DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

ANNUAL STRATEGIC & FINANCIAL PLAN - January 27, 2015

The Department of Landscape Architecture had a successful accreditation of its professional programs in spring 2014, and a Provost-appointed external review that found that the Department excels in three area of the University’s Strategic Plan: energy and the environment, social equity and cultural understanding, and health and wellness. Despite achievements in these areas, realized in the teaching, research, and engagement missions of the Department, it faces challenges with respect to enrollments, visibility, and curricular restructuring. The Department has short-term and long-term strategies for handling these challenges.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

1. Tuition

A. Undergraduate FTEs

*Concern*: Undergraduate (BLA) FTE enrollments have declined in the past 4 years from 84 undergrads in FY 11, to 69 in FY15. The sophomore class (the point of entry into the professional sequence) in FY15 was 13 students. Last year we received 25 applications; this year, we have 24 so far. The undergraduate tuition revenues have fallen from $288,633 in FY11 to $207,571 in FY15.

*Goal*: To increase incoming sophomore class (the point of entry into the professional sequence) to 24 within the next 3 years with continued growth thereafter.

*Short-term Strategy*: Aggressive immediate recruitment of undergrads.

- UEO sent personal email to every potential undergrad applicant on recruitment officer’s list at the end of November
- To increase the yield rate, the UEO will personally call all admitted LA students when the names are available.
- LA will stage a departmental design charrette to show to potential students on “Admitted Students Day” (March 30).
- A master class is under development for high schools to explain to students what is landscape architecture.
- Landscape is preparing “Discover LA” sessions for the June 22-26 FAA Summer Program.
- Landscape is developing LA 199 as a portal course to attract potential majors.
- Landscape is planning installation of student work to show to DGS when they tour TBH this spring.
- Landscape is meeting with Architecture and Urban Planning (Jan. 30) to design a new interdisciplinary non-professional major that draws from existing resources and attracts students interested in environmental sustainability but not necessarily wanting a professional design education.

*Long-term Strategy*: developing contacts with high school guidance counselors and designing programs that explain what is landscape architecture.
• Landscape has developed a workshop for K-12 art teachers. The first was held in TBH in January and we plan to offer more, especially to schools within a 1.5 hour reach.
• St. Louis’s Earth Day: LA is sending its head, an alum and Katrine Trantham to staff a table for student information and recruitment. Earth Day has an attending audience of 34,000.
• Landscape will send a representative to area community colleges to negotiate possible 2+2 agreements for transfer students.

B. Graduate FTEs

Concern: MLA enrollments have risen gradually from 43 in FY11, to 51 in FY15, but even higher numbers are needed to compensate for declining undergrad enrollments. MLA students enter into a 2-year program for students with BLA degrees, a 2.5-year program for students from related design fields, or a 3-year program for non-designers. Approximately 25% of these receive full-year fellowships and tuition waivers.

Goal: an entering class of 24-25 MLA students.

Short-term Strategy:
• Using FY14 admissions yield rates (89 students accepted, with a yield of 26 entering MLAs, or 34%) the department has the goal of admitting 90 students in the 2015 admission cycle to maintain high graduate numbers.
• MLA chair will write a personal message to each accepted applicant to encourage enrollment.
• The Department seeks to grow the 3-year and 2.5-year MLA pool in proportion to the 2-year pool. The 3-year students stay in the program longer (paying 33% more tuition) and they are more likely to be domestic or in-state residents who form a pool of supportive alums who then hire our grads, serve on the Resource Committee and make active contributions.

Long-term Strategy:
• Instead of rejecting applicants with strong portfolios but borderline TOEFL scores, the Department will institute a policy that requires students with marginal TOEFLs to enroll in UIUC’s summer ESL program prior to beginning the MLA program.
• In collaboration with Arch and DURP, the Landscape will begin planning a one-year M.A. that focuses on a specific environmental or heritage issue, designed particularly for international students and/or returning professionals; courses will be delivered partially on-line and draw from existing resources.
• The Department can explore the feasibility of offering a “studio abroad” in Chicago for advanced MLA students in spring semesters.

C. IUs

Concern: Declining revenues due to slightly lower IUs, from undergrad and grad combined IUs of 3,156 in FY11 to 2,908 in FY14.

Goal: Increase IUs to 4,000

Short-term Strategy:
• Offer more large lecture courses such as a new “signature” course with broad appeal and Gen Ed approval.
• Expand size of existing lecture courses through innovative teaching methods (e.g. flipped classroom) and finding adequate, intelligent lecture hall spaces.
- Development of a second on-line course to be delivered in the summer.

2. Grants

_Concern:_ Need to maintain ICR revenues to support research mission. ICR ten years ago was high due to one faculty member (Johnson) who subsequently left the University. The numbers dropped to almost nil but have climbed back to $64,000 charged by LA grants.

