

APA—DURP Mixer, April 17, 2018

By Aarthi Padmanabhan

Event setup

The day was finally upon us: The APA-DURP Professional Mixer. The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa had been waiting with some anticipation to kick-start events such as this. The first spark was from by the APAHI Chapter President, Dean Minakami, followed by other collaborators that became involved in the process. On the DURP end, Professor Makena Coffman along with Dana Singer, took the lead to co-organize the venue and arrangements. An initial telephone meeting was set up to work out the general event date, and details were followed up via e-mail threads.

The Event: APA-DURP Mixer

As the APA student representative, I liaised with both sides of the event, namely the APAHI and DURP, as well as participating in the professional-student mixer. The event was set up to be about an hour long, with the DURP classroom organized into 5 large tables. There was a buzzer and the format was akin to that of “speed dating”, where graduate students were able to sit with planning professionals and chat informally about the latter’s perspectives on careers in planning. Each session lasted 10 minutes, after which the students got up and moved to a different table to meet with other professionals. It was quite interesting, and this way the shifts were more manageable and well rotated. I was able to note the participants’ interactions among each other, and it was insightful and informative. The graduate students were able to obtain a better understanding about the ins and outs of the profession, and often posed some thought-provoking queries about what to expect as a novice entering the job market. Some discussions revolved specifically around the public sector vs. private sector “debate”, and depending on the professional giving the advice and her/his experience level, there were differing views on the pros and cons of working in either sector. In the end, I was left with a hopeful and optimistic vantage point: whichever sector (private firms vs. public governmental/non-profit) the job and wherever it may be geographically, each experience will offer unique insights and change the way I will think about planning, my career interests, and the way I perceive the urban milieu and built environments.

Feedback from Attendees

There were a total of about 40 attendees: 7 professionals, 4-5 students at each of the 5 tables, and a few of the DURP faculty members. All the feedback received from the event’s attendees (professionals and students) was



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positive. Students felt they were given the opportunity to interact with some planning professionals and were able to catch a glimpse into their future selves. Professionals were glad to offer some insights and advice to young, aspiring candidates. Everyone felt that the event was long overdue, and were hopeful that this will perhaps pave the way for organizing similar events in the future. This APA-DURP professional-student mixer was well received and much appreciated by all who attended.

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