

1996 AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION NATIONAL PLANNING CONFERENCE,  
Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, Florida, April 13-17, 1996

## **ASSESSING SPECIALIZATION AND SKILLS DEMAND**

Tuesday, 10:15 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

A panel of planning practitioners and APA chapter professional development officers will discuss the results of recent surveys assessing skills needs for future professional practice.

Co-moderators: Vasso Apostolides, Associate Professor of  
Professional Practice, University of Cincinnati  
David J. Allor, Professor of Planning,  
University of Cincinnati

Panel Members: Charlotte Thompson, Senior Planner,  
City of Cincinnati  
Robert C. Davis, Principal Planner,  
City of Detroit  
David A. Wenzel, Director of Planning,  
HNTB Corporation, Indianapolis

### **INTRODUCTION**

In December 1995-January 1996, a survey on professional specializations and skills was distributed to 770 professional planners, including all 45 of the APA Professional Development Officers (PDOs). Two hundred and eighty one (or 36.5%) responded; their regional distribution was as follows: Region I (Northeast) 12%, Region II (MidAtlantic) 20%, Region III (South) 12%, Region IV (MidWest) 41%, Region V (Northwest) 6%, and Region VI (West) 9%.

Two hundred and fifty three responses (or 35%) were from planning professionals, 28 responses (1.5% of full sample but 62.2% of all PDOs) were returned from PDOs. The PDOs hold dual roles; on the one hand, they are for the most part, practicing planners; on the other hand, they are responsible for assessing the present adequacy and guiding the future competency of professional planners.

The composition of responses revealed no major underlying differences between professional planners and the PDOs. Planners tended to represent smaller firms/agencies (81%), with somewhat stronger participation of professionals with undergraduate planning degrees (59%). PDOs also tended to represent smaller firms or agencies (71%) but held higher concentration of graduate planning degrees (71%).

This 1996 survey is compared briefly to a similar survey distributed in 1988 to 560 professional planners. The number of responses was 285 (or 51%). The regional distribution was Region I, 16%; Region II, 25%; Region III, 6%; Region IV, 51%; Region V, 0%; Region VI, 2%.

In the discussion which follows, both specialization and skills categories appear in **bold** face type. Abbreviated comments of the panel members at the conference follow the discussion.

## PRESENTATION OF RESPONSES

1. Responses regarding both Current Specialization and Projected Specialization in the 1988 and 1996 surveys are presented in Table 1 and Graph 1. **Land Use and Zoning** continue to hold a significant portion of actual specializations (23% and 26%) but both projections are lower (13% and 16%). Similarly, **Urban design and Physical planning** hold significant actual portions (20% and 19%) but both projections are lower (12% and 12%). **Transportation planning** appears to offer brighter prospects in 1996 (15%). **Economic and resource planning** has held rather stable, but may be gaining strength through projected increase in **Real Estate** as a specialization (4%).

2. Responses to Entry-level Skills for both the 1988 and 1996 surveys are present in Table 2 and Graph 2. The dominant skills are tied to both **Writing** and **Oral communication and presentation** (19%, 19% and 17%, 16%). There is a shift away from conventional **Graphic** and **Design** skills and toward **Computerized word processing** and **Computerized graphic** skills. There is some decline in **Economic, finance and budgeting** skills.

3. Cross Tabulation of the 1996 Affiliation by Specialization (Table 3, and Graph 3) of both professional planners and PDOs revealed that all specialization categories were concentrated in employment within cities, counties, and private consultancies. Taken in descending order of modal response, the **Land use/Zoning** modal responses were 58, 23, and 43 respectively. For **Urban design/Physical planning** modal responses were 51, 18, and 48. Both **Economic/Resource development** and **Housing and Community development** recorded similar modalities (31, 10, 22, and 25, 7, 15).

Even those specializations, which were anticipated to be focussed more at regional or state levels, closely followed the same City-County-Consultancy modal response pattern. For **Transportation planning**, the responses were 19, 10, 28. For **Environmental planning**, the responses were 11, 14, 27. Even **Policy planning** clung to the same pattern of responses (17, 6, 7). **Historic preservation** appears nearly fully captured at the municipal level.

Despite the continued interest in **Housing and Community development**, few current opportunities appear for **Health/Human services**. Moreover, despite the growing interest in both **Transportation planning** and **Environmental planning**, few current opportunities appear for **Energy planning**.

4. Responses regarding the 1996 Demand for Specializations revealed only slight variations between professional planner and PDO patterns (Table 4 and Graph 4). Of ten specific specializations, planning professionals gave stronger support for **Housing and Community development** (9%), **Economic/Resource development** (11%), and **Urban design/Physical planning** (19%). PDOs

**TABLE 1**

**CURRENT AND PROJECTED SPECIALIZATIONS**

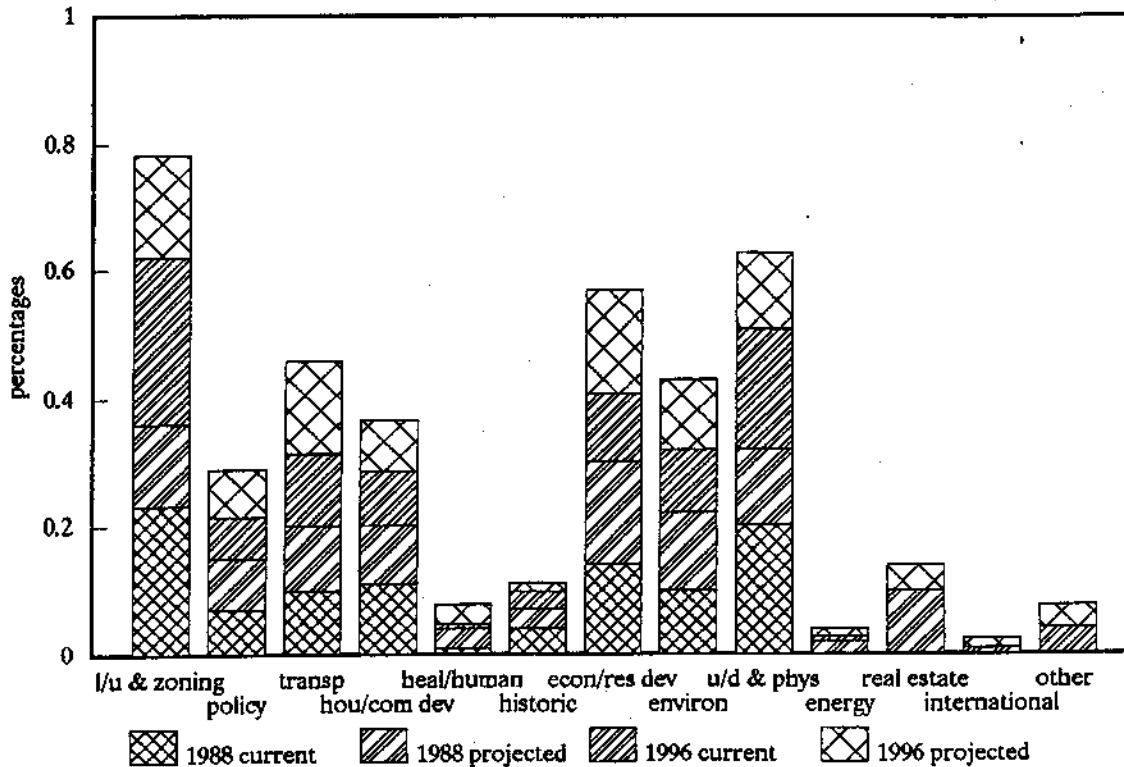
(PERCENTAGES)

