

Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Highlights

A Year Unlike any Other

This academic year began and ended in a global pandemic and represents the first (and, hopefully, first ever) completely remote year of teaching for the [Department of Urban Studies and Planning \(DUSP\)](#). Nonetheless, over this unusual and unprecedented year, our students, staff, and faculty responded with strength, resilience, compassion, and patience.

We are extremely thankful for the many ways so many members of our community worked to support each other, and for their many accomplishments, both large and small, over this difficult time. For example:

- The staff of our departmental headquarters mobilized an extraordinary summer opportunities program to ensure that almost all DUSP students had financial support for meaningful research and professional development.
- DUSP's Academic Continuity Team worked tirelessly to ensure our educational programs continued to excel in innovative and resilient ways through continuously challenging dynamics.
- There were those among us who mobilized our community in response to the George Floyd murder in order to maintain momentum and to push DUSP toward actively becoming an anti-racist organization.
- The student authors of "Planning Ideas that Matter: Blackness, Indigeneity, Redistribution, and Reparative Practice" (the Black DUSP Thesis) clearly articulated a deeply thoughtful vision and call for specific actions including anti-racist research and teaching, enrollment, community and culture, core curriculum, and organizational accountability.
- Members of the department's Racial Justice Teach-In team mobilized and delivered an innovative, creative, and deep learning experience, not only for students but also faculty and staff.
- Many people contributed to the master in city planning curriculum reform under Professor Ceasar McDowell's leadership—a deeply consequential step in ensuring the MCP program is capable of preparing the next generation of leaders to face the world's challenges.
- The Special Program for Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS)/Humphrey Fellowship team and fellows miraculously pulled off an "abbreviated" SPURS year, ensuring an uninterrupted program, now in its 54th year.
- The Anti-Racist Research Initiative, with the leadership of Associate Department Head Mariana Arcaya, undertook deeply important work to ensure that DUSP, as an organization, can support research that intentionally and consistently advances racial justice.

- The DUSP Transformation Design Team took on the monumental task of pushing forward a vision and organizational structure for DUSP 2025.
- The 11.S199 Indigenous Environmental Planning class worked with MIT Solve fellows, rapidly and creatively responding to the call for place- and community-based teaching that emphasizes racial equality, political and economic fairness, and environmental justice.
- We are grateful for all of the DUSP undergraduates, master's, and doctoral students who persevered through to graduation.

Marking a Significant Loss to Our Community

On July 2, 2020, Tunney Lee, professor emeritus of urban planning and former head of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, passed away of complications from cancer treatment. He was 88 years old.

An architect by training, Lee was also an accomplished planner, historian, and community activist. At MIT, his research focused on the process of community-based design, with a particular interest in high-density urban settings. He led frequent collaborations between MIT students and Boston-area neighborhoods. His approach to urban planning and architecture emphasized how these fields could be harnessed to empower and enhance people's lives. In approaching design, Lee viewed the built environment through the lens of how individuals would construct, use, live, and interact with the creations of planners and architects.

A Smaller Entering Class, a Virtual DUSP

This year, for the first time in recent memory, DUSP allowed admitted students to defer their enrollment for one year with no penalty. Approximately two-thirds of the incoming master in city planning (MCP) class elected this option, and we look forward to welcoming them to the department in fall 2021. All admitted PhD students elected to enroll.

Over the year, all our classes—our entire departmental community, including faculty meetings, advising, parties, celebrations, projects, and research—were adapted to fit the reality of remote work.

Action on Climate Change

The relentless pace of extreme weather events this summer, ranging from wildfire to flooding to drought to cyclones, is just the latest indication that the effects of climate change are clear, present, and dangerous. The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change unequivocally states that humans are causing climate change and that the window to take meaningful action to reduce carbon emissions will close within this decade.

