

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
FOR THE PROGRAM IN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Submitted to the Provost

University of New Mexico

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ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW FOR THE PROGRAM IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

This document is a report of the Academic Program Review Team charged with reviewing the Landscape Architecture Program (LAP) at the University of New Mexico. The visit was conducted April 13th through 16th, 2009. The reviewers were Karen Hanna (Professor of Landscape Architecture, Cal Poly Pomona) and Dr. Bruce Thomson (Civil Engineering and Water Resources, UNM). The contents and findings of this report are based on the Self-Evaluation Report prepared by the LA Program, information available on the web, and the results of interviews and discussions held with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and professional landscape architects in Albuquerque.

The Academic Program Review was conducted concurrently with an accreditation review of the LAP by a team appointed by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB). This team consisted of Dean Bork (Team Chair), Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, David Cronrath, Dean of the College of Art and Design at Louisiana State University, and Kent Watson, Principal, Kent Watson & Associates, Missoula, MT. Although the APR Team and the LAAB teams conducted simultaneous meetings during their visits and had extensive discussions of the UNM LAP, the two teams had distinctly different assignments. In particular, the APR Team was charged with reviewing the academic quality of the LAP and whether it was consistent with the expectations and goals of UNM, as well as those of the national landscape architecture academic profession. Thus, although this report benefited from the participation and consultation with the LAAB team and their experience and wisdom, the findings reported here are solely those of the APR team consisting of Professors Hanna and Thomson.

STATE OF THE PROGRAM

Although a youthful program, the Landscape Architecture Program has been quite successful. Officially established in 2000, it received its first national accreditation from the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) in 2003. In 2008-09 the program has an enrollment of 60 graduate students, which is comparable to other, more established programs throughout the US. The program has benefited from the dedicated service of many adjunct faculty members who are also local, practicing landscape architects. At the time of the visit, the program was poised to hire two, Assistant Professors, and will enter a new phase of program structure and function with these hires.

The principle recommendations of the APR team include the following:

- Examine the role and work load of the program Director, Dr. Alf Simon, in an attempt to make him more effective over the long term by allowing him to focus his efforts on the development of the program (See the comments below under ADMINISTRATION: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM)

- Develop a succession plan for future leadership of the program in recognition that there are no mid-career faculty in the LAP who can assume a leadership and mentoring role in the next five to ten years. (See below under ADMINISTRATION: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM)
- Develop areas of focus for an agenda of research, scholarship, and creative activities to be used by faculty and students alike to encourage the LAP to develop an identity of academic accomplishment. (See expanded comments below under PROGRAM IN TRANSITION)
- Strategize about the means to support faculty and student engagement in research, scholarship, and creative activities. (See comments below under PROGRAM IN TRANSITION.)
- The LAP, in concert with the School of Architecture, should conduct a strategic planning exercise to update its strategic plan in light of the success of the program and addition of new faculty. (See comments below under PROGRAM IN TRANSITION)

REPUTATION

In the desert southwest and mountain region there are several accredited, graduate programs of Landscape Architecture. These programs exist at University of Texas, at their Austin and Arlington campuses, at Utah State University, at University of Colorado, Denver, and at University of Arizona. In addition, there are accredited, undergraduate programs in the region at Arizona State University, Colorado State University, and Utah State University. These programs vary in reputation from average to exemplary. The program at UNM is well above average, and as it matures has the potential to be a premier program with a national reputation.

In addition, the students have been very successful at winning design competitions. These awards are widely publicized in print and on the web and bring national recognition to the LAP. This success was cited by several of the students enrolled in the program and is part of the reason for the Program's ability to recruit well-qualified out-of-state and international students. The small faculty also includes three highly regarded scholars: Alf Simon, Chris Wilson, and Kim Sorvig. Each has a significant record of publications and funded research.

VISIBILITY

It is readily evident that the faculty in the Landscape Architecture Program (LAP) at UNM recognize the importance and value of reaching out to the public and professional communities. At UNM, the LAP is receiving increasing recognition due to several factors including: 1) organization of design charrettes for prominent campus and community urban planning efforts, notably the role that Dean Roger Schluntz has played in development of the UNM Rio Rancho campus master planning, 2) the important role that the program's Director, Dr. Alf Simon, plays as chair of the Campus Development and Planning Committee (CDAC), 3) the prominence of Pearl Hall and 4) through activities of the LAP students in design competitions and public forums.

