

Landscape Architecture, Graduate Master of Landscape Architecture

For students who have already earned a bachelors degree, there are four degree programs available. The first is a BLA degree using our concurrent enrollment program. This is a nationally accredited degree for those who want traditional LA design skills (landscape design, planting design, graphics, construction, professional procedures, history, theory, and landscape planning). This is for those whose career goals include professional registration and licensing. The BLA degree through our concurrent enrollment program typically requires 40 to 50 credits (depending on background) and about 3 years.

The second is a BLA/MLA concurrent enrollment program. This combines our BLA program (described above) and our MLA advanced study program (described next). This double degree program requires 50-60 BLA credits, 36 MLA credits and about 3.5 years.

The third is an MLA only program. This graduate program is for those who are seeking advanced study in a particular aspect of landscape architecture. Because the MLA program is small, it is a tutorial-type program, emphasizing individual instruction with a faculty member. The aspects available for advanced study are those in which our faculty have special expertise (for example: vegetation management and ecological restoration, community and neighborhood design, landscapes of waste and dereliction, and GIS modeling for landscape planning). Because the MLA program does not focus on traditional skills (listed above for the BLA program), it does not qualify for national accreditation. The MLA program requires at least 36 credits and 2 years. A thesis option and a non-thesis option are available.

The fourth is an MCRP/MLA double degree program. This combines advanced study in community and regional planning with landscape architecture. It requires a total of 50 to 60 credits (depending on background) and 3 years. A thesis option and a non-thesis option are available. Selection among these four options depends on the student's career objectives. The first two are appropriate only if the student does not already have traditional design skills and whose career objectives include traditional practice or LA licensure. The last two are appropriate if the student already has traditional design skills or if his/her career objectives do not include traditional practice or LA licensure.

I. Mission Statement

The Department of Landscape Architecture is committed to provide students with a meaningful learning experience; to educate for the multi-faceted profession of landscape architecture through a balanced educational program that fosters professional and intellectual growth. Specific goals and objectives related to fulfilling this mission include the following:

II. Goals: Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Develop Advanced thinking skills

Develop a high level of intellectual curiosity as a basis for advanced study in LA
Develop creative, imaginative approaches to solving problems and meeting perceived needs in landscape design, planning, management, and research
Critically analyze and evaluate ideas, projects, study areas, potential solutions

Heighten abstract thinking skills (spatial thinking, visual and conceptual metaphors, lateral association)
Develop integrative thinking skills to combine and apply concepts, ideas, and approaches from diverse sources
Develop and use strategies to effectively deal with complex projects, situations, and factors
Clearly justify and explain the rationale for making decisions about landscape design, planning, management, and research
Develop creative alternatives that are significantly different; evaluate them critically
Understand tradeoffs (advantages and disadvantages) when comparing and selecting among alternatives
Evaluate and understand a variety of schools of thought in at least one aspect of landscape architecture
Develop coherent responses to issues involving of landscape aesthetics and visual quality
Develop knowledge of and insight into landscape theory, including perception, ecology, behavior, social change, landscape interpretation, ...
Understand the influence of past events, actions, and trends on the current landscape
Consider and understand an array of approaches for landscape preservation, conservation, restoration, and development
Build on principles and concepts as a basis for analysis, use analysis as a basis for synthesis, and make synthesis the basis of decisions on design, planning, management, and research
Approach new experiences (including opposing viewpoints) with an open, but critical mind
Challenge your own ideas, thinking, and thought processes
Develop strategies to creatively deal with project environmental and budget constraints
Engage in discussions with peers and faculty to share views about professional issues
Engage in discussions with students and faculty in other departments to better understand interdisciplinary opportunities and constraints
Understand that landscape design and planning involves creating culture and that personal interpretation is an important component

