

Welcome From the Planning Student Organization!

Dear Incoming MRPs, PhDs, and Dual Degree Students,
Congratulations on your decision to join the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP) at the University of Massachusetts! On behalf of the Planning Student Organization, we would like to welcome you to the Regional Planning Program. This student guide will provide you with some information about UMass, LARP, and the Amherst area that may be helpful for you as incoming MRP and Dual Degree students.

The Planning Student Organization (PSO) is an organization of all Regional Planning students (first and second years, dual degree, and part-time Masters and PhD Regional Planning students). The PSO works together to improve the Department's curriculum, our academic and community experiences as students, and our professional networks. PSO officers and students help to organize social gatherings, such as potluck lunches, gatherings at local venues, orientation, hikes, graduation festivities, and fundraisers. The PSO also supports a portion of a student's cost of attendance at planning-related conferences, as well as alumni panels and other networking events.

Fundraising is a very important aspect of the PSO. As a student, you are expected to volunteer for *at least* one fundraising event during the school year. Without all of us pitching in some of our time, we would not be able to support students attending conferences as well as the end of the year LARP graduation ceremony and celebration. In addition, it's a great way to bond with classmates, take a break from studies, and have fun!

We already have a couple fun and exciting fundraising activities planned for this semester. They include:

- Yard Day - Faculty, staff and friends hire us to rake their leaves! Welcome to New England!
- Tri-puff-a-lon - A mini triathlon at Puffer's Pond. This will take place one of the first weekends after school starts so if you are the competitive type, start your training! You can participate in teams or come out to volunteer and cheer on fellow students and faculty.

Please check your email for more information about orientation, the first PSO meeting and other social gatherings. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact any of the PSO officers. Welcome and we're looking forward to another great year!

Sincerely,

2013 PSO Officers

- Co-Presidents: Desiree Hamelin & Meredith Savage
- Treasurer: Ola Smialek
- Secretary: Ken Kirkland
- Social Chairs: Laura Dowd & Brett Gallagher
- GEO Liaison: Angelica Carey
- APA Liaison: Sierra Pelletier
- Student Senate Liaisons: Angelica Carey & Jeremy Price
- Communications Coordinator: unfilled

PSO STUDENT GUIDE 2012-2013

WELCOME TO LARP! *The PSO Student Guide answers common questions for incoming MRPs and Dual Degree students. This guide is not an exhaustive list of all you might need or want to know before entering the program; it is what we believe to be the most important information for you to know before starting in the fall. If you have any questions that are not addressed in this guide, consult the Department's official handbook (located on the LARP website), connect with Mark Hamin (MRP Graduate Program Director), or contact one of the PSO officers or current students.*

Table of Contents

1. Information about UMass and the LARP Department
 - a. MRP Curriculum and Courses
 - b. Funding
 - c. Professional Development
 - d. Department Communications
 - e. Parking on Campus
 - f. Graduate Employee Organization
 - g. Tips from current students
 - i. Places to study and/or use a computer
 - ii. Where to print
 - iii. Food on campus
2. Information about the Amherst Area
 - a. Housing
 - b. Transportation
 - c. Tips from current students
 - i. Grocery Shopping
 - ii. Dining Out
 - iii. Exercise
 - iv. Explore the Outdoors
 - v. Arts and Entertainment
3. Checklist of To Dos for this Summer

Information about UMass and the LARP Department

CURRICULUM AND COURSES

- Figure out the courses you will need to take in the fall by reading the Department Handbook and Department emails. The Department Handbook provides a general overview of courses that you will need to take, but pay attention to any Department communications over the summer since requirements may change.
- Check the course listings on the UMass online system, SPIRE, to determine what classes will be offered in the fall and to sign up for courses. Note that courses listed in the handbook are not offered every semester. If you have trouble getting into a class or finding a class you want to take, email the professor or Mark Hamin.
- Don't hesitate to contact current students if you have questions regarding different courses.
- Tip: Keep track of your paperwork from the beginning. Make copies of all paperwork whether it concerns assistantships, coursework, financial aid, or thesis/project completion. The onus is on us to ensure steps are completed to receive our degree.

FUNDING

It is imperative that you define your financial needs, communicate them to Mark Hamin, and start working on securing resources before arriving. Be proactive in working with the department, financial aid at UMass, external organizations, and networking with fellow students. Department internships and assistantships are often emailed via school email or announced through the Department Google groups email list, so watch for these and if you see one you may be qualified for, apply for it. Keep in mind that it is normal not to have funding figured out by the end of August.

