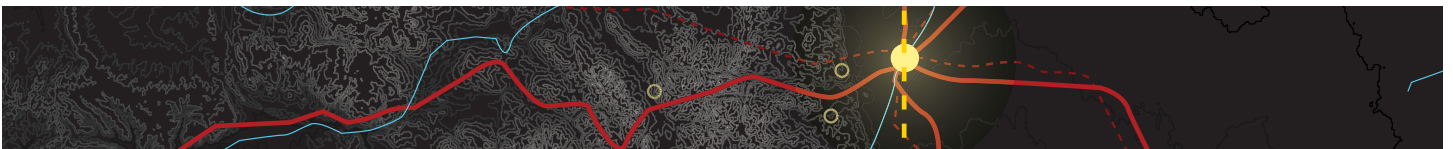




CHAPTER 6

OUTREACH TO THE INSTITUTION, COMMUNITIES, ALUMNI AND PRACTITIONERS



6. OUTREACH TO THE INSTITUTION, COMMUNITIES, ALUMNI & PRACTITIONERS

STANDARD 6: *The program shall have a record or plan of achievement for interacting with the professional community, its alumni, the institution, community, and the public at large.*

INTENT: *The program should establish an effective relationship with the institution, communities, alumni, practitioners and the public at large in order to provide a source of service learning opportunities for students, scholarly development for faculty, and professional guidance and financial support. Documentation and dissemination of successful outreach efforts should enhance the image of the program and educate its constituencies regarding the program and the profession of landscape architecture.*

A. INTERACTION WITH THE INSTITUTION, AND PUBLIC

1. How are service learning activities incorporated into the curriculum?

The faculty embraces service learning as an effective and important means to instruct, to enhance learning, and to be meaningfully engaged with our communities. All faculty have done something to create or seek out opportunities to incorporate service learning in their classes. Faculty and students participate in initiatives created by college and its research centers that also address engaged learning and activities. There are many examples of this as it is an integral educational anchor to our program's courses and the mindset of the faculty and students, who will participate in a service learning opportunity at least twice during their time in the program.

One current example comes from Assistant Professor Jody Beck, who has done extensive work in exploring the issue of human well-being and hunger, studied through questions of food security the Denver metro area. One recent example is the spring 2015 Studio 2 project "Exploring Agricultural Potential within Denver." Students addressed actual projects for their clients – the People's Community Food Pantry, the Impact Empowerment Group, the Mo'Betta Green Marketplace, the Garden at Park Hill and the Sunshine Food Project, and Sprout City Farms. Their final proposal, publicly available in a report, asserts that "... we could grow 288 million pounds of produce within the city limits of Denver itself, enough to supply the fresh fruit and vegetable requirements for the city" on lands available and suitable for the purpose. This fall Professor Beck will continue exploring this issue in a unique seminar partnered with the School of Public Health and sponsored through the CU Denver InWorks program.

Another example is the extensive work done by Professor Lois Brink through her Learning Landscapes initiatives in our department. Created to address the issues of childhood health and to strengthen learning and community, this initiative enables our students to work on schoolyard designs with school constituents. Our students also partner with local landscape architects who collaborate with them in design development and producing construction documents. The work Brink accomplished in Denver has laid the foundation for ongoing work in other urban centers. In AY 2014-15 when she was on sabbatical, Professor Brink expanded the scope and operations of the initiative to Philadelphia. Her work there similarly includes the community and its schoolyard but also addresses the spaces as green infrastructure critical to the ecology of the city. This will be the focus of her advanced landscape architecture design studio in Fall 2015.

Through the Learning Landscapes Initiative Professor Brink pioneered the department's foundational efforts in "Design Build" projects. This legacy was then furthered in projects after

Hurricane Katrina when the department worked in the Lower 9th Ward in New Orleans from 2006-2010. One respondent to the alumni survey of 2105 wrote, "working in the Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina" was their most outstanding education experience, and another that it was "Working in real communities on real projects post-Katrina" in New Orleans.

In 2011 the Design Build Bluff Project, managed through the Department of Architecture's signature design build program, included a landscape project; this work -- "Shade Structure" --won a national ASLA Community Engagement Award in 2012. We are seeking our next opportunity for this important facet of the learning experience to reaffirm our participation in CU Denver's "Learn with Purpose" exemplified through hands-on experiences.

While these highlights demonstrate the department's inclusion of service learning through design studios there are other notable examples. Associate Professor Joern Langhorst has addressed service learning in a studio project he led that focused on Fourmile Canyon near Boulder, and the attendant environmental and community issues following the devastating fire there in 2010.

