



American Planning Association
Illinois Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

Via Email

December 1, 2011

Attn: Paul Farmer, FAICP
American Planning Association
Executive Director and CEO

Attn: Anna Breinich, AICP
AICP Commission President

Re: Tenured Faculty Membership Program

Dear Mr. Farmer and Ms. Breinich,

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Illinois Chapter I would like to extend our concerns and comments regarding the proposed Tenured Faculty Membership Program. In summary we believe the proposal inappropriately establishes an unequal process for achieving certification. Consistent with many of the arguments presented over the past few days, we also do not subscribe to the notion that there is always a consistent nexus between the grant of tenure and the knowledge of the practice, as typically required to pass the certification exam. Further, it is not clear how the grant of tenure has adequately provided the necessary knowledge of the AICP Code of Ethics and planning law which are both key components of certification and the exam.

Certification is commonly the distinguishing factor between practicing planners and those (typically in other professions) that simply claim to be practicing planners. While it may be the case that some tenured faculty members possess the knowledge necessary to pass the AICP exam through their rigorous tenure process, there is simply too much disparity in accredited programs to apply this standard universally. This is the point of the exam in the first place.

We recognize that the number of faculty pursuing certification is dwindling and we applaud APA and the Commission for addressing the issue. However, we strongly feel that establishing separate standards for individuals to become certified is the wrong approach. Rather we would encourage other outreach and incentive approaches that still keep a level playing field for achieving certification. This may include reducing or waiving the fee to take the exam or offering a lower introductory membership rate. Consideration could also be given to providing



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some Certification Maintenance credit for appropriate teaching and research activities that may not be currently available under the CM program.

Should the Commission continue to move forward with this proposal, we recommend additional criteria, beyond simply the grant of tenure, demonstrating that a specific amount of the teaching and/or research has been in the field of planning practice (land use, transportation, etc.). Finally, we also encourage determining a method that appropriately assesses knowledge of the AICP Code of Ethics and planning law.

Considering the high level of interest this topic has generated throughout the membership, we would recommend a better vetting of the proposal through the various Leadership groups within APA. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rob Kowalski".

Rob Kowalski, AICP
President, APA-IL

cc: APA-IL Executive Committee