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USF MURP Students Take Part in FAPA Annual Conference

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In Collaboration with Sam Becker, Amanda Harig, and Andrew Harris, MURP Students

Each year, the Sun Coast section of the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association (FAPA) graciously provides scholarships for USF's Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) students to attend the FAPA annual conference. This generous support helps fulfill the Sun Coast's mission to promote the professional development of emerging planners, and offers students an unparalleled educational and networking opportunity at a formative stage in their careers. Below, this year's conference scholarship award winners share their experiences at **this year's conference**, held in Sandestin on September 10-13, 2019.



Sam Becker

Last year, I went into the FAPA conference as a novice in the field, ready to learn but not comprehending all the great information being dispersed. This year was a different experience for me as I am one year into my Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning at USF with a few planning internships under my belt. I felt like I was able to grasp the higher-level concepts being discussed in sessions—and relate them to the knowledge obtained from the classroom—to form conclusions and talking points for future dialogue with professors and students.

Thanks to the Sun Coast section of FAPA, me and five of my classmates, future peers in the planning field, were able to take this great opportunity to network and develop our professional skills. We attended informative sessions about topics like ADUs, scenario-based transportation planning in Florida, and

sustainability measures taking place in local communities. We then deliberated on what we learned and how we can bring the information back to our classmates that weren't able to attend. These conversations offered me hope and inspiration for the current generation of planners, as well as the next wave of young thinkers who are focused on inclusivity, connectivity, and equity in the planning field.

Some highlights included networking with folks doing work in Pasco and Osceola County; during my last internship, I did due diligence for potential Planned Developments in those locations and I was interested on how those counties are dealing with development and expansion. I also enjoyed linking up with alumni and former co-workers who were able to share the awesome things they've also been working on. I left the conference feeling inspired to learn even more about planning, and how to engage in my own local community, because having well-intentioned and thought out planning is of dire need for the underserved populations of our state.

Amanda Harig

Throughout my first conference experience, I found myself contemplating which session to go to next because there were so many great ones! One of my favorite sessions was *City of St. Petersburg Integrated Sustainability Action Plan (ISAP): A Model of Sustainability, Resiliency, and a Clean Energy Roadmap Planning Effort*. I found this session particularly interesting due to my interests in environmental planning and sustainable transportation. This session gave me insight into how sustainability plans come to fruition, as well as how clean energy road maps can impact municipalities in so many positive ways.

My second favorite session was *I Can See Clearly Now: Creating a Vision-Driven Comprehensive Plan*. The techniques used to create the City of Titusville's comprehensive plan were innovative. I thought the public participation in this plan was astounding and showed how public input can truly shape the future of a city. During the conference, I had the opportunity to speak with planners from the Tampa Bay area as well as from all over the state. During the first night reception, a planner from Orange County told me and other students that we are the future. This really resonated with me because it is truly up to us to continue the plans that are being set into motion today. It is important for us to continue their legacy! Finally, I would like to thank the Sun Coast section of FAPA for giving me the opportunity to attend.

Andrew Harris

I would like to start by taking the opportunity to thank the Sun Coast section of FAPA for the scholarship award and the opportunity to attend this year's FAPA Conference in Sandestin. This was a great experience and very valuable towards my professional development as an urban planner. There were plenty of networking opportunities and I had some great conversations with professionals from both the private and public sectors across the state. Many of the sessions I attended focused on making our communities more resilient through a variety of strategies like shoreline restoration and post-disaster planning.

Some other interesting sessions covered ways to improve comprehensive planning: St. Pete has done a great job of integrating sustainable actions into their plan, and Titusville (my hometown) has created a vision-driven comprehensive plan that reflects the communities' visions, goals, and values. For me, I learned the most from sessions that were applicable to my work as an intern. Topics covered included increasing multi-modal accessibility, improving project proposals/RFPs, and facilitating economic development at the county level. I highly recommend attending these conferences and will be looking forward to attending again this time next year!