The college's Resilient Colorado program also has focused on the aftermath of a disaster, the 2013 floods affecting Lyons and other communities along the St. Vrain watershed. Senior Instructor Lori Catalano's "Plants in Design" course worked with Lyons to investigate re-vegetation of wetlands near their city center. Currently, she is the department liaison with the college's Colorado Center for Community Development [CCCD] and the "Hometown Colorado" Sustainable Cities initiative for Lakewood, CO. Our program will offer three classes tied to this initiative in AY 2015-16.

Finally, there are examples of classes tied to design investigations and studies addressing our own campuses. Over the last five years faculty members have worked with the University's Office of Institutional Planning, and benefitted from alumnus Makenzie Pett who works in that office. Senior Instructor Lori Catalano's design studio earned high praise from Mary Somerville, University Librarian and Library Director at the Auraria Library, for their inspired solutions for redesigning the library as the heart of the campus. Associate Professor Ann Komara and Adjunct Professor Bill Wenk both ran studios developing public spaces on the campus, and each dealt with issues of water. Instructor Emmanuel Didier's studio did exploratory work for the Anschutz Medical Campus, developing options for healing gardens that also would serve as research sites concerning nature affinity for Alzheimer's patients. Senior Instructor Leila Tolderlund has led efforts to introduce green roofs to the campus, with her signature efforts aligned with the College of Engineering and the IRIS [Integrated Research for Integrated Systems] project. Her classes and work have been largely focused on addressing trans-disciplinary, intelligent, and resilient design using Participatory Action Research (PAR) strategies to help mitigate global social, environmental and economic challenges. She believes that PAR projects that are collaborative and 'hands-on' generate student participation, set the stage for holistic design thinking for our students and their work.

While these are highlights and recent examples, it is clear that the department has a lineage of projects and initiatives indicating a deep commitment to service learning and its role in our curriculum. We envision creating an immersion semester that would make such experiences even more directly tied to our program's delivery.

2. *How are service activities documented on a regular basis?*

The department creates annual outcomes reports, submitted to the university, which document these activities as they have occurred in classes during that academic year. In addition, the Program Chair uses faculty meetings as a forum for discussing courses and opportunities; these would be documented in our meeting minutes. Finally, an individual faculty member would record such activities in their annual "Faculty Report of Professional Activities" [FRPA].

3. *How does the program interact with the institution and the public, aside from service learning?*

The faculty as a whole interacts with the institution and the public through multiple avenues. In part this reflects a contractually required percentage effort of service, however, faculty are committed to service in their multiple communities – institutional, academic, and professional, as well as the communities in which we live. To name but a few examples demonstrating this, faculty members volunteer their time for local efforts, and serve on local and national boards and committees, as members of task forces, as peer-reviewers for scholarly journals and conference abstracts and proceedings, and as guest speakers at local events and symposia.

Examples within the institution are faculty who serve as members of committees like the campus Outcomes and Assessment Committee, the Digital Humanities Task Force in partnership with Auraria Library, and the Faculty Senate.

One example bridging the institution and the public domains is the “UCD Mini School for the Arts”. Held on the CU Denver campus, this public outreach program, an initiative of the graduate school, was part of a series that also included medicine and the humanities, as follows: “Faculty from CU Denver will present on topics related to Arts & Architecture, and the lectures will be understandable to every interested layperson. The Mini-School for Arts & Architecture is free for all, and those who do attend at least 6 classes will receive a certificate.” Two landscape architecture faculty members participated, presenting one evening of content in March 2014.

Examples of external public interactions are extensive and diverse. These include faculty participating on review teams for the Denver Arts & Venues Review for Public Art, as outreach through the Learning Landscapes Initiative, and as a volunteer consultant on post-disaster recovery projects for the United Nations, High Commissioner for Refugees (with emphasis on emergency infrastructure, and short-, mid- and long-term redevelopment).

On a final note, for the past two academic years one of our students has been an ex officio member of the University of Colorado Design Review Board, who attends all meetings and takes minutes of the meetings.

4. *How does the program assess its effectiveness in interacting with the institution and the public?*

Assessments occur to track the effectiveness of the learning experience, which has proven that these efforts are a substantive and impactful component of the educational curriculum. At this point, there are no defined policies or assessment practices that allow us to measure our impact in the community or institution. What impact we can ascertain comes from the comments of the constituents (written and verbal), or from other forms of external recognition of the effort – news articles, awards, public forum comments, and so on.

