

## **Two Models of Land Use Education Pedagogy**

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## **Two Models of Land Use Education Pedagogy**

### **Abstract**

Two educational approaches, one for an academic land use/natural resource audience and one for local planning officials are described. These complementary approaches address two important gaps in professional planning education and outreach offerings, and employ specific pedagogy to meet subject matter characteristics and learner needs. These gaps exist because, although nearly all citizens of all countries continuously deal with land use issues, there is little understanding of what is sustainable land use change or of how to be leaders of sustainability. A review of university planning curricula suggests that university-trained planners often have little integrative experience and are offered few leadership skill development opportunities. Professional planners meet local officials in the field who have little or no training in the principles of sustainability, Smart Growth, Strategic Growth or in land use leadership.

In order to close those gaps, two land use educational offerings were developed and evaluated. The theory, scope, structure, technology, costs and outcomes of development of a hybrid (classroom face-to-face with online components) academic course in land use change and decision making based on integrative and asynchronous learning pedagogy is described. The theory, scope, technology, costs and outcomes of development of the Citizen Planner Program, which began as a distance learning offering and evolved into a wholly online educational opportunity, is described. Citizen Planner,

Master Citizen Planner and the Citizen Planner Advanced Academy have directly impacted over three thousand local officials. The projected evolution of the academic course and Citizen Planner are also described.

**Keywords:**

Land Use, Education Gaps, Online Education, Citizen Planners, Local Planning Officials

## **Introduction**

Land use issues are among the most important issues that face society. The importance of land use cuts across countries, states, regions and communities. On one end of the spectrum are all developing countries where, in most cases, land is essentially a basic resource utilized in agricultural production, mining, forestry, and other traditional uses of land.

As one begins to move in the direction of developed countries, land takes on additional characteristics associated with more—and often highly developed—societies. According to land use economist, Raleigh Barlowe, land has very little value in and of itself, but has considerable value when it is brought into contact with people (Barlowe 1978). Across the world, the degree of affluence is often tied to the extent to which people and communities have leveraged land and connected it to better opportunities.

Nowhere else does land touch people's lives as intensively as in Europe and North America. People in these parts of the world deal with land use issues on a continued daily basis. They deal with congested routes to work, constraints on housing location relative to other activities, health of the air and water, and the safety of children going to school. There is often little understanding of the land use decision-making process, even by professionals who are immersed in it. This is due largely to the fact that as a multi-discipline area, most ultimate decision-makers lack the necessary background, training and knowledge to make sound land use decisions. This is not surprising, considering the fact that they emerge from learning traditions that do not provide integrated opportunities.

Few future decision-makers come through universities where their exposure to land use is through one or two disciplines at best, and that is if they studied anything related to land use while in the university. Even if they had prior exposure, it is likely to have happened in the context of one course, dealing with a very specific topic within the area of land use. It is probably more likely than not that they have no background at all in the area of land use. If they do, it is likely to have emerged from exposure to land use from the lens of non-practitioner professors. The college environment does not adequately provide students the opportunity to mingle with professionals who deal with land use issues on a day-to-day basis. Neither do students have opportunities to work on real life problems that would potentially better prepare them for professional life in land use. The academic environment must provide better synchronized and integrated information to allow students to have both the depth and the breadth of knowledge needed by them to be functional professionals.

The lack of an integrative understanding of land use issues and decision making is perhaps a greater problem in the United States where decision making is decentralized to lay officials in local units of government than in other parts of the world. This is unfortunate since the ability to shape the future hinges significantly on land use. Much of the planning and thinking about land is vested in professional planners, either as staff in larger communities or on a consulting basis, whose critical role is to help communities plan their future. However, the professionals do not make substantive, final land use decisions. That right is reserved to elected and appointed officials. The public that elects

local decision makers needs to be more familiar with the important issues of land use change, what constitutes sustainable land use, and how to be effective leaders of land use policy reform. Professional planners need to be able to understand the wants of lay decision makers, and to effectively communicate land use principles to them. There needs to be some level of match between professional and lay planners of the integrated nature of land use decision making, the potential negative and positive impacts of land use change trends such as sprawl or urban infill, and planning approaches such as Smart and Strategic Growth.

Planners represent a professional group that is trained at Universities in the rudiments, formalities, theories and practices of planning, zoning and land use management and they are an important infrastructure for implementing land use policy reform. They must work with local officials in the field who have little or no training in land use in implementing sustainability oriented programs, Smart Growth initiatives, strategic growth programs, and land use leadership. But in spite of their academic training, their potential is limited in that decision is often made by the relatively untrained.

