



2022

NW Section of American Planning Association Intern

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COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Internship Title: NW Section of the WA American Planning Association Intern

Student Name: Rachel M. Belt

Internship Dates: 9/20/21- 6/10/22

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STUDENT SIGNATURE Rachel M. Belt **DATE:** 6/13/2022

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Background of the APA

The American Planning Association (APA) is a conglomerate of section chapters across the United States that come together to further refine planning professionals, unite planners of different backgrounds, and train to improve communities nationwide. The Northwest Section of the APA encompasses Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and San Juan County in Washington State. Within the association, there are members and board members who voluntarily work for Washington APA in the northwest section. Members of the APA vary from students to planning professionals that are AICP certified. AICP stands for the American Institute of Certified Planners which is a test you take either after you have been working as a planner for some years or if you have followed the 'one path'. AICP certifications demonstrate that certified planners "pledge to uphold high standards of practice, ethics, and professional conduct, and to keep their skills sharp and up to date by continuously pursuing advanced professional education" (APA, 2022).

The 'one path' method to getting AICP certified allows students to take the AICP test before their work experience. This is the opposite of the standard of working after graduation for a few years and then taking the exam after gaining experience in the planning world. As a student, I was instructed in 2020 to become an APA member because the fees to join had been waived for students. It was also during the time the APA decided to allow the "One path" Option for AICP Certification.

The NW Section of the APA provides the following to its members:

- Informal discussions about local issues, sharing of ideas, and providing updates from state and federal agencies whose work may influence local planning efforts;
- Presentations provided by professionals on a variety of planning subjects;
- Certification Maintenance (CM) credits through the American Institute of Certified Planners for AICP credentialed planners and advanced certificate planners (Environmental [CEP], Transportation [CTP], and Community Urban Design [CUD]) (NW Section APA, 2022).

The NW Section board is made up of an elected President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer as the appointed positions. Other positions include Professional Development Coordinator Membership Coordinator, WWU Faculty Representative, and WWU Student Representative; which was my position for the school year.

Towards the middle of the spring quarter in 2021, my instructor at the time let his class know about the opportunity of a year-long remote internship with the NW section of the APA. As a student in the Urban Planning and Sustainable Development program where it is required to gain 5 credits towards experiential learning, my ear perked up at the opportunity. Naturally, as a senior in the program, it was my time to earn those through an internship, so I applied and received the offer for the position which I gladly accepted.

Within the organization, I met Nora Nannery, who is the President of the NW Section and works for the Swinomish Tribe in Skagit County. At our first meeting, we drafted the internship

agreement and worked together on creating objectives. We both looked at the feasibility of achieving those goals in a remote position.

Internship Goals/objectives

On the first day of my internship, I met my internship leader to organize and develop my goals for the upcoming year and five credits of work. Below are the goals and objectives we came up with for the year-long internship:

- To learn how to create and engage members and the public in ways that has lasting positive impacts
- Collaborate with Students of the Urban Planning Program at WWU as a student and liaise as a student APA member
- Develop professional skills and perform job shadowing
- Develop an understanding of how planners of different backgrounds can meet, collaborate, and transform
- Conduct background research to plan issues and discover solutions
- Learn from others with different planning backgrounds like long-range, short-range, tribal, transportation

Summary of Internship Work/Projects

Appendix A provides a detailed outline of the work I completed during the internship. Below is a narrative description of my tasks and projects.

Logo design

I never expected for the development, design, and drafting would be such an endeavor, but it proved to be. Nora and I had talked about it as a long-term goal for the internship. Over some time, I became reacquainted with what I had learned in the past about Adobe Illustrator. The effort to begin designing the logo began over the winter break in December with discussing design goals the section wanted. I ended up designing seven different potential designs. The designs were sent out to colleagues to select their favorite design. Figure 4 was the voted choice and is now the NW Section's logo.



