

**Proposal to change the Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA)  
to become an accredited degree.**

**1. Name of the degrees**

a. Master of Landscape Architecture [First professional, accredited degree]

**2. Name of the Major**

Landscape Architecture

**3. Graduate degree to which it applies**

Master of Landscape Architecture

**4. Name of the department**

Landscape Architecture

**5. Other existing areas of specialization**

None specifically; currently have a singular MLA and dual degree options with Architecture and Community and Regional Planning

**6. Required or optional**

Students in the program will select degrees based on undergraduate degree and career objectives.

**7. Rationale**

The faculty of the department of landscape architecture voted in May 2009 to seek accreditation for its MLA degree (the BLA has long been accredited). This decision came from a year-long review of the graduate program, and considered market realities and peer institutions, as well as a desire to increase opportunities for focused teaching and scholarship.

The major reason for the proposed changes is to become competitive with other graduate programs which typically offer a three-year master's degree for students with a bachelor's degree who wish to become practicing landscape architects. This audience historically has been the largest market for the MLA nationwide. At Iowa State, most of our department's graduate students presently utilize a "concurrent BLA/MLA" program

to obtain an accredited degree, a process which typically requires 5 full years of residency because of studio requirements and sequencing. This long time frame is undesirable for most students, who already have a bachelor's degree in another field, and renders our program less competitive. In addition, because the current MLA program is not accredited (students in the concurrent program receive an accredited BLA), it is virtually invisible in professional resources used by prospective students searching for accredited graduate programs. Finally, the concurrent degree has been a source of confusion for students and the accrediting body (the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB)) alike, due to a lack of understanding of which courses apply to which degree, particularly in terms of the BLA's general education electives in areas such as basic English composition, history and humanities.

As a result, the faculty proposes that the department reconfigures the existing Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) to become an accredited professional degree. This degree will concentrate on basic professional competencies necessary for taking the licensing exam, along with advanced studies in a focused area of landscape architecture, as per accreditation standards. The revised MLA degree will be targeted to the student with a non-design undergraduate degree who is looking for a professional practice program. Accreditation for that degree has been requested and provisional status is anticipated to be granted in September 2010. We expect a full accreditation after a team visit in 2012.

#### 7a. Peer Comparisons

Iowa State University's accredited MLA degree would be the only such degree offered in the state of Iowa (including public and private institutions). A large number of universities offer both accredited first professional bachelor's and master's degrees in landscape architecture, including:

- California State Polytechnic University
- University of Florida
- **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**
- Kansas State University
- University of Maryland
- Mississippi State University
- State University of New York
- **Ohio State University**
- Clemson University
- Texas Tech University
- Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
- Florida International University
- University of Georgia
- Ball State University
- Louisiana State University
- University of Massachusetts
- Cornell University
- **North Carolina State University**
- University of Oregon
- **Texas A&M University**
- Utah State University
- University of Washington

(peer institutions in bold)

Among our public university land-grant peer institutions, seven of the nine institutions offer an accredited first professional master’s degree (commonly termed MLA 1 in the discipline) along with an unaccredited “second” or non-professional master’s option (commonly termed MLA 2). The Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) only accredits the first professional degree.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Degree Options</b>	<b>Min. Credit Hrs</b>	<b>Degree Type</b>
Illinois	BLA (LAAB) MLA (LAAB) MLA	152 (5 years) 78 (3 year) 48 (2 year)	1 <sup>st</sup> professional 1 <sup>st</sup> professional Post professional
Minnesota	MLA (LAAB) MSLA	88 (3 year) 30 (1 year)	1 <sup>st</sup> professional Post professional
Ohio State (quarters)	BSLA MLA 1 (LAAB) MLA 2	154 (4 years) 113-118 (3 year) 71 (2 year)	1 <sup>st</sup> professional 1 <sup>st</sup> professional Post professional
Michigan State	BLA only (MLA at Uof Mich)		
North Carolina State	BLA MLA 1 (LAAB) MLA (Advanced)	157 (5 years) 82 (3 year) 48 (1.5 year)	1 <sup>st</sup> professional 1 <sup>st</sup> professional Post professional
Texas A&M	BLA (LAAB) MLA 1 (LAAB) MLA 2	150 (5 year) 81 (3 year) 49 (2 year)	1 <sup>st</sup> professional 1 <sup>st</sup> professional Post professional
Arizona	MLA 1 (LAAB) MLA 2	70 (3 year) 40 (2 year)	1 <sup>st</sup> professional Post professional
Purdue	BLA only (MLA at Ball State U)		
Wisconsin	MALA/MSLA	36	Post/Non-professional