Sources of Funding:

- **From UMass:** Financial aid in the form of student loans, work-study, and scholarships. Sometimes assistantships can be found in other departments – such as the Graduate Student Senate. You can find and apply for these on your own through the University websites.
- **From the Department:** Two types of funding available from the department:
 - Department Research and Teaching Assistantships – working with a professor on their research or assisting a professor with their class. You receive a tuition waiver and an hourly wage. Hours are typically capped at 10 hours/week at a standard rate of about \$20/hour. Department RAs and TAs are eligible to join the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) (see below).
 - Benefits: Tuition waiver, pay at GEO rate, health insurance
 - How to get one: Apply through the department
 - External Assistantships – External organizations (such as the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Co-op Power and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) offer some positions for Regional Planning students. Organizations must agree to provide a stipend at a certain level (the amount changes from semester to semester, contact Terry Trudeau for more information).
 - Benefits: Tuition waiver, pay comparable to GEO rate.
 - How to get one: Network, contact appropriate local organizations. The Department will also send out emails/post on the Google group when there is an available externship.

- **Scholarships and grants from APA:** The Department will send out notices for design and planning competitions that can get you some money for school. Also, check the APA website for information on annual scholarships that they offer.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **American Planning Association Membership:** The Department pays for your membership in APA for your first year in the program. Through this membership you will get access to information about events, conferences, and current issues and topics in the planning world via the monthly APA magazine. You will receive an email about your membership early in the semester. You may also sign up for special interest sub-groups at a discounted student rate.
- **Conferences:** In the fall, there is an annual SNEAPA (Southern New England APA, this year in Worcester) conference, and in the spring, the annual APA conference (next year will be held in Atlanta) that students and faculty from the Department usually attend. Students can usually volunteer during the conferences in exchange for free or discounted entry; many students do this and it's a great way to save money while networking. One of the functions of the PSO is to help students access professional development opportunities, so if you need help with transportation costs to a conference, contact the PSO to ask about funding. The UMass Graduate School also has money available for students to go to conferences (if they are presenting or displaying a poster).
- **Planners Network and Planetizen:** Sign up for these and other listserves and publications to become familiar with the profession.
- **Zube lectures on Thursdays at 4pm in Hills 105:** This lecture series runs throughout the year and brings in professionals from landscape architecture, regional planning, and other related disciplines.

DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS

The LARP Department is located in Hills North, at 111 Thatcher Road. The main office is room 109. The staff are incredibly helpful and knowledgeable.

- **Mailbox:** Each student has a mailbox near the LARP office.
- **Email:** Most official Department communications happen via email. Make sure you are on the contact lists and that you are receiving emails from faculty and staff. If you prefer to use another email (gmail, hotmail, etc) make sure your official UMass emails are being forwarded and let Mark Hamin know this is your preferred email. The onus is on you to check your school email for important school announcements.
- **Google Group:** Join this group - it is used for job and assistantship postings, notices about upcoming department, PSO, social events, sharing press and research related to planning. Participants include Mark Hamin, current students, and alumni.
- **Facebook Group:** Join this group - it is used to facilitate social activities.

PARKING ON CAMPUS

- If you plan to commute by car, you can buy permits through Campus Parking (<http://parking.umass.edu/>). They will last for the entire school year. Most students park in either lot 29 or lot 33.
- GEO members are eligible for discounts on parking passes. Simply take a copy of your contract to the Campus Parking office.
- The Baptist Church on Mass Ave near Hills, also has some inexpensive daily parking.
- There are some on-campus metered parking spots around Hills, but parking tickets are \$25.

GEO

If you are working on campus (note that external assistantships are not GEO-eligible) you will receive union and benefit information from the GEO office and the LARP GEO representatives. GEO serves the important purpose of representing graduate student employees, and there are opportunities to get involved in the organization if you're interested.

<http://www.geouaw.org/>

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS

Smartphone users can download the UMass Guide app. You can print on campus using credit loaded onto your Student ID (and you get \$10 free printing each semester already loaded onto your ucard). Here are some quick tips from students about places to study, print and eat.

Studying/Printing On Campus Good for studying? Computers to use? Printing?

Cape Cod Lounge	Yes	No	No
Library – Commons	No	Yes	Yes
Library – Calipari Room*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Library** upper floors 2,3,7,18, 22	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hills Computer Labs	No	No	Yes
Fine Arts 444 OIT classroom*	No	Yes	Yes
School of Management*	No	Yes	Yes
Studio Arts Bldg upstairs lounge	Yes	No	No
Newman Center upstairs	Yes	No	No
Morrill Lounge	Yes	No	No
Morrill 212*	Yes	Yes	Yes

*OIT classrooms have great facilities, but limited hours and are closed during classes.

** To reserve a private carrel: <http://library.umass.edu/services/borrowing/library-carrels/library-carrel-application>

Studying/Printing Off Campus

- Many cafes, the entire town of Amherst, and most local public libraries have free wifi. Consider using libraries and lounges at any of the “Five Colleges” since the bus is free.
- Collective Copies is great for printing (<http://collectivecopies.com>) (digital dropbox or in person for printing, fax, copies).
- Consider a printer at home because printing at school costs money and can use valuable time.

