

East Carolina University's BS Community and Regional Planning degree is proud to present a program-level strategic plan as required by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). The strategic plan is compliant with all relevant policies and regulations of the University of North Carolina System as found in the [UNC Policy Manual](#), which has been updated since our last accreditation. Furthermore, although this document is separate from [ECU's strategic plan](#), which colleges and units align with, it aims to support the university's mission of Student Success, Public Service, and Regional Transformation.

As a program within the multidisciplinary Department of Earth, Environment, and Planning, the BS Community and Regional Planning degree program offers a unique opportunity to leverage the department's various programs and specialties, expanding the range of focus areas it can provide and engaging in multidisciplinary research. The faculty are strongly encouraged to develop interdisciplinary research in new areas of planning, such as the impact of climate change on developing sustainable communities, regional economic transformation, and building resilient communities, which are important to our region. To that end, the BS Community and Regional Planning degree program has developed dynamic and forward-looking goals and objectives that can help the program move forward.

Planning Mission Statement:

The mission of the Program is to provide opportunities for students to achieve excellence, envision their future, grow intellectually, and pursue a professional planning position or graduate education. As a multidisciplinary field, the BS Community and Regional Planning degree program strives to integrate knowledge derived from the social and physical sciences and related professions. It upholds respect for and engagement with groups from all backgrounds.

Program Vision:

Empowering students with practical skills and partnerships to shape vibrant, resilient regions through hands-on learning and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Program Goals and Measurable Objectives:

- **Goal 1. Student Access/Success:**

The BS Community and Regional Planning program objectives align with the University, College, and Department objectives in terms of greater student access/success and commitment to equality of all persons as defined by [ECU's Equality Policy](#).

- Objective 1. Student composition - The BS in Community and Regional Planning program aims to attract and retain a student body that is representative of the state and region in our major.
 - Action 1.1 – Student Composition – The program will define student composition in a manner that aligns with the program's mission and vision. We define student composition in two ways:
 - a. Geographic composition that reflects the region: Eastern North Carolina (ENC), where ECU is located, is a place of historical richness, community resilience, and a wide range of perspectives. There are also persistent challenges related to high poverty and unemployment rates as our agricultural roots and coastal economy evolve. The BS in Community and Regional Planning program, like ECU, is firmly committed to serving communities and expanding opportunities for all students. Through our curriculum, research, and outreach, we prepare students to understand and address the distinct planning needs of this region. Many of our students come from Eastern North Carolina and are likely to return as leaders and practitioners. Their lived experiences and local

insights enrich the classroom environment and enhance our community engagement efforts. This intentional focus not only strengthens the academic quality and relevance of our program but also advances the broader missions of East Carolina University and the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences (THCAS).

- b. Multidisciplinary interest: Students' varied subject interests are the mosaic of higher education and the Planning profession, which we strive for. Students with varied subject interests will bring broader perspectives and deeper learning into the classroom.
 - Metric 1.1a – Percent of students from Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties, especially from ENC
 - Metric 1.1b – Percent of students who pursue a double-major, dual degree, or minor
- Action 1.2 – The program will develop strategies to recruit underserved students to the major. Underserved in this context is defined as rural, first-generation, and from Tier 1 and Tier 2 North Carolina counties, as designated by the NC Department of Commerce. Actions will include:
 - a. Faculty outreach to community colleges and high schools in ENC to recruit students
 - b. Faculty outreach to student groups at ECU
 - Metric 1.1a – Actions to reach out to community colleges and high schools
 - Metric 1.1b – Actions to reach out to students at ECU
- Objective 2. Greater Student Success – The BS in Community and Regional Planning Program seeks to continue to improve student success by enhancing student retention, graduation rates, and opportunities for academic and professional experiences
 - Action 2.1 – Student internships
 - a. The program will promote internship opportunities for students during their undergraduate education to gain early exposure to the planning profession in a supportive learning environment.
 - b. The program will seek to expand the internship outlets through outreach and working with ECU's Career Services.
 - c. The program will offer internship scholarships to students seeking internship opportunities who are constrained by the high cost of living and/or an unpaid placement.
 - Metric 2.1a – Percent of students graduating with internship experiences
 - Metric 2.1b – The range of internship placements (public, non-profit, and private sectors)
 - Action 2.2 – Student advising - Faculty advisors will actively monitor students' academic progress and communicate relevant information clearly and consistently to their advisees.
 - Metric 2.2 – Percent of undergraduate students graduating within 4 years
 - Action 2.3 – Scholarship - The BS in Community and Regional Planning program will urge students to apply for scholarships that are offered by the program, department, college, university, or external sources.
 - Metric 2.3 – The number of students receiving scholarships
 - Action 2.4 – The program will exercise strategies to enhance and sustain student retention within the Program. Actions will include:
 - a. Faculty advisors will get training offered by ECU's Office for Faculty Excellence and the THCAS to help guide their advisees in a timely and accurate manner.