The LAP recognizes the important role that landscape architecture plays in the local and regional communities and expects its students to participate in community outreach programs. One

notable example is the Development and Planning Assistance Center studio (LA 508). This program is offered in conjunction with the State of New Mexico’s Main Street program, and provides an opportunity for students in landscape architecture, architecture, and community and regional planning to work with small communities in NM to develop strategies and plans for improving the community environment. During the Spring 2009 semester groups of students are working with Gallup, Deming and Lovington. This activity brings considerable visibility, recognition, and appreciation to the LAP.

The formation and subsequent success of the UNM LAP is, to an extraordinary extent, the result of three decades of support and development by the local landscape architecture profession. This is especially attributable to the efforts of Baker Morrow, a landscape architect in private practice who began teaching courses in the program in 1975. Mr. Morrow and landscape architects within his firm, Morrow, Reardon, Wilkinson, Miller, Ltd., have continued to play a major role in the teaching mission of the program, and indeed in the development of the profession, including development and implementation of legislation leading to professional licensure. Other firms that have been especially supportive of the program include Sites Southwest and Consensus Planning, as well as landscape architects in smaller firms or who are sole practitioners. Landscape architects who regularly teach classes in the LAP program are listed in Table 1 below. Many of these individuals met with the APR Team and provided valuable insight to its review.

Table 1. Non-Tenured or Tenure-Track Landscape Architects and Landscape Professionals Who Teach in the Landscape Architecture Program.

Name	Organization	Affiliation with UNM
Morrow, Baker	Morrow Reardon Wilkinson Miller Ltd. Landscape Architects (MRWM)	Adjunct Professor
Perkins, Bill	Williams S. Perkins, ASLA	Adjunct Lecturer
Dennis Wilkinson	MRWM	Adjunct Professor
Brian Verardo	MRWM	Lecturer
Judith Phillips	Bernardo Beach Native Plant Farm	Adjunct Lecturer
John Barney	Barnworks	Adjunct Assistant Professor
Gregory Miller	MRWM	Lecturer
Pat Westbrook	Terra Creatas Landscape Architects	Part-Time Instructor
Steve Borbas	University of New Mexico	Adjunct Associate Professor
Judith Wong	University of New Mexico	Visiting Assistant Professor
Katy Crawford	Freelance Designer	Lecturer

The large number of adjunct faculty provides evidence of the high degree of visibility of the program to the professional community and is testimony to the valuable role that the LAP plays.

In addition to this success, the APR Team believes that there are opportunities to further develop the visibility of the LAP and at the same time improve the educational opportunities of its students, particularly within the University of New Mexico. It is suggested that the LAP

improve its interaction with other departments and programs outside the School of Architecture and Planning at UNM. Five programs in particular are believed to offer courses of relevance to the program:

- Sustainability Studies – sustainability in the built and natural environment
- Water Resources - water resources and management, including introduction to the hydrologic cycle
- Fine Arts – courses in drawing, form, and graphics design
- Geography – courses in GIS, social, and economic geography
- Civil Engineering – courses in construction management, planning & estimating, scheduling, construction documents, surveying(??)

RESEARCH AGENDA

A stated goal of the UNM President, Dr. David Schmidly, is that UNM will become admitted to the Association of American Universities (AAU), 60 of the preeminent U.S. and Canadian public and private research universities. One of the important metrics to achieve this level of recognition is the success of the university's research program. The APR Committee received information from the LAP faculty, the Dean and the Assistant Vice President for Research that research expectations for tenured and tenure-track faculty within the School of Architecture and Planning are increasing. The APR team believes that new LAP faculty will be expected to have strong programs of research and related scholarly work. The LAP should work to develop an externally funded research program and should seek collaboration with other programs (see the list above) to develop interdisciplinary research activities of a regional and national significance.

Since its inception, LAP has been engaged in several funded contracts. These sources of external funding are expected to continue.

ADMINISTRATION: SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE + PLANNING

The Landscape Architecture program is housed in the School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P), under the leadership of Dean Roger Schlutz. The School also includes programs in Architecture, Community & Regional Planning, Historic Preservation, and a Design and Planning Assistance Center. The school's enrollment is approximately 350 undergraduate and graduate students, and 60 of these are in the Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program.

