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Doctoral Education and the Academic Job Market in Planning: 2018-2019

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Executive Summary

This report presents the results from the second year of a planned three-year study on doctoral education and the academic job market in Planning. The Year 2 survey of doctoral programs indicates that programs graduated approximately 270 new PhDs in Planning or closely allied fields during the 2018-2019 academic year—an 8% decrease from the previous academic year. Programs report that approximately 66% of students enroll with aspirations for academic careers. Extrapolating from the survey data, this suggests that of the estimated 270 graduates during academic year 2018-2019, an estimated 179 preferred an academic position. Survey data indicates an estimated 111 graduates found academic positions following graduation. Put another way, approximately 62% of those graduates likely seeking an academic position found one. The number of new PhDs securing academic appointments roughly equals the number of academic positions open to new PhDs (105). However, a new question on the Year 2 survey suggests that job seekers encountered strong competition from faculty engaging in lateral moves. Supported by this and other evidence, we argue the 111 graduates securing academic positions are not filling the 105 identified as open to new PhDs plus six other unidentified positions; they are filling a smaller number of identified jobs and a larger number of jobs promoted outside the channels evaluated in this report.

Job announcements through ACSP and Planners 2040 were up slightly (5.3%) for positions beginning in Fall 2019 compared to the previous year. As in Year 1, the most popular specializations in job announcements were Environmental and Sustainability Planning and Transportation, Land Use, and Urban Design. Due to changes in both the coding protocol and database development, job specialization frequencies cannot be directly compared between Year 1 and Year 2 data. However, some trends are visible. Academic year 2018-2019 saw increased calls for applicants focusing on Social Equity, Health Care, and GIS/Big Data/Data Analytics. Other focal area changes are discussed in the report. The Year 3 report (to be released in 2020) is designed to allow the direct comparison of job specializations across years.

As expected, the survey results describing PhD programs are strongly similar between Years 1 and 2. As in Year 1, the 2018-2019 results indicate that in excess of 70% of doctoral students have teaching opportunities. Proctoring and grading remain popular teaching tasks. Curriculum design remains the least commonly reported teaching responsibility for PhD students, but was more popularly reported in Year 2 versus Year 1. The majority of PhD programs require students to produce publishable research, while actually requiring publication remains very uncommon.

In sum, the Year 2 results reinforce but moderate the Year 1 finding that the academic job market in Planning is competitive. There were fewer academic job openings than academically oriented graduates, and graduates face steep competition for those jobs from faculty engaging in lateral moves. Further, graduates generally have both teaching and research experience. Students will also find uneven job opportunity across specializations, with some seeing more postings than others.

Introduction

Project Goals

This multi-year project seeks to describe doctoral education and the academic job market for Planning. By developing a database of job announcements, this study estimates the number of jobs from year to year as well as the specializations and ranks sought. A parallel survey of PhD programs, conducted in the late spring and summer, evaluates how PhDs students are trained in terms of teaching opportunities, the role of publishing, and specializations. The survey also enables an estimation of the number of new PhDs per year and an estimation of what share of those new graduates secures academic employment.

We hope this study is useful for programs considering investments in various curricular areas or enrollment targets. We also hope this report is useful for PhD students, by providing a view of the job market in terms of the demand for various specializations, the range opportunities across various job titles (tenure-track faculty, post-doctoral positions, researcher staff, etc.), and competition from existing faculty, among other insights.

Summary of Year 1 Results

In the Year 1 report[1] we found that the academic job market in Planning was competitive. On average, programs graduated approximately 4.7 PhDs, extending to an estimated 294 total graduates across programs. We identified 114 academic jobs advertised by ACSP, 70 of which were open to new PhDs. Survey responses indicated that during the 2017-2018 academic year, approximately 46% of graduates (equaling approximately 135) found academic positions, strongly suggesting that graduates identified positions beyond the scope of the ACSP job bank. The vast majority of students graduate with experience in teaching and publishing. Both the job market and PhD program curriculum favored Environmental and Sustainability Planning, Transportation, Land Use and Urban Design, and Community Development while other specializations such as Urban Policy, GIS/Spatial Analysis, Landscape Architecture, and Geography were more common in job advertisements than in PhD program curriculum.