Universities have a traditional role of research and teaching. In the research role, universities contribute to the theoretical body of knowledge and its application to problems society faces. In the teaching role, universities provide training for high-level professionals and education of the person as a member of society. The brilliance of university output and the effective application of research depend on how well it improves the lives of the people it serves. When universities work in isolation, they can

lose track of the scope of the problems they purport to solve with research, or train professionals to deal with. Universities have been criticized for a tendency to sink into isolation, too narrow a focus and non-relevance (Kuhn, 1977); and the planning profession is not immune to this criticism. Universities can play a better role in training potential appointed or elected officials. In order to do that, they, too, must concentrate on integrated multi-disciplinary teaching for this lay group.

### **Purpose**

The purposes of this paper are to:

- Point out the importance of land use and the roles of universities in land use education
- Discuss the gaps in land use education and their impacts
- Elaborate on education at the university practitioner level
- Present two unique educational programs at Michigan State University (MSU) to close those gaps
- Describe the theory, scope, structure, technology, costs, and outcomes of these two land use educational models –one an on-line academic course and the other an online series of course modules for lay planners.

### **Organization of Paper**

The balance of this paper is organized as follows:

- First to highlight some of the gaps in land use education and the importance of closing those gaps.

- Next, to explore the integrative nature of planning compared to planning education.
- Models for education.
- Necessary elements of gap-filling for education of professionals.
- Necessary elements of gap filling for professional training.
- The on-line courses.
- An assessment of the impact of the on-line courses.
- Conclusions about the future of land use education.

### **Planning is Integrative – Planning Education is Not**

Planning is a highly integrative activity, often involving making or responding to policy at the local, regional, state and federal levels, attention to the physical design of places, and interaction with public and private entities. However, planning education is not often integrative.

There is renewed interest in making universities participatory, integrative and relevant. For land grant universities this means a return to the vision of their founding idea: *“that practical knowledge could be combined with traditional scientific and classical studies to create a rigorous higher education curriculum that would provide equal opportunity for all to become citizen leaders and shape the future of our nation.”* (Simon, 2005)

Universities, and especially land grant universities, view themselves as not just locally relevant, but also responsible for society, the economy and environment at the

state, national and global scale. The scales and related issues for which land policy must be considered include:

- Local Land Use Issues
  - Growth management.
  - Affordable housing.
  - Schools.
  - Public services.
  - Economic stability.
  - Quality of life.
- Regional Land Use Issues
  - Duplication.
  - Economic development.
  - Quality of life.
  - Airports.
  - Access to locally produced products.
- State Land Use Issues
  - Tourism.
  - Agriculture.
  - Duplication of services.
  - Cost of doing business.
  - Urban renewal.
  - Smart Growth.

- Strategic Growth.
- National Land Use Issues
  - Interstate commerce.
  - Competition and the high costs of business.
  - Health, obesity and disease control.
  - Food security.
  - Energy security.
  - Housing affordability.
- Global Land Use Issues
  - Global warming.
  - Land tenure and wealth accumulation.
  - Species extinction.
  - Commodities trade.
  - Loss of habitat and ecosystem services.

Universities can provide integrated educational opportunities that utilize the land use arena as a foundational resource for students. This means that students would not only learn about the following topics, they would learn about how practices associated with these topics interrelate in supporting a sustainable society:

- Agriculture (right-to-farm, farmland preservation, local markets, etc.)
- Health (active living, obesity, air and water quality and mental health)
- Urban (form, diversity, legacy issues, brownfield development, housing, transportation, urban amenities, etc.)

- Rural (greenfield development, sprawl, open space preservation, rural amenities, etc.)
- Natural resources (land based industries, conversion of land use and cover, water quality, habitat, threatened and endangered species, etc.)
- Recreation (parks, sports fields, hunting, fishing, bird watching, tourism, wilderness, etc.)
- Strategic growth (vision, identification and capitalization of assets, innovative mindset, inclusiveness, people attraction, immigration, etc.)
- Cluster analysis (economic asset analysis, location analysis, promotion, etc.)
- Regionalism (urban to rural continuum, sharing resources, cooperation, diversity, avoiding duplication, etc.)
- Intergovernmental cooperation (sharing services, joint planning, sharing resources, etc.)
- Highways (access vs. mobility, improvements, new construction, congestion, etc.)
- Trails (connections, greenways, recreation, access, health, quality of life, etc.)
- Taxes (property taxes, provision of services, schools, lot size vs. structure value, shared revenues, etc.)