- a. The program will encourage students to actively engage in the Student Planners' Action Network (SPAN) to foster academic support, peer connection, and professional growth.
 - b. The program will connect students to the profession in various ways, such as exposure to the state and national American Planning Association and inviting professionals to the classrooms.
 - Metric 2.4 – The retention rate of the students
 - Action 2.5 - Faculty members will be encouraged to create and expand student research opportunities and involvement in research.
 - Metric 2.5a – Students working with faculty on research projects for academic credits or as undergraduate student research
 - Metric 2.5b – Student presentations at the institutional, regional, state, or national conferences
- Goal 2. Instructional Mission
 - Objective 3 – Enhancement of Collaborative High Impact Practice - The BS in Community and Regional Planning program continues to thrive through intentional efforts to enhance applied, career-relevant opportunities for students, facilitated by faculty leadership and real-world engagements. These include community-engaged, client-based projects embedded in courses; skill-based instruction led by Planners-in-Residence (PiRs, professors of practice); and place-based academic experience, such as a study abroad program. Additionally, the Program now offers the launch of an accelerated BS Community and Regional Planning/MS Planning and Development degree option.
 - Action 3.1 – Faculty will continue to include applied community projects in their courses.
 - Metric 3.1 – Community-based projects incorporated
 - Action 3.2 – The program will commit to maintaining the Planner-in-Residence program, thereby achieving a balanced education that combines theory and practice in the curriculum.
 - Metric 3.2 – The number of PiRs with adjunct/affiliate status with the department
 - Action 3.3 – The program will promote students to participate in the study abroad program
 - Metric 3.3 – Percent of undergraduate planning students participating in the study abroad program that ECU offers
 - Action 3.4 – The program will promote undergraduate students to enhance their academic experience through the accelerated BS/MS degree option.
 - Metric 3.4 – The number of students entering the accelerated degree program
 - Goal 3. Faculty Success
 - Objective 4 – Faculty Composition – The program emphasizes providing students with a well-balanced comprehensive education by engaging faculty who bring broad perspectives and professional experiences. Our faculty will comprise individuals with a range of career backgrounds and involvements, ranging from full-time faculty holding a PhD in Planning or related fields to the Planner-in-Residence, who brings professional knowledge and extensive career experience.
 - Action 4.1 - The program will recruit and retain faculty with a wide range of career knowledge and experiences.

- Metric 4.1 – The number of new faculty positions and faculty specialty areas
 - Objective 5 – Faculty Scholarship – Faculty in the program have developed essential research programs, and we seek to build on them.
 - Action 5.1 – The planning faculty will further develop its research agenda and productivity
 - Metric 5.1a – The number of peer-reviewed publications in quality outlets, monographs, or book chapters
 - Metric 5.1b – The number of grants submitted and funded, such as extramural funds, internal awards, or contracts
 - Action 5.2 – Planning faculty will continue to increase their scholarship collaborations
 - Metric 5.2 – The number of publications, conference presentations, and grant proposals indicating partnerships within and outside of ECU
 - Action 5.3 – Faculty will participate in engaged scholarship.
 - Metric 5.3 – The number of community-based projects, publications, and grants indicating co-production of knowledge
 - Objective 6 – Active Involvement in National and Regional Professional Organizations – The Program recognizes the benefits to both Program reputation and student success through involvement in professional organizations.
 - Action 6.1 – Faculty members will contribute to the program by providing services and engaging with professional planning organizations.
 - Metric 6.1 – Number of substantive contributions to professional organizations, i.e., ACSP and APA, such as committee membership
 - Action 6.2 – The program will support student involvement in relevant professional organizations.
 - Metric 6.2a – Number of students attending national, state, and regional events
 - Metric 6.2b – Number of students submitting and presenting their projects at professional conferences and competitions
- Goal 4. Program Governance
 - Objective 7 – Establishing Open Governance – The Program recognizes the benefits of open governance to promote progress and innovation, which results in greater success of the Program.
 - Action 7.1 – The Program will encourage active participation of students, faculty, and alumni in Program governance.
 - Metric 7.1a – Frequency of students (or SPAN representatives) attending planning faculty meetings and the ECU Planning Alumni Advisory Board meetings
 - Metric 7.1b – Number of student-led actions supported by the Planning program

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Most strategic plan metrics will be assessed annually towards the end of the academic year, along with the programmatic assessment. Through this incremental approach, the Program will closely monitor progress toward achieving its long-term goals, and updates will occur as necessary. Several items need to be compiled and assessed at the next accreditation cycle. A detailed assessment plan per metric is included in Appendix, Part IIC: Other Evidence.