

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
**OF THE**  
**ACADEMIC MATTERS AND**  
**GRADUATE COUNCILS**

concerning a

**REVISION TO THE**  
**ACCELERATED MASTERS PROGRAM IN**  
**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND REGIONAL PLANNING (BS/MRP)**  
**(#5255)**

(Postponed at the 784<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate February 14, 2019)

Consideration resumed at the  
785<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting of the Faculty Senate  
March 7, 2019

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**ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION**

The Academic Matters Council recommends approval of this proposal.

## GRADUATE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

The Graduate Council recommends approval of this proposal.

### *Briefly describe the Proposal*

When the Department of LARP created the 4 + 1 accelerated BSED (later BSSCD)/MRP degree program in 2014-2015, it was among the first accelerated master's programs at UMass, and thus graduated some of the first accelerated master's students. At that time, our accelerated program included only majors in our department. However, subsequent accelerated master's programs at UMass have also included bachelor's degree students from other programs at UMass and in the Five College Consortium. We would like to expand our existing accelerated program to allow the same accommodation of students from complementary pre-planning fields, e.g., Sustainable Community Development as a minor, BSLA, BDIC students with sustainability concentrations, Geography, Landscape Studies, Environmental Studies, Public Policy, etc. These students could seek admission to the accelerated program with approval of the MRP graduate program director.

### *Provide a brief overview of the process for developing the proposal*

A number of Bachelor's degree programs, even though not professionally-oriented degrees, offer concentrations or sub-fields complementary to planning. Combining the undergraduate degree in one of these planning-related programs with the core coursework of the existing two-year Master of Regional Planning degree will help prepare students for the profession of planning in a total of five years by reducing duplicative coursework. Among the eligible students beyond our current BSSCD majors would be SCD minors, BDIC students who pursue sustainability concentrations, Bachelor's students in Geography, Environmental Studies, Landscape Studies, etc. in the Five-College Consortium, with approval of the MRP graduate program director. This expansion will only serve to make our accelerated 4 + 1 program comparable to other such UMass programs. The LARP department faculty voted unanimously in support of this proposal in fall 2017.

### **Purpose and Goals**

*Describe the proposal's purpose and the particular knowledge and skills to be acquired and provide a rationale for creating this accelerated degree program.*

Because of recent educational and institutional trends, an undergraduate degree in a planning-related field is increasingly not sufficient for long-term professional development in the field of city and regional planning. Almost every year, students with undergraduate planning degrees from Westfield State University apply to MRP programs (at UMass or elsewhere) for further graduate-level professional training toward an accredited degree. Before the 4 + 1, similarly, a number of our BSSCD majors at UMass also considered graduate study in the planning field; in recent years, based on the success of our 4 + 1 program, students in other interdisciplinary fields such as BDIC, Geography, Environmental Studies, etc. have also expressed interest in graduate study in the planning field. We wish to take this emerging trend to the next step of encouraging students to think in advance about undergraduate preparation for graduate study (e.g., through

internships or practica) and to continue their studies at UMass rather than matriculate elsewhere.

#### Accelerated Masters Information

*Does the accelerated master's option apply to all master's degrees in this field, or only to certain tracks or concentrations?*

The accelerated MRP program applies to all concentration areas in the degree program.

*What type of degree program does this accelerated master's option pertain to?*

*Note: second and third require separate approval.*

Not Answered

**Comments:** All complementary planning-related undergraduate Bachelor's program would be eligible subject to the approval of the MRP graduate program director. The accelerated 4+1 related to the MRP program, comparable to the existing BSSC/MRP 4 + 1 accelerated program that was already approved in 2015; we wish to expand the program to include similar program majors in the Five College Consortium.

*Describe the projected course sequence for this degree and the timeline to completion for students.*

Please see proposal document; students would identify and interest in the program during their junior year for curricular advising, would take graduate RP coursework in their senior year, and apply for the MRP program in February of their senior year.

*What undergraduate degree program is this accelerated masters associated with, if any.*

Currently associated with the BSSCD major, would include potential related majors such as BSLA, BDIC< Bachelor's degree in Geography, Environmental Studies, Landscape Studies, etc. within the Five College Consortium.

*If this proposal requires no additional resources, say so and briefly explain why. If this proposal requires additional resources, explain how they will be paid for. For proposals involving instruction, indicate how many new enrollments are expected and whether the courses have room to accommodate them.*

No additional resources required.