Methods

This section focuses on project components that underwent revision for Year 2. A description of the project's methods from Year 1 that continued into Year 2 with little or no alteration are given in the Appendix.

Changes for the Year 2 Survey

Questions from participants and readers following the Year 1 report generally focused on two areas: 1) demographic characteristics of the graduates; and 2) whether positions open to new

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[1] Ganning, Joanna, "Doctoral Education and the Academic Job Market in Planning: 2017-2018" (2018). *Urban Publications*. 0 1 2 3 1550. https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/urban_facpub/1550

PhDs were being filled by new PhDs, faculty engaging in lateral moves, or candidates coming from post-doctoral researcher positions.

Of the former, we concluded that collecting demographic data on PhD students falls beyond the purview of this project. Moreover, we note some ethical considerations involved in asking PhD program directors to supply information about gender identity, race, and ethnicity on behalf of students who may not have consented to have their information either reported or used for such a research purpose; nor are we prepared to implement a survey of graduates themselves, although such a survey would be useful.

Of the second category of questions, regarding lateral moves within the academy, we incorporated two questions pertaining to faculty hires in respondents' departments. These new questions ask whether faculty hired with a Fall 2018 start date were new PhD graduates, post-doctoral students, candidates moving from faculty positions at other institutions, or other situations. If the market shows a preference for lateral moves—which we believe are common in Planning—then job openings available to new PhDs overestimate demand for such candidates.

We then went one step further to understand the supply of new PhDs applying for jobs. We incorporated a new question aimed at estimating the percentage of PhD students who enter programs with the intention of pursuing an academic career. Presumably, not all students desire an academic appointment upon graduation. Some students pursue doctoral degrees to advance existing careers in industry or practice. Estimating the percentage of such students enhances our ability to estimate the supply of Planning academics.

Two other questions underwent minor revisions. First, the inquiries regarding academic placements of graduates were clarified to define "positions at academic institutions" to include post-doctoral positions, full-time research staff jobs at universities, or adjunct, full-time instructor, or tenure-track faculty positions. Second, the question on program specializations was amended pursuant to new research. Brinkley and Hoch (2018)[2] published a paper that focuses on specializations in Planning education. They disaggregate specialization names (e.g., "real estate and housing" was coded as "real estate" and "housing") and calculate the frequency of each across ACSP member schools' programs. To count as a focus area, the topic had to require at least two specialized courses. In coding job advertisement specializations, we followed their protocol for disaggregating names. Survey respondents wrote in specializations if those provided in the list (which follows Brinkley and Hoch, 2018) did not suitably reflect their program.

Results

By the Numbers: Graduates

Participating programs (n=23 with complete data; see Appendix) reported 102 graduates between Summer 2018 and Spring 2019. Extrapolated to the full set of PhD-granting institutions, we estimate approximately 270 people graduated with a PhD in Planning or a closely allied field

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[2] Brinkley, C., & Hoch, C. (2018). The Ebb and Flow of Planning Specializations. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 0739456X18774119.

between Summer 2018 and Spring 2019. By comparison, the Year 1 survey results yielded an estimated 294 graduates.

The Year 2 survey introduced the question, "Estimate the percentage of students in your PhD program that enrolls with the intention of pursuing an academic career." Responses, in percentages, were combined into a weighted average, where the number of students who graduated from the responding institution between Summer 2018 and Spring 2019 serves as the weight. By this measure, an estimated 66.2% of students enroll aspiring to an academic career.

Integrating these two questions yields an estimate of the number of graduates potentially seeking an academic job during the 2018-2019 school year: 179. This estimate falls substantially below the Year 1 estimate of 294. The difference is accounted for by a drop in the estimate of graduates (down 24, or 8%) and by the reduction factor applied based on student career intention.

By the Numbers: Job Openings & Placement

For positions beginning in Fall 2019, we identified 120 jobs, up 5.3% from postings for Fall 2018 start dates (Figure 1). The increase in job postings is visible in the data beginning in mid-September.

