



COMMENTARY

# On Planning and “Related” Degrees

Our professional forefathers saw planning as a very broad discipline. CIP Membership originally extended to artists, sculptors, surveyors, and lawyers, for example. Likewise, many individuals recognized at the forefront of the planning field have been members of other professions, including architecture, landscape architecture, sociology, and journalism.

AACIP’s logbook guidelines also leave room for interpretation. The specific focus areas of Subject Matter considered suitable for submission as “responsible, professional planning experience” are comprehensive enough to include the fields of engineering, economics, business, environmental studies, geography, and more.

Despite this, Members with “related” degrees, as suggested above, are not always recognized by AACIP’s Registration Committee. This currently means the difference between four years of Provisional Membership, and six. With Planner postings in Alberta increasingly favouring Full Members, particularly for higher-level positions, this is a matter of concern for our entire membership to understand and discuss as the CIP membership reforms progress.

The Journal is proud to feature the debut of our new Commentary section in this issue. It is our hope that by featuring opinion pieces submitted by members we will spark conversation and debate and engage members in dialogue about emerging issues that are important to them. The opinions featured in this section do not necessarily represent the views of the AACIP Council, Administration or the Planning Journal Committee.

- 1 Neither AACIP nor CIP have an appeal mechanism to deal with membership issues, although other professional associations do. Our Registration Committee, like any Committee, makes mistakes; however provincial law gives AACIP’s Registration Committee “sole jurisdiction” to administer AACIP’s membership qualifications.
- 2 Neither AACIP nor CIP have a formal position on the fundamental purpose of Provisional Membership, beyond that of an arbitrary period of logging experience before progressing to Full Membership.
- 3 Every application for Provisional Membership is reviewed on a case-by-case basis by AACIP’s Registration Committee, independently of past decisions. Two virtually identical submissions can face completely opposite outcomes.
- 4 Unsuccessful applicants are typically informed only that their submission is “not good enough”, without being given any specific details about the deficiencies in their application. This makes it very difficult for applicants to respond, for example, by taking adequate additional coursework.
- 5 AACIP’s current membership practice review lacks transparency. Revisions to a system which affects the entire Membership are taking place without adequate communication and opportunities for constructive comment by the Membership-at-Large.
- 6 Consequently, AACIP may be putting its reputation on the line. Even a perceived failure by the AACIP to ensure an objective and transparent decision-making process within the context of its membership reviews may put the reputation of our Association and its Members at risk.

**CONCLUSION**

We, as planners, must appreciate that planning is not inherently a profession unto itself; much of its success comes from its very multidisciplinary roots.

To better support its Members, and to align with the supports extended in other professional associations, we believe the AACIP needs a third-party appeal process, and a formal position on the fundamental purpose of Provisional Membership.

In our opinion, more transparency and clarity about AACIP’s processes, requirements and expectations surrounding “related” education are also needed, because Members are being inadvertently stalled on the basis of vague requirements which are open to interpretation.

AACIP membership is both a privilege and a responsibility. Let us work together to clarify the responsibilities involved with the membership process so that all of us can better exercise the privilege of membership. ■

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If you have an opinion on current planning issues we’d love to hear from you! Watch for our next call for submissions to put forward your point of view or email [aacip.planning.journal@gmail.com](mailto:aacip.planning.journal@gmail.com) to tell us what you think of this commentary or our new section in general.