

The Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) Program at West Virginia University

The Landscape Architecture Program of the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design at West Virginia University has launched a Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree program. For students entering landscape architecture study for the first time, the entry-level degree is the first professional degree. This may be a BSLA or a BLA undergraduate degree or a MLA graduate degree from an accredited program. 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 environmental restoration, community design, or environmental resource analysis methods.

A BSLA, BLA, or Bachelors degree in a related design field is the academic pre-requisite for the post-professional MLA degree (38-hour program). Students with a BS or a BA in another discipline are required to complete up to 28 credits of pre-requisite or leveling courses prior to beginning the two year MLA curriculum resulting in a three year course of study for students entering the program without a background education in design. Students without Bachelors degrees in a design field are strongly encouraged to consider and apply to the Program. We are actively seeking accreditation by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). Our existing BSLA program is already fully accredited.

Program 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.

Objectives

- To provide students with a solid professional educational foundation that encompasses knowledge and skills of design, construction, problem-solving, plant materials, landscape management, 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 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.

Admission Requirements

In applying for either the second professional degree (two year course of study) or the first professional degree (up to a three year course of study) the following admission requirements should be met:

Bachelor's degree to include:

- 4 credits of biology or plant science (including a laboratory)
- College algebra and trigonometry (or pre-calculus or calculus or equivalent)
- Undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or higher on a scale of 4.00 (can be considered on an individual applicant basis)
- Math or biology deficiencies can be made up during first year leveling studies.

Additional Requirements:

- Portfolio demonstrating creative expression (can be written or graphical)
- Graduate Record Exam (GRE)
- Writing sample: professional publication or a multi-page essay on environmental or community design
- Three letters of recommendation
- Applicants whose first language is not English must submit TOEFL scores to demonstrate English language proficiency. (Minimum scores: 550 paper; 213 electronic).

Coursework

A total of 38 credit hours are required for the post-professional MLA program. The requirement for the first professional degree includes an additional 28 undergraduate credits prior to commencing the 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 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 process for a project subject to realistic conditions. It will also include a formal public presentation/defense before the students' committee.

The composition of graduate advisory committees will follow Davis College and WVU regulations 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.

Program Emphasis

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.

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.

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.

Community Design and Planning. Building on the existing Community Design Team (CDT) 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.

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.

The MLA is considered to be the terminal degree within the profession. Accordingly, graduates will be eligible to apply for academic positions.

Proposed Curriculum

The curriculum leading to the MLA consists of three components: Core courses, selected electives, and a thesis or terminal project. Students with an undergraduate degree in landscape architecture from an accredited program will follow Program I, the two-year, minimum 38 credit program that provides the opportunity for advanced specialization

Students with a degree other than landscape architecture seeking an MLA degree may be admitted contingent upon completing 28 credits of undergraduate course work (Program II) prior to commencing the graduate courses listed under Program I.

Program I

1st Year

Fall		Spring	
LARC 650 (Design)	5 cr.	LARC 651 (Design)	5 cr.
LARC 694 (Seminar)	1 cr.	LARC 670 (Res. Methods)	2 cr.
Emphasis Elective	3 cr.	Emphasis Elective	3 cr.
	—		—
	9 cr.		10 cr.

2nd Year

Fall		Spring	
LARC 652 (Land Dev.)	5 cr.	LARC 697 (Proj/Thesis)	6 cr.
LARC 653 (Proj/Thes PIng)	3 cr.	Emphasis Elective	3 cr.
LARC 695 (Seminar)	2 cr.		
	—		—
	10 cr.		9 cr.

Program II

The following pre-requisite or leveling courses must be completed by students who do not have an undergraduate degree in landscape architecture prior to taking the courses listed under Program I

Fall		Spring	
LARC 212 (History of LA)	3 cr.	LARC 550 (Design)	4 cr.
LARC 330 (Construction)	4 cr.	LARC 331 (Construction).	4 cr.
HORT 260 (Plant ID)	3 cr.	LARC 484 (Construction)	3 cr.
LARC 520 (Des/Graphics)	4 cr.	LARC 223 (Comp. Gr.)	3 cr.
	—————		—————
	14 cr.		14 cr.

Total Credits:

2-year MLA 38 credits

3-year MLA 38 credits + 28 credits of undergraduate pre-requisite credits

Course Descriptions

▪ **LEVELLING COURSES**

*Denotes courses that are leveling and are new courses only in that they will have an added component just for the graduate students.