Figure 1: ACSP Job posts. 2017-2018/2018-2019 Comparison
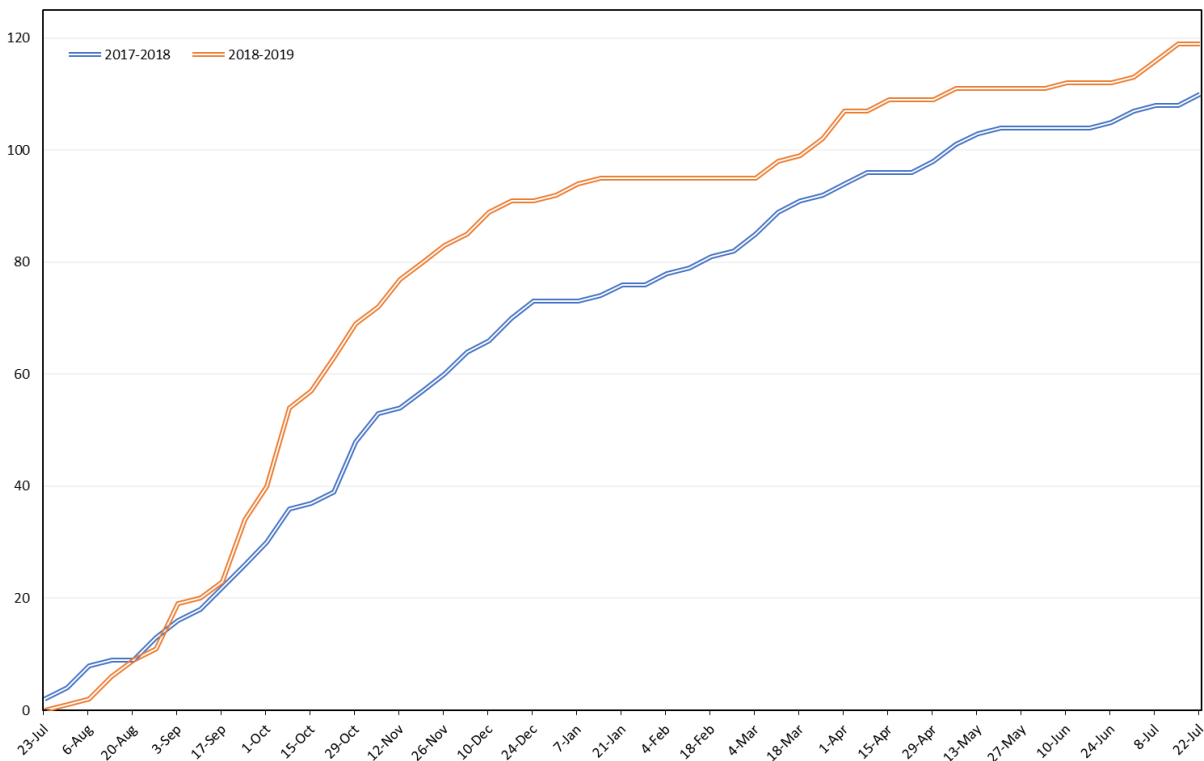
From the survey of programs, we identify a 41% placement rate of graduates into academic positions, slightly down from the 2017-2018 results (46%). Of the estimated 270 graduates during academic year 2018-2019, of which an estimated 179 preferred an academic position, an estimated 111 likely found such a position following graduation. Put another way, approximately 62% of those graduates likely seeking an academic position found one.

New this year, we asked respondents whether their departments hired during the previous academic year, meaning the new faculty member had a Fall 2018 start date. Eleven responding departments filled a total of 19 faculty positions. It is unclear whether the results are representative. However, the survey results indicate that faculty engaged in lateral moves equally as often as new PhDs filled positions, taking six jobs each (Figure 2). Three new faculty members were coming from post-doctoral positions. Four were identified as having other characteristics which were not explained. Notably, none of the 11 departments hired faculty returning to higher education, nor did any hire faculty for positions not requiring a PhD. In sum, new PhDs took only 32% of the new positions in this sample, suggesting, at a minimum, that new PhDs face strong competition from candidates with additional professional experience.

