

May 14, 2021  
Dr. Karen P. DePauw  
Vice President and Dean for Graduate Education  
Virginia Tech Graduate School

Dear Dean DePauw,

Below is a description of the ways that the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program in Urban Affairs and Planning, School of Public and International Affairs, will comply with the Diversity and Inclusion Requirements from the Graduate School.

The Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies Resolution 2017-18A requires that students meet the following guidelines:

1. The Virginia Tech Principles of Community as they apply to the valuing of human diversity and inclusion.
2. The impact that personal actions and words have on self, others, and the communities— university, national, and global—in which we live; issues of privilege, bias, power, prejudice, and discrimination; concepts of multiple personal, social, and cultural identities.
3. Available avenues of redress and our shared responsibilities as active by-standers.
4. The process of individual introspection required both to understand one's own forms of implicit or unconscious bias and to create inclusive environments.

Graduates of the MURP Program will meet these objectives in the following ways.

1. Complete the following required core courses, which critically engage issues of inclusion and diversity in the course content and theme:
  - a. **UAP 5084 Collaborative Planning and Community Involvement:** This course focuses on the tools and approaches planners and policy-makers need to facilitate engagement in order to enhance policies, programs or services at the community level or to respond to pressing public needs. Students design, lead, and facilitate inclusive community involvement processes, practice deliberative engagement, design processes that promote constructive dialogue, engage in cross-cultural interpersonal communication, and apply facilitation, mediation, moderation, negotiation, and conflict resolution techniques to real world challenges. In this application-based course, students learn to confront issues of identity, bias, privilege, and power, including their own. Each real world case study, workshop, or activity in this course centers on social justice and empowerment and prompts students to engage in self-reflection and examine their own assumptions.

This course will be amended to include a class session on *Virginia Tech's Principles of Community*. *Our shared responsibilities as active by-standers* will be discussed on the same day that the Principles of Community are covered. As part of the reading assignment for this day, students will be asked to review the Virginia Tech Graduate School's "Disrupting Academic Bullying" overview ([https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/we-hear-your-voice/disrupting\\_academic\\_bullying.html](https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/we-hear-your-voice/disrupting_academic_bullying.html)).

- b. **UAP 5174 Planning Theory and History:** Anti-racist pedagogy is at the center of this course. Drawing on Giroux's (1988) concept of "border pedagogy", this class discusses past and present racism, stereotyping and discrimination in society, the economic, structural and

historical roots of inequality and racism, and examples of institutional racism in the field of urban planning, analysis of unequal social and power relations. It includes many resources from authors of diverse backgrounds and identities to allow students to locate themselves in history or create new identities. It provides opportunities for students and teachers to reflect on their attitudes, experiences, and partialities in culture to identify themselves within the power dynamics of social structure. Further, the course provides opportunities to critically question the content of curriculum and engage in reflective social and political self-analysis and see themselves in ways that were formerly unfamiliar. This course includes a class session on Association of Schools of Planning (ACSP) Code of Professional Ethics and Integrity.

2. In addition, students have the opportunity to take the elective courses like UAP 5244 Multicultural Cities.
3. All MURP students will complete the Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity Module and the Diversity: Inclusion in the Modern Workplace Module provided by Virginia Tech's Office of Inclusion and Diversity. <https://www.inclusive.vt.edu/Initiatives/DiversityEducationandPrograms/dei-learning.html>
4. The MURP Handbook includes the following **statement about the Virginia Tech Principles of Community:**

*Our departmental expectations of civility, inclusion, and respect are embedded and reaffirmed by Virginia Tech's Principles of Community:*

*Virginia Tech is a public land-grant university, committed to teaching and learning, research, and outreach to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the nation, and the world community. Learning from the experiences that shape Virginia Tech as an institution, we acknowledge those aspects of our legacy that reflected bias and exclusion. Therefore, we adopt and practice the following principles as fundamental to our on-going efforts to increase access and inclusion and to create a community that nurtures learning and growth for all of its members:*

- *We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.*
- *We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.*
- *We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.*
- *We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others. We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).*

5. Available channels for redress are written into our Graduate Handbook, the relevant portions of which are quoted below:

Complaints about professional misconduct (integrity and civility) are concerns of both the targets of those complaints and of the department. As such, they are not appropriate topics of informal discussion alone. Students giving voice to complaints of misconduct should, in a timely fashion, initiate processes in which the department and the targets of the complaints would have opportunities to respond. Students can initiate such processes by sharing complaints with departmental or university authorities, as listed below.

MURP and Virginia Tech have means to address complaints of misconduct. Relevant offices include:

- Graduate director, MURP — discussion of concerns about graduate student integrity and civility within the department, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to the Human Resources Title IX coordinators, as noted below.
- Chair, Urban Affairs and Planning — discussion of concerns about faculty conduct, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to HR Title IX, as noted below.
- [Graduate Student Ombudsperson](#) — discussion of any concerns related to treatment by others, including officials, in the university, all of which remain in confidence other than sexual harassment/assault, mention of which must result in a phone call to ...
  - o [Human Resources, Title IX](#) — reports of sexual harassment/assault, which reports result in HR officer outreach to alleged victims, who then choose whether to authorize continued investigation.
  - o [Student Conduct](#), in the [Dean of Students Office](#) — [reports of concerns](#) about student conduct, including disruption, threats, incivility, and harassment (form of redress.
  - o [Graduate Honor System](#) — reports of violations of academic integrity.
  - o [Graduate School Appeal](#)
  - o [Process](#)

For confidential discussions of issues of civility, you may contact:

- o [The Women's Center's](#) Counseling staff (concerns about gendered conduct, sexual assault, sexual harassment)
- o [Cook Counseling Center](#)

6. In addition, we will add the following text to the Graduate Handbook: The Virginia Tech Graduate School and Urban Affairs and Planning program encourage graduate students to be active bystanders and to report academic bullying when they witness it. As Graduate Dean Karen DePauw states,

*Academic bullying manifests itself in many different ways and can include intimidation, humiliation, belittlement, embarrassment and undermining one's authority. Academic bullying also includes behaviors or comments that indicate disregard of one's concerns, ignoring contributions, minimize one's efforts in the eyes of colleagues, and other means of exclusion or withholding information...Academic bullying occurs throughout the academic or professional space; in the classroom, in meetings, at conferences, in the laboratory setting, in face-to-face interactions, and of course through email and social media.*

*Through the Disrupting Academic Bullying Initiative, the Graduate School has created resources to help members of the VT community identify academic bullying and to report it through the [Disrupting Academic Bullying Reporting Form](#).*

7. Attend the Graduate School Orientation Session and workshops and Urban Affairs and Planning Orientation for incoming MURP students in August, which includes information University resources on inclusion, diversity, and equity.
8. Opportunities to attend guest speaker series on topics of diversity and inclusion. For example, this year we had a guest speaker series organized through our Multicultural Cities class.

Sincerely,

Ralph Buehler, Chair Urban Affairs and Planning