

Departmental Plan incorporating Communication across the Curriculum

Department of Landscape Architecture
College of Architecture and Urban Studies

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Statement of Departmental Goals and Objectives for an integrated, sequenced approach to spoken, visual and written communication across the Bachelors of Landscape Architecture curriculum.

The Bachelors in Landscape Architecture is a professional program accredited by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB). In addition to the department's commitment to providing an opportunity for each student to have a strong liberal arts and sciences background (as evidenced by the requirement of between 15 and 21 elective credits), the LAAB defines a set of expectations and competencies for the professional/disciplinary portion of BLA curriculum. As a design, planning and management profession, all levels of practitioners are expected to develop and communicate ideas, concepts, implementation plans and critiques through a combination of spoken, written and visual means. These vary from highly schematic concepts to finely detailed design and construction plans, and from professional memos to in-depth impact assessments.

At the completion of the BLA degree program, students will be able to:

Visual Communication

- use a variety of hand and computer drawn representations, and three-dimensional models to convey the scope, depth and breadth of their design process and areas of investigation,
- select and develop graphic representations appropriate to visually present their design proposals and justifications to diverse groups (These may include peers, faculty, professional juries, and client groups.)

Spoken Communication

- orally present their design process and proposals as expected of an entry-level practitioner
- participate in meaningful discussions reflecting upon the issues and positions of landscape architecture
- prepare and lead discussions with diverse groups (These may include peers, faculty, and client groups)

Written Communication

- write clear documentation their design processes and proposals,
- write clear explanations of concepts and principles
- demonstrate knowledge of course material in written format
- write professional reports reflective of current professional standards (These necessarily include a number of visual components.)

In 2000, the faculty reviewed and refined a curriculum that reaffirmed and strengthened the program's grounding in the importance of discovery-based and iterative learning within the design disciplines. As part of that process, department faculty met regularly and identified knowledge and skill areas important to address in each of the five years of the program. These

include spoken, written and visual communication abilities. The curriculum builds a broad base of fundamentals within the first two years of study and that incorporates growing levels of complexity and expectations as students progress toward graduation.

Development and Implementation of Communication across the Curriculum

The Bachelors of Landscape Architecture curriculum includes three categories of coursework within the discipline: Theory and Methods Courses, Technical Courses and Studio Courses. Spoken, visual and written communication skills are incorporated into the major's required course work with an emphasis on *focus (intent of communication)*, *form (expression or production)*, and *forum (audience)*. As a design profession requiring abilities to develop and present concepts and plans in written, visual and spoken forms and forums, students develop these skills through out a number of required courses.

The courses listed below include the spoken, visual and written components as described, and either are or will be required of each BLA major unless otherwise noted. The faculty believes that the landscape architecture curricular goals and objectives will be met as students complete these courses. LAR 4094: Senior Project is a capstone course tying together many aspects of the communication across the curriculum goals and objectives.

During spring semester 2005, the department will revise the check sheet for students entering 2005 to reflect a change in course requirements such that,

- (1) the existing WAM is no longer identified as a distinct set of required courses, and
- (2) LAR 4304: Topics in Landscape Architecture will be listed as a single 3 CR option supplemented by additional courses, under a new heading: Professional Electives, students will be required to fulfill 3 CR in this area,

During spring 2008, LAR 4034: Evolution of the American Landscape, a writing intensive course, will be reassessed to determine whether the number of pages of iterative writing is necessary to meet the communication objectives of the course and whether it should remain a WI course in service to other academic units. Any changes to requirements effecting its WI designation would be made for spring 2009.

As current students work through their WAM requirement to complete LAR 4304, this course syllabus will be changed to better reflect the range of theory and methods topics and their associated teaching methods. The course syllabus will be reviewed over the next two years in preparation of the revision as there is some concern that changes may not meet the requirement for WAM designation. Should this happen, the department will request removal of the WAM designation for the entire course sequence.

Theory and Methods Courses

** required of all BLA majors, unless otherwise noted all theory and methods courses are three credit hours*

Theory and methods courses emphasize written and visual formats, some courses require oral presentations. Because of course enrollments, most of the oral presentations in these courses are group presentations.