	1988	1988 PROJECTED	1996	1996 PROJECTED
LAND USE & ZONING	23	13	26	16
POLICY PLANNING	7	8	6	7
TRANSPORTATION PLNG	10	10	11	15
HOUSING&COMMUNITY	11	9	9	8
HEALTH&HUMAN SERVICES	1	3	1	3
HISTORIC PRESERVATION	4	3	3	1
ECONOMIC&RESOURCE	14	16	11	16
ENVIRONMENTAL PLNG	10	12	10	11
URBAN DESIGN&PHYSICAL	20	12	19	12
ENERGY PLNG	0	2	1	1
REAL ESTATE	*	1	*	4
INTERNATIONAL PLNG	*	1	*	1
OTHER	*	0	4	3

\* Not included in the 1988 and 1996 suveys on current specializations

**GRAPH 1**

**CURRENT AND PROJECTED SPECIALIZATIONS (1988 AND 1996)**



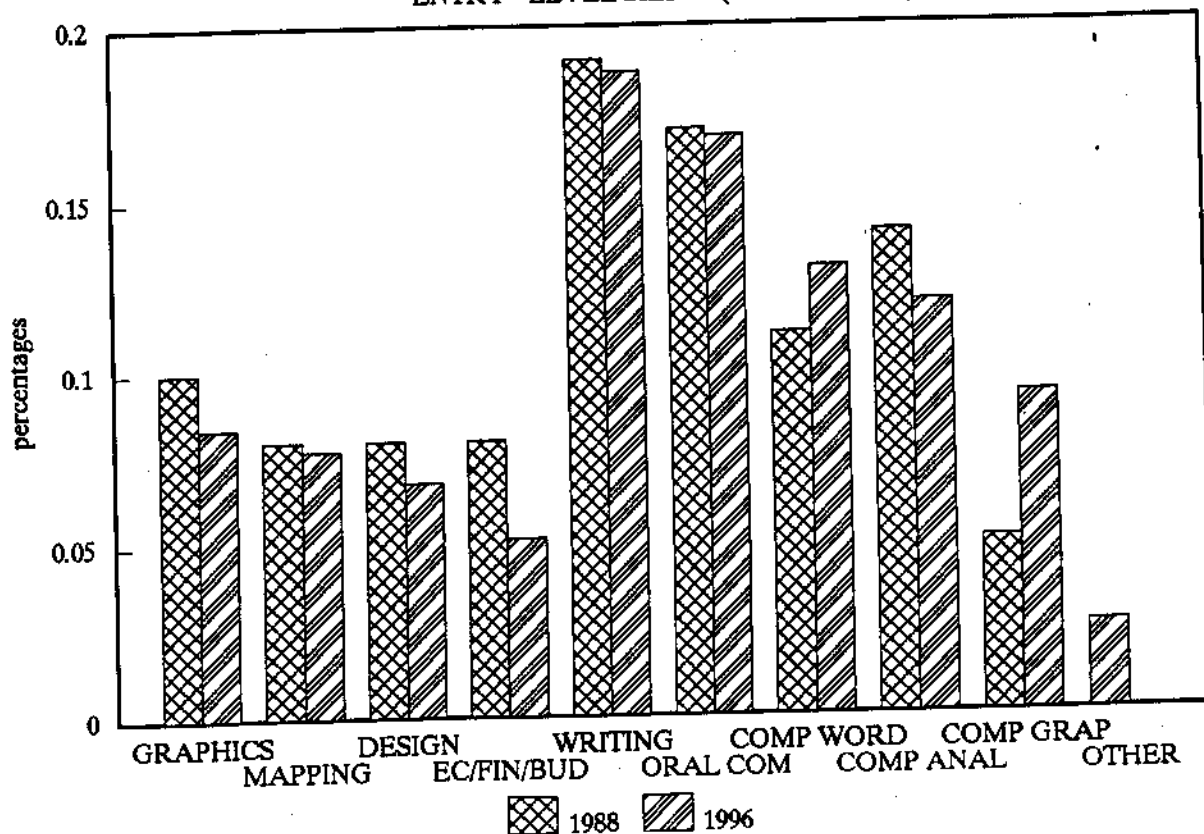
**TABLE 2**  
**ENTRY-LEVEL SKILLS**

(PERCENTAGES)

	1988	1996
GRAPHICS	10	8
MAPPING	8	8
DESIGN	8	7
ECONOMIC/FINANCE/BUDGETING	8	5
WRITING	19	19
ORAL COMMUNICATION&PRESENTATION	17	16
COMPUTERIZED WORD PROCESSING	11	13
COMPUTERIZED DATABASE/ANALYTICAL	14	12
COMPUTERIZED GRAPHICS	5	9
OTHER	0	3

**GRAPH 2**

ENTRY-LEVEL SKILLS (1988 AND 1996)



**TABLE 3**

**POPULAR CURRENT SPECIALIZATIONS BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT**

(FREQUENCIES)