By providing theory and research-based knowledge, plus contact with practicing professionals, universities can help professional and lay planners use land use knowledge as a foundation for needed action to inform policy makers as they deal with, or operate with in the frameworks of:

- Home rule

- Growth
- NIMBYism
- Regionalism
- Agriculture
- Highways
- Economic development
- Green infrastructure
- Talent attraction
- New Economy

**Gaps in Land Use Education:**

Our informal survey of university planning curricula, experience with student interns and recent graduates, and a review of literature indicates that university-trained planners often have little integrative experience to be optimally effective, exposing gaps in land use education. Gaps we have noticed in land use education include:

- Discourse opportunities on land policy issues with student colleagues, faculty, practicing professionals and policy-making officials.
- Student experience is often directed to only a few communities, and often those are not representative of those experiencing or initiating the most change.
- Channels of information tend to be insular, and not open to the people who are deeply involved in the planning profession or policy making.
- Technology is available to tap but underutilized for the creation, dispersal and storage for asynchronous retrieval of material, and for the production by students

of reports and presentations. Distance learners are a ripe audience for information presented in a wide variety of media. Student teams in online courses at Duke University are already submitting their works as YouTube presentations which could conceivably be more positively received by audiences. (MSUVU-DAT, 2007)

- Students/activists from a variety of disciplines are seldom brought together to examine land use and policy from their different perspectives. It can be highly instructive to discover the different paradigms people hold about the land and people who make land use decisions.
- Courses are all over the place in how they approach land use issues and decision making. There is no effective standard. *“Not all accredited schools teach the same courses or emphasize the same subjects—in fact, the differences between the schools appeal to different student interests.”* (ASCP, 2006)
- Lack of integrative courses. Planning courses tend to be narrow in focus. This may help concentrate learning on certain topics, but is not reflective of the experience of professional planning.
- Students generally have little prior experience and training in land use issues and decision making.
- No source of information on how to integrate academic learning and research findings with the experience and practices of real world decision makers.
- Lifestyles-learners often work or have families, which leaves them little time either to study or travel to take classes.

- Many learning opportunities are offered up, but few are focused on land use decision making.
- Little exposure to practitioners and leaders across the broad range of land use topics.
- There is not usually any practicum in land use except in the areas of urban and regional planning.
- There is usually no capstone course in land use to tie the examination of land use trends, issues, and policies to the people who make land use decisions.
- Students are also offered few leadership skill development opportunities while training to be planners. (Birch 2001.) (Baum 1997.)
- Citizen planners (members of elected bodies, planning commissions, zoning review boards, environmental commissions and other boards and commissions) who serve as local leaders are also activists with little to no training in land use issues or exposure to experts and visionaries; yet, they move ahead with land use change decisions –often on a large scale.

### **Importance of Closing the Gaps**

As a result of gaps in land use education, communication gaps exist between professional planners and local planning officials with whom they must partner (Warbach 2004), and the land use practice community lacks effective, knowledgeable leaders.

Results of the continuation of these gaps include:

- Continued unsustainable land use development.

- Failure of many metropolitan areas to capitalize on land assets and reach prosperity.
- Failure to protect land based industries (agriculture, forestry, mining, tourism) from the conversion of resource-rich lands to development.
- Failure to allocate land to alternative energy production.
- Failure to protect air and water resources from degradation.
- Failure to provide social equity or environmental justice.
- Other failures to use land wisely and justly.

Closing those gaps requires models that improve the capacity of both university land use graduates and local officials. This includes:

- Catering to both communities of learners as a fundamental responsibility of universities.
- Taking advantage of an opportunity for universities (land-grant universities in particular) to create a pipeline for future professionals who are better prepared for land use decision making.

Some of the necessary aspects of the required training of students are:

- Learning cuts across boundaries – it is integrative.
- They are exposed to knowledge of the latest trends.
- Facility with mapping and GIS applications.
- Courses are cross-listed among multiple academic disciplines.
- Learning requires problem solving; research projects are important.

- Courses are accessible to not only land use students, but also to other students and professionals in the field
- Learning provides exposure to practitioners and visionaries and people who have tackled similar issues in other places and in different ways
- Given the time constraints of students with jobs and families the package and delivery of this educational experience must be flexible in the schedule by which students can access the course.
- Learning provides leadership opportunities through in-course activities and activities that extend the student circle of experience to high levels of community leaders.