As with the Year 1 data, graduates logically must be accepting positions beyond those identified in the job bank data represented in Figure 1. In addition to the evidence given in Figure 2, the survey-based record of where graduates were placed reinforces this finding. Many of the hiring institutions listed by survey respondents do not appear in the job bank data, such as full-time research positions at the home institution, academic institutions in foreign countries that might not advertise with ACSP, and other opportunities.

Figure 2: Faculty Hires with Fall 2018 Start Dates
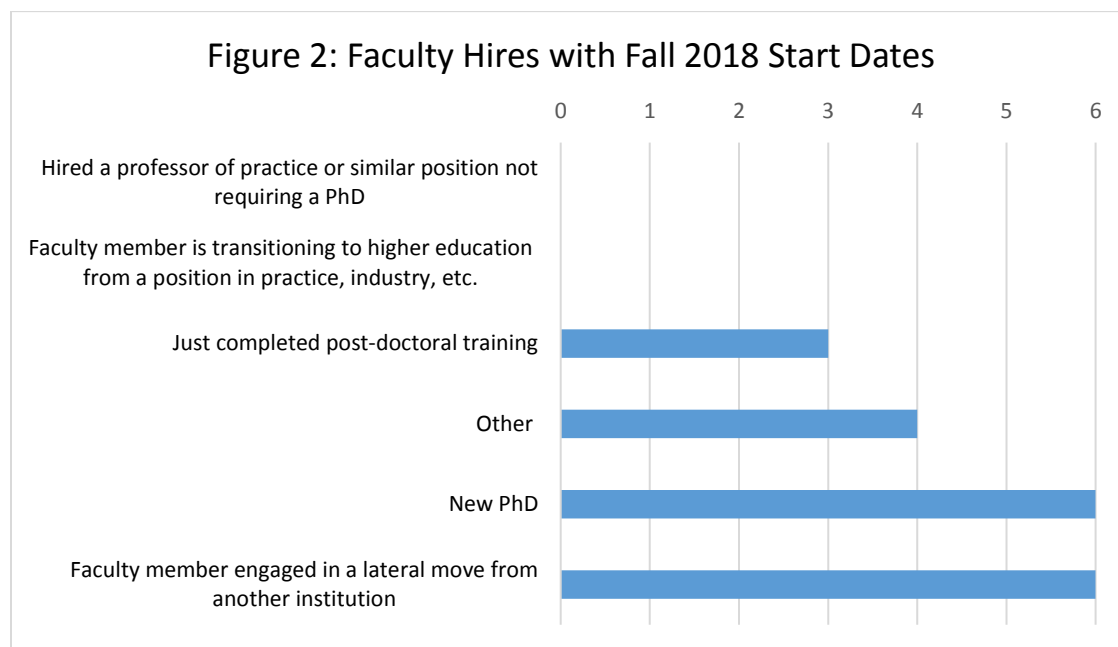
Nor are all jobs open to new PhDs. Of the 120 jobs identified with Fall 2019 start dates, 105 were open to new PhDs—a substantial increase over the 2017-2018 figure (70). Table 1 breaks these down into more specific job types. Of the 105 jobs open to new PhDs, 75 were tenure-track positions.

Of the 15 positions that were not open to new PhDs, 8 were administrative (department chairs, deans, etc.), 6 advertised for Associate Professors or above, and 1 advertised for a fellowship.

Table 1: Positions Advertised by Rank or Title that are Open to New PhDs

Job Title	Number of Advertised Positions	Number of Tenure Track Positions
Assistant Only	53	50
Assistant or Associate	20	19
Lecturer	12	1
Post-doctoral	8	0
Open Rank	7	5
Visiting Assistant	2	0
Research staff	1	0
Adjunct	1	0
Academic Professional	1	0
Total	*105*	*75*

Specializations: Program Offerings versus the Job Market

Figure 3 shows the reported program specializations for Year 2. These categorizations, as last year, reflect the popularity of Environmental and Sustainability specializations. About half of all responding programs indicated offering the following specializations: Housing; Community Development; Economic Development; and Transportation, Land Use, and Urban Design. GIS, International Planning, and Real Estate were less common specializations. The frequency of these specializations is strongly similar to the Year 1 results, although they are difficult to compare directly due to the noted change in the coding protocol.