The Provost reported to the reviewers that the Dean is very supportive of the Landscape Architecture program, and the APR team concurs with this assessment. In light of the university's expectations that all faculty perform research and appropriate scholarly work, the reviewers were surprised to learn that there are no plans to give any release time to the two new tenure-track faculty hires to help them establish an agenda for their research and creative activities. The reviewers met with the Assistant VP for Research, Michael Dougher, and learned that the Office of Research will often cover the replacement costs for new faculty for their course release time. We would encourage the Dean to explore this option to maximize the opportunities for these young faculty members to establish vigorous research programs that will be essential for their academic success at UNM.

The program has managed to grow on a very limited budget, due in large part to its reliance on adjunct faculty. As a small unit, the SA+P has little flexibility in its resource allocation. Nevertheless, there are a couple of items that need immediate attention, one of which will require additional funds, as discussed in the next section.

The program has been extremely successful at attracting private donations. The J.B. Jackson Endowed Chair is funded with a \$1.78 million endowment, and the program has received another gift from Mr. Jackson in the amount of \$1.9 million for scholarships and stipends for the students, and other program needs. For a young program with few alumni, these are admirable levels of private giving, and the terms of these gifts have been well articulated.

ADMINISTRATION: LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

The program Director, Dr. Alfred Simon, is a very capable administrator, exceptional advocate and mentor to the students, an outstanding teacher, and a well-recognized scholar. As an administrator he manages a large cadre of adjunct faculty and works collaboratively with faculty across the school. He, his faculty, and the students are heavily engaged in community design work locally and across the state of New Mexico. The students report that he is very responsive to their needs, he is the primary advisor to all the students, he chairs most of the thesis committees in the program, and he meets with prospective students and provides other recruitment services. Dr. Simon also represents the unit on school and university committees. The reports about his teaching were universally complimentary. He is in the final stages of completing a book for UNM Press, *Building to Endure: Design Lessons for Arid Lands*. While he has not yet applied for promotion to full professor, the Dean has informed the reviewers that he should have no difficulty within the program or the school. In short, Dr. Simon is the heart and soul of this program. While the program is strong enough to survive if he should leave, we feel it's better to be pro-active and retain him as its Director. There is a severe shortage of qualified department heads of Landscape Architecture programs across the country and the APR Team believes that he is vulnerable to recruitment by other programs. The reviewers have two suggestions in this regard.

First, Dr. Simon should be strongly encouraged to apply for promotion to the rank of Full Professor. The APR Team discussed this topic with the Dean of SA+P and with the Deputy Provost for Academic Affairs. Promotion of Dr. Simon to Full Professor would formally recognize UNM's appreciation of his contributions to the program, would improve his professional stature within the university and beyond, and should come with a significant salary increase.

The current plan to divert 50% of Dr. Simon's appointment to the Dean's office as Associate Dean for Research should be carefully considered. Dr. Simon is already overcommitted; he and the Dean need to find ways to transfer some of his duties to others, whether that is his teaching load, advising load, mentoring, or other duties.

While no one wishes for administrative turnover, it is commonplace in academia. The program has no mid-career faculty, and its one other senior faculty member, Professor Wilson, does not

hold a degree in Landscape Architecture. The program should work with the school to develop a succession plan for future leadership of the LAP.

PROGRAM IN TRANSITION

As a professional program, Landscape Architecture typically provides students with skills that will prepare them for their careers, as well as critical thinking and leadership which will prepare them to be design leaders in the future. As with any program on a university campus, the faculty and students must also advance the body of knowledge within the discipline. It is this latter aspect that has suffered with the shortage of permanent, tenured and tenure-track faculty. It is crucial that at this juncture, with two incoming Assistant Professors, that the program defines its areas of focus and a research agenda for itself. In a perfect world, this would have happened prior to these hires and would have informed the hiring process.

In meeting with the LAP students, the team learned that there was not always a strong linkage between the material taught in the theory classes and that covered in the studios. It is believed that part of the reason is due to heavy reliance on Adjunct Faculty who, although they are extraordinarily dedicated to the program, are not fully integrated into curriculum development. Thus, they are not familiar with either the material that has been covered in previous courses, nor do they have a complete understanding of how their course fits in with subsequent offerings. With such heavy reliance on Adjunct Faculty, more coordination is needed to guide them as they prepare course syllabi and course materials.

