

# Dual MCRP + MS/CE Degree Paves the Way to Future Planning Opportunities



Georgia Tech was one of the first universities in the country to offer a dual degree program focusing on city planning and transportation systems. The Master of City and Regional Planning (MCRP) and Master of Science with a major in Civil Engineering (MS/CE) degree (Transportation Concentration), established in 1962, has trained several generations to meet the needs of planning agencies and transportation departments.

The combination of the two graduate degree programs prepares students for careers influencing public policy and private investment in transportation systems. Such systems, including urban, suburban, exurban and rural highways, railways, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, rights-of-way, ports, terminals, parking, and inter-modal linkages, involve design and policy coordination that benefits from both engineering and planning.

Graduates from this program become instrumental in bringing perspectives from one profession into the lexicon and tools of the other profession. Similar programs involving city planning and transportation exist at leading US universities where both planning and civil engineering are taught, including MIT, University of California, Berkeley, Ohio State University, and University of Minnesota (Twin Cities).

Laurel Paget-Seekins graduated with the dual degree in 2007, going on to earn her doctorate in civil engineering, specializing in transportation systems, at Georgia Tech in 2010.

Paget-Seekins is now a post-doc fellow at the Technical University in Munich, Germany, where she is researching mobility culture in megacities. "I work with researchers from the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, South Africa, China, and India with backgrounds in history, architecture/urban design, geography, policy/planning, industrial engineering, and civil engineering," she says.

"Having completed the dual degree program helps me in this interdisciplinary setting," she continues. "I believe the future of transportation research lies in interdisciplinary approaches, as really innovative solutions are required to solve the key transportation challenges we face."

Paget-Seekins also serves as a technical advisor to the Partnership for Southern Equity, conducting research and preparing policy documents for the non-profit advocacy organization, which works to increase equity in transportation investments in the Atlanta metropolitan region. In the past, she has served as a planner for UrbanTrans Consultant, an Atlanta firm that provides technical assistance to local governments and transportation management associations.

"The dual degree program was an excellent opportunity," says Paget-Seekins. "I was able to take advantage of the best of what both the city and regional planning and civil engineering had to offer, while combining the basic requirements for both degrees."

The program is administered jointly by the School of City and Regional Planning and the School of Civil Engineering. Bruce Stiftel, chair of the School of City and Regional Planning, in the College of Architecture, says it prepares its graduates for an evolving and challenging future.

"The dual MCRP + MS/CE program has attracted some of the best students among our MCRP applicants. They often go on to hold truly influential positions in industry and government," Stiftel says. "I think the combination of planning and engineering helps graduates to see the full picture of transportation policy, design, and operations, especially when it comes to multi-objective issues such as modal split, the relation of transportation to land use, environmental consequences of construction, and the impact of roads on neighborhoods. With growing concern over active lifestyles and relation to public health, the transportation-land use nexus is only becoming more important. Our dual degree graduates will have vision to guide such changes."