Figure 3: Program Specializations, 2018-2019
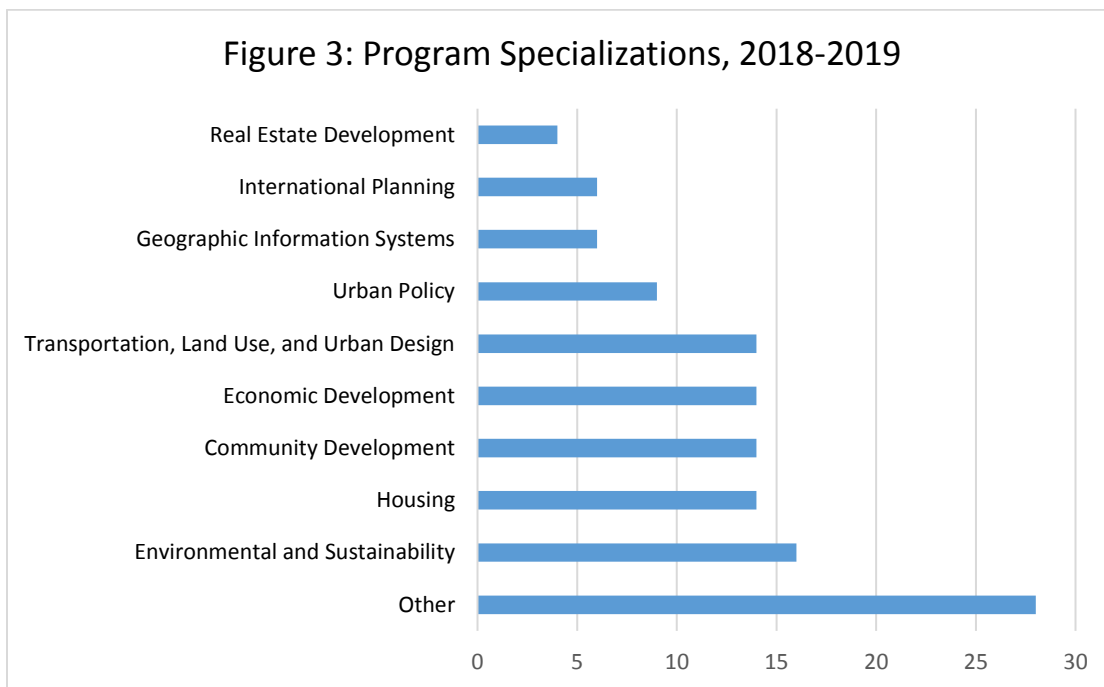
The large "Other" category does not lend itself well to generalization. Of the 23 programs reporting specializations other than listed, the most common was some other type of policy-

based specialization (4 programs), including Public Policy, Health Policy, and Education Policy. Three programs articulated planning-focused specializations and two indicated specializations in Public Administration. Two programs offer a focus on Construction and related studies. The 17 "other" specializations range widely, from Spatial Analytics to Food Systems to Finance. None of these "other" specializations appears more than twice in the results.

Table 2 illustrates the specializations given in job posts. As in Year 1, the supply (by program) and demand (by job advertisement) only partially align. Again, the program specialization data indicates what is offered, but not the enrollment in each specialization within the program.

The job specialization figure from the Year 1 report is included in the Appendix (Figure A1). However, we caution readers not to compare the frequency of specializations directly, as both the coding protocol and the database design changed from Year 1 to Year 2, rendering a direct comparison invalid. The Year 3 report will provide valid year-over changes in specializations from Years 2 to 3. The frequency of specializations in Table 2 sums to more than the total number of job openings, reflecting that many jobs list multiple specializations.

Consistent with Year 1 data, job advertisements seeking candidates with expertise in Environmental and Sustainability Planning outnumber any other individual focus area. Transportation, Land Use, and Urban Design follows closely. Despite our inability to directly compare frequencies of job specializations, some trends are clear. Calls for scholars focusing on Health Care and Social Equity were not identified in Year 1 data but are relatively frequent for start dates in Fall 2019. Additionally, calls for expertise in the GIS-allied areas of Data Analytics/Big Data/Data Science spiked during the 2018-2019 academic year. Potentially, these changes in demand reflect the smart cities trend in Planning.