Over the past three years, DUSP has built a strong foundation to respond. This year, Dean Hashim Sarkis committed the School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P) to the SA+P Climate Action Plan, which was developed in 2020 by SA+P students with

DUSP associate professor David Hsu and Professor Caroline Jones (Department of Architecture). The Climate Action Plan identified major opportunities for each department and unit in the school to tackle their carbon emissions. MIT's new climate action plan will build on our efforts, and other departments are looking to us to lead. DUSP is continuing discussions across the school and the Institute to mitigate our emissions from space heating and cooling, construction, procurement of goods and services, and commuting. We are consulting with other departments and with MIT Facilities, and we will develop pilot programs for these areas within larger Institute-wide systems over the coming year.

A Renewed Focus: Racial Justice Teach-In

Throughout 2020 and beyond, critical failures of urban planning have been laid bare. As MIT president Rafael Reif said in June, recent events have highlighted “the tragic persistence of racism and systemic injustice in the United States.”

Anti-Black racism and white supremacy in the United States is part of a broader, structural, global human rights problem exemplified elsewhere in the world in the legacies of colonialism and exclusions based on race, class, religion, and/or gender. DUSP cannot ignore the complicity of planning in these systems and outcomes. Building communities based on equity and inclusion is planning's duty. Only by dismantling systemic racism can we confront the overlapping social, environmental, health, and economic crises facing cities globally.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement urgently challenge us to imagine again what is required to build inclusive, thriving, and sustainable cities. DUSP has committed to a long-haul transformation of our departmental culture and teaching, research, and career development into an anti-racist institution. This transformation will be strategically integrated with our capability to tackle many of the other challenges the world faces, such as the public health crisis, the housing affordability crisis, the employment crisis, and the climate crisis.

To center these issues in the DUSP curriculum and spark a longer-term transformational change, the department developed and launched a five-week teach-in process. The teach-in used a transitional justice framework, which is a means to recognize (often hidden) histories of human rights abuses, understand the implications for the present, and identify paths to the future. Our work was animated by the question, “What would planning look like if it were to radically confront its painful past of identity-based violence, exclusions, and oppressions; recalibrate our present practices and knowledges to respond; in order to envision more just cities?”

We centered issues of racial and social justice, multi-racial community, and critical self-reflection as a means to build a better practice. We challenged our students and ourselves to think differently about differences, asking ourselves to consider the role and effect of power in driving injustice. We grounded our conversations in diverse and cutting-edge thinking while paying heed to the lessons, traumas, and advances of the past. Throughout, we kept a practical eye on the future.

This work was led by a team helmed by Dayna Cunningham, executive director of DUSP's Community Innovators Lab (CoLab), and Delia Wendel, Spaulding Career Development Assistant Professor of Urban Studies and International Development, along with assistant professor of urban economics and housing Devin Michelle Bunten, associate professor of urban science and planning Catherine D'Ignazio, and CoLab deputy director Taina McField.

An Expanded Leadership Team

At the start of the year, we were excited to announce the appointment of Ceasar McDowell as associate department head, joining existing associate department head Mariana Arcaya. In his expanded role, McDowell assumed responsibility for coordinating DUSP's academic continuity to ensure a successful 2021 academic year (and beyond) and integrate lessons learned into program transformation for future years; and for leading DUSP's anti-racist city alliance, serving as the point of contact with the City of Boston for AY2021 to marshal cooperative teaching, research, and learning opportunities and build a foundation of knowledge for anti-racist planning action.

Arcaya's charge includes coordinating DUSP's anti-racist transformation to ensure the department fulfills its obligations and serves as a force for change within the Institute, and leading DUSP's research reform and reinvention to make it easier for our research to be community driven, visible, accessible, and meaningful to those we work with and for, including all voices and perspectives integral to the research enterprise.

Departmental Visiting Committee Rescheduled

With the pandemic unresolved and significant pressures on faculty and administrators planning for a highly unusual fall, Chair of the Corporation Robert Millard and the Institute's senior officers decided to postpone the eight visiting committees planned for this fall. As a result, DUSP's next Visiting Committee meeting will be in fall 2022.