Some of the necessary aspects of the required training of local officials include:

- Understanding their legal responsibilities, opportunities, and limitations in regard to land use planning and regulation as mandated by law
- Knowledge of the latest trends
- Exposure to knowledge of how to solve land use issues their communities face
- Understanding what makes communities perform well or not perform well
- Learning in an atmosphere of changing paradigms regarding how communities achieve success have an adequate knowledge of targeted New Economy and Smart and Strategic Growth Strategies
- Understanding how inter-governmental partnership and cooperation provides greater returns from more regional thinking and strategy

- Given the time commitment of members of Planning Commissions, Zoning Boards and other professionals, the package and delivery of this educational experience must be accurate, flexible, timely, and accessible
- Courses in the distance learning environment, such as in Cooperative Extension, need to generate funds and be self-sustaining

### **Models for Education in Academia and Profession**

Clearly there is an evolution of learning theory that land use educators can apply to great benefit. Surprisingly, distance classroom or online learning is not the whole picture of the newly evolved pedagogy. Those are merely the tools. A key element of the evolution of learning theory is to create opportunities for the student to become an active rather than a passive learner. This requires learning structures in which students work together to solve problems, do the bulk of investigation themselves, and work in concert with faculty who serve more as a guide than a sage.

Academic departments are often pushing distance classroom or online learning for two reasons. One is the perceived ease and low-cost to teach classes. Many distance learning courses are prepared by consultants or adjuncts expressing a desire to give of their knowledge and experience, or who are interested in extra income. Some departments believe they will be able to report much increased enrollment by responding to the demand by students with busy lives for flexibility to learn at their own convenience. Many tenure-stream faculty simply enjoy immersing themselves in the new technology, and enjoy being viewed as forward-thinking. Others are inhibited by time commitment, learning curve with the technology and continued skepticism over online

effectiveness compared to classroom teaching. But regardless of individual faculty or department motives, online learning comfortably fits the mission of the land grant university by providing access to educational opportunities, whether they are designed for the academic or the lay learner.

There is extensive literature on the motives of universities to engage in distance learning and on the pedagogy of online learning in the *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, published by the University of West Georgia, the Illinois Online Network at the University of Illinois, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, and many university online education initiatives such as the University of Huston, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Central Florida. Michigan State University provides extensive training on both the technology and approaches to online learning. Many universities have support groups for faculty engaged in online teaching. Among the conclusions of multiple research studies on online learning are the following:

- Online education provides learning opportunities for a diverse group of citizens, such as working professionals who would otherwise be unable to obtain needed training. (Gaytan 2007; Gordon, 2006; Larreamendy-Joerns & Leinhardt, 2006))
- Online educators should respond to different learning styles by designing a range of learning activities, such as learning contracts, small group work, collaborative learning, case studies and forums. (Gaytan, 2007; Illinois Online Network, 2006)
- There is disagreement on whether online education can be as effective as classroom education. While early literature suggested that online education can be

at least as effective, the methods of those early researchers have been questioned.  
(Gaytan, 2007)

- The disagreement over effectiveness of online education may be a distraction from the need to focus on effective teaching methods. Some classroom methods may be highly ineffective, so online courses should be based on the most outstanding characteristics of face-to-face learning, such as:
  - Challenging students to think.
  - Providing a reason to want to step into the classroom.
  - Displaying a willingness to give extra help and encouragement.
  - Giving varied and meaningful assignments (Gaytan, 2007; Marshall, 2003; Tallent-Runnels et al., 2006).

### **The Content, Scope, Technology, Costs and Impacts of Two Land Use Models**

#### *Academic Courses in Land Use*

The Land Policy Institute provides an academic model for integrated land use education in its blended learning course, Smart Growth and Strategic Land Use Decision Making (ESA 450). The course:

- Is designed to be multi-disciplinary: economics, agriculture, natural sciences, social sciences, psychology, resource development, economic development, planning, design and political science.
- Is cross-listed in four departments: Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resources Studies; Agricultural Engineering; Planning, Design and Construction and Geography.