As the number of tenure track faculty in the LAP increases it is anticipated that the difference between the expectations of the academic faculty and those of the Landscape Architecture profession will become evident. Academic success for a program and for individual faculty is measured by production of scholarly works that may have little relevance to the local Landscape Architecture profession. Scholarly work may include publishing of books, edited volumes, refereed journal papers, and prizes awarded at state and national juried competitions. The expectations for a young faculty member are thus much broader than simply being a good teacher and mentor to graduate students.

The UNM LAP must recognize that the two expectations, those of the university and those of the profession, are not always compatible. Because of the strong support of the local professional community for the program, and their consequent expectations that the program place its highest priority on graduation of capable and well trained young landscape architects, the LAP must be able to clearly articulate the expectations of new faculty with respect to academic criteria and must communicate these expectations to the local professionals.

As part of this discussion, the program should examine ways to support these scholarly and creative activities. The program is encouraged to familiarize itself with the opportunities available in the Office of Research and to take advantage of their assistance where possible. While faculty in the LAP have pursued some externally funded projects in the past, they may also look at externally funded research grants, release time for new faculty, and other means to support these activities.

CURRICULUM

The Landscape Architecture program is nine years old and has grown steadily over that time. With about 60 students in the 3 year MLA program, enrollment is almost at its maximum given available space in Pearl Hall. As discussed above, much of the instruction has been provided by local practitioners serving as Adjunct Faculty. This high percentage of adjuncts has provided a great savings to the School, but it is not without drawbacks.

Other comments relative to the curriculum and pedagogy of the program include the following:

- Sustainability is well integrated across all the courses and is further supported by electives that provide greater depth in these topics. The team feels that students should be encouraged to take electives outside the school to further deepen their knowledge of topics such as water resources, geography, sustainability, and construction management.
- The professional curriculum is very well developed and serves its graduates well as they begin their careers.
- Landscape Architecture serves to bridge the disciplines of Architecture and Planning, providing an important linkage within SA+P.
- A review of the syllabi revealed inadequately articulated learning objectives, or in some cases, objectives that are difficult to assess.
- The large number of adjuncts and the heavy load carried by the Director has resulted in uneven rigor and some duplication in the material presented to students.
- While the program enjoys a large offering of electives, few are classes from outside of the SA+P, which would engage students from other programs and enrich the learning experience for all.

As discussed above, the scholarly and creative focus of the program needs to be developed so a research agenda can be pursued. Once the faculty members have clearly identified a focused research area they may work more closely with the Office of Research to identify and develop externally funded research programs.

STUDENTS

The LAP has strong cohorts of students in each year of its three year program. Many of these students are out-of-state and international students. When questioned, these students said they learned of the program through publicity about awards that students had received and material contained on the LAP's website.

However, a large majority of the students are white. A majority are female, which follows the national trend for MLA programs. The low number of minority students also reflects the national trend for professional landscape architects.

The reviewers pursued the issue of recruitment of Native American students in discussions with the Provost and the Dean's office. We learned that the campus has a liaison to the Native American Pueblos in the state. In our experience recruitment of Native Americans is a long-term effort. At Utah State University, for example, a special program was in place for about a decade, targeting Native Americans for Landscape Architecture. One faculty member developed a

relationship with a tribe in Central Utah and identified prospective students. He helped them complete their applications, find housing, helped them move to Logan, and assisted with tutoring. The university provided them with full tuition scholarships and living stipends. The program was successful until this faculty member retired.

Efforts to attract other minorities, such as Hispanics, require similar programs. Landscape Architecture is not widely known or understood in the general population, much less in minority communities. The Main Street work that is being done by DPAC is a good mechanism to make people aware of Landscape Architecture as a career choice. Follow-up visits to these communities to discuss the success of the completed projects would further increase the visibility of the program and could yield a number of minority students for the program, especially if they were coupled with appropriate scholarships. It is possible that a scholarship endowment could be built for this purpose.

ALUMNI

Since the program is very young, it has a small cohort of alumni, and these are new to the profession. With so few permanent faculty, it seems premature to invest their time and efforts in developing an advisory group of alums for the program. As an alternative, the Dean has been encouraged to continue to recruit landscape architects and related persons for his Dean's council. These council members may be senior landscape architects from the region, vendors who work with the profession, and landscape contractors. This will add to the core of prospective donors for the program for the near term. In addition, the program should continue its involvement with its alumni through invitations to student juries, seminars, and lectures, as well as its publications.