Comings, Goings, Promotions

Appointments

Over the summer we had the pleasure of officially welcoming Karilyn Crockett as assistant professor of urban history and public policy and planning. Shortly afterwards, we were excited to learn that Crockett had been appointed chief of equity and inclusion for the City of Boston. In this position, she heads the mayor's Equity and Inclusion Cabinet, driving the city's work to dismantle systemic racism and embed equity in all planning and operations moving forward. While serving in this role over the 2021 academic year, Crockett continued as a lecturer in DUSP. She will officially assume her role as assistant professor in September 2021.

Also this year, we were delighted to recognize and welcome Mary Anne Ocampo to a new role as associate professor of the practice. Ocampo has been a lecturer in the department since 2013. In addition to her teaching role, she has been a highly productive, award-winning practitioner of urban planning and design at Sasaki Associates, where she served as a principal. Her global professional planning projects

include capital city designs, regional sustainability strategies, campus plans, and neighborhood plans for specific sites. Her leadership and stewardship of community-oriented initiatives in the Boston area provide an invaluable bridge to professional practice, connecting students with community activists and leaders through real-world projects and courses, and her publications and reflective writing address contemporary urban design and planning practice.

Tenure-Track Faculty Position in Computation, Equity, and the Health of the Planet

In November, DUSP received approval to begin a search for a tenure-track faculty position in computation, equity, and the health of the planet. The search committee followed the specific guidance that female and underrepresented minority faculty be represented on the committee and included the following members:

- Mariana Arcaya, chair
- Eran Ben-Joseph, Class of 1922 Professor of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning
- David Hsu
- Ceasar McDowell
- Sarah Williams, associate professor of technology and urban planning
- John E. Fernández, professor, Department of Architecture
- Arianna Salazar Miranda (student representative)

The committee coordinated its review with the MIT Stephen A. Schwarzman College of Computing Shared Faculty Search Committee:

- Aleksander Madry, Cadence Design Systems Professor of Computing, Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (EECS), chair
- Srinivas Devadas, Edwin Sibley Webster Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, EECS
- Patrick Jaillet, Dugald C. Jackson Professor in Electrical Engineering, EECS
- Nancy Lynch, NEC Professor of Software Science and Engineering, EECS
- Samuel Madden, professor, EECS
- Noelle Selin, associate professor, Institute for Data, Systems, and Society and Department of Earth, Atmospheric, and Planetary Sciences
- George Verghese, Henry Ellis Warren (1894) Professor of Electrical and Biomedical Engineering, EECS

By December, the search committees had received 90 applications. Over a number of meetings and iterations, the committees finalized a shortlist of three candidates to bring to campus for interviews. Each candidate gave a talk attended by 35–45 people from

DUSP and the Schwarzman College of Computing and participated in two days of interviews with students and faculty.

In the end, despite a lot of hard work, no offer of appointment was made, as we faced difficulties identifying a candidate acceptable to both units. We remain eager and excited about continuing to work together with the College to find the right candidate in a search which we hope to reinitiate in the 2023 academic year.

Leaves and Sabbaticals

Justin Steil, Erica James, and Phil Thompson were on leave during the entire 2021 academic year. Eran Ben-Joseph, Jason Jackson, and Anne Whiston Spirn were on leave in fall 2020, and Sarah Williams was on leave in spring 2021.

Visitors and Affiliations

This year, DUSP had a wonderful cohort of visiting faculty and scholars, both new and returning:

- Jim Aloisi, the former Massachusetts secretary of transportation, joined as a lecturer in transportation planning, co-teaching 11.540 Urban Transportation Planning and Policy with Fred Salvucci. Aloisi is a writer, commentator, and consultant with a specialty in transportation planning and policy, and law.
- Garnette Cadogan returned as a visiting scholar for the fall semester, teaching special subject 11.S944 Seeing the City Afresh: Writing About the Modern City.
- Sasha Costanza-Chock, a designer and media scholar, joined as a research scientist with DUSP and the MIT Media Lab. Costanza-Chock has been a member of both communities for many years, as a co-principal investigator in the Center for Civic Media and as an affiliate with both CoLab and Catherine D'Ignazio's Data + Feminism Lab.
- John Moavenzadeh will be co-teaching 11.029/11.529 Mobility Ventures: Driving Innovation in Transportation Systems. Moavenzadeh is the executive director for urban mobility professional education at MIT and a senior advisor to Deloitte's Future of Mobility practice. He previously served as head of mobility and member of the executive committee of the World Economic Forum for over 15 years in Geneva, Switzerland, and New York City, leading teams that developed public-private initiatives including autonomous vehicles and urban mobility, security of the international travel system, drones and the future of the air space, and advancing seamless integrated mobility.
- William Aulet, managing director of the Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship, is an award-winning educator and author whose current work is built off the foundation of his 25-year successful business career, first at IBM and then as a three-time serial entrepreneur. During this time, he directly raised over \$100 million and, more importantly, created hundreds of millions of dollars of shareholder value through his companies. Aulet will be co-teaching 11.029/11.529 Mobility Ventures: Driving Innovation in Transportation Systems.

- In January, the Special *Program* for Urban and Regional Studies/Humphrey Fellowship welcomed 12 fellows from Barbados, Colombia, Eritrea, Lebanon, Mongolia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Turkey, and Uruguay.

Teaching the Master in City Planning Core

Master in City Planning core subjects and instructors for AY2021 were as follows:

Fall 2020

- Five-Week Module on Transitional Justice: Delia Wendel and Dayna Cunningham
- 11.201 Gateway: Urban Studies and Planning: Jeff Levine
- 11.205 Introduction to Spatial Analysis: Sarah Williams
- Program Group Intro Courses:
- 11.301 Introduction to Urban Design and Development: Brent Ryan
 - 11.601 Introduction to Environmental Policy and Planning: Larry Susskind
 - 11.401 Introduction to Housing, Community, and Economic Development: Karilyn Crockett
 - 11.701 Introduction to International Development Planning: Balakrishnan Rajagopal
 - 11.540 Transportation/Mobility: James Aloisi

Spring 2021

- 11.205 Introduction to Spatial Analysis: Joe Ferreira
- 11.203 Microeconomics: Albert Saiz
- 11.202 Planning Economics: Albert Saiz
- 11.220 Quantitative Reasoning and Statistical Methods for Planning I: Albert Saiz

Practica

The following practicum subjects were offered this year:

- 11.651 USA Lab: Bridging the American Divides
- 11.337 Urban Design Ideals and Action
- 11.304 Site and Environmental Systems Planning
- 11.303 Real Estate Development Studio

New Elective Courses

The following new courses were offered this year:

- 11.029/11.529 Mobility Ventures: Driving Innovation in Transportation Systems
- 11.074/11.274 Cybersecurity Clinic
- 11.119 NEET Digital Cities Independent Study
- 11.S03 Special Subject: Transportation Shaping Sustainable Urbanization: Connections with Behavior, Urban Economics and Planning
- 11.S188 Special Subject: Racial Justice Teach-In for Urban Studies and Planning
- 11.S189 Introduction to Computational Thinking in Cities
- 11.S943 Practicum: Just Money: Working with Mission-Based Financial Institutions to Address Social and Ecological Challenges
- 11.S947 The Fire This Time: Race and Racism in American Cities
- 11.S953 Frontier of Transportation Research
- 11.S958 Housing Justice Clinic
- 11.S946 Cities and the Urban Informal Economy: Rethinking Urban Development, Design and Planning
- MAS.S69 Design and Facilitation of Constructive Communication Systems
- 11.S944 Seeing the City Afresh: Writing About the Modern American City

Other News

Grants, Awards, and Recognition

- Justin Steil, the Spaulding Career Development Assistant Professor of Law and Urban Planning, was named as a recipient of the 2020–2021 Harold E. Edgerton Faculty Achievement Award, recognizing his excellence in service, mentorship, and research that impacts critical societal challenges in environmental sustainability and social justice.
- Ford Professor of Urban and Environmental Planning Larry Susskind and Jungwoo Chun received a second grant from the Public Interest Technology University Network to extend the work of the MIT Cybersecurity Clinic, which places teams of students in New England cities that want help assessing their vulnerability to cyberattack.
- In partnership with the Clean Energy States Alliance, Associate Professor Janelle Knox-Hayes, Jungwoo Chun, and Shekhar Chandra received a multi-year grant from the Department of Energy to work with state energy agencies and community-based organizations to improve their ability to share the knowledge and information needed for solar energy to be developed efficiently, equitably, and cost effectively in low- and moderate-income communities.