	LAND USE PHYSICAL	TRANSPOR TATION	HOUSING COMMUN	ECONOM RESOURCE	ENVIRON	URB DESI &PHYSIC
<b>CITY</b>	58	19	25	31	11	51
<b>COUNTY</b>	23	10	7	10	14	18
<b>REGIONAL/ METROPOLITAN</b>	12	11	4	4	5	3
<b>STATE</b>	3	5	2	2	3	1
<b>CONSULTANT</b>	43	28	15	22	27	48
<b>FEDERAL</b>	0	1	0	0	1	0
<b>INDUSTRY / BUSINESS</b>	1	1	1	2	0	4
<b>COLLEGE</b>	2	1	0	1	2	0
<b>NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION</b>	0	1	1	2	1	1
<b>OTHER</b>	3	2	4	0	4	3

**GRAPH 3**

**POPULAR CURRENT SPECIALIZATIONS BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT**

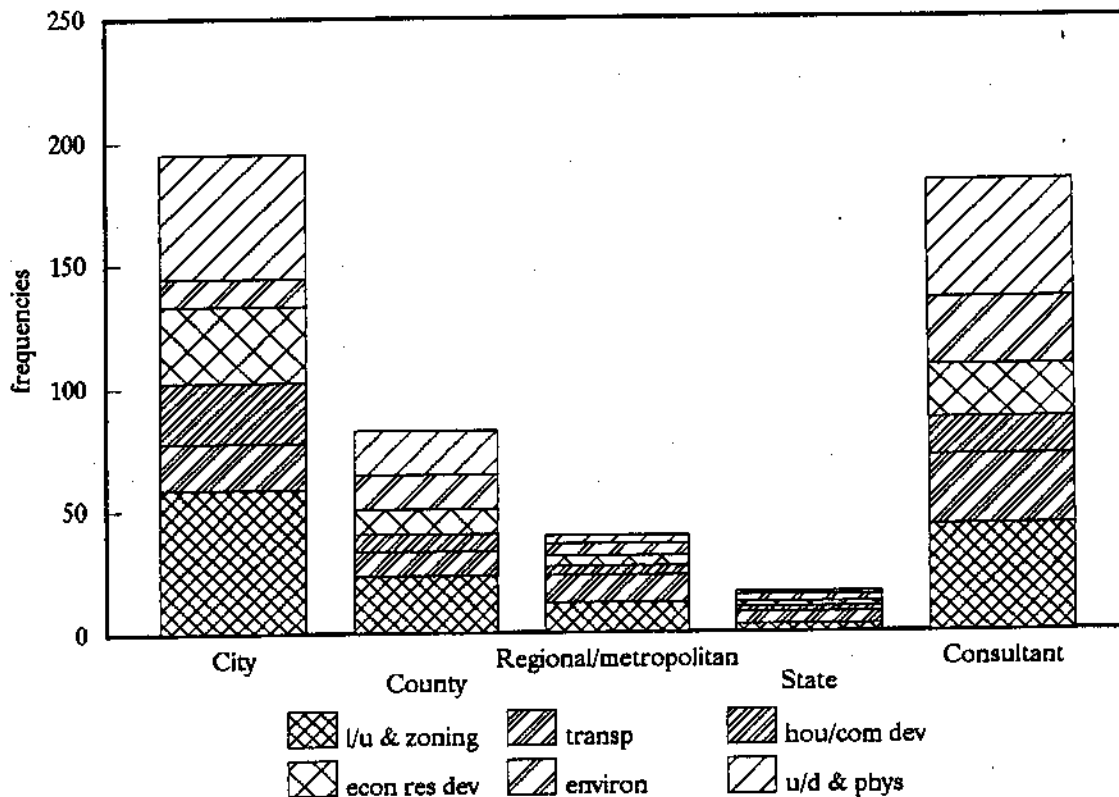


TABLE 4

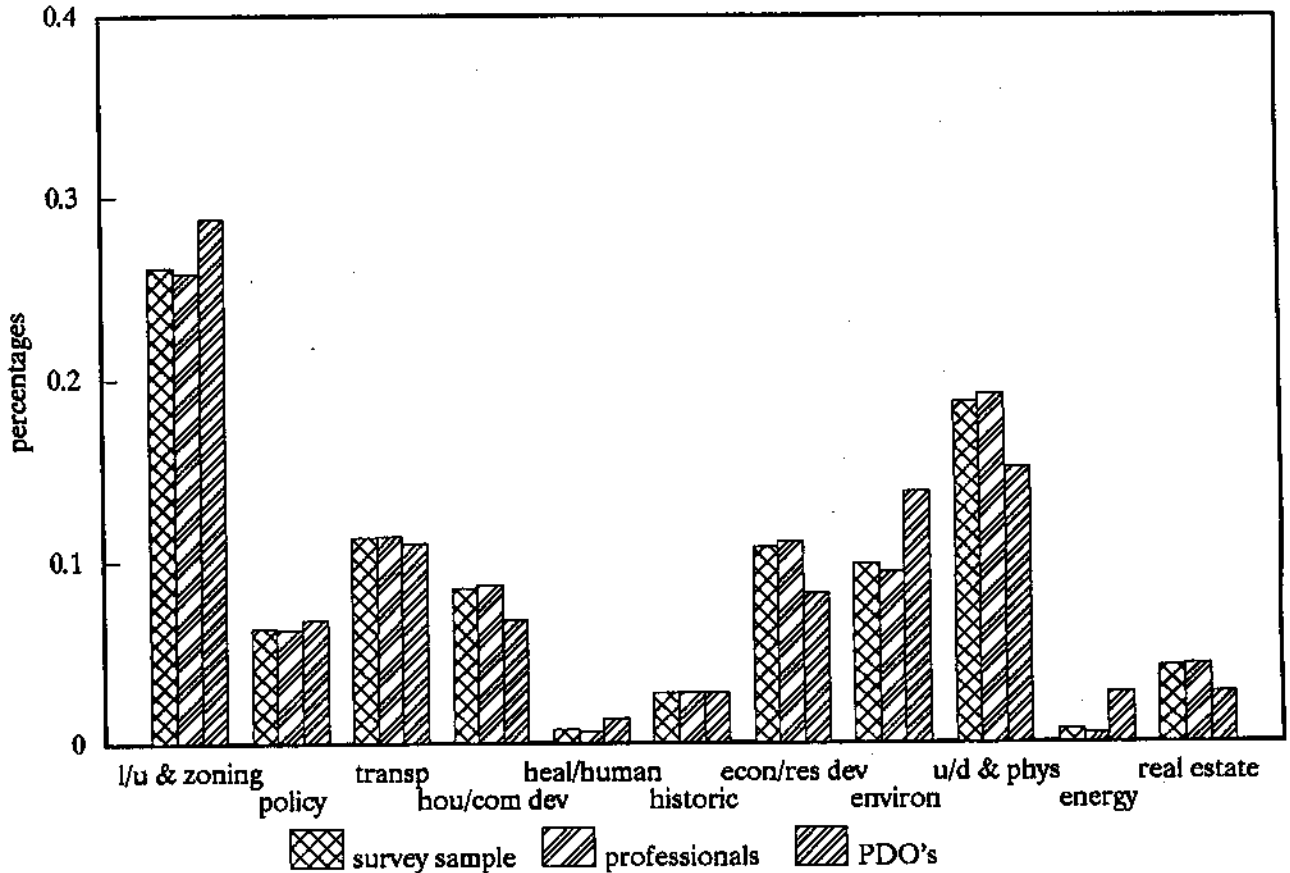
CURRENT SPECIALIZATIONS: 1996 SURVEY

(PERCENTAGES)

	TOTAL	PROFESSIONALS	PDO's
LAND USE & ZONING	26	26	29
POLICY PLANNING	6	6	7
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING	11	11	11
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	9	9	7
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	1	1	1
HISTORIC PRESERVATION	3	3	3
ECONOMIC & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	11	11	8
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING	10	9	14
URBAN DESIGN & PHYSICAL PLANNING	19	19	15
ENERGY PLANNING	1	0	3
OTHER	4	4	3

GRAPH 4

CURRENT SPECIALIZATIONS (1996)



### 3, APA96, Apostolides and Allor

more strongly favored **Land use/Zoning** (29%) and **Environmental planning** (14%). While the response pattern for the professional planners was broader, both groups cited **Land use/Zoning** as constituting more than one-fourth of all immediate specialization demands (26%, 29%).

5. Responses regarding the 1996 Demand for Entry-level Skills remarkably similar for both professional planners and PDOs (Table 5 and Graph 5). Contrary to expectations, neither group gave strong support for conventional **Graphics** (8%, 9%), **Mapping** (8%, 7%), or **Design** (7%, 5%) skills.

PDOs more strongly favored **Oral communication and presentation** skills (20%). The strongest responses of both groups were for **Writing** skills (19%, 19%) and **Oral communication and presentation** skills (16%, 20%), with all three categories of **Computerized** skills varying from 9% to 13%.

