

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMS**  
**ACCREDITATION REPORT AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Action Requested:** Receive the accreditation report for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and the Master of Landscape Architecture in the College of Design at Iowa State University.

**Executive Summary:** The programs (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards of accreditation defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The programs were accredited for the maximum six-year period through 2021. However, there were four recommendations affecting accreditation for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture Program and five recommendations affecting accreditation for the Master of Architecture program identified and which must be addressed in annual reports. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priorities for “access, affordability, and student success; educational excellence and impact; and economic development and vitality.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of undergraduate program.** The Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program is a five-year professional degree program. Students gain strong communication skills, a working knowledge of plants and construction, and an understanding of the way natural, social, and cultural systems influence design. Types of projects include residential; parks and recreation; streetscapes and public spaces; and historic preservation and restoration. The undergraduate program was seeking renewed accreditation.
- ◇ **Description of graduate program.** The Master of Landscape Architecture program was approved by the Board of Regents in June 2010. The program concentrates on basic professional competencies necessary to take the licensing exam, together with advanced studies in a focused area of landscape architecture as required by accreditation standards. The program is targeted to students with a non-design undergraduate degree who desire a professional practice program. The curriculum includes a minimum of 30 credits of advanced courses, both required and elective. The program was granted candidacy status after a preliminary LAAB review in Spring 2011. The graduate program was seeking initial accreditation.
- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met state and national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification. Accreditation is also intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and professional practice.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the Landscape Architecture Accrediting Board (LAAB) of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA).

- ◇ Review Process. The self-study prepared by the Landscape Architecture programs contained the responses to the appropriate standards required by the accrediting body – program mission and objectives; program autonomy, governance and administration; professional curriculum; student and program outcomes; faculty; outreach to the institution, communities, alumni, and practitioners; and facilities, equipment, and technology.
- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In March 2014, the visiting team determined that the Landscape Architecture programs met the requirements for accredited status, although there were a number of recommendations affecting accreditation that must be addressed prior to the next review.
- ◇ Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.
  - ☑ “The team agrees the BLA program is an impressive undergraduate landscape architecture program. The faculty are very talented and extremely dedicated to the success of the students. They are also engaged in scholarly and creative activities and work to support the profession, the state of Iowa, and the Ames community. The curriculum is well considered and crafted to make an outstanding learning experience for students who are energized and produce very high quality work.
  - ☑ Diverse areas of faculty research include hydrology/urban watersheds; community design and engagement; transportation; health communities; landscape computing and 3-D modeling; theory and therapeutic landscapes. Following the Ernest Boyer model of scholarship, the faculty integrates their research and outreach activities into their teaching. The department has a good track record of substantial externally funded research. Most faculty also have extensive professional practice experience and many maintain foreign or U.S. practice licenses. A number of faculty maintain active professional offices outside of their academic duties.”
- ◇ Recommendations Affecting Accreditation Identified by the Visiting Team for the Undergraduate Program.
  - ☑ “Work to make the program mission and objectives more concise and develop benchmarks and annual assessment tools to evaluate progress. (Standard 1)
  - ☑ Improve program disclosure so that information required by LAAB is “one click” away on the Program’s website. (Standard 1)
  - ☑ Improve the communication and transparency of the budget process so that the Department chair is able to make appropriate decisions about the generation and use of funds. (Standard 2)
  - ☑ Make certain that adequate support personnel are made available to the Program to minimize clerical/secretarial burden on the department Chair and faculty. (Standard 2)”
- ◇ Recommendations Affecting Accreditation Identified by the Visiting Team for the Graduate Program
  - ☑ “Develop an MLA specific mission, purpose, values, and educational goals, objectives, and outcomes. (Standard 1)

- Develop a long-range plan, specific to the MLA program. (Standard 1)
  - Comply with LAAB Public Information Policy and include program mission, purpose, values, and educational goals, objectives and outcomes on the program's website. (Standard 1)
  - Provide to the program a transparent description of how revenues and expenses are allocated to the program. (Standard 2)
  - The courses required for graduate LA students should have a syllabus specific to the expectations and requirements of those students. (Standard 3)"
- ◇ Suggestions for Improvement Identified by the Visiting Team for the Undergraduate Program.
- "Formalize the internship program to both require specifically and identify the objectives of the program and to have students report on their experience in the fall semester following the internship. (Standard 3)
  - Students, with faculty support and direction, should work to increase participation in professional societies and events. (Standard 4)
  - Continue to assist junior faculty, through course reductions, professional development grants and other methods to allow sufficient opportunity to pursue advancement, tenure, promotion, and professional development. (Standard 5)
  - Assist associate professors through professional development grants, provision of TAs or RAs, and other methods to allow sufficient opportunity to pursue promotion to full professor. (Standard 5)
  - Better utilize the Landscape Architecture Practitioners Advisory Council (LAPAC). (Standard 6)
  - Formalize LA Department alumni outreach procedures. (Standard 6)
  - Given the plans for program growth in the MLA, Master of Urban Design, Master of Design in Sustainable Environments as well as the growth in the Industrial Design Department it is apparent that additional space will be required in the (possibly very near) future. Planning to accommodate this growth should begin now and be clearly communicated to all departments. (Standard 7)
  - The library reading room is an integral and important part of the College of Design and as such should be maintained within the building. (Standard 7)"
- ◇ Suggestions for Improvement Identified by the Visiting Team for the Graduate Program.
- "MLA specific goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time Bound {SMART}. (Standard 1)
  - The current interim chair is doing a commendable job, but the program needs a consistent and stable commitment to leadership. (Standard 2)
  - Establish a strategic plan/program to recruit a culturally, educationally, and experientially diverse student body in support of its Commitment to Diversity. (Standard 2)

- ☑ Create graduate level course designations for all required MLA courses. (Standard 3)
  - ☑ Students should be encouraged to become engaged with local, regional, and national professional organizations. (Standard 4)
  - ☑ The junior faculty's expectations for support and assignments need to be managed in order to minimize confusion and conflict. (Standard 5)
  - ☑ The Landscape Architecture Professional Advisory Council (LAPAC) needs to be reactivated to provide advice and support specific to the MLA program. (Standard 6)
- ◇ Accreditation Status. In August 2014, the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board awarded accreditation to the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and the Master of Landscape Architecture programs for the maximum six-year period through 2020. The undergraduate program must submit annual reports and maintenance of good standing. The graduate program must submit a satisfactory progress report, including examples of students' work, by July 1, 2017, annual reports, and maintenance of good standing. The Department of Landscape Architecture is in the process of reviewing the recommendations and developing appropriate action plans.