*Provide the curriculum to the applicable Master's degree as it currently appears in the Graduate Bulletin and explain how this curriculum will be scheduled over the student's undergraduate and graduate careers. Note that total number of credits must be 30 plus the minimum number required for undergraduate degree (generally 120, making total number of credits required 150).*

**Note:** For Master's programs under 36 credits, a maximum of 9 graduate-level credits taken as an undergraduate may be applied to both degrees. For Master's programs over 36 credits, a maximum of 12 graduate-level credits taken as an undergraduate may be applied to both degrees.

120 undergraduate credits, 12 credits taken in undergraduate program applied to graduate program as well, 36 graduate credits for the MRP program, similar to existing BSSCD/MRP accelerated program.

*Who can apply to pursue this accelerated Master's degree?  
(UMass students, Five College Students, Students in specific degree programs, etc.)*

Please see above; all Five College students, subject to approval of MRP graduate program director.

*Are there any admissions exceptions to this degree program, such as a waiver of the GRE requirements?*

No.

**Comments:** GRE required for graduate study in MRP program; waivers granted in exceptional circumstances with comparable credentials for graduate study.

**MOTION:** That the Faculty Senate approve the Revision to the Accelerated Master's Program: Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, as presented in Sen. 16-19 Doc. No. 19-039.

*Proposal attachment appears on the following pages.*

**ATTACHMENT:**

May 29, 2018

TO: Academic Affairs and Graduate Councils, Faculty Senate

FROM: Mark Hamin, Graduate Program Director, Master of Regional Planning (MRP)

SUBJECT: Proposal for expanded accelerated 4 + 1 Bachelor's/MRP Program

When the Department of LARP created the 4 + 1 accelerated BSED (later BSSCD)/MRP degree program in 2014-2015, it was among the first accelerated master's programs at UMass, and thus it graduated some of the first accelerated master's students. At that time, our accelerated program included only majors in our department. However, subsequent accelerated master's programs at UMass have also included bachelor's degree students from other programs at UMass and in the Five College Consortium. We would like to expand our existing accelerated program to allow the same accommodation of students from complementary pre-planning fields, e.g., Sustainable Community Development as a minor, BSLA, BDIC students with sustainability concentrations, Geography, Landscape Studies, Environmental Studies, Public Policy, etc. These students could seek admission to the accelerated program with approval of the MRP graduate program director.

The Director of the Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Community Development (BSSCD) and the Master of Regional Planning (MRP) Programs in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning proposes to offer an accelerated degree program for qualified students to earn their Bachelor's degree and the MRP within five years of full-time study, rather than the six years usually required to earn the two degrees separately. For undergraduate students in eligible programs, this would provide a 'head start', allowing them to begin satisfying core requirements of the MRP program while simultaneously satisfying requirements for their Bachelor's degree.

A number of Bachelor's degree programs, even though not professionally-oriented degrees, offer concentrations or sub-fields complementary to planning. Combining the undergraduate degree in one of these planning-related programs with the core coursework of the existing two-year Master of Regional Planning degree will help prepare students for the profession of planning in a total of five years by reducing duplicative coursework. Among the eligible students beyond our current BSSCD majors would be SCD minors, BDIC students who pursue sustainability concentrations, Bachelor's students in Geography, Environmental Studies, Landscape Studies, etc. in the FiveCollege Consortium, with approval of the MRP graduate program director. This expansion will only serve to make our accelerated 4 + 1 program comparable to other such UMass programs.

**Proposal for Expansion of Accelerated 4 + 1 Master's Degree Program**

Master's Program:	Master of Regional Planning (MRP)
Related Bachelor's Degree Programs:	Major or Minor in SCD; BSLA; BDIC sustainability concentrations; Five-College programs in Geography, Environmental Studies, Landscape Studies, etc.; or other suitable programs approved by MRP program director
Undergraduate seeks program approval:	February of Junior Year (curricular advising)
Undergraduate applies to MRP program:	February of Senior Year (formal graduate application)
Accelerated option applies to:	Existing Master's Degree Program (MRP)
Restrictions:	Restricted to Five-College Undergraduates in planning-related major or minor programs, with approval of MRP graduate program director

**Rationale:**

Because of recent educational and institutional trends, an undergraduate degree in a planning-related field is increasingly not sufficient for long-term professional development in the field of city and regional planning. Almost every year, students with undergraduate planning degrees from Westfield State University apply to MRP programs (at UMass or elsewhere) for further graduate-level professional training toward an accredited degree. Before the 4 + 1, similarly, a number of our BSSCD majors at UMass also considered graduate study in the planning field; in recent years, based on the success of our 4 + 1 program, students in other interdisciplinary fields such as BDIC Geography, Environmental Studies, etc. have also expressed interest in graduate study in the planning field. We wish to take this emerging trend to the next step of encouraging students to think in advance about undergraduate preparation for graduate study (e.g., through internships or practica) and to continue their studies at UMass rather than matriculate elsewhere.