APPENDIX I - QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY APR TEAM

APR Landscape Architecture

April 13-16, 2009

Our students come from all over, nationally and internationally, and they all have different academic backgrounds. Does the team have suggestions for how we can develop a formal recruitment process?

Aside from printed materials and an excellent website, there are several ways to develop a formal recruitment process. These include visits to related undergraduate programs, and ads in the publications of related professional organizations. However, given the rapid success of the program and the large numbers of well qualified applicants for the limited number of student positions, recruitment does not seem to be an issue of concern.

The professional program in LA prepares students to be practitioners and educators globally. However, our geographic location is our teaching and learning laboratory, and we strive to engage the communities and the environment in which we are located. Does the team have particular suggestions for how we can engage the Native American communities of New Mexico, and the issues that they are dealing with, in productive and effective ways?

The Native American communities face many of the same issues as the rest of the population. The program is already addressing topics such as arid land development and sustainability. LAP is already engaged in outreach to the Pueblos and may take advantage of these interactions to promote their recent findings. The APR Team was pleased with the current level of outreach to small communities in New Mexico, many of them with high populations of Native Americans. The addition of two new faculty members should allow further development of these programs.

The discipline of Landscape Architecture appears to be dominated by Caucasians. This is particularly true of the student population in the LA program at the University of New Mexico. Does the team have suggestions for how we might build diversity in our student group?

Design programs with highly diverse student bodies tend to be located in highly diverse urban centers. This is true at Cal Poly Pomona, Florida International University, and City College of New York. Recruitment efforts among the undergraduate students in related fields at these diverse institutions may yield more diversity in the MLA program. Although there is a desire to attract students from other schools, the high fraction of undergraduate minority students at UNM suggests that one way to improve the diversity of the student cohort is to recruit from within the university.

Landscape Architecture has embraced the principles of sustainability for the better part of a century. Nevertheless, there is a growing body of knowledge regarding intelligent ways for humans to build on, and inhabit, the landscape. We have been attempting to integrate the ideas of sustainability across the curriculum, rather than in a dedicated course sequence. Is the team able to observe whether or not this strategy is effective, and do they have suggestions for strengthening 'sustainability across the curriculum'?

Sustainability appears to be well integrated across the MLA curriculum. Greater emphasis could be placed on electives that are outside the SA+P, such as those in Geography, Water Resources, Sustainability Studies, Fine Arts, and Civil Engineering.

The LA program is successful in large part because of the dedicated and talented group of adjunct faculty that teach in the program on a regular basis. Does the team have observations on how successfully the adjunct faculty have been integrated into the program, and do they have suggestions for doing this more effectively?

The adjunct faculty appear to be very well integrated into the program. As the LAP develops a research focus, it will be important to include the adjunct faculty in this dialogue, and to make them aware of the requirements placed on junior faculty in regards to their scholarship, research, and creative activities. The adjunct faculty should become more fully acquainted with the entire curriculum, not just the portion they teach.

We are now in our ninth year, and most of our energy has been devoted to building a strong program. However, we now have over forty alumni of the LA program, and there has been very little attempt to engage our alumni in a formal way. Does the team have suggestions about how we might become more active in this area?

Continue to invite the alums to participate in design juries, receptions and workshops, especially workshops about interviewing and portfolios. The APR team feels that with such a small, full-time faculty, and such a small cohort of alums, it is not yet appropriate to develop an advisory group for LAP. Instead, we encourage the Dean to include alums and other landscape architecture professionals in his Dean's group. Continue to develop newsletters and other publications documenting the success and activities of the program. When there are at least 200 alumni, you may be able to find 20 to 30 who will be actively engaged in an alumni advisory group.

Landscape Architecture is both a profession and a discipline. The LA program attempts to balance the needs of a professional education, with academic reflection, discussion and engagement in theoretical discourse. Does the team have observations regarding how successful we are in achieving this balance?

LAP has been very successful in providing a professional curriculum. With the arrival of two, tenure-track faculty in Fall 2009 it will be essential that you develop a research and/or scholarship agenda, as described in the body of this APR report. As usual, it will take adept leadership to advance both sides of the new curriculum.