2. Refine and Enhance Professional Communication

Clearly express thoughts, ideas, and information in an engaging way
Communicate effectively with non-LA professionals and the general public
Answer questions in a clear, honest, direct way
Develop active listening skills in class, outreach projects, assistantship duties, and other work responsibilities
Organize topics in a logical order; provide transitions between topics
Use detail sufficient to explain and make readers confident that you've thought through your topic
Use precise language to avoid glittering generalities, unsubstantiated superlatives, and exaggeration
Design written and graphic information in visually pleasing and interesting ways
Develop and use well-designed visualization techniques to communicate with audiences
Illustrate written text with appropriate, efficient, high quality graphics, images, charts, tables
Write cogent sentences and paragraphs using error-free mechanics (spelling, grammar, punctuation, usage, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and so on)
Use active voice and conversational tone to make your writing engaging and easy to read
Be aware of the variety of choices in style manuals and formats for bibliographies, citations, and footnotes; select and follow one manual/format in a consistent way
Attend a variety of seminars to exchange ideas with faculty and students

3. Further Develop Technology and Tools

Use tools and technology effectively for measuring site characteristics, site materials, client and stakeholder characteristics
Understand advantages and disadvantages of digital tools to permit logical and efficient decisions when selecting between digital methods, mental methods, and manual methods
Integrate digital methods with mental and manual methods
Use digital tools effectively and efficiently for landscape design, planning, management, and research (especially for word processing, numerical computations, graphic design and production, geographic modeling, presentations)
Use tools and technology effectively for print and electronic publishing of text and graphic products
Creatively apply quantitative skills to landscape design, planning, and management
Communicate effectively using Email, Web browsers, animation, and video conferencing
Apply biotechnology practices in landscape design and management plans

4. Undertake Research

Understand the difference between research that yields new knowledge (big “R” research) and research that yields existing knowledge (little “r” research)
Be aware of a wide variety of quantitative methods, qualitative methods, and opportunities to use both (triangulation)
Critically evaluate others’ research and communication of research results
Find, read, evaluate, interpret, and intelligently apply research results in your own work
Develop sufficient understanding of research to intelligently use others’ research results in your own landscape design, planning, management, and research
Understand research concepts and terms enough to hire or work with researchers who can aid your projects
Learn about sources of data, their characteristics, locations, and limitations
Use data to effectively inform landscape design, planning, or management activities
Obtain, analyze, interpret, summarize, and communicate appropriate data to clients and stakeholders
Effectively use and understand advantages and disadvantages of electronic data sources
Use human perceptions of the landscape to effectively inform design, planning, or management activities
Learn about research tools: library, bibliography, language, field observation, measurement, statistics, data processing, GIS modeling
Learn about research methods: historical, bibliographical, case study, survey, field, and experimental
Clearly articulate a list of research issues, guiding questions, propositions, or hypotheses for a proposed research project
Identify data or evidence needed to answer research questions or address research guiding questions, propositions, or hypotheses
Describe appropriate research methods to gather needed data or evidence
Create an organized, complete, well-written proposal for a research project
Develop organizational skills to identify priorities and effectively manage time, funding, people, data, and other resources
Learn about a significant portion of the body of literature relating to landscape architecture
Use citations of others’ work to raise your credibility and give due credit to others
Learn about feasibility and the need for resources to make research projects succeed (time, creative energy, funding, knowledge of specific subjects, knowledge of literature)

Learn about case study research methods that support work in class, at work, and in your thesis or creative component

Understand the procedures, tasks, steps needed to successfully implement a research project

Create clear, efficient visual displays of research results

Use others' research results to support landscape planning and design decisions

5. Explore Connections

Explore relationships between landscape architecture and other disciplines

Apply concepts and skills from undergraduate degree program to your graduate studies

Integrate knowledge and skills from work experiences into your graduate studies

Actively seek relationships between courses as a way to better understand the interconnectedness of different aspects of landscape architecture

Integrate knowledge from all courses in a summative, creative, individual project (creative component or thesis)

Work effectively in cooperative, collaborative team situations, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary

Understand the importance of human, environmental, ethical dimensions of complex problems

Understand the influence of human behavior on landscape process and form

Understand the influence of ecological processes and systems on landscape process and form

Understand impacts of landscape change and human intervention on the built environment and natural environment

Understand the geographic context for decision-making, particularly connections between site and region, off-site impacts, native materials

Understand landscape systems as interconnected components with functional and aesthetic relationships

Demonstrate a clear understanding of landscape ecology concepts, the four ecological elements (patch, corridor, mosaic, matrix) and ecological patterns on the landscape

Develop a knowledge of ecological restoration, ecological integrity, biodiversity, landscape sustainability and their implications for landscape design, planning, management, and research