- Has 26 students from a variety of cities, states and countries.
- Enrolls students who come from a wide variety of academic programs in environmental economics, urban planning, landscape architecture, geography, environmental psychology; environmental journalism and environmental sciences and applications.
- Blends both face-to-face and online components, with a wholly online section for distance learners that includes recordings of the face-to-face sessions.
- Is open to upper division undergraduate and graduate students.
- Provides that graduate students have the opportunity for extra credit work in order to qualify for acceptance by graduate student advisors.
- Bridges many gaps for students, especially those regarding providing an integrative, multi-disciplinary framework, interaction with community officials and practicing professionals, research practice, asynchronous learning to allow for flexible schedules and a land use issue and policy focus.
- Provides academic content is provided through weekly PowerPoint lectures with recorded audio, posted online for distance learners and review for local students. These are posted as flash files, podcasts and MP4 files. PowerPoint-only versions are also posted. There is a course pack of assigned readings that is available in a local bookstore, online to order as hard copy or PDF download and in the university library reserved reading section. In addition, the weekly schedule identifies web links for students to visit external sites for additional material, such as articles, case studies, videos and audio files. Internal websites provide webcasts

of previous guest speaker presentations. Students can access the academic content at any time from their home or dormitory room computer, computer labs and libraries.

- Includes two exams that the students are required to take online. Students are given a two-hour window which they can utilize any one time over a 3 to 5 day period set by the faculty.
- Requires completion of a semester research project in which student teams do research from existing data sources and interviews with local officials and report findings and analysis. The online software provides email, *wiki*, *blog* and discussion forum tools so that teams members at dispersed locations can interact with each other, draft and rewrite team reports, learn from or offer critiques to other teams and interact with faculty.

The scope of the LPI academic land use course includes:

- The history of land use change and how land use change prompted a planning and regulatory structure.
- The planning process, measuring and identifying trends in land use change,
- Links between important land use elements and social and economic factors.
- The role of a leader in land use issues.
- Creating a vision for a community, region or state
- Strategic asset identification
- The nature of land resources and the scarcity of land, consumer preferences and unlimited nature of wants, land budget constraint and how consumers maximize

utility from their interaction with land, and the necessity for consumers to make choices among land and other factors that influence their well-being.

- The concept of consumer equilibrium and how that translates into land markets, and short and long term determinates of land demand and the concept of valuation in the short and long run.
- Objective function of players in land markets: developers, home owners, regulators, etc.
- The relationship between property taxes, funding, and the provision of community services.
- Roles different levels of government play in administering and contributing to land use change.
- Relationship between enabling legislation and local planning and zoning.
- Master plan, zoning ordinance and police power ordinance.
- Ten tenets of Smart Growth
- Best practices—urban, suburban and rural.
- Types of planning policy
- Different value-driven mindsets as they affect land use decision making.
- The concepts of “takings” and “givings” in relation to property rights.
- Relationship of policy to values
- Intended and unintended consequences
- Policy as impediments to sustainability
- Build out analysis

- The concept of carrying capacity.
- Protecting and building around urban assets through a range of regulatory and non-regulatory tools
- New planning relationships
- New planning levels (regionalism)

The current structure of the academic land use course is:

- Face-to-face sessions supported by online resources, testing, student-to-student and student to faculty communications.
- Live sessions with major local and national leaders, practitioners and visionaries.
- Online courses provide direct contact with faculty and are highly interactive.
- Substantial student to student and student to faculty interaction.

The technology used in the academic land use course is:

- The Angel online environment from Angel Learning, Inc. All students are given access upon enrollment.
- Lecture materials online with text including illustrations, PowerPoint, audio, video, links to other websites, animated PowerPoint, MP3 and MP4 downloads, testing in all formats, grade books, blogs, forums and “wikis”.

The costs of the academic land use course are not all readily apparent or calculated.

However, the following is known or estimated:

- The University provides the learning environment software for free, including free training sessions for faculty and teaching assistants.

- The estimated real cost for development of course material, training in online environment, and graduate assistant is about \$60,000. LPI expended \$7,500 the first year for a consulting planner. In the second year LPI expended about \$15,000 for ¼ time graduate assistant. The remaining time was volunteered or part of senior faculty teaching percentage.
- There is a strong motive for creating completely online courses at MSU as the department receives a portion of online tuition directly according to a formula (about 70%) while tuition from students in classroom courses is not captured by departments or faculty at MSU. Departments can negotiate to supplement a faculty member's salary for the perceived or actual overload because the preparation of material to fit the technology and learning approaches can be extremely time-consuming..
- The cost for a student to take the academic online course depends on the student's academic level and whether the student is on campus, and an in-state or out-of-state student.