B. INTERACTION WITH THE PROFESSION, ALUMNI AND PRACTITIONERS

1. *How does the program recognize professional organizations, alumni, and practitioners as resources?*

The program benefits greatly from a robust and active professional community in the Denver metro area and the state. Many of our alumni practice in the state, although we also have a national and international presence through our alumni. Design and planning professionals, as well as others involved in community organizations and the arts, come to the school to participate in design reviews, guest lecture in classes, and speak as invited guests in our college-wide lecture series. We have also been privileged to be able to hire practitioners to teach design studios and other classes in which they bring their expertise and perspective.

Our students visit professional offices to tour and learn about the work and practice; the student ASLA chapter typically arranges these tours. The student chapter also hosts a portfolio review where students receive feedback from local design professionals. Students may also intern with firms and engage practitioners as mentors. The college has a part-time staff member who manages these opportunities, along with the ACE Mentorship program. Many of our students participate in these avenues for professional enrichment. In a recent alumni survey, one respondent wrote, "The relationships with Professors and Professionals in the industry has been beneficial and vital to my success."

Of similar import, at the "Professional Input Sessions" held in spring 2015, the idea arose for an Extern Program. Externships are experiential learning opportunities, similar to internships, provided to give students short practical experiences in their field of study. This program, introduced to the Department of Landscape Architecture for fall 2015, invites our graduate students to explore a career interest in a realistic learning environment outside of the classroom. Participating students spend at least one week with sponsoring firms and organizations. The benefits to the sponsoring firm or organization are also great-- extern sponsors appreciate the opportunity to observe the capabilities and interests of motivated College of Architecture and Planning students and can benefit from their skills, knowledge, and fresh ideas. Alumni can utilize the extern experience as a mentoring opportunity, or as a way to give back to the school.

2. Does the program maintain a current registry of alumni that includes information pertaining to current employment, professional activity, postgraduate study, and significant professional accomplishments?

The college does not maintain its own registry of alumni. The formal registry of alumni of the college, and therefore of the program, is the responsibility of the University of Colorado Denver's Office of Alumni Relations, and by extension, also tied to the Office of Advancement. The department identified improving our list as a pressing need and for the last few years the Department Chair and Associate Chair have been working to cultivate connections with alumni and expand our alumni contact list. We do maintain an unofficial alumni list.

The department hosts a LinkedIn group for alumni of the program. The college maintains a Facebook site for alumni and friends, and the college hosts a blog as well.

3. Does the program use the alumni registry to interact with alumni?

Yes. They receive newsletters and other college information, and some specific departmental updates. The College of Architecture and Planning's weekly announcements are sent to those alumni who are on file and have not opted out of this information; it covers sections on faculty, students, alumni, college news and events, and local news and events that are related to our programs and interests.

In direct contacts, in fall 2014 alumni received an invitation to join the department for a reunion during ASLA's annual conference in Denver. In June 2015 alumni were invited to participate in an alumni survey for the program.

4. How does the program engage alumni, practitioners, allied professionals and friends in activities such as a formal advisory board, student career advising, potential employment, curriculum review and development, fund raising, continuing education, etc.?

We have just recently been able to place a landscape architect, Don Brandes, an alumnus of our program, on the Dean's Advisory Board. Mr. Brandes is also a member of the University of Colorado Design Review Board. The Program Chair also engages local professionals and alumni who serve as informal advisors. It is highly likely that a departmental Advisory Board will be reconstituted in the next year.

As noted in other earlier sections of this chapter, alumni participate in Portfolio Reviews, as guest critics in design studios, and as mentors. Through their firms they host interns and externs. They also reach out to the department when positions open in their firms to allow us to connect students to these important job openings.

A group of four alumni formed a local steering committee for the alumni reunion event held last November 2014 during the ASLA annual conference in Denver; their efforts contributed directly to the high attendance (over 230 guests) and to the success of that event, the first alumni reunion held by the department.

Alumni were also involved in the "Professional Input Sessions" held in spring 2015 to gain feedback on the program. They were asked to complete a survey in the weeks immediately following these sessions; the summary of that survey is included in the appendices.

Finally, alumni are donors to the program – their gifts support the department, students through scholarships, and program initiatives such as thesis.

5. *How does the program assess its effectiveness in engaging alumni and practitioners?*

There are, of course, informal means of gauging effectiveness through conversations, job circumstances, and through other professional interactions.

Formally, our effectiveness has been assessed through an alumni survey run in June 2015. This survey was the first officially undertaken by the department using the University of Colorado Denver's Office of Institutional Reporting. We worked closely through the spring semester with that office to design the survey instrument, and it will serve as a baseline survey questionnaire for future surveys. They also helped us develop the survey instrument that was a follow-up to the "Professional Input Sessions" held during April, 2015. The summary of that survey is included in the appendices.