

ACSP President's Agenda

Draft

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I want to describe the work of Lyvia Rodriguez. Lyvia Rodriguez is a 1997 graduate of the University of Florida's Master of Urban and Regional Planning program. In 2005 she founded ENLACE del Caño Martin Peña, a community development organization in Puerto Rico. Through ENLACE she worked to organize a community land trust in the Caño Martin Peña neighborhood. – work that won a UN World Habitat Award.

After Hurricane Maria in 2017, the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency was initially rejecting close to 60 percent of all applications for aid from residents of Caño Martin Peña. The informal settlements there did not meet FEMA's formal tenure requirements. Lyvia Rodriguez jumped into the fray, persuading FEMA to recognize the collective title in the community land trust and expediting aid. Lyvia's planning background and training were particularly important in helping lift the voice of her community in a time of great need.

Like Lyvia Rodriguez, every student we educate today will work in a world shaped by the climate catastrophe. Planning has a vital role to play. But we have work to do. We need to make certain that our curricula, pedagogy, scholarship, and engagement are responsive to the rapidly changing world in which we live.

Planning can and must clearly articulate how climate change, our century's defining challenge, will be, first and foremost, a challenge of

justice. Justice is, and must be, a central organizing theme of planning. What is justice? Our colleagues have been leaders in theorizing justice, and a brief definition here does not reflect the depth of their work. Let me offer a cursory definition to help frame the presidential agenda for the next two years: Justice must focus on removing structural barriers that exclude and disadvantage marginalized groups.

Our university programs in which we teach are leaders on that topic, and we have more work to do. Three priorities that will help steer the work of ACSP during the next two years – we will (1) Innovate our curriculum, to (2) prepare our students to be leaders in a warming world and (3) institutionalize and strengthen our association’s long commitment to diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice.

- **Curriculum:** Our curricula, classes, standards, and accreditation criteria in some cases date to practices that are decades old. We need curricula that respond to the challenges of today. We need to train students in cultural competency. We need to give students the tools that help them frame questions normatively. We need to train listeners, advocates, and professionals who will build partnerships that partner with those who have been marginalized. Technology and data are reshaping the tools of planning, and our students must be up-to-date in a world that is merging data, media, computation, and urban governance. And our students must include, in larger numbers than today, those who have been marginalized.

As the world is changing, higher education is also changing rapidly. Some of our programs have created one-year degrees. Some have launched or have long had non-accredited degrees that sit side-by-side next to their accredited degrees. Some programs are rapidly responding to issues from climate change, to

social innovation, to urban data science. But many programs feel constrained. I am committed to being sure that ACSP is here to help – by canvassing innovative curricula, by expanding the learning within our organization, and by emphasizing that your degrees can and should evolve. Over the next two years, we will launch a discussion within ACSP about curricular innovation, and how that centers on justice.

- **Planning and the Climate Crisis:** Our changing climate is not the only question facing academic planning, but it will touch on all other questions. ACSP will work to raise this issue – in our curriculum, and in our scholarship. ACSP will better link to organizations and initiatives that include Planners for Climate Action and UN Habitat. We look forward to working with our partners in the American Planning Association (APA), the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), and the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) to help the profession move forward in ways that prepare our current and future professionals to best do their work in a warming world. And we will work to examine ways to help our build climate challenges into our curriculum.
- **Institutionalizing diversity:** Our members have done so much good work, over so many years, to move ACSP to focus on diversity and inclusion. Now is the time to be certain that those efforts are at the core of our association, and they are. Let me give you a few examples. At the 2020 annual conference, in Toronto, we will host a focus event on “Racial Equity and Justice in Urban Planning Research and Education in the Face of Racialized Inequality” Thank you to the co-chairs of that task force, Gerardo Sandoval and Sheryl-Ann Simpson, for their

inspiring work launching that event. Through the leadership of the Committee on Diversity and so many association members, we have instituted a pipeline program to draw students of color into our Ph.D. degrees through our pre-doctoral workshop. We have learned that 1/3 of the attendees at the five previous workshops are now in or have completed a Ph.D. program. At our governing board meeting last Wednesday we approved a funding proposal that will fully fund that workshop, through ACSP resources, for the first time ever. I look forward to doing all we can to support the vital work of POCIG and the Committee on Diversity.

Lastly, we all know that some of our colleagues, in good conscience, are not here today due to South Carolina law that discriminates against members of the LGBTQ community in adoption and foster care, and we have worked to shine a light on that and related issues at this conference and to be clear about our values. We are in the process of examining how our values should be reflected in our annual conference location, and a task force chaired by Vice-President/President-Elect Carissa Slotterback will be reaching out to membership soon for your input as we work to link our values – and our newly approved values statement – to the way we site and conduct our conferences.

ACSP is a community of scholars who have for decades pointed the way – engaging our communities, partnering with the most vulnerable, educating students who have made a difference, and making that difference ourselves. And in so doing planners have helped and are helping to transform the academy. Sometimes we are asked what is planning? As we look at our curriculum, the climate challenge, and our association's work we must remember that planning is fundamentally about justice – in communities, for persons, in places. At this moment, the world needs thousands, even tens of thousands of planners with the talent and the uniquely planning training of that Lyvia Rodriguez

brought to Puerto Rico. You have educated those students for decades, and your energy, your wisdom, and your intellect are unmatched. I look forward to working with you and serving you on this next step in our association's journey.