Landscape Architecture, M.L.A.

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Degree Offered

- Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)

Nature of the Program

The Landscape Architecture Program within the School of Design and Community Development of the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design at West Virginia University offers an accredited Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree program. The MLA was granted continued full accreditation as evaluated by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) in 2019.

Demand for professional landscape architects is increasing due to emerging environmental markets and projected shortages of graduates from accredited landscape architecture programs. The MLA focuses on environmental and community design and planning, in addition to providing the primary skills and methods of landscape architecture. The curriculum is flexible for students who may want to develop specialized knowledge in areas such as health care facility design, environmental restoration, community design, cultural or historic landscape planning, or environmental resource analysis methods.

The MLA is three academic years of full-time graduate enrollment. The program allows for advanced placement of up to one academic year of study — which counts towards the minimum three year requirements — in case students enrolling in the MLA have a background education in landscape architecture (BLA or BSLA) or a bachelor degree in a related design field.

Mission

Landscape Architecture is the art of design, planning, and arranging natural and man-made elements on the land. It applies cultural and scientific knowledge with concern for the conservation and stewardship of natural, cultural and aesthetic amenities to create an environment that serves a useful and enjoyable purpose. This involves consideration of the quality of life in urban and natural settings, as well as the interaction of humans with nature. The Landscape Architecture Program at WVU strives to equip students with knowledge and skills in problem solving, design theory, site construction, land use planning, and planting design. It emphasizes a philosophy of responsibility and commitment to ethical standards regarding the natural environment, personal relationships, and professional practice.

The faculty represents a multi-disciplinary team with practical experience in creative and scientific research, design, consultation, and public service. This diversity is the nucleus of the Program, allowing for a strong graduate curriculum supplemented by related courses in the arts, sciences, engineering, and planning, reflecting the needs of the Appalachian region, both urban and rural, and current trends within the profession. Three of the faculty are licensed. Graduates of the program can assume traditional landscape architectural roles, e.g., positions with design consulting firms, governmental planning departments, construction firms, transportation planning agencies, etc. In addition, WVU MLA graduates are prepared for design and planning positions meeting the needs common to West Virginia and other rural areas.

Objectives

- To provide students with a solid professional educational foundation encompassing knowledge and skills of multi-scaled site design, construction, problem-solving, plant materials, geographic information systems, and professional practice responsive to the needs of the environment, society, and the landscape architecture profession.
- To instill ethical standards in the students regarding the environment, the profession, personal relationships, and social responsibility.
- To prepare students to be proficient in communicating professional concepts graphically, orally, and in writing.
- To provide students with cognitive opportunities to incorporate professional information through the study of real-life problems in Morgantown, the state of West Virginia, and the region.
- To enhance course offerings, collaborative faculty research opportunities, and avenues for scholarly activities by increasing and diversifying ties with other disciplines across campus.
- To provide design and planning expertise to West Virginians in the areas of community development, and improvement of the quality of life by offering the skills of the faculty and students of the Landscape Architecture Program.

Program Disclosure

STUDENT RETENTION AND GRADUATION RATES, AND DEGREES GRANTED

The MLA program regularly tracks student retention through the program from admittance until graduation. From Fall 2017 to Spring 2022, 23 students began the program, 12 students graduated (52.2%), and 7 students dropped (30.4%). The program granted an average of 2.4 degrees per year. The graduation time varied depending on the students' background. It went from a minimum of 2.5/3 semesters for students with a background education

in landscape architecture or a bachelor's degree in a related design field, to 6 semesters for students with a background education other than the ones listed above. Considering students who took extra semesters for the completion of the degree, the average graduation time has been 6.3 semesters.

POST-GRADUATION EMPLOYMENT

The MLA program regularly surveys graduates in order to get a picture of their employment status. From academic year 2016-2017 to academic year 2021-2022, 4 alumni are pursuing their graduate education and 11 are working in private practice. They correspond to 26.6% and 73.3% of the respondents respectively.

ESTIMATED COST OF ATTENDANCE

Information about fees, tuition and other expenses can be found at https://tuition.wvu.edu/graduate/morgantown-oncampus#table-4 (https://tuition.wvu.edu/graduate/morgantown-oncampus/#table-4) .

The School of Design and Community Development graduate research assistantships are competitive and limited in availability. Research and teaching assistantships for the MLA program include nine months of pay in the amount of $14,250. Assistantships include University tuition waivers and payment of health insurance.