Despite the relative strength of the **Economic/Resource development** specialization, emphasis on **Economic/Finance/Budgeting** skills is low (5%, 4%).

Drawing upon complementary data from another part of the 1996 survey, the skills required of planning students (for possible employment as intern or co-operative work placement) again reported largely concurrent response patterns. While **Oral communication and presentation** skills are not immediately sought, both groups of respondents favored **Writing** skills (15%, 14%), with all three categories of the **Computerized** skills strongly favored, varying from 12% to 18%.

6. The Cross-tabulation of 1996 Skills by 1996 Specializations revealed some remarkable common modalities (Table 6 and Graph 6). Without exception, when combining responses for both groups, strongest modal response was for **Writing** skills. Without exception, the second strongest modal response was for **Oral communication and presentation** skills.

With the exceptions of **Historic preservation** and **Urban design/ Physical planning**, all other specializations reported **Computerized word processing** and **Computerized database/Analytical** skills as the third and fourth modalities.

Specializations in **Land use/Zoning**, **Transportation planning**, and **Environmental planning** (which have relied on conventional Graphics and Mapping) have moved strongly toward **Computerized** graphics.

7. The projection of Specialization demand five years into the future is a modest horizon; yet, during that period, entry-level planners could have completed graduate degrees, AICP membership, or additional professional certifications or legal registrations. The number of multiple responses was greater, generating broadened array of specializations. The analysis is run on two ways: first, the shifting in responses when comparing patterns in Tables 4 and 7, and second, comparing response patterns between professional planners and the PDOs.

