

## A Note from the Department Head

I am proud to introduce this issue FOCUS as the new Department Head of City & Regional Planning. I am committed to supporting the faculty—especially editor Dr. Vicente del Rio—and students who work hard to produce this journal that makes an important contribution to advancing planning and the learn-by-doing Cal Poly mission.

I want to take this opportunity to thank and recognize my predecessor, Dr. Hemalata Dandekar. Hema joined us as Department Head in 2009 and made numerous important contributions to the growth and development of the department. Hema served during the Great Recession that saw higher education budgets in California slashed and we were no exception. She was able to guide the Department through this challenging financial crisis and ensure that we continued to deliver a high quality education to our students. She successfully oversaw our accreditation by the Planning Accreditation Board and earned our first seven-year accreditation (many schools only get five). Finally, Hema secured one of the largest gifts ever to the CRP Department. The \$250,000 Errett Fisher Foundation gift will support student scholarships, student travel and field study, and studios and student service in low-income communities. She has left an important legacy for the department and she will continue to serve on the faculty as a committed educator.

Let me tell you a little about my background and plans. I arrived at Cal Poly in 1998 from Florida where I completed my Ph.D. in Urban & Regional Planning at The Florida State University. Prior to that I had worked as a professional planner at several different levels of government. In my time at Cal Poly I have focused on delivering high quality classes in planning theory, environmental planning, climate action planning, policy analysis, and a variety of other classes. And, I've kept a foot in practice by serving as a member of the City of San Luis Obispo Plan-



ning Commission. Other than serving as Department Head, my primary work these days is in two areas: developing tools and processes for addressing the climate crisis, and, assessing the implications of autonomous vehicles on our cities.

I have several priorities in this first year as Department Head. They include:

- Ensuring that our curriculum is preparing students to address California's most pressing problems including housing affordability, urban growth and livability, overburdened and outdated infrastructure, the climate change crisis, and natural hazards.
- Enhancing our classrooms with state-of-the-art technology so that students enter the job market ready to provide immediate value to communities and firms.
- Providing financial support to students in need; we believe that everyone who wants to be a planner should not be held back because of their financial situation.

I hope you will embrace these goals and partner with us. You can make a gift online at <http://www.caed.calpoly.edu> by clicking on the "give now" link and contributing to the CRP Fund for Excellence.

Finally, I want to express my sorrow over the loss of Dr. David Dubbink (see his eulogy on page 8). Dave was a mentor to me during my progress to tenure. We often co-taught environmental courses and he taught me what it really meant to teach in a learn-by-doing mode (which was different from my previous experience). I'm sure I'm where I am today because of his support. I will miss him.

Michael R. Boswell, PhD, AICP;  
Professor and Department Head,  
City and Regional Planning Department.