

A PLANNER'S EDUCATION

What kind of an education should a planner have? Today most people need a professional *Masters Degree in Planning* to get the best planning jobs, although a Bachelors degree (BA or BS) can provide an entry into the profession. People can enter Masters programs in planning with many different kinds of Bachelors degrees; it is not necessary to have a BA/BS in Planning to do graduate work in planning. Some planners are educated first in the social sciences like public administration, sociology, economics, geography, or government; others are trained first in the design professions like architecture, urban design, and landscape architecture. Still others have their undergraduate degree in professions such as public health, social work, nursing, or engineering. Many people with undergraduate degrees in the Arts or Humanities (English, Art, History) also choose to pursue a graduate planning degree.

Some people use the new skills they acquire in graduate school to expand the emphasis of their undergraduate degree while others develop new approaches. For example, those with economics training may become economic development planners while those with degrees in biology or chemistry may choose to become environmental planners. But it is not unusual for someone trained at the undergraduate level as an architect to become a social policy planner or for someone with a BS in Nursing to become a housing planner!

There are many places where you can gain the education and training you need to become a planner. Today there are over 120 planning programs or planning departments which are members of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) or which are recognized by the Canadian Institute of Planners. Seventy of the US programs and nine Canadian programs give **accredited** Masters degrees. An additional eleven give an **accredited** Bachelors degree in Planning. Most of these programs are described in detail in the body of this GUIDE.

If you can, you should attend a planning program **accredited** by either the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) in the U.S. or the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) in Canada, because it can make a difference in your career. (A few Canadian schools have programs that are both PAB and CIP accredited). Masters or Bachelors Planning programs are reviewed for

accreditation by these organizations to assure prospective students, employers and the public that they measure up to the profession's standards—and are therefore qualified to train future planners. The PAB is jointly sponsored by **ACSP**, the organization of Planning Professors, and by two organizations of professional planners, the **American Institute of Certified Planners**, (AICP) and the **American Planning Association** (APA). The CIP is the Canadian organization of professional planners.

The PAB strives to foster high standards for professional education in planning; accredited programs must meet strict standards developed cooperatively by both practicing planners and planning academicians; the same is true of the Canadian schools accredited by the Canadian Institute of Planners. The PAB does not evaluate Ph.D. programs because their primary focus is not professional practice. However, the CIP does evaluate Ph.D. programs for accreditation.

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. But the curriculum at all accredited schools will provide you with a **core** set of theories, methods, and techniques which properly prepare you for a career as a practicing planner. Graduating from an accredited program will make you more attractive to most agencies or firms which hire planners. In addition, you will be able to join the American Institute of Certified Planners sooner after leaving school; being a certified planner can advance your professional career.