Landscape Architecture, M.L.A.

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Degree Offered

- Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)

Nature of the Program

The MLA (Master of Landscape Architecture) is a professional master’s level program offered by the Landscape Architecture Program in the School of Design and Community Development. The Program provides two tracks for students who wish to pursue graduate education in landscape architecture and environmental design. The program provides for a three-year course of study for students without a landscape architecture undergraduate degree who wish to pursue graduate studies in landscape architecture. That track provides one year of leveling courses, so students may then pursue advanced studies in their remaining two years. Students pursuing the three-year MLA are then able to engage in the profession of landscape architecture as practicing professionals.

The program also provides a two-year course of study for students entering the program with an undergraduate degree in landscape architecture or a related field such as architecture. The program provides opportunities to engage in landscape architectural design as well as the potential to engage in specializations such as community planning and design, environmental restoration, and environmental informatics focusing on GIS-based planning and design methods. With both the two-year and three-year programs, the student concludes their studies by completing either an applied capstone project or a thesis.

The master of landscape architecture program provides opportunities for both foundation and advanced training in the core areas of landscape architecture, including site and environmental design, land use planning, construction methods and materials, landscape architecture history and theory, and plant materials and planting design. It is anticipated that many students, particularly those pursuing the post-professional degree, will take interdisciplinary approaches to their studies as well as use them in practice. There are twelve credit hours of electives in the curriculum. These allow the student to tailor a series of courses in areas of focus such as community planning and design, environmental restoration, or environmental and natural resource analysis methods including geographic information systems and remote sensing.

Graduates of the program will be prepared for competitive entry-level positions in private firms and public agencies. In the course of their graduate education, students may pursue one of four options, ranging from a general professional background to a focus on environmental restoration, community design, or environmental and natural resource analysis.

1. A comprehensive education in landscape architecture, environmental design and planning. Students pursue a program of study to provide a well-rounded design background suitable for entry into the landscape architecture profession. This option would be most appropriate for students in the first-professional-degree MLA program who do not possess design or technical science undergraduate degrees.

2. Environmental Restoration. Through elective course selection and thesis or professional project selection, students may pursue a course of study focusing on environmental restoration including soils and water restoration, brownfields, mined areas, and wetlands and watersheds. This option allows students to take advantage of the strengths of the Davis College for collaborative in-depth study in many aspects of environmental and community restoration.

3. Community Design and Planning. Building on the existing Community Engagement Lab (CEL) and a number of other allied programs, students will be able to pursue focused studies emphasizing comprehensive community design and planning. This option will provide students with in-depth knowledge in the theory and practice of community-based design, including outreach, public participation, and visioning. The general emphasis will be on small communities that are typical to the Appalachian Region, although studies will be applicable to urban and regional design as well.

4. Environmental and Natural Resource Analysis Methods. With a greater focus on the environmental aspects of landscape architectural practice, this option will permit students to focus on environmental analysis methods including geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing, statistical and field survey methods, and the incorporation of these methods into landscape architectural and environmental design projects. This option recognizes the strengths and expertise found in the landscape architecture program as well as other programs in the College and University.

Mission

The mission of the Master of Landscape Architecture Program at West Virginia University is to provide students with the knowledge necessary to develop the skills and abilities in design, planning, and management that are pivotal to their effectiveness and success in the workforce, and that are responsive to the unique qualities of the state and the region. The program prepares students to become effective professionals and citizens by emphasizing a philosophy of responsibility and commitment to ethical standards regarding the natural environment, professional practice and personal relationships.
Admissions

The landscape architecture faculty offers the master of landscape architecture (MLA) as a professional degree leading to the practice of landscape architecture. Candidates for the MLA may enter the program with a BSLA or BLA, and pursue a thirty-eight credit hour course of study culminating in the preparation of either a master’s thesis or terminal project. For these students, the MLA will serve as a post-professional degree providing the opportunity for advanced or specialized studies in particular areas of landscape architecture.

Students entering the program with a BS or BA in another design discipline or a non-design discipline are required to complete up to an additional twenty-eight credits of leveling courses prior to entering the second year of a three-year course of study with the thirty-eight credit hour course of study to be completed in years two and three. The number of leveling courses that any student may be required to take will be dependent on the student's academic background and will be determined in collaboration with the student's academic advisor. For these students, the MLA will serve as the first professional degree that is required for entry into the profession of landscape architecture. Studies for these students will also culminate in the preparation of a master’s thesis or terminal project.

A regular graduate student is a degree-seeking student who meets all the criteria for regular admission to a program of their choice and be under no requirements to make up deficiencies.