- Elisabeth Beck Reynolds PhD '10, executive director of MIT's Industrial Performance Center, accepted a senior post in the Biden administration's National Economic Council.
- Larry Susskind was recognized with a Committed to Caring Award for his mentorship, innovation, positioning of equity, care, and leadership.
- Sarah Williams was named as the new director of the Norman B. Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism.
- Ceasar McDowell was named associate director for civic design at the newly launched interdisciplinary Center for Constructive Communication at the MIT Media Lab. The center leverages data-driven analytics to better understand current social and mass media ecosystems and to design new tools and communication networks capable of bridging social, cultural, and political divides.

Events, Exhibitions, Publications, and Activities

- Led by Catherine D'Ignazio, the month-long Feminist Future(s) hackathon and community event series explored feminist future(s) in which people and the planet thrive. In teams mentored by community organizations, participants designed interventions for reproductive justice, the care economy, prison abolition, and environmental justice.
- The City Design and Development Forum welcomed a wide range of urbanists to present their work, including Belinda Tato, *ecosistema urbano* and Harvard University Graduate School of Design; Trinity Simons, Mayor's Institute on City Design; Christine Gaspar, Center for Urban Pedagogy; and Ifeoma Ebo, Creative Urban Alchemy.
- During the spring term, the MIT Mobility Initiative, led by associate professor of city and transportation planning Jinhua Zhao, coordinated a weekly speaker series that showcased transportation research from across the Institute.
- The new book *Street Commerce: Creating Vibrant Urban Sidewalks* (University of Pennsylvania Press) by Andres Sevtsuk, Charles and Ann Spaulding Career Development Associate Professor of Urban Science and Planning, digs into the science of commerce and examines salient cases about sustaining main streets from the US and beyond, including London, Singapore, and Tallinn, Estonia.
- Lister Brothers Associate Professor of Economic Geography Janelle Knox-Hayes and Oxford University's Dariusz Wójcik published the *Routledge Handbook of Financial Geography*. This handbook is a comprehensive, gender-balanced, and up-to-date work that offers a survey of the state of financial geography. Featured contributors include Associate Professor Gabriella Carolini, Isadora Cruxen, Jungwoo Chun, and Priyanka deSouza.
- SPURS released the Buenos Aires report, "Towards an Inclusive Urbanization," a research project undertaken during the 2019 academic year by SPURS Fellows and DUSP master's students as part of a two-semester practicum.

- A new edition of *Environmental Problem-Solving: Balancing Science and Politics Using Consensus Building Tools*, by Lawrence Susskind, Bruno Verdini, Yasmin Zaerpoor, and Jessica Gordon, was published by Anthem Press.
- *Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) in the Built Environment Project* is a digital collection and remembrance of BIPOC designers and advocates that have shaped how we see and interact with the built environment and city form. Students across the School of Architecture and Planning joined forces with MIT Libraries to create this resource, focused on the US and highlighting those who have made contributions to the built environment in education and in practice.
- For the first time this year, SPURS joined the MIT 24-Hour Challenge, raising \$21,445 from SPURS alumni and friends.

Degree Committees

Master in City Planning Committee

The MCP Committee completed the first major revision of the MCP core curriculum in over 20 years, focused on redesigning the core classes in content, integration, format, and approaches. The new core curriculum, which will launch in the 2022 academic year, includes new required subjects in urban design skills and qualitative methods, and a revised two-semester gateway sequence, which de-emphasizes the required group introductory subjects and 12-unit thesis preparation subject.

In AY2021, the department enrolled 20 new MCP students (41 deferring) and one Master of Science in Urban Studies and Planning (SM) student. The department granted 45 MCP and no SM degrees.