The projected evolution of the academic land use course is for it to remain as a blended learning experience, with the possibility of specific topic modules that are entirely self-paced and asynchronous online. This provides faculty with the opportunity to aggressively interact with students, provide remedial assistance to those students needing it, to continue a team-learning environment, and to provide real-time interaction with community leaders who are dealing with current or emerging issues. Specific

support modules, and certificate level modules are likely companion pieces that would be completely self-paced and asynchronous.

Impacts of the LPI academic land use course include:

- Improved leadership capacity among students.
- Well-rounded understanding of the integrative nature of land use planning.
- Increased comfort in meeting and making presentations to elected and appointed officials, business leaders, nationally recognized visionaries and distinguished academics.
- Positive comments from students and academic advisors, including:
  - *“The speakers were amazing.”*
  - *“I truly find every class enlightening and inspiring!”*
  - *“The most rewarding undergraduate class I have ever had.”*
  - *“An amazing networking opportunity. It even landed me a job!”*
  - *“The student feedback was so positive that I’m encouraging the students I advise to enroll.”*
  - *“This lecture was amazing. I don’t get this kind of information in any of my other classes.”*

### ***Citizen Planner Course***

The Land Policy Institute provides a lay person model for integrated land use education in its Citizen Planner Online program.

- An opportunity for volunteer community leaders to obtain the latest technical knowledge and information needed to perform their duties more effectively and responsibly.
- Seven modules that contain self-paced, independent learning units presenting the core elements associated with being a planning official.
- Each module takes about 5 hours to complete—each unit within a module about 1 hour.
- Participants can take any combination of modules and units.
- Opportunity to combine online educational opportunity with instructor-led events.
- Continuing education opportunities through Master Citizen Planner and emerging issue sessions.

The scope of the lay planner online program includes:

- Planning official roles and responsibilities.
- The zoning process.
- Legal foundations of planning and zoning, historic and current court cases.
- The Comprehensive Plan, why and how one is created, and the distinctions of different land use categories.
- The phases of the planning process.
- Zoning tools, techniques, responsibilities, site plan review, PUDs, subdivisions, etc.
- The art of community planning, including running meetings and working effectively.

Impacts of the lay planner education program include:

- The Citizen Planner Program has trained over 3,000 local officials or other community volunteers in Michigan since 2002 in the pre-curser classroom-based programs, with 188 taking online modules or units since the launch of the online program in December of 2006, creating a huge network of graduates who serve as advocates for the program and potential clients for continuing education opportunities.
- Improved knowledge of land use planning as evidenced by self-evaluation surveys of hundreds of graduates of the classroom-based programs.
- Over one hundred professional planners have contributed either to face-to-face learning sessions or to the preparation of online modules, exposing lay students to a wide variety of practitioners either directly or indirectly.
- Lay planners were exposed to a wide variety of specific topics in addition to the core modules, including: designing healthy communities, conflict management, farmland preservation, brownfield development, community and economic development, hazard mitigation planning, low impact design, manufactured housing, New Urbanism, takings, right-to-farm, Native American implications, riparian rights, tourism, transportation planning, water quality, wetlands regulation and others.
- Positive comments about the online program from lay planning students:

- *“Citizen Planner provides such high-quality, proactive information; I can’t imagine getting anything better from any other source.”*
- *“The Citizen Planner program was an important piece of training that helped me become more involved and make a difference.”*
- *“Instead of having to learn things over a slow, long learning curve, [Citizen Planner] really gives you access to experts and...an opportunity to see what other townships and other municipalities have been working on.”*
- *“Citizen Planner taught me that a proactive approach to public involvement and zoning enforcement is critical to our community.”*
- Provides an extensive outlet for disseminating the results of university research and the practical experience of professionals.
- Other states now interested in contracting with LPI Citizen Planner Program to produce similar programs in their states, customized according to the legal structure of planning and localized approaches to planning communities.

The current structure of the Citizen Planner online lay planner modules is:

- Completely self-paced, asynchronous learning, with no active involvement of the creators of the modules.
- Students may take any combination of modules or units, which can fit the needs and budget of the lay planner.
- Persons who complete the modules receive a certificate.