Understand connections between people and the land, their history, and their futures

Use faculty links with other departments to establish intellectual relationships with students and faculty in other disciplines

Understand the influence of social and intellectual history on the landscape and the profession

Understand the role of plants not only as a component of site design, but as a component of ecological systems

Travel widely to experience a variety of landscapes and their cultural and natural components

6. Partake of Academic Life

Develop clear career goals that lead to selection of appropriate courses, POS committee members, and topic for thesis or creative component

Develop a high level of scholarship in at least one aspect of landscape architecture

Recognize the need and develop abilities for life-long learning

Develop life-long friendships

Learn that sharing with classmates provides a diverse resource for helping you succeed in courses, projects, research, and career opportunities

Develop, along with your classmates, a cohesive identity promoting advanced study at the graduate level

Learn that sharing your knowledge and experiences with undergraduates is rewarding

Develop insights into opportunities and challenges of academic practice

Improve skills in teaching, research, or outreach aspects of academic practice

Program Review

Understand issues of academic honesty, professional ethics, ISU's Code of Computer Ethics
Be aware of issues relating to copyright, ownership of intellectual property, conflict of interest
Be aware of issues of misrepresentation ("how to lie with statistics" and "graphical distortion")
Appreciate and respect cultural diversity within the university academic community
Respect and accept opinions and belief of others within the university academic community
Know the professional expertise and academic contributions of faculty in Landscape Architecture and other departments
Develop a customized Program of Study that is built on your needs and the strengths of your major professor, department, college, and university
Select a topic for your creative component or thesis that involves an issue important to the profession, leads to new knowledge (big R), engages your attention, and begs for a solution
Provide constructive criticism to others and effectively use it to improve your own work
Be aware that higher education is shifting from teacher-centered to learner-centered, providing more active learning opportunities and creating a greater need for individual initiative
Develop individual initiative and personal responsibility for success in graduate studies
Develop good work habits, time management, organizational skills, attendance, and punctuality
Develop skills for "quick learning": listening actively, taking notes, asking questions, clarification
Assess your own obstacles to learning; seek ways to overcome these obstacles
Understand the difference between advanced study (MLA) and basic skills of traditional practice (BLA)
Understand the difference between two common types of LA graduate programs: first professional degree and advanced study
Learn some department history, including accomplishments of graduates (first Forest Service LA, ALSA presidents, chief LAs in Fed, ...)
Be aware of the contents of the Graduate Handbook, Thesis Manual
Be aware of services and assistance to graduate students at ISU (library, computing, research funding, ...)
Be aware of Graduate College deadlines and department deadlines for course registration, graduation, thesis deposit, oral examination, English proficiency, ...
Understand differences between thesis and non-thesis options; be able to intelligently select one option based on career goals
Understand the importance of POS committee meetings, agenda items, and scheduling
Be aware of university regulations and department traditions regarding oral examinations
Understand that it is common for graduate students to feel overly optimistic (take on too much) at the beginning of their terminal project and overly pessimistic (overwhelmed) toward the end
Benefit from relevant elective courses in other departments

7. Further Explore the Profession of Landscape Architecture

Explore a variety of career options in public, private, and academic practice
Seek opportunities to interact with professionals in public, private, and academic practice
Appreciate the diversity of professional roles, responsibilities, and activities
Learn about landscape architects and others who have shaped a significant portion of the profession
Recognize the importance of public service to the profession and to communities
Deepen understanding of professional ethics and conduct
Be aware of the ASLA Code of Professional Conduct and Declaration on Environment and Development
Understand norms of good practice
Expand awareness of current and future issues facing the profession
Deepen landscape stewardship understanding and commitment to environment, both built and natural

Student Outcomes Assessment

Learn the functions and benefits of participation in local, regional, and national organizations (ASLA national, ASLA chapters, CELA, related organizations)

Increase experience in working with a variety of project clients and stakeholders (direct and indirect)

Appreciate and respect the role of cultural diversity among client groups and stakeholders

Learn and apply techniques for public input and participation

Understand dimensions and implications of professional work on public policy, equity, and social justice

Understand dimensions and implications of professional work on public health, safety, and welfare

Understand the implications of social and economic feasibility on design, planning, management, or research decisions