

URBAN STUDIES



Half the world's population lives in urban areas. In the U.S., that number is greater than 80 percent. And demographic projections indicate that the future will bring more of the same. So where do those metrics put urban studies majors? They're uniquely positioned to understand and shape future communities.

Emma Schropp chose this major because she knows it's important to understand the urban dynamic. She also wanted to be in a field where her work could have a positive impact on the lives of others. "Initially, I didn't know what urban studies was, but I took the introductory course on a whim. Not only was the material interesting, the information was applicable to things I already understood."

Since then, she has immersed herself in this field, taking as many courses as possible, and doing internships as well. One summer, she interned with the department of community development in her hometown in Florida. "I did a little bit of everything, which was very interesting, like planning, zoning and historic preservation. The department was trying to preserve the historic nature of the town and combat sprawl. At about that same time, the city finished rewriting its comprehensive plan, and I got to do some of the implementation work. I learned so much in a hands-on way."

In one course, Emma read a history of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. "It's really interesting to see how that city has evolved. I got a lot of background information, and came to appreciate the amazing variety of factors that play a role in community development. One example would be social aspects – such as segregation. Clearly it took a lot of work for that city to come together."

In another course, she was impressed by the professor's methodology. "He was so passionate about the topic. And, instead of just using textbooks, he'd bring in newspapers and magazines. Then he'd relate what we were studying very directly to a range of current issues, including new developments, new infrastructure, changing demographics and education systems that are being challenged. He offered us real-world situations to help us see that urban studies is always applicable to every-day life." Curious about urban studies? Take a class and check it out for yourself.

COLLEGE of CHARLESTON

This multidisciplinary major is designed to provide students with the academic foundation necessary to understand and be sensitive to the problems and potential of the city and its environment. A background in urban studies is excellent preparation for a variety of fields, including urban planning, nonprofit organization, community development and government administration.

Facts

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, urban planning is decidedly a growth field. Between 2008 and 2018, job growth in this area is expected to increase by 19 percent.

Students have the option to pursue one of two tracks: Urban Planning and Administration or Urban Policy and Social Problems.

Opportunities

Students in the major take courses in a variety of departments, from political science to biology.

Urban studies majors are encouraged to develop their own unique course plan.

Charleston's urban environment offers numerous opportunities for case studies.

Urban studies graduates have gone on to a variety of professional roles as well as graduate school programs.

Internship and research opportunities abound in the Charleston area.

Special topics courses range from "Urban Applications in GIS" to "Politics of Suburbia."