MLA student research conference travel can be subsidized by the School of Design and Community Development through USDA Hatch funding. The Davis College offers competitive grant funds to support student travel.

Travel to communities for project work is generally supported by external funds and USDA Hatch funding.

Further fellowship opportunities can be found here: https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/finances/fellowships (https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/finances/fellowships/)

Further graduate scholarship opportunities can be found here: https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/finances/scholarships-and-internships (https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/finances/scholarships-and-internships/)

Upon enrollment students are required to buy a kit of drafting supplies for a cost of around $300. At the end of the first year studio sequence, students are required to purchase a computer that is capable of efficiently running programs with graphic intensive applications extensively used during the following years studio sequences. The approximate cost of a computer of this capability is around $2,500.

Opportunities for study abroad include the LARC 444 Summer Semester: International Experience Western European Gardens, Landscapes and Architecture (6 credits) for an approximate cost of $6,000. The course qualifies for student financial aid.

In accordance with the Higher Education Act the program meets the educational requirements for licensure eligibility in each U.S. state.

Admissions

In applying for the MLA, the following admissions requirements should be met:

Bachelor's degree to include:

- Four credits of biology or plant science (including a laboratory); this requirement can be made up during the first year in the program
- College algebra and trigonometry (or pre-calculus or calculus or equivalent); this requirement can be made up during the first year in the program
- Undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or higher on a scale of 4.00; this requirement can be considered on an individual applicant basis

Additional Requirements:

- Portfolio demonstrating creative expression (can be written or graphical)
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE); recommended but not required
- Writing sample: professional publication or a multi-page essay on environmental or community design
- Three letters of recommendation

* International students must meet WVU's minimum score requirement for English language proficiency (https://graduateadmissions.wvu.edu/how-to-apply/apply-for-2023-2024/international-graduate-applicant/).

Admission Requirements 2024-2025

The Admission Requirements above will be the same for the 2024-2025 Academic Year.

Major Code: 0759

A candidate for the M.L.A. degree in Landscape Architecture must meet all University, College, School, and Program requirements as outlined in the WVU Graduate Catalog.

Program Requirements

All M.L.A. degree candidates are required to follow a planned program of study. The student develops the plan of study during their first year in the program in conjunction with the graduate committee. The plan must be approved by the Director of the School and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Davis College.

Code	Title	Hours
A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 is required in all courses applied toward degree requirements.		
Course Requirements as determined by the Plan of Study *		30
Total Hours		30

*

Students must complete a minimum of 30 total hours, of which at least 24 hours must be coursework other than research, thesis, project, internship, etc. credits.

COURSEWORK

A total of thirty-eight credit hours are required for the post-professional M.L.A. program. The requirements for the first professional degree may include an additional twenty-eight undergraduate and graduate credits prior to commencing with subsequent graduate courses.

THESIS OR TERMINAL PROJECT

Students will be required to complete either a research thesis on a problem in environmental or community design or landscape architecture or to complete an applied comprehensive professional project. Each student selecting the thesis option will defend their thesis in a public forum before their committee. The comprehensive project option will result in a professional submission that includes a written report and appropriate professional drawings documenting the design project for a project subject to realistic conditions. It will also include a formal public presentation/defense before the student's committee.

The composition of graduate advisory committees will follow Davis College and WVU guidelines and must have at least two landscape architecture faculty members and one outside member. Two of the committee members must be full members of the graduate faculty, and the third may be an associate member.

Major Learning Outcomes

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

- To provide students with a solid professional educational foundation that encompasses knowledge and skills of design, construction, problem-solving, plant materials, landscape management, landscape history and theory, and professional practice and that is responsive to the needs of the environment, society, and the landscape architecture profession.
- To instill ethical standards in the students regarding the environment, the profession, personal relationships and social responsibility.
- To prepare students to be proficient in communicating professional concepts graphically, orally, and in writing.
- To provide students with cognitive opportunities to incorporate professional information through the study of real-life problems in Morgantown, the state of West Virginia, and the region.
- To enhance course offerings, collaborative faculty research opportunities, and avenues for scholarly activities by increasing and diversifying ties with other disciplines across campus.
- To strengthen the Landscape Architecture Program’s role as an integral part of the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources & Design's research and scholarly activities regarding landscape design, landscape ecology, landscape planning, cultural and sustainable environments, and geographic information systems.
- To provide design and planning expertise to West Virginians in the areas of community development, and improvement of the quality of life by offering the skills of the faculty and students of the Landscape Architecture Program.