

# **Report of the Visiting Team**

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Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board



## **BACHELOR OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE RE-ACCREDITATION**

**Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning Department  
Utah State University  
Logan, Utah**

**March 12-16, 2017**

### **VISITING TEAM MEMBERS**

Dean Bork, Educator (MLA)/Team Chair  
Douglas Johnston, ASLA, Educator (BLA)  
Lorraine Davis, Hon. ASLA, Academic Administrator  
Richard Ciardella, ASLA, Practitioner

## PART I

### OVERALL ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning (LAEP) Department administers Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA) and Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) first professional degree programs at Utah State University. The department also offers advanced MLA studies, and a Master of Science in Bioregional Planning degree.

This report includes detailed assessments of the first professional BLA and MLA degree programs based on the seven LAAB standards. However, it is important to note that the greatest changes since the last visit appear to have occurred at the departmental and collegiate level. Looking to the near future, it also appears that the greatest challenges are departmental in that they involve the continued evolution of the faculty and its ability to provide the kind of effective collective leadership necessary to advance the respective degree programs toward the next level of achievement and stature.

In 2010, LAEP returned to its original home in the College of Agriculture and Applied Science (CAAS). This change occurred in response to then President Albrecht's request that the department recommend a new college home for itself. The request was occasioned as the department's previous home, the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences, was restructured into two academic units. Moving to a new college home introduced opportunity for positive change. It has contributed to improved stability within the department, which, in turn, led to improved quality in the MLA and BLA degree programs.

The Department Head, who was hired in 2009, brings bountiful energy and vision, as well as stability of leadership, to a department that had not enjoyed it for some time. Under his influence, and with significant willingness and effort on the part of the faculty, the visibility of the department within the college, university and beyond has been substantially elevated – particularly over the past three years or so. These efforts have been augmented by the catalytic contributions of an LAEP alumnus and Practitioner in Residence who has helped to rekindle the department's studio culture.

Significant improvement in student work, in both the MLA and BLA program, is broadly attested by students, faculty, alumni and practitioners who are able to compare the most recent years with the past. It is more difficult for a visiting team to gauge this change in the course of a brief visit. Yet, we caught glimpses from the enthusiasm of the faculty and most recent student work that give credence to the testimony. The team is satisfied with the quality of student work and the preparedness of graduates to enter the profession. However, there remains significant opportunity for improvement – perhaps most especially in the MLA program.

Noteworthy improvements to the department's physical space, stature within the university and profession, and human and fiscal resources have been achieved since the last accreditation visit. Recognizing that many of the problems of the past have been substantially addressed, that important steps toward a renewed future have been taken, it now seems timely for the departmental community to pause and reflect. It is perhaps especially important that the widely acknowledged change in studio culture, which is directly experienced and highly valued by the students, also be internalized as part of a shared future vision and pedagogical commitment among the faculty. Were this to occur, it could provide a solid and sustainable academic foundation for future growth and continued improvement in both degree programs. This includes an opportunity to (still) more sharply focus and clarify the intent of each degree program while making their futures less dependent on the presence and contributions of specific individuals.

## PART III

### **Summary of Recommendations and Suggestions**

#### **-BLA PROGRAM-**

#### **A. RECOMMENDATIONS AFFECTING ACCREDITATION**

##### **Standard 1: Program Mission & Objectives**

1. Engage the LAEP faculty in a long-range planning process for the department and its programs and document the results.

#### **B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS**

##### **Standard 2: Program Autonomy, Governance, & Administration**

1. Regularize faculty participation in program development and departmental operations to enhance engagement and transparency.

##### **Standard 3: Professional Curriculum**

1. Develop formalized curriculum review processes to ensure department-wide awareness of continuity and progression among courses.
2. Evaluate the collective impact of Extension and service learning activities on attainment of program learning objectives.

##### **Standard 5: Faculty**

1. Celebrate and reflect on the accomplishments of LAEP over the past several years before undertaking new initiatives.
2. The program should consider initiatives to support faculty development in teaching and scholarship/creative activity.

##### **Standard 6: Outreach to Institution, Communities, Alumni & Practitioners**

1. Examine the extent to which service learning projects may compete with the practice community.

**-MLA PROGRAM-****A. RECOMMENDATIONS AFFECTING ACCREDITATION****Standard 1: Program Mission & Objectives**

1. Engage the LAEP faculty in a long-range planning process for the department and its programs and document the results.

**Standard 3: Professional Curriculum**

1. Monitor the recently revised MLA curriculum and modify it as necessary to ensure delivery of a distinctive, graduate degree program.

**B. CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS****Standard 2: Program Autonomy, Governance, & Administration**

1. Regularize faculty participation in program development and departmental operations to enhance engagement and transparency.

**Standard 3: Professional Curriculum**

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