**Proposed Accelerated 4 + 1 Bachelor's/MRP Degree:**

Accelerated degree candidates will be required to fulfill the coursework equivalent of 36 credits as graduate students (equivalent to the credit total of MRP core + thesis requirements), with 12 credits of graduate courses counting toward both the undergraduate degree and master's degree. Students in a Bachelor's program must graduate with 120 credits, with 12 credits at graduate RP level counted toward the Master's degree in addition to 36 credits taken in the graduate program in the fifth (+ 1)

year. Prior to graduate admission, prospective students will be required to do a professional internship or practicum, whether paid or unpaid, and preferably for academic credit, during the summer or the academic year, as a way of acquiring relevant professional experience, and as a critical complement to their academic work.

Courses eligible for double-counting would be graduate-level courses that are required for the MRP core or concentrations, and taken in the Bachelor's senior year. These would be 500- and 600-level classes that the LARP department makes available to undergraduate students pursuing the 4 + 1 MRP program.

This proposal thus meets the overall accelerated five-year degree requirement of a minimum 120 undergraduate Bachelor's degree credits with a total five-year degree requirement of 156 credits (36 in the final MRP year, with 12 double-counted between the programs). The net reduction of degree credits for the combined Bachelor's/MRP, only reduces total credits with elimination of duplicative/elective requirements, allowing a student to complete the accelerated program within five years rather than the six required to complete the two degrees separately. Thus, there is no reduction in core or concentration degree requirements for either Bachelor's or MRP programs.

Students will be required to complete the full core curricula of both programs. *These changes will not alter the core requirements of either degree program, or conflict with the accreditation requirements of the MRP program.*

### **Typical Program Timeline:**

#### *The Fourth Year:*

Accelerated Degree Students in their first year fulfill General Education requirements, and in their second year begin to fulfill core requirements for their Bachelor's program. During their third year, they continue to complete undergraduate core requirements and begin taking their concentration classes, preferably with 500-level and above courses. During their fourth and final undergraduate year, Bachelor's students will begin taking core courses for the MRP program, and will apply for the MRP program in February. They complete a Bachelor's with 120 credits.

#### *The Fifth Year:*

In the fifth/graduate year of the 4 + 1 program, students will fulfill their remaining requirements for the MRP program, including the required MRP studio (fall only) and either the MRP Thesis, Project, or Three-Course Option. The student will take graduate-level electives to complete the necessary 36 graduate credits, a 156-credit total to meet the accelerated 4 + 1 degree threshold requirement for the MRP degree.

#### *Internship:*

In addition to the course requirements, the accelerated program will require, advise and assist students to find and complete a professional planning-related internship, usually in a public or nonprofit organization. The internship can take place during the summer or the academic year, for pay or for academic credit, with documentation of the internship prior to entry into the MRP program. The planning internship should be carried out either before or during the summer before starting full-time graduate coursework, or at another time only with special permission.

**Administration of Program:**

1. Applicants are required to enter each program separately, sequentially, and individually, and must meet the respective admission requirements for each program. Once admitted to both programs, a student will qualify for the accelerated degree program. Applicants to the MRP program are expected to have taken the GRE. In addition, applicants whose native language is not English must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).
2. Advising: During the Bachelor's portion of the program, students will be advised by the Undergraduate Program Director of their major. During the MRP portion of the program, students will be advised by the MRP Graduate Program Director. Students may have full access to advisors from both programs throughout the five-year curriculum.

**Summary of Changes:**

1. Students will complete the required 120 credits for their Bachelor's degree + 36 credits for the MRP program (with 12 overlapping for both programs) = 156 total.
2. Students must graduate from their Bachelor's program with a minimum of 120 credits, with 12 of these credits satisfying both the Bachelor's and MRP degree requirements.
3. Students may seek approval for the 4 +1 program in their junior year, and students can apply formally to the MRP program in their senior year.