File #1: Entry Information

Name of PSO — Urban Planning and Policy Student Association (UPPSA)

Primary Contact —
Justin Keller
Master of Urban Planning & Policy Candidate
APA-PSO Student Representative
400 South Peoria Street
Chicago, IL 60607
jkelle23@uic.edu | (630) 701-6576

Name of school and academic program —
University of Illinois at Chicago
Master of Urban Planning and Policy

Category — Best Practice

How Entry Meets Criteria —

Working hand-in-hand with the Department of Planning & Policy, and in collaboration with professional planning organizations in the Chicago metropolitan region, UPPSA provides social, professional, academic, and philanthropic programming for Master of Urban Planning & Policy students at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC):

1. SUPPORT OF PLANNING

UPPSA is fortunate to have strong connections with the Illinois Chapter of the American Planning Association, the APA Chicago Metro Section (APA-CMS), the APA-IL Diversity Committee, and the College of Urban Planning and Public Affairs (CUPPA) Alumni Association. These groups are keen to offer collaborative programming in partnership with UPPSA, with an emphasis on education and professional development. We strive to bring these events to our campus as frequently as possible, and to make the events smooth and enjoyable for our organizational partners so they will come back again and again.

UPPSA also recognizes our tight-knit CUPPA community and diverse student body as invaluable assets. UPPSA celebrates and promotes diversity through its close connections with the other CUPPA student organizations: the Society of Black Urban Planners (SBUP), the Latino Planning Organization for Development, Education and Regeneration (LPODER), Women in Planning and Public Affairs (WPPA), and the Public Administration Students Association (PASA). We support and promote their events and also collaborate to host frequent joint events.

Furthermore, a degree in planning may not, on its own, be enough to ensure a successful transition into the professional world. In order to improve students’ chances of success, UPPSA hosts an ongoing series of networking and professional development events, drawing on the expertise of our active and devoted group of alums throughout the Chicago region. These events include resume workshops, designing an effective portfolio, negotiating salaries and benefits, and more.

2. CONTRIBUTION

The friendships we make in school last far into the future. To ensure planning students have a good amount of fun mixed in with their studies, UPPSA arranges at least one
monthly social event, such as tours and Transit-Oriented Dinners (TOD). These take place throughout the year, even during summer months, and are a great way to connect with classmates on a deeper level and build lasting bonds.

In addition to offering events and social opportunities, UPPSA recognizes the privilege of our position as graduate students and emphasizes the importance of getting involved in the community and giving back. In collaboration with other student organizations at the university, UPPSA participates in and coordinates various service and philanthropic opportunities, primarily with local non-profits and service organizations.

3. INNOVATION

Learning takes place both in and out of the classroom. UPPSA’s signature event of the year is a student-run, one-day conference which focuses on cutting-edge planning practices — the Urban Innovation Symposium. The event includes a daytime session, during which professionals provide insight into cutting-edge ideas in physical planning, design, housing, and economic development, and an evening session, which facilitates networking and includes more creative presentation formats. For example, the 2017 Urban Innovation Symposium was titled “Networked for Good” and focused on smart cities, tech and transit, and the sharing economy.

Additionally, UPPSA arranges tours of locations throughout the Chicago region where interesting planning-related work is taking place. Many of these events come out of the connections students make through internships or via work they do with CUPPA’s various research institutions.

These best practices have ensured that UIC’s planning students have fun, develop professionally, have a chance to give back to the community, and receive a well-rounded planning education. In short, UPPSA exists to help students get the most out of their educational career and to set them on a path for success upon graduation!

We thank you in advance for considering our application.

Sincerely,

AY2017-18 UPPSA Board

Johamary Pena, President
Maureen Sullivan, Vice President
Brian Lowenberg, Treasurer
Amanda Madrigal, Secretary
Sasha De La Cruz, Alumni Relations Officer
Justin Keller, APA-IL Student Representative
Thomas Straus, Chief Marketing Officer
Benjamin Corpuz, Chief Activities Officer
Kalindi Parikh, Symposium Co-Coordinator
Elizabeth Ginsberg, Symposium Co-Coordinator