Graduate Program Review
Texas Tech University

Program Reviewed: Landscape Architecture

Onsite Review Dates: 26-28 February 2014

Name of Reviewers

Internal:
Please include name, title, and Department
Ralph Ferguson, Associate Dean of Graduate School
Nancy McIntyre, Professor, Biological Sciences
Gad Perry, Professor, Natural Resources Management

External:
Please include name, title, and Department
Charles Timothy (Tim) Baird, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, Pennsylvania State University
Michael Seymour, Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture, Mississippi State University

I. Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan
Please evaluate the following:

Vision, Mission and Goals
☐ Excellent
☐ Very Good
☐ Appropriate
☐ Needs Improvement

Strategic Plan
☐ Excellent
☐ Very Good
☐ Appropriate
☐ Needs Improvement

Please elaborate if you have identified any items in this section as Excellent.

Click here to enter text.
Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section as Needs Improvement. Provide recommendations in the area of Strategic Planning.

Landscape architecture is first and foremost a design discipline and it is a concern that the word “design” doesn’t appear in the mission statement. The statement should include that the curriculum enables students to define issues and problems facing local, regional, and global populations and use design to formulate creative responses to these problems and issues that are grounded in ecological and cultural sensitivity.

The Goals, Benchmarks, Objectives, and Strategies, while commendable, assume that a strong foundation has already been laid to achieve some of the outcomes. Smaller steps to accomplish the desired outcomes will likely be required and should be phased over time. The “low hanging fruit” could be addressed immediately with some of the more ambitious items phased in at a later time. This approach will allow for immediate accomplishment that can be built upon in order to progress to the larger and more difficult tasks. All three components of faculty appointment, service, research, and teaching should be addressed in the strategic plan.

It seems that a strength of the program can be in the area of sustainable landscape architecture and natural resource management in arid regions of the world. The Vision Statement should include that the department shall be recognized as one of the top programs with a regional, national, and even international focus on arid lands, especially related to water. Given this possible focus and the stated desire to prepare graduates to design in rural and urban contexts, university resources outside the department in urban ecology and arid lands research should be utilized in the pursuit of this component of the vision.

Other comments (optional)

Click here to enter text.

II. Program Curriculum

Please evaluate the following:

Alignment of program with stated program and institutional goals and purposes

☐ Excellent

☐ Very Good

☐ Appropriate

☐ Needs Improvement

☐ N/A

Curriculum development coordination and delivery

☐ Excellent

☐ Very Good
Please elaborate if you have identified any items in this section as Excellent.
Click here to enter text.

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section as Needs Improvement. Provide recommendations in the area of Program Curriculum.
The ratio of analog to digital drawing seems out of balance (two semesters of analog only drawing) and needs to more accurately reflect the needs of practice. This in no way should be taken as a suggestion to remove analog drawing completely from the curriculum; it is a necessary skill that can be taught possibly in a more streamlined delivery. Offering students newer, and scalable, 3D modeling programs such as Rhino and 3D Max, as well as Illustrator, would position graduates to be more competitive in the job market.

Design Implementation courses could possibly be streamlined in the graduate program and delivered in an intensive workshop format in order to reduce the number of courses required. Some site engineering topics taught, such as horizontal and vertical road alignment, should more closely reflect the needs of the contemporary profession. General overviews and conceptual foundations of these topics, which are absolutely necessary, might be a more
efficient way to deliver the information. This issue is not unique to this program but is an area where all programs are struggling to incorporate the quantity of new information while deciding what to delete or streamline. The technical courses taught and the faculty’s ability to deliver them are a definite strength of the program and any refinement should be undertaken carefully so as to maintain this strength.

The collaboration studio is a definite strength of the program and should be used as a means of enhancing the department’s relationship with the architecture department. The complexities of today’s design projects are such that collaboration is a necessity and not a luxury. Since architecture is landscape architecture’s most closely allied profession, efforts should be made to prepare students in both disciplines for the professional collaboration that will surely become an integral part of their careers. The studio model that is the cornerstone of design education is being discovered by other disciplines, such as business, economics, and the sciences, through project based learning. Enlarging the number of disciplines participating in the collaboration studio might expand students’ understanding of the necessity of design collaboration in the global society. Potential connections with these other fields might also provide additional cross-disciplinary research opportunities for faculty.