For regular admission, a student must:

• Possess a baccalaureate degree from a college or university and have at least a grade point average of 2.75 on a 4.0 scale (or an average of 3.0 or higher for the last sixty credit hours).
• Provide three letters of reference from persons acquainted with the applicant’s professional work, experience, or academic background.
• Submit a written statement of 500 words or more indicating the applicant’s goals and objectives relative to receiving a graduate degree, and identify a potential faculty advisor.
• Have an adequate academic aptitude at the graduate level as measured by the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or the New Medical College Admissions Test (New MCAT).

* International students have the additional requirement to submit a minimum score of 550 on the paper TOEFL examination or 213 on the electronic TOEFL examination if their native language is not English.

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.

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

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* 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.

COURSES

LARC 520. Introduction to Design. 4 Hours.
Theory, principles, and elements of site planning and design. Lectures, readings, short problems, and site visits dealing with site analysis, ecological considerations, circulation and parking, management, and cost factors. Also includes basic computer graphics.

LARC 532. Recreation, Trails, and Community Development. 3 Hours.
Using outdoor recreation as a facilitator of community development, this course will provide a preview of comprehensive trail planning strategies guiding sustainable trail development, including the benefits of trails (economic, health, and social), strategies for stakeholder engagement, funding, activation and programming, and evaluation. Online, 3-credit graduate course, cross listed with LARC 332 (for undergraduate students).

LARC 534. Sustainable Trails: Design Concepts. 3 Hours.
Plan trail networks according to current best practices, responding to site topography and aesthetics while incorporating skills progression and accessibility for trail users of all skill levels. Online, 3-credit graduate course, cross listed with LARC 334 (for undergraduate students).

LARC 535. Sustainable Trails: Design Detailing & Drainage. 3 Hours.
PR: LARC 534. Refine trail masterplans for costing, bidding and construction documentation with site-specific detailing and specifications, while incorporating stormwater management best practices and ecological restoration principles. Online, 3-credit graduate course, cross listed with LARC 335 (for undergraduate students).

LARC 537. Sustainable Trails: Practicum Experience. 1-3 Hours.
PR or CONC: LARC 535 and RPTR 536. Engage directly in a trail project’s design, construction, maintenance and/or monitoring, through a service-learning capstone project in sustainable trails development. Work with stakeholders and community representatives directly to support recreation economy development. Can be repeated for credit: students can enroll for 1, 2, or 3 credits at once. Online, graduate course, cross listed with LARC 437 (for undergraduate students).

LARC 550. Design Studio. 4 Hours.
PR: LARC 520. Medium scale site design and development including planting, design and grading. Application of basic design principles, programming, and site analysis reinforcing design processes and visual thinking in the design of sites.

LARC 570. Meanings of Place. 3 Hours.
PR: Consent Study of place as a psychological and social phenomenon with implications for community development, historic preservation, interpretation, design, management, natural and cultural sustainability, and human well-being. (equivalent to RPTR 570).

LARC 595. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

LARC 650. Land and Environment Planning and Design. 5 Hours.
PR: LARC 550 with a minimum grade of B-. Introduction to and understanding of environmental planning, design and management of natural and social landscape systems at a regional, watershed, or ecosystem scale. Studies focus on systems inventory, analysis and impact assessment. GIS and 3D modeling applications will be integrated into this course.

LARC 651. Community Planning and Design. 5 Hours.
PR: LARC 650. Design studies focused on community planning, community development, and community growth. Integration with a community design team or other outreach project. (2 hr. lec; two 3 hr. studios.).

LARC 652. Land Development Princ. 5 Hours.
PR: LARC 650 and LARC 651. Brief history of land development. Design studio involving large scale design; projects with extensive time implementation sequence. (2 hr. lec., two 3 hr. studios.).
LARC 670. Research Methods in Design. 2 Hours.
A survey of the philosophies and methodologies of science and research as they apply to the field of landscape architecture. Development of research methods for terminal project.

LARC 693. Special Topics. 1-6 Hours.
A study of contemporary topics selected from recent developments in the field.

LARC 694. Seminar. 1-6 Hours.
Seminars arranged for advanced graduate students.

LARC 695. Independent Study. 1-9 Hours.
Faculty-supervised study of topics not available through regular course offerings.

LARC 696. Graduate Seminar. 1-3 Hours.
PR: Consent. Each graduate student will present at least one seminar to the assembled faculty and graduate student body of his or her program.

LARC 697. Research. 1-9 Hours.
PR: Consent. Research activities leading to thesis (697), problem report (697), research paper or equivalent scholarly project (697), or a dissertation (797). (Grading may be S/U).

LARC 698. Thesis. 1-6 Hours.
This is an optional course for programs that wish to provide formal supervision during the writing of student reports (698), or dissertations (798). Grading is normal.