Table 2: Specializations in Job Advertisements, Year 2

Specialization	Frequency
Environment and Sustainability	42
Transportation, Land Use, and Urban Design	40
Other	28
GIS/Spatial Analysis	22
Community Development	16
Housing	15
Data analytics/Big Data/Data Science	14
Social Equity	13
Urban Policy	13
Economic Development	12
Healthcare	9
Landscape Architecture	6
Real Estate	5
Disaster Management	3
International Planning	2

Graduate Education: Teaching and Research Experience of Graduates

Going into Year 2, we expected the survey results regarding graduate teaching and research experience to generally align with the Year 1 results. Similar to the Year 1 results, in excess of 70% of programs report that all or most PhD students have the opportunity to gain teaching experience (Figure 4). It remains relatively uncommon (4% of programs, or 1 responding program) that PhD students rarely or never have teaching opportunities.

Figure 4: How Many Students Have Teaching Opportunities?
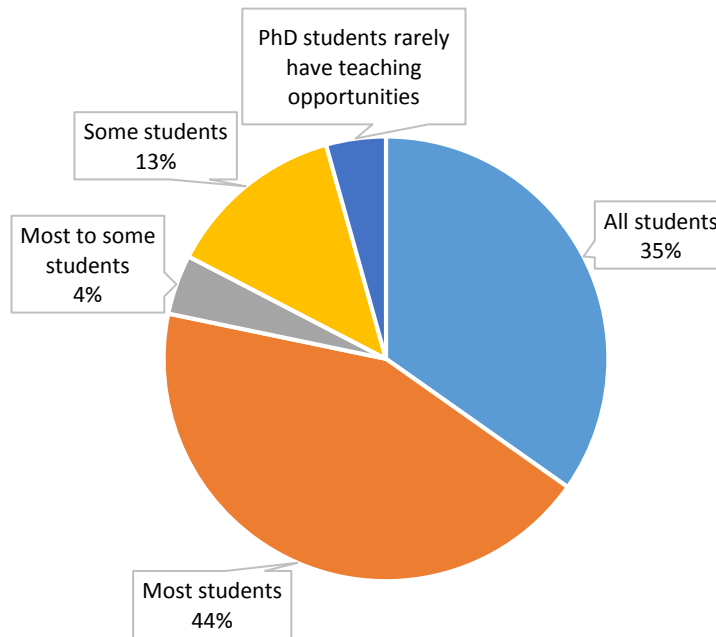
The teaching tasks and responsibilities identified in the Year 2 data were similarly anticipated to mimic those reported in Year 1. Table 3 shows the comparison of Year 1 and Year 2 data for this question. As with access to teaching opportunities, the data indicate stability in results across years for most teaching tasks and responsibilities. As a share of responding programs, PhD students appear to have led discussion sections and engaged in curriculum design more commonly in Year 2 than in Year 1.

Table 3: Teaching Tasks

Teaching Task or Responsibility	Year 1	Year 2
Proctor and grade	26 *(93%)*	21 *(91%)*
Act as instructor of record	22 *(79%)*	19 *(82%)*
Lead discussion sections	20 *(71%)*	20 *(87%)*
Secure TA positions in other departments	16 *(57%)*	15 *(68%)*
Engage in curriculum design	9 *(32%)*	13 *(57%)*
Total # of Programs Responding	28	23

Also similar to Year 1 results, most programs (15/23, or 65%) report that PhD students are required to produce publishable research but are not required to publish as part of their degree. Another 7 programs (30%) indicate that PhD students are encouraged to publish, even if producing publishable work is not a degree requirement. As in Year 1, it is reported but very uncommon for a degree program to require students to publish; one program reports this requirement for the 2018-2019 academic year. In the Year 1 survey results, three programs reported requiring publication. None of the three programs reporting publication as a requirement in Year 1 reported it again in Year 2. It may be that requirements changed or that expectations and requirements surrounding publishing are not well understood.