Other comments (optional)
Faculty technical expertise and their availability to students is highly valued by the students and a definite strength of the program.

The hiring of the recently advertised faculty position with a specialization in planning should be carefully considered; is this the best fit in a small program where generalists might be a more valuable and flexible addition?

III. Faculty Productivity

Please evaluate the following:

Qualifications
☐ Excellent
☐ Very Good
☐ Appropriate
☐ Needs Improvement
☐ N/A

Publications
☐ Excellent
☐ Very Good
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Load</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Grants</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Evaluations</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Service</td>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

08/07/13
Community Service

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

**Please elaborate if you have identified any items in this section as Excellent.**
Click here to enter text.

**Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section as Needs Improvement. Provide recommendations in the area of Faculty Productivity.**
The “low hanging fruit” available to increase faculty productivity in publications should be the preparation of paper presentations for the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) annual conference and the possible publication of those papers in conference proceedings. This should be the first step toward developing a research agenda that can eventually build to a body of work needed to seek funding, both internal and external. The teaching of service learning studio projects, the collaboration studio, and other courses should be documented and developed into potential design pedagogy paper presentations for venues such as CELA or the Environmental Design Research Association (EDRA). Digital media courses are constantly evolving and faculty who teach these courses should be attending conferences to both present what they are doing in the classroom and to learn what is being done in other universities. Faculty engaged in teaching digital media should be provided funding to attend workshops so they can keep current in this area in order to deliver the most current information to their students.

Faculty should be encouraged to become more involved in service commitments; new faculty should be considered for departmental and college committees in order to help them develop a foundation that can be built upon for future university, community, and professional service roles. Service learning studios should be documented as service commitments in addition to becoming potential topics for paper presentations and publications.

A method of ascertaining if and how course content is being delivered and to promote faculty accountability for classroom behavior, beyond student evaluations of faculty effectiveness, seems to be in order for some faculty. One possibility might be a group faculty only review of studio work at the end of each semester to determine if course content guidelines have been met.

**Other comments (optional)**
Click here to enter text.

**IV. Students and Graduates**
Please evaluate the following:

**Time to degree**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- ♦ Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- ☐ N/A

**Retention**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- ♦ Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- ☐ N/A

**Graduate rates**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- ☐ N/A

**Enrollment**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- ☐ N/A

**Demographics**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

**Number of degrees conferred annually**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

**Support Services**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

**Job Placement**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

**Student/Faculty Ratio**
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
Please elaborate if you have identified any items in this section as Excellent.
The student to faculty ratio is excellent due to the size of the program and is seen as a strength by the students.

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section as Needs Improvement. Provide recommendations in the area of Students and Graduates.
The students indicated dissatisfaction with the quality of the facilities and resources provided. Most of the students work to be able to afford the program (one student works a fulltime 40 hours per week which is problematic) and financial aid would certainly help relieve the burden in such a labor intensive curriculum.

The capstone or design project in lieu of a research based thesis is much more in line with other MLA programs and will better prepare graduates for professional careers which is the purpose of a first professional degree.

Other comments (optional)
The students interviewed are very energetic and excited about the field of landscape architecture and their futures in it. They are committed to the program and their work. All feel that the capstone or design project in lieu of a research thesis is a much needed improvement to the curriculum.

V. Facilities and Resources

Please evaluate the following:

Facilities
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

Facility Support Resources
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement

08/07/13
Financial Resources

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

Staff Resources

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Appropriate
- Needs Improvement
- N/A

Please elaborate if you have identified any items in this section as Excellent.

Click here to enter text.

Please elaborate if you identified any items in this section as Needs Improvement. Provide recommendations in the area of Facilities and Resources.

If non-tenured faculty are to develop a research agenda, they must be provided at least minimal financial support for travel to conferences to present papers and to network with faculty from other institutions. Student travel is equally important given the remote location of the university. Financial support for tuition and teaching assistantships is needed to aid both the students and the faculty with whom they will be able to work on research.