Figure 1: Logo Option 1

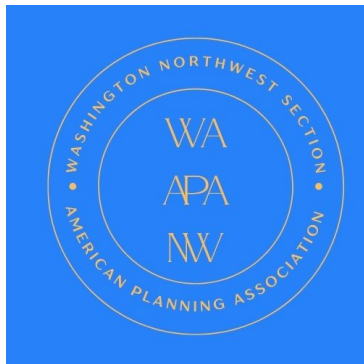


Figure 2: Logo Option 2



Figure 3: Logo Option 3



Figure 4: Logo Option 4; this voted and became the Section's logo



Figure 5: Logo Option 5



Figure 6: Logo Option 6

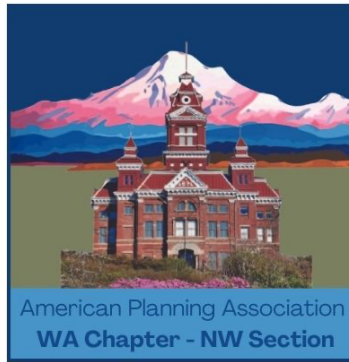


Figure 7: Logo Option 7

Board meetings

Once or twice per quarter, a board meeting was hosted between the board members to discuss upcoming plans, tasks that needed to be done and much more. I attended them with the duty of completing tasks assigned to me and absorbing as much knowledge during meetings.

Newsletters

Before seasonal forums newsletters were shared to inform members of the upcoming event. Nora and I would work together draft then send out regarding news, topics, job opportunities and upcoming events. Below in figure s 8 and 9 show contents of newsletters.



NW Section Autumn 2020 Board Report

Wow. What a year.

Figure 8 shows an example of newsletter/board report



Figure 9 shows internship flyer designed by Rachel Belt

Basecamp

Halfway into the year, the section made the transition from organizing their work within google drive through one account to a online software called Basecamp. The drive was always cumbersome because users could accidentally forget the password or users had issues navigating the drive. Basecamp allowed multiple users to have accounts for accessing and storing documents. The software connects teams remotely and tracks work with to-do lists, a shared calendar, and a message board to show progress on team projects. It was my responsibility to become established with the site, begin uploading necessary documents and keep the calendar updated for board members who use the site.

Forums

Each quarter the board members organized a forum of discussions with different speakers. The forums provide credits for continuing education to maintain AICP status. I assisted with reaching out to potential speakers, helping with the getting the agenda set and other coordinating tasks as needed.

Survey

After a tumultuous two years with COVID and the BLM movement the NW Section Board officers had changed, membership changed, and the section's goals were outdated. To discover and appeal to members interests I created a five-question survey to determine any new goals, objectives and initiatives from the APA members. The results have helped to inform Forum topics and speakers.

YouTube

COVID has frequently shaken up school at WWU and altered how the NW Section planned their quarterly forum. To allow greater access to presentations for those unable to attend and to keep digital records, the section decided to create a YouTube page. It was yet another task on my agenda. The fall forum was recorded through zoom with three different presentations over the course of three hours. I took that file, edited and uploaded it to a new YouTube page I made for the NW Section WA APA.

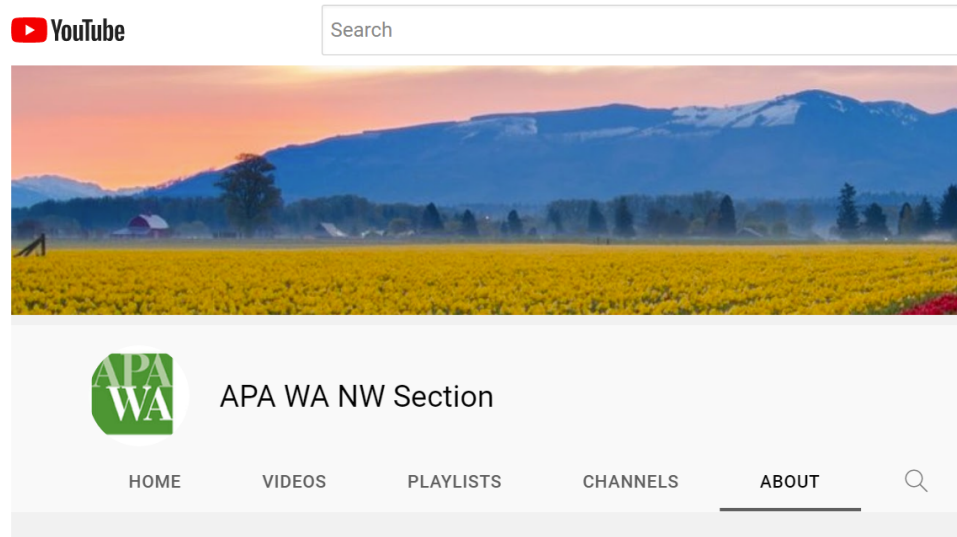


Figure 10 shows the section's YouTube

However, some concerns and consequences come with recording meetings. This includes it feeling invasive to presenters and attendees' boundaries, it can also discourage attendance at meetings. After the winter forum, it was decided to forgo recording meetings and posting them to a public account. This was a major learning lesson in professional boundaries

Computer/website work

Due to the persistent and relentless nature of the COVID-19 pandemic the first two years of the pandemic set back the NW section of the Washington APA. One outcome was that the contents on the NW Section's website outdated. The results of the survey prompted updates of the section's work plan and board of directors. I reformatted the content and updated them on the section's website.

