Bioregional Planning, MS

Department: Environment and Society Department; Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Department
College: S.J. & Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources; College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences

Overview

About This Degree

Formed in 2002, the Department of Environment and Society is the first of its kind in a college of natural resources in this country and has served as a model for the development of similar departments at other institutions of higher learning.

The interdisciplinary bioregional planning degree prepares graduates to assist communities with growth and development. Additionally, graduates will be able to produce and evaluate alternative futures to help communities make decisions about future building and growth. Bioregional planning is focused on how the biophysical attributes of a region influence the human dimensions of culture and settlement, and also how human settlement and building affect the environment of the geographic area in which the community is situated. This program is unique in that it focuses on large-scale planning; bioregional planners deal with entire geographic regions, yet they are also qualified for smaller city planning as well. The program has an interdisciplinary core of courses that provides the background for addressing complex issues in the areas of environmental analysis, planning, and policy.

The program emphasizes group projects and interactions in a studio setting, individual research, field trips to study areas, and department seminars, along with traditional- and workshop-style coursework. An important aspect of the program is learning to use spatial visualization techniques to help multiple audiences understand alternative future development and conservation scenarios. These techniques can be anything from “then-and-now” photographs to detailed maps created using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software. Employment is available in both the private and public sectors, wherever there is emphasis on large-scale landscape planning, policy and management, as well as traditional planning positions, such as municipal planners.

Career Options

Graduates are qualified for careers as bioregional planners for local, state, and national agencies. Planners work in the following areas:

- Large-scale planning of broad geographic areas
- Municipal planning
- Zoning administration
- Planning policy and management
- Consultation
- Planning for government entities

What it takes

Admissions Requirements

Applicants from various undergraduate backgrounds may be considered. Depending on the student’s desired area of research, certain prerequisite courses may be required.

To be accepted to the program, it is recommended that applicants first contact a specific faculty member with whom they are interested in working. If the faculty member is accepting graduate students and agrees to work with the student, the student can then apply by completing the following application requirements:

Application Requirements:

- Complete the online application
- Pay the $55 application fee
- Score at or above the 40th percentile on in the GRE
- Have a 3.0 or higher GPA on your last 60 semester or 90 quarter credits
- Provide transcripts of all college/university credits
- Provide three contacts for letters of recommendation

International students have additional admissions requirements.

Admissions Deadlines

The department has the following deadline:

- Fall semester – February 15
- The department will continue to review applications submitted after these dates, but chances of acceptance and financial assistance are better for students who apply earlier.

Master's Degree Plan Options

Students can receive the MS by pursuing one of two options:

- In the **Plan A** option, students complete graduate-level coursework and must write a thesis.
- The **Plan B** option requires the production of a paper or creative work of art and is expected to reflect equivalent scholarship standards as a thesis.

Financial Assistance

The Department of Environment and Society provides funding for all of its graduate students through research assistantships, available through professors having contracts, grants, or other awards.

A variety of additional funding opportunities are available, including fellowships, scholarships, tuition awards, and travel support. Additionally, students may be eligible for subsidized health insurance through qualifying assistantships.

Program Requirements

Click here to see course requirements for the **Master of Science**.

Students have a 10-credit studio course requirement lasting two semesters in which they participate in hands-on bioregional analysis for a government or non-government entity to help make decisions about future planning.

Contact

Advisor(s)

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Faculty

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Get Involved

Professional Organizations, Honor Societies, and Clubs

American Planning Association: APA is an independent, not-for-profit educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in community planning, promoting education and citizen empowerment, and providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change.

Labs, Centers, Research

Canyonlands Research Center: Canyonlands is a reseach station centered at the Nature Conservancy's historic Dugout Ranch property. The center's goal is to facilitate research, education, and collaboration for understanding the interactive effects of land use and climate and developing land and water management solutions that meet human needs while maintaining ecological viability on the Colorado Plateau and in semi-arid lands worldwide.

Ecology Center: The Ecology Center is an administrative structure in the university that supports and coordinates ecological research and graduate education in the science of ecology and provides professional information and advice for decision makers considering actions that affect the environment. The Ecology Center at USU has had a string of directors known nationally and worldwide as premier scientists in the field of ecology, and students graduating with a degree in ecology are able to make important contacts with influential faculty that can help them go on to prestigious post-doctoral programs and faculty positions at universities around the world.

S.J. and Jessie E. Quinney Natural Resources Research Library: The Quinney Library maintains collections of materials pertaining to natural resources and the environment in a number of formats that support the programs of study and research in the College of Natural Resources and several partnering centers. The library has more than 60,000 items, both print and electronic, as well as videos, images, and more.

Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter: The Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter, located in Park City, Utah, consists of a 1,200-acre land trust in the Snyderville Basin and a 10,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility dedicated to environmental education. The preserve protects critical wetland and foothill terrain in the heart of one of the state's fastest-growing areas. The EcoCenter, completed in 2009, is a multi-use facility with space for educational and community activities. The facility is LEED platinum certified, the highest standard for design, construction, and operation of high-performance green buildings.

Utah Botanical Center: The UBC, located in Kaysville, Utah, is home to research and demonstration projects focused on sustainable living in the Intermountain West. Studies of water conservation, horticulture, water quality

enhancement, wetland ecology, integrated pest management, urban forestry, agriculture, fish and wildlife, highway enhancement, and storm-water management combine to make the center a living laboratory.

Utah House: Located at the Utah Botanical Center, Utah House is a demonstration home displaying efficient use of resources and sustainability principles. The mission of Utah House is to demonstrate, educate, and empower the public about new ways of building homes and creating landscapes that promote energy efficiency, water conservation, universal design principles, healthy indoor environments, and the sustainable use of all resources.