately following the panel. This was coordinated using APA funds our board provides to the Student Representative and Student Director, both of whom are PSO board members. PSO booked the
This year, the PSO was instrumental in our annual conference.

-Eric Weiss, Vice President – Elect
Dear Committee Members:

As the President of the Minnesota Chapter of the American Planning Association I have had the pleasure to work with the Planning Student Organization (PSO) at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs through my tenure. The PSO works diligently year-round to connect students with professionals and the state chapter through career panels, networking events, and most importantly, having students attend the annual conference. Therefore, I am happy to be writing a letter of recommendation on behalf of the PSO for their nomination for involvement with the APA Chapter of Minnesota.

This year, PSO students were vital in and throughout the planning and execution of the Upper Midwest Regional Conference. Due to the PSO’s efforts, there was a large showing of students at our state’s Planner’s Conference in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. One PSO board member volunteered as the sponsorship co-chair, the only student in recent years to volunteer for this pivotal task. She executed her role with ease and I was very impressed with the outcome. Additionally, four PSO board members created a student outreach committee to organize students attending the conference. This committee only existed because PSO board members advocated for themselves and volunteered their time. The committee reached out to planning organizations across the state, reserved group rooms in advance for students, planned carpool trips for attendees, and sought out volunteering opportunities for students to receive discounted admission to the conference. Additionally, they helped organize sessions for students to present their work at the conference, and the sessions were well-attended. I was able to network with students throughout the entire conference, and was impressed with the level of attendance and engagement from the students. PSO board members went above and beyond to ensure that students attended the conference, and even asked if they could plan a young planners happy hour the first night of the conference that had over 100 attendees. This allowed for professionals to get to know students in a laid-back setting, and was very successful.

Each year, the Student Representative and Student Director of our chapter have a small budget to plan professional development events for students and professionals. For the past few years, both the Student Representative and the Student Director have been students at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and members of their PSO. The PSO has worked to ensure that each year, there are at least two career panels with professional planners and members of the APA. The first panel this year was a huge success with over 40 students in attendance and three planners on the panel. One of the panelists, Eric Weiss, was the co-chair for conference planning and is running unopposed for the Vice President position on the board. Students were able to submit questions in advance, and PSO board members moderated the panel. The event ran smoothly and was followed by a casual networking and happy hour that the PSO planned at a restaurant nearby. All APA members were invited to this portion of the event, and there were 8 professional attendees, all members of the APA, including the current Vice President and future
President and Vice President of our chapter. The PSO planned reserved the room, pre-ordered appetizers and drinks, marketed the event via our APA listserv, and personally invited APA members they knew. The event was professionally executed, and allowed students to have thoughtful conversations with professionals. The PSO hosts networking events like this at least twice a year for students and APA members, and they are planning a speed networking event for the spring where students can quickly network with many different planners.

PSO has done a remarkable job connecting students with professionals and are extremely involved with the state chapter. They are currently hosting bi-monthly brown bag lunches with chapter leaders and members, where students can learn about specific planning topics they are interested in over lunch while networking with professionals. The PSO always encourages students to attend chapter activities and engage with programs. They play webinars on campus for students to watch, make it easy for students to attend our meetings and events through carpools, and have students contribute to our monthly newsletter.

I would strongly encourage the committee to award the PSO at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs the Outstanding PSO Award for involvement with the state chapter. The PSO ensures that students and chapter members have ample opportunities to meet each other and network and come up with innovative ways for these connections to take place. Just last week, the PSO hosted the APA at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs and ordered coffee and appetizers for us and allowed us to mingle with students in their studio space. The PSO at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs are an excellent example for PSOs nationwide and deserve acknowledgement for their contributions to our state chapter.

Sincerely,

Breanne Rothstein
President, American Planning Association – Minnesota Chapter

PSO has done a remarkable job connecting students with professionals and are extremely involved with the state chapter.

-Breanne Rothstein, President
November 10, 2016

Subject: Support of the PSO Chapter at the Humphrey School/University of Minnesota for the Outstanding PSO Award.

To Whom it May Concern:

As administrators, we have the good fortune to work with some of the students at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs on a regular basis, in particular with the students who are members of the PSO. Each year, we come to really appreciate the talents of these students at the conference, at the board meetings, during the chapter Awards process, and at various chapter events.

This year, ten of the students volunteered at our three day chapter conference, in particular helping at the registration desk and moderating for the various sessions, working a group total of 50 hours. Because students volunteered, our professional members were released from some of their responsibilities to attend sessions and mobile tours. Several of the students also volunteered to be "gophers" during the conference, running errands around town and picking up last minute printing for the sessions. In addition during the conference, one of the students, Gratia Ratzloff, chaired the Exhibitor/Sponsor Committee, working numerous hours to fill in for the original chair who was on maternity leave. She can tell you it is an exhausting job to answer all the demands of the 22 exhibitors who were at the conference. Two other students worked on the Conference Planning Committee, again putting in many hours helping with all of the functions of the committee, such as planning the Program and Mobile Tours. There was a concerted effort on the part of the PSO to include as many students as possible both as participants and as volunteers. From our point of view, we were especially pleased to see that the Humphrey Chapter of the PSO reached out to two of the other planning schools in the state, encouraging those students to attend the conference and providing them with the same opportunities to be involved as volunteers.

In 2016, as in many past years, both our Student Director, Darin Newman, and our Student Representative, Chloe Brigl, have served on the Chapter Board, and both are Humphrey School students. They not only attended our chapter meetings, but also Darin presented a session at the conference. Darin and Chloe organized a number of events where students could network with the professional members of the chapter at the conference and during the regular school year. Also, Chloe was this year’s recipient of our chapter’s Gunnar Isberg Scholarship. Incidentally, the PSO faculty advisor is Carissa Schively, who is also the faculty liaison to the APA MN board.
Finally, several of the students were recognized as part of our annual Awards program. Chuck Demler, Kaela Dickens, Joe Hartmann, Laurel Nightingale, and Kalli Perano received the Award for Outstanding Student Project.