**TABLE 5**

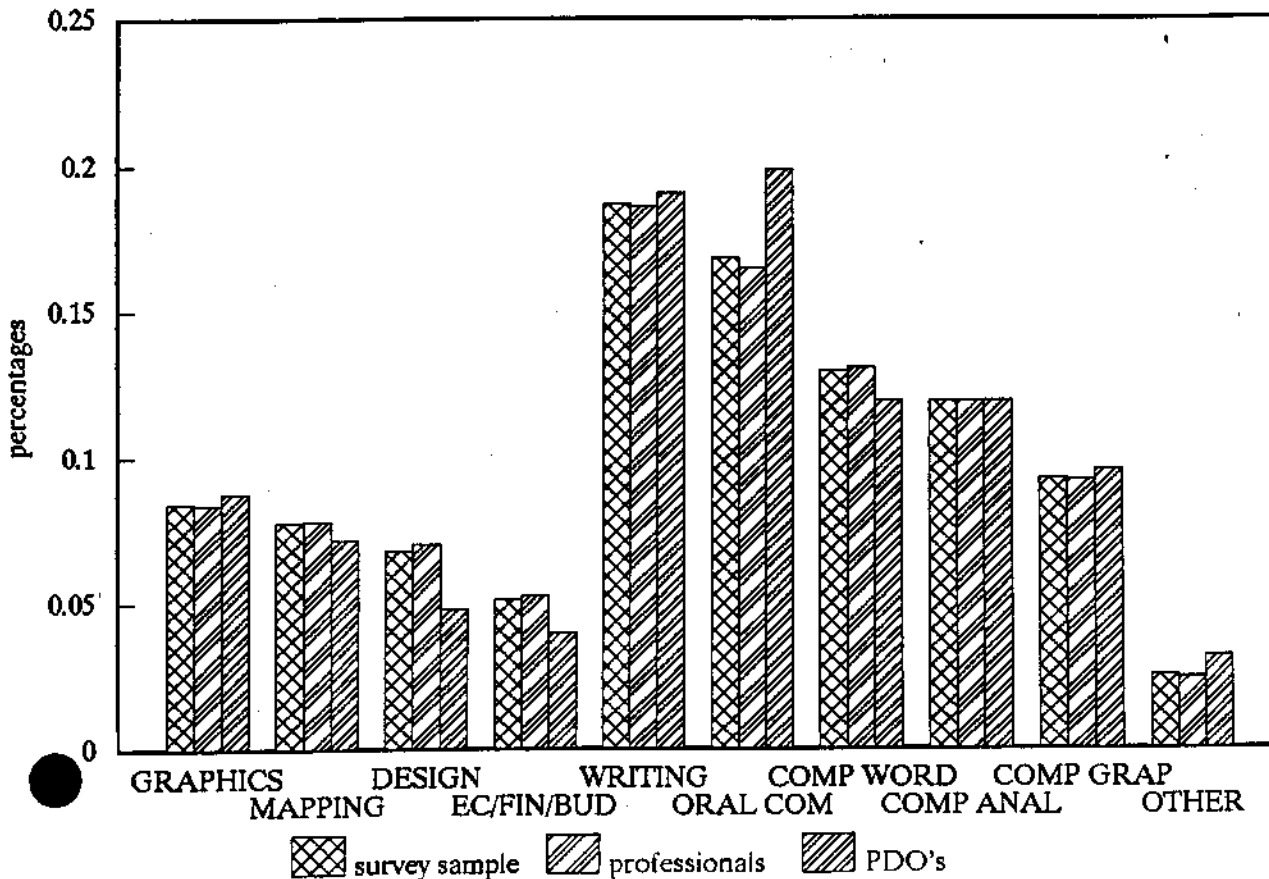
**ENTRY-LEVEL SKILLS: 1996 SURVEY**

(PERCENTAGES)

	TOTAL	PROFESSIONALS	PDO's
GRAPHICS	8	8	9
MAPPING	8	8	7
DESIGN	7	7	5
ECONOMIC/FINANCE/BUDGETING	5	5	4
WRITING	19	19	19
ORAL COMMUNICATION&PRESENTATION	17	16	20
COMPUTERIZED WORD PROCESSING	13	13	12
COMPUTERIZED DATABASE/ANALYTICAL	12	12	12
COMPUTERIZED GRAPHICS	9	9	10
OTHER	3	2	3

**GRAPH 5**

**ENTRY-LEVEL SKILLS (1996)**



**TABLE 6**

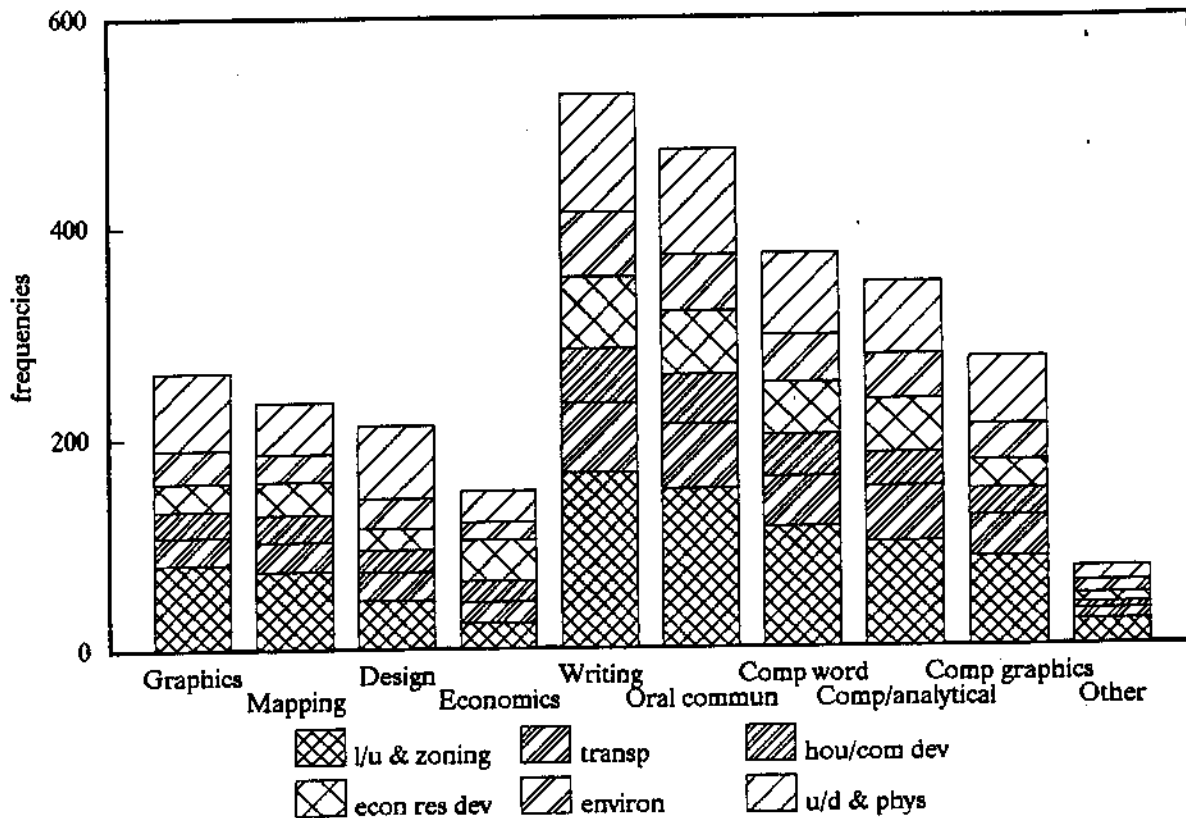
**POPULAR CURRENT SPECIALIZATIONS BY SKILLS**

(FREQUENCIES)