AICP test research/study group

Several members continue to participate and attend meetings in the APA despite not having AICP certification. One major obstacle that impairs and intimidates members from taking the test is the price of the test and the commitment to studying. Unless members have enrolled in the One-path program where they can take the test immediately after their education, they must experience work prior to testing. So the goal of the NW Section was to reduce the barrier to taking the test with offering to fund study materials and create study groups. I was responsible of finding study materials to invest in.

Miscellaneous Work

Throughout the year I had tasks that pertained to the organization and management of the internship at the NW Section of the Washington APA. I weekly responded to and created emails between colleagues and scheduled meetings. Performing miscellaneous work flexed professional muscles in communication skills, software education, project management skills and networking.

Planning Club

I attended Western Washington University's planning club weekly. As the WWU student Representative, I frequently attended planning club meetings to liaise with fellow students and help foster a greater relationship between students and the section. A goal for the NW Section of the APA was "Continue to build a strong relationship with the WWU Planning Program that connects our regions strengths in academics and professional practice". A major accomplishment in developing the connection between the two was collaborating in person at a board meeting. Board members and students had the opportunity to safely meet in person after over two years of limited contact at McKay's Taphouse and Pizzeria in Bellingham. This was a greater opportunity for students and the board to mingle. Several students left this meeting with a greater awareness of their board members. They also left this meeting with new potential job and internship opportunities. Another accomplishment was funding the planning club and students of Dr. Laninga's planning class to virtually attend the National Planning Conference (NPC). The NW Section covered the attendance cost to encourage greater student participation of the NPC. The attendance cost was not something most students could afford, so the Section assisted in registration.



Figure 11 shows students attending NPC session

Relevant Course work

In my senior year, I took nine classes outside of participating in my internship with the NW Section of the APA of Washington. Of those classes, three helped me alongside this internship Community Development, Environmental Dispute Resolution and Cartography.

Fall	Winter	Spring
Planning Theory	Environmental Law and Policy	Planning for Sustainable Communities
Land Use Law	Applications in GIS	Cartography
Community Development	Environmental Dispute Resolution	Social Justice and the City
Internship (1cr)	Internship (2cr)	Internship (2 cr)

Figure 12 Shows schedule for the 2021-2022 school year

Fall 2021

Fall quarter served as an illuminating quarter to begin to understand the importance of community development. Without a community even the most rich and prosperous municipalities become sterile and unsupported. My goal was to incorporate community development into schooling, internship, and real life. I am happy I took this class at the beginning of my internship because it made a major impression on me. It has become a core principle to develop further.

Winter 2022

Dispute resolution was an advantageous class to take and more should be encouraged to take it. The experience alone communicating with other student reminded me people come from different background and carry different values. Conversation and negotiation encourage discussion that can result in breakthroughs between groups. This helped me further understand conversations and discussions the occurred in APA Section Forums. Additionally, this will help me moving forward to become a planner, especially for the potential of public meetings where I may sit listening to residents' concerns.

Spring 2022

Spring quarter expanded and released my creative side. The cartography class I took allowed me to express myself through design that strongly helped me through the process of designing a logo. As I worked busily in class following map design standards, I translated that knowledge towards the seven logos I created. ArcGIS Software and Illustrator were very similar, which helped me navigate the design process more confidently.

Conclusion/Reflection

As my position has wrapped up with the NW Section of the APA, the association has begun to elect positions for next year's elections. The board I met over zoom and eventually got to meet in person are colleagues I hope to keep close and get to know more. Thus, I volunteered to run for election as the treasurer of the NW Section of the APA. I hope to continue to work and volunteer my time with the colleagues I have meet and worked with in this internship. The APA is a magnificent way to get in contact with local planners and continue education in planning after college. I would strongly encourage my student colleagues and recent graduates to join their local section of the APA. In addition to that, I have encouraged some of my classmates to apply to the NW Section internship. The projects I got to work on have been invaluable to my undergraduate education. The Section trusted me with tasks that have increased my confidence in professional work as I graduate this quarter.

