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Viewpoint ACSP at 50: introduction

The founding of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) in 1969 and its creation of a separate conference (from the AIP/APA's) in 1981 marked the institutionalisation of a planning academy independent of but still inherently tied to professional planning practice. Ironically this institutionalisation in some ways codified the ongoing tension between planning theory and planning practice: the planning academy and the planning profession. This is ironic because the *raison d'être* of ACSP and its annual conference was pedagogy: how can planning educators effectively train students to be planning professionals?

It is not surprising that the so-called gap between planning theory and professional planning practice remains a trenchant issue after some 50 years. In fact, many would argue that the institutionalisation of the planning academy ensured this, with the incentives embedded in the academy versus the differing incentive structures of the various venues of professional planning practice leading to differential foci and reward for specific efforts. At the same time, ACSP as an organisation and its conference as a venue for the interaction, exchange, and diffusion of theory, pedagogy, and the analysis of contemporary practice continue to explore, direct and promote professional planning practice. In a sense ACSP and its member schools remain focused on planning practice through trying to understand the practice of planning both positively and normatively and then using that understanding as a basis to train future professionals to act effectively in that professional realm.

While this gap can unfortunately lead to a lack of mutual respect between practising planners and planning educators and thus tarnish relationships between the academy and the profession, simultaneously it may also serve progressive purposes. On the one hand, it may provide the basis for planning theorists and planning educators in general to develop and refine positive understandings of contemporary planning practice, which, as indicated above, feeds back into planning education and thus future practice. On the other hand, a gap between contemporary practice and normative theory provides an impetus for the development of better practice and better pedagogical techniques. Without a gap, a theorist might argue that planning practice would remain rudderless and practitioners might argue that planning education and the knowledge of planning practice would be stagnant and perhaps irrelevant. The key to progressive success lies in ensuring that planning educators' and reflective practitioners' attention focus on utilising the usefulness of each others' products rather than

the mere existence of a gap. ACSP and its member schools continue to foster this synergistic relationship.

The viewpoints provided here are from two former presidents of the association. Christopher Silver's vantage point spans the entire history of ACSP's conferences. He provides a personal take on the collegiality of its founders and subsequent members. In doing so, his essay focuses on ACSP's dual role of fostering planning education in both the academy and the profession. His remarks highlight the dialectical relationship between the academy and the profession via the institutionalisation of associational practices meant to ensure collaborative and synergistic relationships. First, the development of the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* as the journal of record for planning scholarship in the US signifies this dual role in the academy and profession. Second, the initiation and evolution of the Planning Accreditation Board as a collaborative effort between US associations of planning practitioners (APA and AICP) and educators (ACSP) focuses on pedagogy and ensuring a curriculum that adequately trains future planning professionals. Finally, ACSP's role in fostering and nurturing the development of other associations of planning educators emphasises its commitment to better planning education and practice in a globalising world. The development of the Global Planning Education Association Network (GPEAN) and its World Planning Congress brings to fruition these efforts.

Mike Hibbard's discussion of ACSP at 50 demonstrates these continuing efforts through his detailing of the current activities and issues that face the association. Mike's recounting of ACSP's recent and current activities demonstrates the association's commitment to collaborating with AESOP with its Joint Congresses and to nurturing GPEAN and its World Planning Congress. The recent, and evolving, collaboration with the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners to develop and refine a continuing education requirement for US certified planners in the form of certification maintenance, and the development of the Planning Accreditation Board accreditation process that now focuses on outcome assessment rather than input requirements, demonstrate the association's focus on planning education and its relevance for planning practice. Finally, Mike reports that ACSP has not neglected its role in fostering the position of planning education within the academy, as its current research and dissemination efforts concerning institutional output data and tenure and promotion outcomes demonstrate.

These viewpoints provide an important reflection on the generative tensions between planning practice and planning education in the US. They afford readers an opportunity to reflect and evaluate how their practice (scholarly and professional) promotes the development of better planning knowledge, pedagogy and practice.