	LAND USE PHYSICAL	TRANSPOR TATION	HOUSING COMMUN	ECONOM RESOURCE	ENVIRON	URB DESI &PHYSIC
GRAPHICS	80	26	25	26	32	74
MAPPING	73	28	26	31	27	49
DESIGN	46	26	21	20	28	71
ECONOMIC/FINA NCE/BUDGETING	24	20	19	39	17	29
WRITING	165	67	52	67	62	114
ORAL COMMUN- ICATION PRESEN	149	63	47	59	54	101
COMPUTERIZED WORD PROCESS	113	47	41	50	44	78
COMPUTERIZED DATABASE	98	52	33	51	43	68
COMPUTERIZED GRAPHICS	83	39	25	28	35	64
OTHER	23	10	6	9	11	14

**GRAPH 6**

**POPULAR CURRENT SPECIALIZATIONS BY SKILLS**



**TABLE 7**

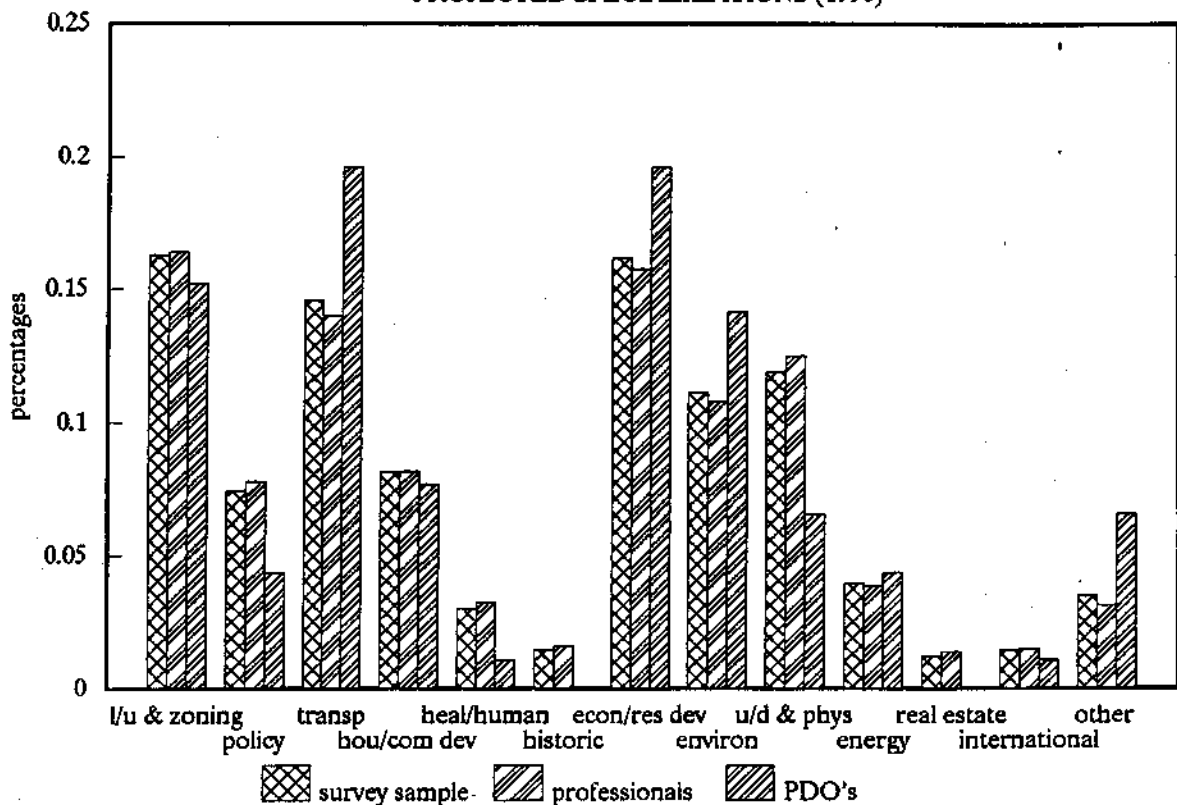
**PROJECTED SPECIALIZATIONS: 1996 SURVEY**

(PERCENTAGES)

	TOTAL	PROFESSIONALS	PDO's
LAND USE & ZONING	16	16	15
POLICY PLANNING	7	8	4
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING	15	14	20
HOUSING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	8	8	8
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	3	3	1
HISTORIC PRESERVATION	1	2	0
ECONOMIC & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	16	16	20
ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING	11	11	14
URBAN DESIGN & PHYSICAL PLANNING	12	13	7
REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT	4	4	4
ENERGY PLANNING	1	1	0
INTERNATIONAL PLANNING	1	2	1
OTHER	3	3	7

**GRAPH 7**

**PROJECTED SPECIALIZATIONS (1996)**



#### 4, APA96, Apostolides and Allor

When comparing current Specialization demand to future specialization demand, marked downward shifts are recorded for both groups in three specializations:

**Land use/Zoning** declined from 26%, 29% to 16%, 15%,  
**Urban design/Physical planning** fell from 19%, 15% to 13%, 7%,  
**Historic preservation** nearly disappeared, falling from 3%, 3% to 1%, 0%.

Two specializations held nearly constant:

**Housing and Community development**, 9%, 7% and 8%, 8%,  
**Environmental planning**, 9%, 14% and 11%, 14%.

Two specializations recorded increasing strength:

**Transportation planning** rose from 11%, 11% to 14%, 20%,  
**Economic/Resource development** rose from 11%, 8% to 16%, 20%.

The additions of **Real estate development** (4%, 4%) and **International planning** (1%, 1%) as specializations give additional strength to shifts toward a more encompassing economic development focus.

When comparing future specialization responses between the two groups, there was some erosion of support by the PDOs for **Policy planning** (8%, 4%). The PDOs are also far less optimistic with regard to **Urban design/Physical planning** (13%, 7%). Conversely, the PDOs gave far stronger support for **Transportation planning** (14%, 20%) and for **Economic/Resource development** (16%, 20%).

#### COMMENTS BY PANELISTS

##### Current and projected specializations (1988 and 1996 surveys)

**Thompson:** There is a certain core of information about planning that is going to be constant throughout planning as a profession. Land use and Zoning will always form much of the basis of planning. In Cincinnati, the City Charter mandates that we shall do a master plan of the city -- divide the city into appropriate zones -- and that we shall rule on any disposition of city owned property or acquisitions. So that these are going to be constant tasks. But the survey says to me is that, with the future emphasis on transportation, we are going to begin to develop a much more regional approach to planning and those of you who are here from the regional planning agencies could be called on, I think, to do more comprehensive planning than specializations. I find it kind of an encouraging sign, we have look beyond our immediate boundaries to the larger picture.