Limitations

As quoted from the Year 1 report, "the seeming mismatch between program specializations and job market demands may not be as stark as the data suggest. Cross-training between specializations overcomes a portion of the apparent mismatch. Perhaps more significantly, though, the data represent what programs offer, not what students pursue. As such, the data on program specializations does not directly capture the skillsets of recent graduates." This challenge continues to pose a potential limitation.

Another limitation noted by survey participants is that the dates for graduation vary significantly across institutions. In Years 1 and 2, information on graduates was broken into semesters to improve data accuracy and to clarify the interest in those completing their degrees during the previous academic year. However, this effort has been difficult for some programs, and others find filling in information in this disaggregated manner inefficient. We anticipate revising this question for Year 3 to address these concerns.

As noted in the report, the coding protocol for both program and job specializations changed between Year 1 and Year 2. In part, this was done to reflect recent research and to enable stronger data integrity. Unfortunately, the changes disallow direct comparison of specializations from Year 1 to Year 2. This issue will be resolved for the Year 3 report, where direct comparisons will be reported.

Finally, while this Year 2 report makes significant strides toward better estimating the size of the market of academic job seekers, it is impossible to know this number precisely. First, some graduates may be open to multiple career paths without a strong preference between the two. Second, some graduates may focus their job searches in allied fields such as the environmental humanities. A survey of graduates themselves could address some of these unknowns.

Conclusion

This Year 2 report of doctoral education and the academic job market in Planning offers strong support for the Year 1 findings, while also adding nuance and clarity in some areas. Indeed, the academic job market in Planning is competitive. As an academy, we graduate more PhDs than there are academic positions in which to place them. However, not all graduates desire an academic career path. Even so, only an estimated 66% of graduates likely desiring an academic position in the 2018-2019 academic year found one. The positions found stem from a more diverse array of sources, going beyond ACSP and Planners 2040. Such expansive searches are

necessary due not only to the fact that as a discipline we do produce more graduates than jobs, but also because graduates appear to face strong competition in the job market from candidates holding experience as post-doctoral scholars or as faculty.

Year 3 data collection on the academic job market is already underway. The Year 3 survey of programs will be sent out in late Spring 2020. We anticipate this will be the final year of this study. We thank programs and their directors in advance for their support and participation.

Acknowledgements

Author Biosketch and Contact Information

Dr. Joanna Ganning is an Associate Professor of Urban Planning and Economic Development in the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. Her research uses quantitative methodologies to study contemporary U.S. communities marginalized by geography, decline, or economic status in order to promote development that raises the standard of living for everyone. Her research has been funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Institute for Transportation and Communities, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and various private and local governmental organizations. Dr. Ganning serves as Program Director for Cleveland State's Master of Urban Planning and Development program, as co-chair of the Economic Development track of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, and on the City Planning Commission for the City of Shaker Heights, OH.

Georgina Figueroa is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Urban Studies in the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University. Her research focuses on transportation and social equity. As a graduate assistant she has worked on real estate market analysis projects and database development and is currently leading a study of the steel industry in Ohio. She holds a Bachelors in Economics from Universidad Autonoma de Sinaloa in Mexico and a Masters of Urban Planning Design and Development from Cleveland State University.

Contact Information

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Appendix

Methods: Components Continuing from Year 1 with Little or No Change

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used for this project contains 15 substantive questions, 2 related to informed consent, and 1 that serves as a check on the role of the person supplying responses. The Institutional Review Board at Cleveland State University reviewed and approved the survey instrument. Informed consent was necessary because by publishing the respondent identification strategy, anonymity could not be guaranteed. Respondents were informed that survey data would be reported in aggregated versions but that university-level responses might also be shared. Respondents were asked to report data for programs from which graduates might pursue careers in the Planning academy. In two cases, respondents provided data from only selected tracks within multidisciplinary PhD programs, as the other tracks do not graduate PhDs who would seek employment related to Planning.

A more detailed review of survey questions can be found in the Year 1 report, but the instrument is briefly summarized here. For both Year 1 and Year 2 data collection, the survey asks questions covering the following topics:
- Number of graduates
- Job placement for those graduates
- PhD program specializations offered
- Teaching experience available to PhD students
- Publication expectations/experience for PhD students

Questions pertaining to specializations, teaching experience, and publishing expectations are all used to assess the alignment of job advertisements to programs and the competitiveness of graduates in aggregate. These questions are all multiple choice.

