Landscape Architecture

Charles B. Yuill, Graduate Program Coordinator
email: charlie.yuill@mail.wvu.edu

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.

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 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.

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<th>Course Requirements as determined by the Plan of Study</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
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<td>* 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.</td>
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**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**

**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.

**Learning Goals:**

- 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.