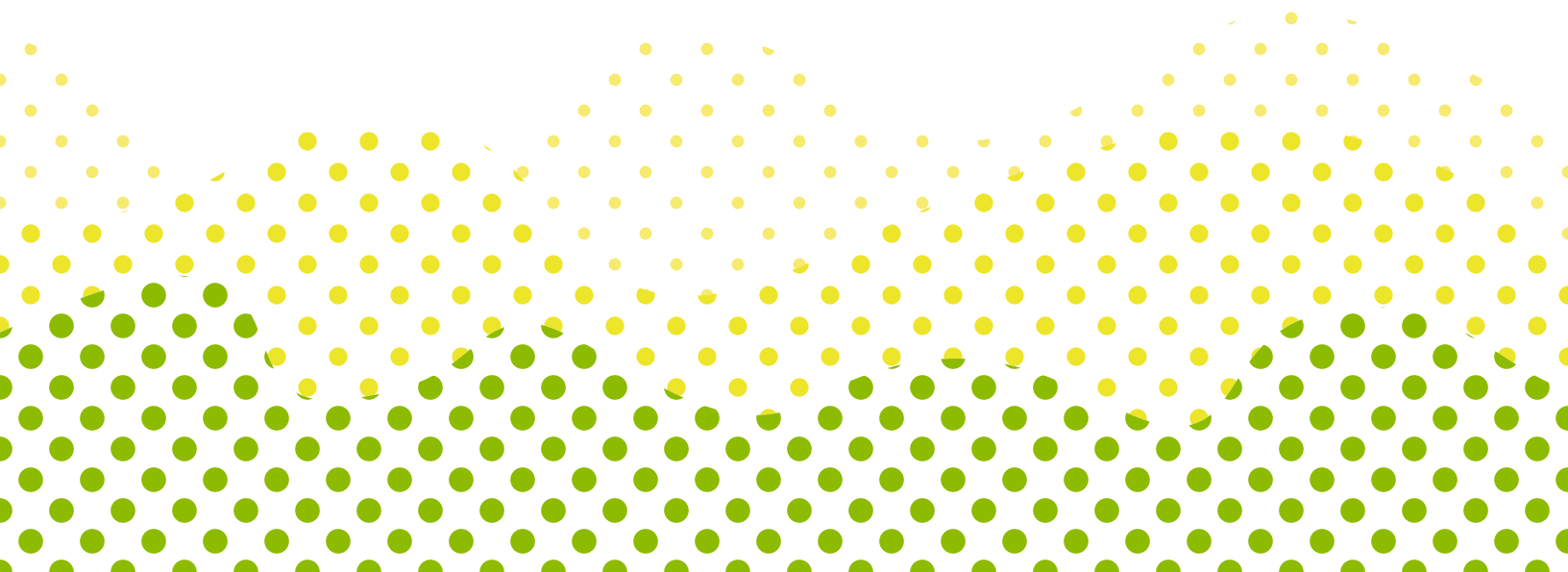


**MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
GRADUATE PROGRAM**

**LAP**



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

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.

### **Program 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 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 the MLA, the following admission requirements should be met.

- Bachelor's degree to include:
  - 4 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
- 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 66 credit hours are required for the MLA program. In case of advanced placement only 38 credit hours are required. Graduate courses are often combined with undergraduate courses as the content of the courses is shared between both accredited degrees. An MLA program of study must be approved by the student's graduate committee prior to graduation.

#### **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 presentation/defense is facilitated by a 'shuttle sheet', required of all students graduating with an MLA.

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 Areas**

Graduates of the program will be prepared for competitive entry-level positions in private firms and public agencies. All MLA graduates will acquire a comprehensive education in landscape architecture, environmental design, and planning. In the course of their

graduate education, students may desire to pursue specific emphasis areas in their study. The faculty of the landscape architecture program, as well the addition of the third committee member, allows the MLA student a broad range of emphasis areas. These emphasis areas, as defined by elective courses and committee composition may include:

- 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.
- Cultural landscapes in Appalachia. The common vernacular landscapes of West Virginia provide a laboratory for research, planning, interpretation, design, treatment, and management projects. This area of emphasis may consist of coursework in historic preservation, geographic information systems, community outreach, and field work. Through the lens of cultural landscape analysis, students may work to interpret, manage and preserve the region's often overlooked vernacular landscapes.
- Energy Landscapes. Faculty possess specific interest and expertise in research, planning and design within landscapes that are the results of energy production and particularly the landscapes of extraction. The State of West Virginia constitutes an outstanding example of this landscape, as the byproduct of the coal industry. Underground mining, contour mining and mountaintop mining deeply shape the region leaving huge mine sites to be reclaimed from environmental, landscape and the community point of view.
- 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.
- Healthcare Environments. The investigation of people-nature relationships and opportunities in landscape design and human health is a significant field of contribution for contemporary landscape architects. Through the application of biophilic principles to create therapeutic environments, and evidence-based design this emphasis area can address specific societal needs in enhancing public

health.

- Stream and Environmental Restoration. Through elective course selection and thesis or professional project selection, students may pursue a course of study focusing on environmental restoration including streams, 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.