Participant Identification

For Year 1 data collection, PhD programs were identified by a review of departmental websites for all Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) accredited Master's degree programs. This list was supplemented and cross-referenced with the ACSP Guide to Undergraduate and Graduate Education in Urban and Regional Planning, 2014 Edition (the most recent edition available online[3]). For Year 2 data collection, the Year 1 list was edited to reflect feedback from programs requesting to be removed due to a misalignment between program curriculum and the goals of this project. The Year 2 program list was also edited to reflect feedback alerting us to two programs we had previously overlooked.

With this list of relevant PhD programs (given in Appendix Table A1), program websites were reviewed to identify program directors or, if one could not be identified, a department chair. In many cases, multiple people per department were contacted. As in Year 1, the distribution list was revised according to feedback after each email solicitation went out.

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[3] https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.acsp.org/resource/collection/6CFCF359-2FDA-4EA0-AEFA-D7901C55E19C/2014_20th_Edition_ACSP_Guide.pdf

Dissemination and Participation

The survey was implemented via Microsoft Forms. The initial invitation to participate was sent out in mid-April 2019. Three reminder emails were sent between then and the end of June. In mid-July, individual emails were sent to programs that participated in Year 1 but had not yet participated in Year 2 data collection. The survey closed on August 10.

Of the 63 programs surveyed (see Appendix Table A1), 26 participated (41% participation rate). Of those 26 participants, two programs responded via email to indicate that their programs do not focus adequately on Planning to warrant their inclusion in the study. One program sent responses to a limited number of questions via email; this response was omitted. For extrapolations from survey data, we use an assumed 61 programs as the full universe.

Job Bank Data

All academic jobs posted on the ACSP website were compiled in an Excel database between July 2018 and July 2019. Efforts were made to monitor the Planners 2040 Facebook page as well but in almost all cases jobs posted on the Facebook page were eventually posted on the ACSP website. Characteristics of each job were recorded systematically in a database. The database includes fields for job title, institution, department, rank, role, specialization, tenure-track status, and other requirements. The full text of each job advertisement was copied and archived for reference. The job bank database was closed and finalized on July 15, 2019. It is possible but unlikely that positions with Fall 2019 start dates were posted after this date.

Table A1: List of Contacted and Participating Institutions and Programs

Arizona State University (2 programs)	University of California Los Angeles[2]
Auburn University	University of Cincinnati
Clemson University[2]	University of Colorado Denver[2]
Cleveland State University[2]	University of Delaware[2]
Columbia University	University of Florida[2]
Cornell University	University of Georgia
Florida Atlantic University[2]	University of Hawaii
Florida State University	University of Illinois Chicago[2]
Georgia State University	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Georgia Tech University[2]	University of Louisville
Harvard University	University of Manitoba
Indiana University	University of Maryland
Jackson State University	University of Massachusetts
Kansas State University[1]	University of Michigan
Massachusetts Institute of Technology[2]	University of Minnesota[2]
Michigan State University[2]	University of New Orleans
New School[1]	University of North Carolina[2]
New York University[2]	University of Oklahoma[2]
Northeastern	University of Pennsylvania[2]
Ohio State University	University of Southern California
Portland State University[2]	University of Texas Arlington
Rutgers University[2]	University of Texas Austin[2]
Texas A&M University	University of Toronto
Texas Southern University	University of Utah[2]
University College London	University of Virginia
University of Alabama	University of Washington[2]
University of Alberta	University of Waterloo
University of British Columbia	University of Wisconsin
University of Buffalo[2]	Virginia Commonwealth University[2]
University of California Berkeley	Virginia Tech
University of California Irvine	

1: Program director indicated inclusion is inappropriate at the current time due to an interdisciplinary program that, at this time, has few if any students focused on planning

2: Participating program

Figure A1: Year 1 Report Figure on Job Announcement Specializations

Figure 3. Specializations in ACSP Job Posts