Appendix A: Schedule for the School Year

Quarter	Week	dates	Week	Total Hrs
Fall	Week 1	9/20/21 - 9/24/21	1st meeting (1hr), Read about APA (1hr), navigate google drive (1 hr)	3
	week 2	9/27/21 - 10/1/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Read about APA (1hr), navigate google drive (1 hr)	4
	Week 3	10/4/21 - 10/8/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr)	2
	Week 4	10/11/21 - 10/15/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), GMA research (2hr)	4
	Week 5	10/18/21 - 10/22/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Board Meeting (1hr), Drafting Survey (2hr), Newsletter (1)	6
	Week 6	10/25/21 - 10/29/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), prepping for forum (1hr), Planners Forum(3.5hrs),	6.5
	Week 7	11/1/21 -10/5/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Finalizing Survey results (2 hr)	5
	Week 8	11/8/21 - 10/12/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), editing (1h), Uploading to youtube, finalizing (1hr)	4
	Week 9	11/15/21 - 10/19/21	meeting (1hr)Planning Club (1hr)	2
	Week 10	11/22/21 - 11/26/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr)	2
	Week 11	11/29/21 - 12/3/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr)	2
	Week 12	12/6/21 - 12/10/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Board Meeting (1hr)	3
Break	Week 13	12/13/21 - 12/17/21	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr)	2
	Week 14	12/20/22 - 12/24/22	Holidays	
	Week 15	12/27/22 - 12/31/22	Holidays	
			quarter total	45.5

Winter	Week 16	1/3/22 - 12/7/22	meeting (1hr)Planning Club (1hr); Board Meeting (1hr), AICP Test research (1 hr), google drive organization(1hr)	5
	Week 17	1/10/22 - 1/14/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), AICP Test research (1 hr)	3
	Week 18	1/17/22 - 1/21/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), google drive organization(1hr), misc work (1hr)	4
	Week 19	1/24/22 - 1/28/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Prep for Board meeting (1)	3
	Week 20	1/31/22 - 2/4/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Board Meeting (1hr), google drive organization(1hr), misc work (1hr)	5
	Week 21	2/7/22 - 2/11/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Research AICP credits (2), Internship information (1hr)	5
	Week 22	2/14/22 - 2/18/22	meeting (1hr), Prepping for forum, Planners Forum (3.5hrs); Planning Club (1hr), Misc (1), Internship information (1hr)	5
	Week 23	2/21/22 - 2/25/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Internship flyer (1hr)	3
	Week 24	2/28/22 - 3/4/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Election Research (1hr), logo research (1hr)	4
	Week 25	3/7/22 - 3/11/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Misc (1), logo research (1hr)	4
	Week 26	3/14/22 - 3/18/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), logo research (1hr)	3
Break	Week 27	3/21/22 - 3/25/22	meeting (1hr); Board meeting (1hr), misc work (1hr)	3
			quarter total	47
Spring	Week 28	3/28/22 - 4/1/22	Website Updates (1hr), meeting (1hr)	2
	Week 29	4/4/22 - 4/8/22	Website Updates (1hr), meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Logo design (2.5hr)	5.5

	Week 30	4/11/22 - 4/15/22	Website Updates (1hr), meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Logo design (2.5hr)	5.5
	Week 31	4/18/22 - 4/22/22	Misc (1 hr), meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Logo design (2.5hr)	5.5
	Week 32	4/25/22 - 4/29/22	Board Meeting Planning (2 hr), Section Board meeting (1hr), APA/Planning club Meeting (2.5hrs), Logo design (2.5hr)	8
	Week 33	5/2/22 - 5/6/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Logo design (2.5hr)	4.5
	Week 34	5/9/22 - 5/13/22	Logo Survey (1hr), meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Organizing Basecamp(1hr)	4
	Week 35	5/16/22 - 5/20/22	meeting (1hr), Misc (1), Planning Club (1hr), Organizing Basecamp(1hr)	4
	Week 36	5/23/22 - 5/27/22	meeting (1hr), Planning Club (1hr), Working on Report (3 hrs)	5
	Week 37	5/30/22 - 6/3/22	meeting (1hr), Logo Final Touches (1.5hrs), Planning Club (1hr), Working on Report (3 hrs)	6.5
	Week 38	6/6/22 - 6/10/22	Working on Report (3 hrs), Working on Report (3 hrs), Planning Club (1hr)	7
quarter total				57.5
yearlong total				150