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

### **MLA Curriculum**

The curriculum leading to the MLA consists of three components: Core courses, selected electives, and a thesis or terminal project. 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. The decision to allow advanced placement is made on a case by case basis and it is based on the evaluation of the courses taken while pursuing the previous degree. The applicant would submit course descriptions, syllabi, project examples and other pertinent information to the Program Coordinator for assessment. An advanced placed student will follow a two-year 38 credit hours track (Track I). Students with a degree other than the ones mentioned above seeking an MLA degree will follow a three-year 66 credit hours track (Track II).

## Track I

### Year One

#### Fall

LARC 650 Land and Environment Planning and Design	5 cr
Emphasis Elective	4 cr
<hr/>	
	9 cr

#### Spring

LARC 651 Community Planning and Design	5 cr
LARC 670 Research Methods in Design	2 cr
Emphasis Elective	3 cr
<hr/>	
	10 cr

### Year Two

#### Fall

LARC 652 Land Development Principles	5 cr
LARC 653 Research Planning or Project Programming or Thesis Development	3 cr
LARC 696 Graduate Seminar	1 cr
<hr/>	
	9 cr

#### Spring

LARC 698 Thesis	6 cr
LARC 696 Graduate Seminar	1 cr
Emphasis Elective	3 cr
<hr/>	
	10 cr

## Track II

### Year One

#### Fall

LARC 212 History of Landscape Architecture	3 cr
LARC 330 Landscape Architectural Construction 1	4 cr
HORT 260 Ornamental Woody Plants and Groundcovers	3 cr
LARC 520 Introduction to Design	4 cr
<hr/>	
	14 cr

#### Spring

LARC 550 Design Studio	4 cr
LARC 331 Advanced Grading & Stormwater	4 cr
LARC 261 Planting Design	3 cr
LARC 223 Computer Graphics in Landscape Architecture	3 cr
<hr/>	
	14 cr

### Year Two

#### Fall

LARC 650 Land and Environment Planning and Design	5 cr
Emphasis Elective	4 cr
<hr/>	
	9 cr

#### Spring

LARC 651 Community Planning and Design	5 cr
LARC 670 Research Methods in Design	2 cr
Emphasis Elective	3 cr
<hr/>	
	10 cr

## Year Three

### **Fall**

LARC 652 Land Development Principles	5 cr
LARC 653 Research Planning or Project Programming or Thesis Development	3 cr
LARC 696 Graduate Seminar	1 cr
<hr/>	
	9 cr

### **Spring**

LARC 698 Thesis	6 cr
LARC 696 Graduate Seminar	1 cr
<hr/>	
Emphasis Elective	3 cr
<hr/>	
	10 cr



## **Courses Description**

### **LARC 212 History of Landscape Architecture – 3 cr. Fall Semester**

A broad survey of the history of the designed human environment with emphasis on the development of landscape architecture.

### **LARC 223 Computer Graphics in Landscape Architecture – 3 cr. Spring Semester**

Application of basic computer graphics to include drafting, rendering, and visualization software used in developing landscape architectural plans and environment analysis.

### **HORT 260 Ornamental Woody Plants and Groundcovers – 3 cr. Fall Semester**

Design uses, ornamental qualities, cultural requirements and identification of woody plants and groundcovers in West Virginia. Field course.

### **LARC 261 Planting Design – 3 cr. Spring Semester**

Study of planting design theory and practice, including uses of plants in site and environmental design, planting design techniques and preparation of planting plans, construction details, and technical specifications.

### **LARC 330 Landscape Architectural Construction 1 – 4 cr. Fall Semester**

The study of the technical principles of grading design, their application to site planning, and preparation of land form grading plans.

### **LARC 331 Advanced Grading & Stormwater – 4 cr. Spring Semester**

Study and preparation of parkway plans (road alignment), surface and sub-surface drainage plans, advanced grading plans, and cost estimates.

### **LARC 520 Introduction to Design – 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 considerations, circulation and parking, management, and cost factors. Also includes basic computer graphics.

### **LARC 550 Design Studio – 4 cr. Spring Semester**

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 650 Land and Environment Planning and Design – 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.

**LARC 651 Community Planning and Design** – 5 cr. Spring Semester

Design studies focused on community planning, community development, and community growth. Integration with a community design team or other outreach project.

**LARC 652 Land Development Principles** – 5 cr. Fall Semester

Brief history of land development. Design studio involving large scale design; projects with extensive time implementation sequence.

**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.

**LARC 670 Research Methods in Design** – 2 cr. Spring Semester

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 696 Landscape Architecture Seminar (I, II)** – 1 cr. Fall and Spring Semesters

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

**LARC 698 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.

**Emphasis Electives**

Beyond the required courses and seminars, the student should choose 12 or more 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.

## **Public Disclosure Information**

### **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-ontcampus#table-4> .

The School of Design and Community Development has an annual allotment of Meritorious Tuition Waivers that can support students' expenses for University Tuition. College tuition and other fees are the responsibility of the graduate students. 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/fellowships> .

Further graduate scholarship opportunities can be found here:

<https://graduateeducation.wvu.edu/funding-and-cost/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.

**Contact**

Stefania Staniscia  
Program Coordinator  
Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture  
(304) 293-5543  
stefania.staniscia@mail.wvu.edu  
4316 Agricultural Sciences Building