## 5, APA96, Apostolides and Allor

**Wenzel:** I can clarify what current and projected mean. In the survey was asked "if you were going to hire somebody right now what would be the specialization most in demand" and the second was "in 3 to 4 years given current plans which specializations are going to have a significant demand". I agree with Tommie, I think the core most of our business, both in the public and private sector, is that there is a legislative mandate that we have to do and that is always going to be there. There are other skills that kind of ebb and flow depending upon the "hot" topics and I would suggest that from my perspective there is a direct relationship between the projected skills and what is being the "hot" topic, if you will, in Washington DC. And if you retract back perhaps twenty years ago, if the survey had being done, the relationship of 701 planning, of community development planning, and now the current hot topic, that has being funded is the ISTEA legislation and that, I would suggest, is widened the increase in the Transportation planning beyond what the other disciplines are.

**Davis:** Well, I agree but I look at some of those other categories, as Health and Human services and I think they should be higher because we look at cities where there are a lot of social problems. We think about community services and public services and how you can coordinate that. What I see in Detroit, it tends to be neighborhood groups and foundations doing public service activities. Now that we have an empowerment zone (that is mainly human services entitlement 20 sort of programs), we need to see what everybody is doing; making sure not to duplicate any body else, how to evaluate public service, and how do you know somebody is being trained to properly do a job in the future. There is a whole realm of need up there that planners need to become familiar in terms of training and specializations.

### Entry level skills for 1988 and 1996 surveys

**Wenzel:** In a session I sat yesterday on technology and techniques, a participant said that their staff has been reduced from approximately 75 people to about 50 people. Currently there is a dramatic increase in technological communication skills that they range from GIS to 3-D modeling. One of the things that I see on the private side is that we are constantly looking for ways to control our overhead and one of the ways is trying to reduce support personnel (technical or clerical), pushing more and more responsibilities for computerization both in analytic as in clerical areas. I think that is one of the trends we are seeing and, I think, it is amplified by the Hillsborough county example.

**Davis:** ... Because of GIS, Desktop publishing is less of a need for Graphic skills . But I still think planners have to learn how to articulate that in a drawing sense because nothing beats sitting there and drawing what they want to express. You have now the computer programs which can spit out any design you want, but I think, as planners, we all have to develop a better understanding of what we are trying to do and it is very important that we try to gain additional knowledge in terms of how to articulate our sketches and drawings. In terms of Written and oral communication skills, obviously they are very important because we have to be sellers, we have to constantly sell what we are doing to decision makers, to citizen groups; so that these are obviously very important. If people do not understand what planners do, we short-sell the profession.

**Thompson:** This is only a very logical conclusion . When I got my master's degree in 1977 the only computer programming we did was card punch programming. Here it is 20 years later and it is a whole new world in terms of the technology. Co-op students that Vasso sends have much more computer comfort. It has changed the face how we present things and in many case it is better. You can do more interesting graphics in short time. I feel however that one thing that is a constant, and is a concern to many planners, is the need to communicate, verbally and in written form. The more you become advanced in your profession; the more reliance you have on being able to communicate it. I don't know whether that is a fault of the planning education, rather I think this happened long before the students came to planning. I find myself correcting the English and syntax of student work.

**Apostolides:** I have been working with students for over ten years and I can see a change in regards to their ability to write and express orally. Employers request that their portfolios include writing samples. Evidence that they can write and express orally is a cross-discipline requirement. Regarding technology, employers rely very much on young persons for computer graphics.

**Wenzel:** The computer, I think, is a temptation. I know, as an employer, when I evaluate students for new hires or middle level people, I am influenced by somebody's computer skills and particularly computer graphics. The harder measure is to assess their critical thinking skills, and their ability to utilize that GIS system and understand analytically what they are trying to get at, and not to be wooed by the "wisbang" pictures etc. I know, I fall into the trap and I think you can see there are a number of presentations at this conference on GIS automation, etc. which is a tool for us planners. We have to be cognizant of the critical thinking component and not be enamored of someone's ability to show something very artistically. There has to be some depth to that.

**Thompson:** ... The changing faces of planning favor diversity. In Cincinnati diversity is not really important in terms of language, it is important in terms of sensitivity to other cultural subgroups.

**Apostolides:** Recipients of the survey had the chance to indicate foreign languages in the "Other" category, and they did not, they did however indicate GIS and their response was included in the category of computerized database/ analytical.

#### Popular current specializations by type of employment

**Davis:** Environmental issues, I know when people talk environment, you talk environmental quality, air quality at the state level. From the city stand point, environmental issues are as important because we have contaminated sites, called "brown field" sites, and there is a need to understand the biology behind that to figure out what is the best way to clean up these sites so that we can have a level playing field for both the city and the county. If the city can accommodate "in-fill" development, it helps the larger areas as well, because you don't have new areas spreading out in the outskirts, while the core constantly becomes hallow. So, if we want to help the regions, we have to concentrate on the "in-fill" in the city. We have to understand what needs to be done, and in Detroit we recently

changed our laws. Where before we had to clean every particular contaminant within a site, now the laws have been changed because of better understanding of these environmental issues and now you can go and just contain the contaminants, if you can, and try not to disturb the site as much as possible.

**Thompson:** When I think of our graduate school I am only aware of one or two people who in the last decade who have gotten their degrees with the specialization in Environmental planning. One of them is still in Cincinnati and she is working with an organization such as the Hillside Trust and the Millcreek Conservancy. We have an office of environmental management and, I think, many of those people came from environmental engineering and similar specialties but what I wanted to say earlier and what I want to say now is that we have been called to step into many additional roles as planners and our city is not different from cities across the country. Our city manager has us working on CINAS (Cincinnati Neighborhood Action Strategy) in self-directed work teams with representatives of many city departments -- of health, public works, economic development, building and inspections, city planning, etc. Departments, that typically only met each other in a formal capacity, now are supposed to be working collaboratively with the communities up front to identify their problems. One of the neighborhoods, that I am particularly involved, is a poor neighborhood -- primarily public housing -- and it is located very close the Mill creek, which is a polluted stream that goes through Cincinnati that historically used to dump all their scrapings from the pig factories in there. Now is not quite so blatant, it does not turn red any more but it is still polluted. Yes, we have to be familiar with environmental planning but there is no money in our department compliment for an environmental planner, so if you go and say I am a hot shot environmental planner we probably appreciate you but not hire you. And, I think, until this is recognized by planning and even more so by the administration of the cities where we work as something that rightfully belongs in the planning department, this is going to be the response we get. We get asked to do energy plans for the city, in other words how the city itself, our office buildings and our own buildings could become more energy efficient. We did that again in a work team approach but it was a "one-shot" thing and we kind of toned ourselves real quickly how to be energy planners.