1. LARC 212 - History of Landscape Architecture – 3 cr. Fall Semester

History of Landscape Architecture. I, II. 3 hrs. A broad survey of the history of the designed human environment with emphasis on the development of landscape architecture.

2. LARC 330 – Construction 1: Grading, Drainage & Road Alignment – 4 cr. Fall Semester

Landscape Architectural Construction 1. I. 4 hr. The study of the technical principles of grading design, their application to site planning, and preparation of land form grading plans. Study and preparation of road alignment and road design.

3. LARC 331 - Construction 2 – 4 cr. Spring Semester

Landscape Architectural Construction 2. I. 4 hr. The study and preparation of parkway plans (road alignment) , surface and sub-surface drainage plans, advanced grading plans, and cost estimates.

4. HORT 260 - Plant Materials – 3 cr. Fall Semester

Ornamental Woody Plants and Groundcovers. (Plant Materials) I. 3 hr. PR: PI Sc 260, or equivalent. Design uses, ornamental qualities, cultural requirements and identification of woody plants and groundcovers in West Virginia. Field course. (One day field trip required at student's expense.) Two 3-hr. labs

5. LARC 520 - Intro to Design & Multimedia Graphics – 4 cr. Fall Semester *

Theory, principles, and elements of site planning and design. Lectures, readings, short problems, and site visits dealing with site analysis, ecological consideration, circulation and parking, management and cost factors. Application of basic computer graphics to include drafting, rendering, and visualization software used in landscape architecture plans and environmental analysis.

6. LARC 531 - Construction: Materials, Methods and Stormwater Management - 4 cr. Spring Semester *

A study of storm water management and materials used in landscape architectural construction with emphasis on methods of construction and the preparation of construction drawings for design implementation.

7. LARC 550 - Design Studio – 4 cr. Spring Semester *

Medium scale site design and development including planting design and grading. Applications of basic design principles, programming, and site analysis reinforcing design processes and visual thinking in the design of sites. Will include a range of projects in natural, rural and urban settings.

8. LARC 484 -Professional Practice – 3 cr. Spring Semester

Professional Practice. I. 3 hr. PR: Consent. Procedures in preparation of contract documents, fees, estimates, operation of an office, and relationship to clients and contractors.

9. LARC 223 – Computer Graphics – 3 credits. Spring Semester

Core Graduate Courses

Note that only three of the new courses are studio courses (LARC 650, 651, and 652). There is also one two-unit lecture course LARC 670). All other courses are seminars, project or thesis research, or electives taught outside of the LA program.

10. LARC 650 - Land & Environment Design and Planning – 5 cr. Fall Semester

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.

11. LARC 651 - Community Planning, Design, and Development – 5 cr. Spring Semester

Design studies focused on community planning, community development, and community growth. Will involve Community Design Team project.

12. LARC 670 - Research Methods in Design & Planning (early) – 2 cr. Spring Semester

An introductory course surveying the basic philosophies and methodologies of science and research as they apply to the field of landscape architecture. Development of research methods for terminal project.

13. LARC 652 - Land Development Principles & Practices – 5 cr. Fall Semester

Brief history of land development methods and impacts. An interdisciplinary design studio involving large scale design; projects with extensive time implementation sequence; responses to socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and technical needs, and implementation strategies.

14. LARC 695 - Landscape Architecture Seminar (I, II) – 1 cr. Fall 1st year and 2 cr. Fall Semester 2d year

Focus on current issues and trends in landscape architectural profession. Discussion of terminal project, research, or thesis by students, faculty, and invited speakers.

15. LARC 653 - Project Programming or Thesis Development – 3 cr. Fall Semester

Research and the development of a program directed toward the advancement of a Masters Project and Report or thesis.

16. LARC 697 - Masters Project & Report or Research in Landscape Architecture (Thesis) – 6 cr. Spring Semester

Independent research, under faculty guidance leading to the development of comprehensive design or research related to the field of landscape architecture.

17. Emphasis Electives

Beyond the required courses and seminars, the student should choose 12 credits from landscape architecture and other disciplines according to his/her interests to create a focus. These courses must be 400-level or above with a 40% maximum of 400-level. Note that many of these classes have prerequisites. Consultation with one's academic advisor is required.