Other comments (optional)

VI. Overall Ranking

Overall Ranking

- Excellent
- Very Good

08/07/13
Appropriate

Please provide summative conclusions based on the overall review.
The department has much to offer the region and elsewhere and should be fully supported by the administration. The contemporary field of landscape architecture is at the forefront of addressing global issues such as climate change, sea level rise, urban heat island effect, and soil, water, and air contamination, through the design and implementation strategies of infrastructural landscapes, sustainable development, toxic land reclamation, urban forestry and agriculture, and resource management which should position graduates well for successful and rewarding careers. The graduate program must, however, address the serious shortcomings in the areas described in this report if it is to remain a viable asset to Texas Tech University.

Please provide summative recommendations based on the overall review.
A current Strategic Plan must be prepared that reflects a prioritized phasing of the goals and objectives and how these will be accomplished over time beginning with the most easily attained and positioning some of the more ambitious items at a later time. Smaller steps that can be attained earlier will boost morale and lay the foundation for the more difficult and time-consuming goals of the longer term.

Promotion and support of non-tenured faculty is imperative both financially and in other ways such as teaching releases for research, equitable teaching load allocation, and travel funding to ensure their success and to enable them to deliver the most current and professionally relevant information. Senior faculty should be assigned as mentors for the tenure track faculty to guide them through the Promotion and Tenure process, beginning with immediately assisting them with the development of a research/creative work agenda. New faculty hires should be strategically and thoughtfully planned so as to enhance the current strengths of the program and to resolve deficits in faculty expertise. Tenured faculty must also be supported in their research, service, and teaching and encouraged to improve their teaching methods and keep current in their course content. Institutional support and funding must be forthcoming for the basics of graduate design education such as faculty research related travel and student scholarships and teaching assistantships. The department chair is working to resolve many of these issues where he has the tools to do so and he is well aware of the work required to move the program forward.

The department has produced several alumni who are regionally or nationally known and these individuals should be recruited to support the program financially, in recruitment of graduate students, and to continue to hire graduates of the program. Some examples include Professor Eric Bernard, Director of the Landscape Architecture program at the University of New Mexico; Eric Schultz is a practitioner who recently formed his own firm after many years of practice in Austin – his firm, dwg., is a member of the design team, led by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, that recently won the Waller Creek design competition in Austin; Bob Anderson is a regionally significant landscape architect who was a part of the design team for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin; and Christie Ten Eyck is a nationally recognized landscape architect in Austin, formerly in Phoenix, with numerous design awards to her credit. These graduates of the program could be invited to give lectures, sit in on studio reviews, direct design charrettes, or give desk crits as a way to provide students with insight about the field and to encourage these alumni.

08/07/13
to support the program in any way possible. An effort should be made to recognize these individuals with alumni awards as a way to bring recognition to the program. Financial support from these alumni could also be a way to encourage others to provide funding. Funding for student scholarships and travel, summer internships, and a lecture series should be a priority of the department. Other professionals in the state who support the program by hiring graduates include Earl Broussard of TBG Group and Jim Burnett of the Office of James Burnett. Invitations to visit and give lectures or sit in studio reviews might be a good way to enhance the relationships of these firms and the department and this could lead to financial support.

A recruitment strategy might include other undergraduate programs within the college and university such as horticulture, architecture, engineering, natural resource management, and the natural sciences. Faculty presentations and/or brochures describing the profession and the graduate program could be used in these programs as well as other schools in the region.

Possible approaches to departmental revenue generation for student scholarships might be through general education and/or summer courses for professional development or licensure exam preparation, assuming faculty to teach such courses are available and willing. Two examples are the general survey of landscape architecture history taught at Pennsylvania State University to landscape architecture majors as well as 500 to 700 other undergraduate students as one of their general education requirements or the general education course, Views of the American Landscape, taught to a similar number of undergraduate non-majors at Louisiana State University. The required landscape architecture history course currently being taught by the department could be offered as a general education course. This would not only generate revenue for the program but could also provide an introduction of the discipline to a varied audience which might become a potential recruiting tool for the graduate program.