The technology used in the Citizen Planner online lay planner modules is:

- Professional planners contract to provide the content of the educational modules, while educational consultants assemble the material into learning units.
- Citizen Planner Online also uses the MSU Angel online environment from Angel Learning, Inc. Students go to a “ShopMSU” website to enroll, and once the payment is credited to the University, they are given access and a password.
- The technology supports text and graphics, and includes tests of proficiency with the material.

The costs of Citizen Planner online differ substantially from that of the online academic course.

- Each module requires a professional planning consultant contract for the assembly of content, and the contracted services of learning designers at the University. The total is about \$40,000 per module.
- There is a small cost for the university to maintain the course online.
- The ShopMSU registration process collects a small fee.
- Citizen Planner operates under a shared cost-recovery agreement, in which MSU Extension receives a small percentage, the marketing and learning design entity at the university receives about 40% of remaining proceeds and the Citizen Planner program receives 60%. Both of the latter entities place about 10% of their portions into a fund for program development.
- It costs about \$70 for a lay student to enroll in one Citizen Planner online module, and about \$350 for a package of the core seven modules.

## **Conclusions and Lessons for the Future**

Institutions of higher education need to be aware of significant gaps in land use education and offer educational models to fill those gaps. Primary among these gaps is the need to better match the knowledge, leadership skills and practical experience of the academically trained professional planner and the lay planner who is ultimately responsible for most land use decisions. Other gaps exist in educational technology, the extent to which land use education is integrative, the extent to which land use education includes experience with practicing professionals, elected and appointed officials, business leaders and visionaries. Access to educational opportunities needs to be expanded to accommodate people of diverse backgrounds, work schedules, families, and other factors.

The Land Policy Institute has worked for three years to develop two education models that fill important land use education gaps. These two models are the academic course that includes online learning, Smart Growth and Strategic Land Use Decision Making and Citizen Planner Online. Capstone courses such as Smart Growth and Strategic Land Use Decision Making position students to become land use leaders who are effective in helping policy makers in growing communities plan sustainably. Lay planner educational opportunities such as Citizen Planner Online need to be greatly expanded, especially in America where they make most land use decisions, and these opportunities should also be integrative, and university-linked in order to bring the depth of academic research and outreach capacity to the lay planner.

The online academic course appears to serve as an effective land use educational model. It uses a combination of small group work, collaborative learning, case studies, forums, lectures and discussions to maximize learning, all of which is available to online and classroom students. Further, the lectures and assignments feature the integration of economics, natural and social sciences, policy, design, land, vision and leadership. This combination appears to be an effective approach to filling gaps in land use education. However, gap-filling is difficult to document, especially with a very small enrollment and an iterative process of course development. For the near future, evaluation will continue to be anecdotal.

The LPI series of modules, Citizen Planner Online, is the lay planner companion to the academic course. Citizen Planner Online also fills a significant gap by providing a comprehensive, integrative scope of information to help lay planners do their volunteer jobs. Often, it is the only organized training they have, and informs them of their responsibilities and tools available to them to make land use decisions. It also serves to better link the academic, professional planner with the lay planner where the latter is the primary source of land use decision making.

Land use educators face challenges as new communication technologies and new land use issues emerge. Further compounding the transfer of knowledge and skills in land use is the wide range of values, attitudes and approaches to work and learning among the four generations currently working, learning and becoming involved in land use decision making in our society. These four generations are:

- Mature and veteran generation. This generation includes many of the academic faculty and lay planners. This generation has respect for authority, they want to conform and they have discipline. They cherish education as a dream. They communicate in formal, written forms, and are motivated when their experience is respected.
- Baby-boomer generation. This generation also includes many of the academic faculty and lay planners. This is an optimistic generation, highly involved, believing education to be a birthright. They choose to communicate in person and are motivated when they feel valued.
- Generation X. This generation includes many of the young practicing professionals, and working students. This group views the world and its ideas and ideals with skepticism. They seek fun and are highly informal. Education is simply a way to get where they want to go. They want immediate and direct communication. They are highly entrepreneurial and motivated by being able to find their own way.
- Generation Y. This is the generation about to be college students. This is an extremely confident generation, highly social, into extreme fun and motivated by the opportunity to work with other bright and creative people. They are the most facile with the Internet and communicate almost exclusively through technology. They also require gratification and feedback on demand. (Hammill, 2005)

The generational differences should shape the way educators interact with academic and lay planners over the next ten years, involving students of all four generations. They

all see their responsibilities differently and they are each more effective when responding to different motivations or forms of communication. These differences are a challenge to land use educators. But the gaps we need to fill are common to all generations.

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