Due to the ongoing effects of the pandemic and the anticipated number of deferred students intending to enroll in the coming fall, the department did not accept or review any applications for admission this year.

PhD Committee

As part of DUSP's successful efforts to secure enhanced and sustained support for both current and future PhD students, the PhD Committee has developed new measures to monitor and evaluate student progress via clear milestones, a statement of values and ethics to support student well-being, and guidelines for funding responsibilities and incentives to help bring additional resources to support students and faculty research.

The department graduated nine PhD students. The following dissertations were completed in AY2021:

- Mark Brennan, "Social Policy and Operations Management"
- Madeleine Daepf, "Three Essays on Residential Mobility, Housing, and Health"
- Cauam Ferreria Cardoso, "Technological Change and the Changing Nature of Grassroots Development Organizations: The Case of the Self-Employed Women's Association of India (SEWA)"

- Yonah Freemark, “Mobility Politics: Local Ideologies in the Multi-Jurisdictional Metropolis”
- Nick Kelly, “Can Housing Policy Address Spatial Inequality? Innovations in Policy and Politics to Expand Access to Opportunity Neighborhoods”
- Daniel Traficonte, “Patents Over Planning: Industrial Capital and Federal Innovation Policy”
- Chaewon Ahn, “Manufacturing Social Capital: Social Networks Through Civic Innovation Initiatives”
- Priyanka deSouza, “Making Air Quality Count: Low-Cost Sensors, Public Health, and Urban Planning”
- Shin Bin Tan, “Three Essays Examining Social Vulnerability and Place-Based Determinants of Health”

The department received 132 applications during the AY2021 PhD admissions cycle. Nine students were admitted, and eight will be enrolling.

Undergraduate Program

David Hsu joined Cherie Abbanat, lecturer of international development, to take on the role of co-chair of the Undergraduate Committee.

In AY2021, five students graduated with a bachelor of science from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning (four in Course 11, one in Course 11-6).

Accounting for graduations, changes of major, and new declarations, the department will have 33 undergraduate majors for the coming year: 17 in Course 11, and 16 in Course 11-6.

Commencement and Awards

At the departmental commencement celebration in June, DUSP celebrated—physically distanced but together in spirit and community—the achievements and accomplishments of the graduating class of 2021.

The commencement keynote speaker was Nithya Raman MCP '08. Raman is the Los Angeles city council member for the 4th district, a seat she won in a historic victory as the first challenger to defeat an incumbent city council member in 17 years. Raman ran on a platform that centered on ending homelessness, advancing climate justice, and diversifying the voices represented in city government. Prior to her role with the city of Los Angeles, Raman co-founded Transparent Chennai, a nonprofit that collaborated with residents of urban slums to enhance their voice and strengthen their advocacy for resources such as running water and basic sanitation.

After the commencement speeches, the following year-end awards were announced:

Certificates

- Environmental Planning Certificate: Michelle Mueller
- Urban Design Certificate: Sofia Gulaid, Tess McCann

Departmental Awards

- Outstanding Undergraduate Thesis: Mimi Wahid, “The Path Toward Racial Reconciliation in Salisbury, North Carolina”
- Outstanding MCP Thesis: Winn Elliott Costatini, “Integrating Climate, Economic, and Racial Justice through a Boston FutureCorps”
- Outstanding PhD Dissertation: Yonah Freemark, “Mobility Politics: Local Ideologies in the Multi-Jurisdictional Metropolis”
- APA Outstanding Student: Bahij Chancey
- Rolf R. Engler Award for Outstanding Service: Jill Kronberg-White and Takeo Kuwabara

Student Council Awards

- Excellence in Teaching: Devin Michelle Bunten
- Excellence in Advising: Mary Jane Daly
- Staff or Faculty Contribution to Student Life: Ellen Rushman
- Excellence in Teaching by a Teaching Assistant: Tanvi Sharma
- Frank Hebbert Award for Student Contribution to DUSP: Osamu Kumasaka

Christopher Zegras
Department Head
Professor of Urban Studies and Planning