Eating

- On Campus – Lots of us pack in lunches to save time and money. On campus eateries closest to Hills are the Newman Center Café and Frankin Dining Commons. At the Student Union there are choices ranging from Earthfoods and People’s market, to French Meadow and the Blue Wall. These include everything from burgers to vegan fare, lattes to Gatorade.
- Off Campus – See next section.

Information about the Amherst Area

HOUSING

- **Where to look for housing options:** UMass Off Campus Housing (UMOCH) (<http://www.umoch.org/>), Western Mass Craigslist, and the Daily Gazette.
- **Start working on securing housing soon (by early August).** There are a lot of colleges in the area and usually not enough housing for all the students, so it's important to work on this early. Much of the housing is in large apartment complexes which does not suit everyone. Amherst has more college kids and Northampton more grad students and young professionals, but involves more commuting. Where you will want to live depends on price point, how you commute, family situation, etc.
- For details on certain areas and anecdotal advice, don't hesitate to contact current students. Local real estate agencies can be helpful, but often charge a fee of half months rent. Don't forget to find out utility costs (New England heating costs can be very high).

TRANSPORTATION

- **Buses:** The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) and Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) provide extensive bus service for the region. Find bus, rideshare, and park 'n ride information on their websites (<http://www.pvta.com/> and <http://www.frta.org/>). PVTA buses that service the Five Colleges are free to students (with student ID). Going to Holyoke or Springfield or other destinations costs regular fare. Navigational apps (such as iPhone Maps or Google Maps) do contain information about on-campus buses to help plan transportation. Ride the bus ahead of time to figure out the route.
- **Biking:** If you bike, investigate your routes (local buses are bike-rack enabled) through local town web sites and the Norwottuck Rail Trail. Professors Mark Hamin and Frank Schlegers are avid cyclists, and great resources on regional bike transit and recreation. There is a bike Co-op in the Student Union for repairs, information or just tools to borrow. Many students bike on campus.

TIPS FROM CURRENT STUDENTS ON LIVING AND PLAYING IN THE AREA

- **Grocery Shopping:** Trader Joes, Cushman's Market, and Atkins Market are all within 10 minutes of campus and reachable by bus. There are also many farmers markets in the area, including one in downtown Amherst. (www.massfarmersmarkets.org). Mainstream grocery stores (e.g., Big Y, Whole Foods, and Stop 'n Shop) abound in Hadley on Route 9.

- **Going Out:**
 - Amherst has the full range of world cuisine, fancy, pizza etc. Some of our favorites include:
 - For coffee (and quick b-fast or lunch): Rao's Café, Loose Goose, Black Sheep
 - For meals: Amherst Brewing Company (microbrew), Amherst Chinese, Bueno Y Sano, Arise, Antonio's (\$1 cheese slice on Fridays), Lone Wolf (for awesome brunch), High Horse (also a microbrew), Paradise of India, Mango Mango, Judie's, Fresh Side
 - Froyo/ice cream: GoBerry, Froyo World, Bart's
 - Northampton favorites include:
 - For coffee (and quick b-fast or lunch): Woodstar Café, Haymarket
 - For meals/drinks: Dirty Truth, Joe's café, Local Burger, Sylvester's (great brunch), Bella's (vegetarian), Amanouz, Eclipse (\$\$\$), Siam Square,
 - Other destinations: Esselon Café Route 9, the Montague Bookmill and Lady Killigrew, Mesa Verde, Hope and Olive (\$\$), Magpie, People's Pint in Greenfield, 2nd Street Bakery in Turners Falls, Blue Heron (\$\$\$) in Sunderland, Goten of Japan (\$\$\$). All of these are great cycling destinations!
- **Get Moving!** Shop around for a gym that fits your needs. The gym on-campus is not free for grad students (around \$100/semester – GEO or other insurance may reimburse some). Other options include: Planet Fitness, YMCA, to a climbing gym, and yoga studios all over.
- **Explore the Outdoors:** This area is GREAT for hiking. Check individual town and regional online trail guides, as well as state info at: <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/parks/central/hksp.htm>. See Transportation section for cycling.
- **Arts and Entertainment:** For everything from Monet to dinosaurs, modern art to puppets, explore the regional museums and don't forget on-campus openings (FiveColleges, MassMoca, etc). For info on events and music pick up the free Valley Advocate or check out MassLive.com.

Checklist of To Dos for Getting Started as a LARP Grad Student

- Activate your SPIRE account through the UMass Amherst website. Once you are accepted into the program, you can search for and enroll in classes via SPIRE.
- Activate your email account through OIT on the UMass Amherst website. If you are already in the UMass system, there are special steps to switch to LARP email addresses - call OIT (<https://www.oit.umass.edu/>).
- Sign up for the Google groups and Facebook page for the department and start checking both regularly.
- Choose and register for fall courses.
- Let Mark Hamlin know if you are looking for funding and internships and start looking for yourself.
- Buy a parking permit through Campus Parking
- Get a UMass Student ID (once you're on campus, in Whitmore Room 168)
Download the map app for UMass Amherst if you have a smartphone.
- Contact current students if you have any questions!