LAR 1004: Natural and Human Systems I	Communication emphasis on description, translation, comparative analysis, and evaluation through individual written and graphical reports, synoptic writing, and participation in class discussions.
LAR 1144: Introduction to Landscape Architecture	Communication emphasis on descriptive written and graphic presentation, and participation in seminar-style class discussions. Students are required to keep a journal including reflective writings and responses to assignments. Visual note-taking is encouraged. <i>This is a one credit hour course.</i>
LAR 2004: History and Theory I	Communication emphasis on critical analysis, reflection and comparative studies in written and graphic format. Small groups prepare oral and visual presentations of a landscape architecture project, supplemented by evaluative written documentation. Course also includes an essay exam.
LAR 3004: Natural and Human Systems II	Communication emphasis on developing a written position, and preparing descriptive and evaluative professional reports which include written and graphic components. Small group oral presentation of research projects. Use of threaded on-line reflective discussions inform in-class discussion. Course also includes an essay exam.
LAR 3044: Land Analysis	Communication emphasis on professional case study analysis including individual written and graphic report, team oral and graphic presentation, and team generated report utilizing geographic information systems mapping.
LAR 4004: History and Theory II	Seminar class requires oral discussion. Small student groups prepare and lead weekly full-class discussion using visual aids. Students write a theoretical 'position' that builds from a required daily journal, and prepare weekly written and visual reflective pieces that build into a final written and visual document.
LAR 4034: Evolution of the American Landscape	Communication emphasis on developing writing reflecting professional standards for cultural landscape studies, including written and graphic documentation of landscape site. Additional writing used in reflective, descriptive and critical forms, and in essay exams.
LAR 4304: Topics in Landscape Architecture	Emphasis on critical analysis and position development. Individual students write a position paper. Student panels prepare an collaborative report and panel presentation illustrated with visual aids appropriate to the topic covered. <i>This course requirement will be changed to an option under a 3 CR Professional Elective Course requirement, effective Fall 2005. However, as one of the five courses in the current WAM sequence continuing students will have to take one of the topical offerings to complete their WAM sequence or take a different 3CR WI course.</i>

Landscape Architecture Technology Courses

**required of all BLA majors, unless otherwise noted all technology courses are four credit hours per semester*

The technology courses allow students to develop hand and digital drawing skills necessary to practice landscape architecture. The nature of the project assignments require students to orally communicate their designs and design intents to the teaching faculty and student colleagues, and the final drawings convey their construction instructions using professional conventions.

LAR 2035-2036: Technology I: Grading and Materials	Development of hand and digital representation skills appropriate to development and communication of land form and material construction design proposals common to the practice of landscape architecture. Includes numerous iterations of hand lettering exercises, grading plans for landform manipulation, and construction details.
LAR 4244: Technology II: Hydrology	Development of hand and digital representation skills appropriate to exploring and finalizing hydrological design proposals. Includes maps drawing, design/technical process drawing, documentation of technical calculations and calculation processes, and production of professional reports.
LAR 4324: Technology III: Construction Documents	Development of professional hand and digital representation skills appropriate to communicating landscape construction processes and expectations. Includes production of a design development set of construction documents based on student generated site design.

Landscape Architecture Studio Courses

**required of all BLA majors, unless otherwise noted all studios are six credit hours per semester*

- LAR 1015-1016: Design Foundation Laboratory
- LAR 2015-2016: Basic Landscape Design
- LAR 3015-3016: Intermediate Landscape Design
- LAR 4084: Design and Planning
- LAR 4094: Senior Project (12 credits max. capstone course)

Design studios require students to develop and use a variety of visual tools to conceive and develop proposals for built things, designed landscapes, and landscape management plans. Beginning in their first year of studios, students are required to make 2 and 3 dimensional representations appropriate to the design problems, to prepare written and graphic reports, and to orally present and discuss their proposals. As students advance through the design studio sequence, they develop more complex visual, written and oral presentations. These presentations include numerous visual components, such as, diagrams, maps; plan, section, and perspective drawings; digital models; and 3-dimensional constructions. During their fourth and fifth year, students present their work to ‘clients’ and/or design/development professionals. In LAR 4084: Design and Planning, students develop either a poster style presentation or analysis report including written and graphic components as appropriate to the specific project. In the fifth-year, students complete a capstone sequence, LAR 4094: Senior Project. Students must successfully complete an oral defense of a design project before a jury of three faculty members. These presentations include written and visual components and are open to students, guests and professionals. Once deemed substantial, students produce a hard copy and digital presentation documenting their final project.

Plan for Assessing Outcomes

Assessments of the undergraduate curriculum and student outcomes are currently done using the following tools:

1. Senior Surveys
2. Alumni Surveys

3. Employer surveys
4. Senior project oral exam.
5. Review by outside evaluators (LAAB)

The most direct and immediate student outcomes assessment is conducted through a two-semester, twelve credit capstone course sequence, LAR 4094: Senior Project, completed in the fifth year. Each student is required to prepare and present their senior project in an oral defense supported by written and visual documents appropriate to their project's topic and scope. They also are required to design and produce paper-based and digital presentations of their project in order to graduate. Toward the end of the first semester of this sequence, students conduct an in-progress presentation where they present work-to-date to panel of three faculty, who are responsible for assessing progress, as well as offering comment and direction. Toward the end of the second semester course, students design and present an oral defense of their final project in a Substantial Completion Review. Both of these presentations are open to all students, faculty and guests. Students must be deemed substantially complete by a majority of a reviewing body composed of at least three faculty members and invited members of the landscape architecture profession. Students deemed substantial are assessed using a multivariate instrument covering competencies in professional skills, abilities, and knowledge areas. Results are compiled annually and reviewed by the faculty for trends, strengths, weaknesses, etc.

All of these tools will be evaluated and refined during spring semester 2005 and fall semester 2005 to more explicitly incorporate the department's Communication across the Curriculum goals and objectives. Changes will be made prior to their next use.