Document 2: Project Description

Urban Excursions & Planner Exchange

Description

The CSU-APA planning student organization has organized a series of regional networking events throughout 2016 that foster an exchange of knowledge, professional development, and collaborations with professional and student planners from nearby cities. The student group has led “urban excursions” to Buffalo (March 2016), Cincinnati (August 2016) and Detroit (October 2016), organizing tours of local projects such as Silo City in Buffalo and meetings with local planners, neighborhood activists, and planning students from the University of Cincinnati and Wayne State University/University of Michigan. CSU-APA has also collaborated in organizing a “planner exchange” with students from The Ohio State University. In March 2016, CSU students travelled to Columbus for a student-led tour of the city and in September 2016, Ohio State students came to Cleveland, where CSU-APA organized tours of the Campus District, University Circle and Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority (RTA) projects.

This is all in addition to the student organization’s speaker events held twice a month, and special programs like walk- and bike-led tours of areas of interest, and collaborative projects with urban design students from Kent State University’s Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC).

How the Project Fulfills the Award Criteria

The urban excursions and planner exchange initiatives exemplify interesting, creative and successful programming and activities on the part of CSU-APA. Both programs support planning students by broadening their knowledge of planning activities and local projects beyond Cleveland (for MUPD students) and by building networks between planning students from multiple institutions, planning practitioners and other urban activists. The knowledge gained as the result of the urban excursion and planner exchange programs furthers the planning movement and benefits the students by providing additional knowledge beyond that obtained in a typical classroom setting. The CSU-APA organization has been innovative and entrepreneurial in developing these initiatives. They have taken it upon themselves to build more first-hand knowledge of urban issues, planning activities, and planning processes in cities beyond Northeast Ohio, while simultaneously building collaborative networks with their peers at other institutions.

Planning Process, Implementation & Success
CSU-APA has organized three “urban excursions” beginning with Buffalo in March 2016 and most recently traveling to Detroit in October 2016. The excursions are two nights/three days, with the date of the trip set three months in advance to give students time to plan. To make the trips affordable, CSU-APA worked with a local hostel in Buffalo and Detroit, while in Cincinnati they stayed in dorms on the University of Cincinnati campus. Over time, CSU-APA has developed a robust process for planning the excursions, including networking with potential partner cities at the national APA conference in Phoenix. The excursions are planned by the CSU-APA Executive Board, but are open to all CSU-APA members, students, and others (alumni, young practitioners). The excursions have been very successful in terms of exploring planning projects and making connections with local planning departments, planning students, and neighborhood or other urban activists. Nearly half of CSU-APA’s membership, which averages 15-20 students, has participated in the excursions. The attendance for each was: Buffalo – 7 students, 3 others; Cincinnati – 4 students, 2 others; Detroit – 8 students, 1 other.

The CSU-APA/Ohio State student planner exchange has occurred three times (twice during the award period): February 2015, March 2016 and September 2016. This day-long exchange allows the students to network with each other and planning practitioners, while learning about local planning activities in Cleveland or Columbus. CSU-APA coordinates the exchange when OSU students come to Cleveland, organizing a full day of activities. In September 2016, this included a tour of the Campus District, led by Bobbi Reichtell (President, Campus District, Inc.), University Circle, led by Debbie Berry (VP of Planning and Real Estate, UCI) and Elise Yablonsky (Director of Planning, UCI), and the Red Line with Jose Feliciano, Jr. (External Affairs Administrator, Greater Cleveland RTA).