_Goal:_ ICR at or above $65,000.

_Short-term Strategy:_
- Encourage grant-seeking among senior and emeritus faculty in the natural sciences.
- Encourage humanities faculty to seek external support for campus activities such as symposia.
- Encourage future iterations of the 2015 NEH Summer Institute.

_Longterm Strategy:_
- Mentor faculty to join grant-seeking coalitions on campus, particularly in the areas of water resources, health, and environmental sustainability.
- Seek future hire of faculty with potential to obtain large research grants.

3. Departmental Excellence

_Concern:_ Professional Practitioners. The department is not in a metropolitan design hub and cannot draw on major firms for adjunct teachers. Its tenure-track faculty focus on design research rather than professional practice. Visiting instructors with professional experience are needed if we are to place ourselves in the top 5 BLA and top 10 of MLA-granting programs.

_Strategy:_
- Continue the ongoing 30% appointment of the Clinical Assistant Professor (Henson) who is a project manager at Olin Associates and brings current professional experience and potential employment opportunities for students.
- Continue to appoint a new visiting Designer in Residence each year to teach studio.

_Concern:_ Ranking. The Department’s status as one of the nation’s leading programs of landscape architecture is precarious. It cannot rest on historic prestige but must strive for greater national and international visibility through leadership roles and research that makes an impact and is communicated widely. A recent Mississippi State University survey indicates that ranking matters a great deal to students when selecting a landscape architecture.

_Strategy:_
- Enhance faculty mentoring with not only tenure as the goal but national prominence in conference presentations, publications, prestigious fellowships, service on national and international editorial boards or boards of directors, symposia organized here at UIUC, and design criticism and pedagogy. The Department has many senior faculty: they can use their experience to advise the junior faculty and help them gain distinction.

- Organize Department events with lasting impact: a design charrette with three nationally respected landscape architecture firm principles will take place in March 2015, an India
symposium is planned for spring 2016 (Sinha), a midwestern landscapes symposium is planned for fall 2016 (Mattson). The Department must continue this level of productivity in future years to gain national visibility.

**Concern:** International scope. The Department cannot seat itself solely in the Midwest. To be a major national program, we must extend our reach internationally, not only in the students enrolled in the program but in faculty research projects, publications (especially those translated for broader dissemination), public lectures, and honors.

**Strategy:**

- The Department belongs to a UIUC consortium of units that have developed an exchange with National Taiwan University on the subject of human health. Currently an exchange of students and faculty, it has the potential to lead to a UIUC conference on landscapes of human health.
- International site study abroad is offered every other year. Currently ad hoc and somewhat invisible, this can be regularized, named, and partially funded so that it becomes a regular biennial offering among the Department’s annual student field trips.

---

**FINANCIAL PLAN**

2015-16 proposed spending.

1. The full-time non-tenure track instructors are currently funded through salary transfer and course buyout of Professor Harris. In an environment of no recissions, this is sustainable for the duration of Harris’ IPRH contract.

2. With the departure of two office staff persons in summer 2014, the Department has hired only one replacement: the Office Manager. When the Office Manager is absent (for training, vacation days), the Head, Assistant Head, and Account Tech respond to inquiries at the front desk. With the additional temporary help in periods of high stress, this level of staffing is currently feasible but may change with the centralization of Business Services, in which case either a second staff person may become necessary, or reduced hours for the LA Main Office.

In the event of a 2.5% recission—or $26,327 in 2015-16—the reduction in staffing will cover the recission.

In the event of a 5% recission—$52,654 in 2015-16—the department will have to adjust by cutting the second staff position permanently, cutting adjunct positions and one designer in residence position, and shifting the salary of the remaining Clinical Assistant Professor (non-tenure track) from state allocation to departmental gift funds.

3. Design Charrettes and symposia. On March 30-31 the Department has invited three prominent designers to lead a department-wide charrette on the railway corridor in Champaign, concluding with an exhibition in the Link Gallery. For departmental to visibility and impact, future charrettes and symposia are planned. The expenses for this are drawn from gift funds.
4. Career Fair. In March 2015, the Department will move the Fair to Chicago for better access to firms that hire our students; increased visibility in the city; and the opportunity to host event for area alums and thus build good relations. If successful, this will be an annual event that will enhance our students’ careers and improve ongoing relations with alums. The expenses for this are covered by fees charged to the interviewing firms; the venue is an in-kind donation from an alum.

5. Facilities Improvements. The three TBH studios need track lighting along the north and west wall where pin-ups occur, glass doors for greater visibility, repainted door frames, replacement of two window shades in TBH 325, and the replacement of floor outlet covers which are currently missing. The Department may also have to purchase a new plotter, as the current ones break down frequently. The current budget has funds for some of the these improvements, which will be addressed in order of priority.

APPENDICES:
Appendix 1: Faculty Productivity