**Wenzel:** If you look at these skills, Land use, Transportation planning, etc., and then you look at the different providers of those being on the consulting side, our biggest market share, if you will, are in those areas you were just talking about: Urban design / Physical design, Environmental, and then Transportation planning and that tracks right with my office's areas of specialization. I am not quite sure whether our clients are saying that they feel much more comfortable with that skill or may be they are saying that these are hot topics and they want to bring in a consultant, who can take the grief and they can let him go. I'm not sure. But clearly, look at the skills and track them, the skills are different by your sector. The showing of hands before, really tracks with the survey, most of the people are from municipal planning organizations and, I would suggest, they are predominantly involved in the legislative land use /zoning, processing, if you will; long range planning, and probably the bulk of the consultants and involved in those three topics as well.

1996 Demand for specializations and entry level skills (professional planners and PDOs's)

**Thompson:** And I think that's a shame because it is the ability to see the larger picture that, I have always considered it to be my strength and it has worked well for me. I came into planning from social work and community organizing and I consider in many respects that I am a social planner but I certainly wouldn't say that around the office, and I think that's wonderful, and it makes me effective in the work I do, because I look at the land use and the physical planning that need to be made in the context of the social environment. I am all for some kind of specialization, so if you have a sharp skill you can present to the world, if need be, but if you don't have that global picture, that over all awareness, then I think that it is part of the communications problem, not being able to communicate your idea because you can only speak in terms of economic planning. And that's why they have the city planning department, as far as I am concerned, to be more generalist with a specialty in land use and zoning.

**Apostolides:** Undergraduate planning education will produce the generalists, specializations will most likely emerge from graduate education.

**Allor:** It goes beyond the response but... there is tremendous pressure at the master's level to specialize.

Projection of specialization Demand

**Thompson:** Especially those of us who come from older urban areas, Historic preservation is necessary. However our department does not support historic planners to the extent that it did a few years ago. We are calling on historic planners to design their time 50 % between historic and 50% between comprehensive and yet either they come with a specialization in historic preservation or planning, so the other half is not going to be as proficient. Some of these things seemed contradictory, the things we have seen earlier on, but the idea that people are seeing more call for environmental planners this does not surprise me we have not funded it to this point in our departments, but I see there is a growing awareness. The whole idea of sustainable development is one that appears in PLANNING magazine more and I think that more of our planners are aware that we must conserve the earth, that we must avoid conspicuous over consumption although we don't do that in our personal lives. I think that probably the planners who responded are looking ahead to trends and what will be too ..... four to five years from now.

**Davis:** Obviously Land use and Zoning is high because that is the core of the profession, when I look on Urban design and Physical planning, I sort of tie this back to zoning because to do successful zoning you have to have a good feel for urban design, because if you work with Plan Unit Development , site design review, etc. You must communicate this to the client. As far as Historic preservation..... we are making too burdensome for people in our district, we have to make sure that we don't include in our ordinances and guidelines so many restrictions that ... cannot do anything in their districts. With regard to Transportation planning (ISTEA), Economic and resource

development, cities cannot do it all. In Detroit when people are asking what the city is going to do, we tell them that we are trying to target our resources so that the private sector can come in and do the sort of development that we need. We need to plan the area so that it is attractive to the private sector; we may try to match with grants but basically the private sector will do the development.

**Allor:** From this discussion, I fear that I have a new but fundamental concern: does the profession of planning lead or follow?

**Wenzel:** The question was do we follow or lead? The bulk of us in this room are result of the political process; we serve at the whim of policy makers that may change annually or every four years. That may drive your budget process. Whether you are going to put your resources on Transportation planning or Environmental. The current federal hot topics are Transportation and Economic development, and, I think, we are being led by that. But those of you who are most effective are the ones that can talk to your policy makers and try to frame for them the issues that need to be analyzed and frame for them the directions of analysis that needs to be taken as opposed to reacting to them. So that result does not surprise me again, because I think of the relationship that we as planners have more than any other profession to the political process.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The session at the APA National Planning conference attracted over 40 participants. While their comments were contributed throughout the session, a summary of their recommendations is placed here both as a conclusion and as a guide for future research.

1. While specializations are important, perhaps the profession should look to new ways of integrating careers, such as through "sustainable development" which links economic, community, and environmental planning.
2. Critical thinking is an essential skill to be added to future surveys. This is a "shrinking world" with a much more mobile profession; the choices to be made with respect to the environment, economy, and society will be far more complex and have crucial consequences to the globe.
3. It is not just communication skills, "listening" skills are essential. Planners need to be able to observe environments and listen to the people who live in them. Planners do need to be "sellers", they do have to be able to show the value of their work; but they also have to understand what clients and the community want as the "buyers" of planning.
4. Foreign language skills and possibly regional dialectic skills are necessary not only for international planning but also for working in small but multicultural environments.
5. The surveys need to add rural and regional planning, the study appears too urban in that most of the respondent were urban or metropolitan planners.

10, APA96, Apostolides and Allor

6. Cities are no longer the leaders in their own redevelopment, they are co-participants with both private sector and regional interests; the focus must be turned to a public-private sector relations but at regional scale.
7. At the day-to-day level, cities are still clusters of neighborhoods, neighborhood planning warrants attention as a specialization requiring sensitive blending of skills.
8. In some dimensions planning has to be implemented both by direction of law and by competent administration. Both planning law and administration need to be added as specializations.
9. Whether planners feel comfortable with it nor not, planning is part of the political process. It not just the profession needs to communicate better, it needs to influence decision-makers better. Planners give form to the choices to be made and thereby contribute to the political agenda. Planners are not just technicians, with high but narrow skills; planners are essential actors within the political process.