The PSO seems to be an organization that brings out the best in the students. With enough opportunities and activities as part of the chapter agenda, all of the students have the potential to engage in some aspect of planning that allows them to develop a focus and to practice their skills and talents. The networking with professionals in the field provides them a venue to learn from practical suggestions, like how to interview for a job, but also allows them to make connections both socially and professionally that will enhance their future as planners in Minnesota and beyond.

We strongly recommend the Humphrey School PSO as a worthy recipient of the Outstanding PSO Award.

Sincerely,
Peggy & Otto Schmid
APA Minnesota Co-Administrators

The PSO seems to be an organization that brings out the best in the students.

... all of the students have the potential to engage in some aspect of planning that allows them ... to practice their skills and talents.

-Peggy + Otto Schmid, Co-Administrators
December 7, 2016

Outstanding PSO Award Selection Committee
American Planning Association
205 N. Michigan Ave, Suite 1200
Chicago, IL  60601-5927

Dear Members of the Outstanding PSO Award Selection Committee,

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for the Outstanding PSO Award – Involvement with APA Chapter or Division application of the Planning Student Organization at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. As the faculty advisor for the Humphrey School’s PSO for the past four years I feel well positioned to comment on the vital role this group has played in the life of our Master’s program in Urban and Regional Planning, as well as the crucial link it plays in connecting our students to APA Minnesota. In this letter I will briefly describe the extraordinary lengths that our PSO goes through to improve our degree program and the experience of our students, but spend most of my time explaining how our PSO has interacted with and supported APA Minnesota.

The officers and members of the Humphrey School’s PSO routinely go above and beyond in their efforts to improve the quality of our Master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning and the experience of our Master’s students. In addition to holding regular meetings, officers of PSO attend and vigorously participate in faculty meetings. Unprompted, members of PSO planned and executed a series of activities for our admitted student weekend that occurred in Spring 2016. Ranging from a game night to brunch to tours of the Twin Cities transit system and local art museums, this effort was lauded by our Admission’s staff, our associate dean and, perhaps most important of all, prospective students. For these reasons, and many others, PSO was the recipient of the annual Jernberg Award, which is chosen by the entire student body of the Humphrey School (we offer six distinct master’s degrees and have a student population of about 400 in any given year) and recognizes the individual or institution at the School that made the greatest contribution to student life over the course of the academic year.

The Humphrey School PSO’s involvement with APA Minnesota is exceptional and extremely worthy of recognition at the national level. The officers and members of our PSO clearly recognize the professional advantages of supporting APA Minnesota, but also firmly believe in the mission of planning and see their interaction with APA Minnesota as a way to participate and influence planning in Minnesota as they complete their educations. Much of PSO’s involvement with APA Minnesota is centered on annual or periodic events that bring together our students with the broader membership of practicing planners in the state. Each year PSO plans and hosts as many as three career panels and informal networking sessions. PSO members regularly attend APA Minnesota brown bag lunches and continuing education opportunities, such as webinars and in-person seminars. This fall, PSO invited the APA Minnesota Board to hold one of their meetings at the Humphrey School, a practice that is sure to continue in the future.
Letter of Support

In addition to on-going interaction with the leadership of APA Minnesota and participation in chapter events described above, the Humphrey School PSO has an important presence at the chapter’s annual conference. To be sure, PSO members take advantage of volunteer opportunities at the annual conference. Most recently, approximately 10 students volunteered to help with conference logistics, including checking participants into the conference and even moderating panels (perhaps most memorably, a student moderated the panel “Goats in the City”). More importantly, members of our PSO helped to plan and fundraise to support the most recent APA Minnesota annual conference. Four of our PSO members served on the inaugural Student Engagement Committee and one member of PSO, Gratia Ratzloff, served as co-chair of the fund-raising committee for the conference. More than 20 students attended the most recent APA Minnesota annual conference, and almost all were students at the Humphrey School and active members of our PSO. PSO members planned and hosted a Young Planners Happy Hour at the conference that was attended by over 70 conference goers and is certain to become a mainstay social and networking event. Finally, PSO members from the Humphrey School won the Gunnar Isberg Outstanding Student Scholarship and were part of the student group that won the Outstanding Student Project Award that was sponsored by APA Minnesota (“Increasing Engagement with Communities of Color: A Toolkit for Carver County Parks and Recreation”).

In short, the efforts and successes of the Humphrey School PSO in connecting to APA Minnesota are exemplary. Through their own initiative, the officers and members of PSO have created a set of opportunities and experiences with APA Minnesota that have benefitted our students and practicing planners in Minnesota alike. It is my hope that you see fit to recognize these students by awarding them the Outstanding PSO Award - Involvement with APA Chapter or Division.

Sincerely,

Ryan P. Allen
Associate Professor
Director, Urban and Regional Planning Area

[The PSO] see their interaction with APA Minnesota as a way to participate and influence planning in Minnesota as they complete their educations.

-Ryan Allen, Director Urban and Regional Planning Area
Photos
Our Leadership

Alexander Kleppin
President

Sarah Strain
Vice-President

Elizabeth Showalter
Secretary

Gratia Ratzloff
Treasurer

Jared Staley
Engagement Officer

Aimee Fritsch
MURP Representative to
Public Affairs Student Association

Chloe McGuire Brigl
APA – Minnesota Chapter
Student Representative

Olivia Dorow Hovland
First Year Representative