## **8. Program requirements**

### ***MLA***

The reconfigured MLA is the proposed accredited first professional degree, with a target audience including (but not limited to) students with undergraduate degrees in related disciplines such as ecology, horticulture, civil engineering, or some of the social sciences and arts. In general, these are students seeking to enter landscape architecture with the intent of practicing as a licensed professional in either the public or private sectors. Like a BLA, the accredited MLA degree will provide students with the basic skills and knowledge required for professional competency as measured by a licensing exam. However, the MLA, per LAAB requirements, is differentiated from the BLA by the depth and specialization of inquiry.

The proposed curriculum shown below thus utilizes some of the department’s existing bachelor’s degree courses to provide basic professional practice skills and competencies. This is common for many universities which offer both bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

Of the peer programs above, both the University of Illinois and North Carolina State University have major overlap between their graduate and undergraduate curricula to deliver professional skills.

While the curriculum requires bachelor's degree courses (to allow us to deliver this program using current faculty resources), **graduate-level work is accomplished through a minimum of 30 credits of advanced courses, both required and elective, at the 500-level.** These courses are *highlighted in italics* in the curriculum chart below.

As per LAAB requirements, this coursework also provides a chance to concentrate study in a topical area of practice, through coursework and/or an optional thesis. Students' concentrations--in areas such as history-theory; design-art; ecology; hydrology; community design, etc--will be determined by the student in conjunction with his/her major professor and will be designated in a Program of Study, to be completed by the end of his/her first year. Electives may be selected from within the department and college as well as from other departments across campus. To ensure graduate level work and meet the minimum of 30 credits of graduate level work, at least 12 of the electives (out of 18 total) must be completed at the 500-level or above (graduate courses highlighted below). Item 10 below lists existing graduate courses in the department and college available to students as electives. As master's programs in both our department and the college continue to grow, we also anticipate our students will be able to take advantage of increasing offerings of interdisciplinary graduate-level electives in all college departments.

<b>MLA: Accredited First Professional Degree</b>			
Year 1: Core Professional Skills and Graduate Seminars			
Fall		Spring	
3	LA 373: Landscape Architectural History to 1750.	6	LA 202: Site Planning and Design I
3	<b><i>LA 582: Grad Seminar</i></b>	3	LA 274: Behavioral Aspects of Design
3	<b><i>LA 578G: Design Representation</i></b>	3	LA 282: Landscape Dynamics
3	LA 221: Midwestern Plants	3	LA 222: Introduced Plants
12	<i>Credits</i>	15	<i>Credits</i>
Year 2 -- Intermediate Professional Skills and Methods			
Fall		Spring	
6	LA 301: Neighborhood Planning and Design	6	LA 302: Ecological Planning and Design
3	LA 381: Design of Intensively Managed Landscapes	3	<b><i>LA 501: LA Theory</i></b>
6	Concentrat'n Elective (3-500-level)	3	LA 441: Professional Practice
		3	<b><i>Concentration Electives (500-level)</i></b>
15	<i>Credits</i>	15	<i>Credits</i>
Year 3: Advanced Professional Skills and Specialization			

Fall		Spring	
6	<b>LA 504 (proposed dual listed with current 404) or LA 501 (proposed, dual listed with 401): Urban Design or Community Design Studio</b>	6	<b>Dsn S 546: Interdisciplinary Design Studio</b>
3	LA 481: Construction	3	LA 482: Construction II
6	<b>Concentration Electives (500-level)</b>	3	<b>Concentration Electives (500-level)</b>
15	<i>Credits</i>	12	<i>Credits</i>
<b><i>This curriculum shows 84 total credits: 33 graduate level credits plus 51 bachelor level credits.</i></b>			

### **MLA with optional thesis or creative component**

As described above, the MLA 1 program requires students to take two 500-level studios, which provide a “capstone” experience for students. However, for MLA students wishing to do research, perhaps in support of a future academic career, an optional thesis/creative component could be completed within the three-year period by taking LA 504 as part of the department’s summer Rome Program, and then substituting courses as follows:

<b>SUMMER OF YEAR 2: ROME PROGRAM</b>			
6	<b>LA 504: Advanced Landscape Design</b>		
1	LA 309 Field Travel/LA 590 Independent Study		
7	<i>Credits</i>		
<b>Year 3: Advanced Professional Skills and Specialization</b>			
Fall		Spring	
6	<b>LA 501:Community Design Studio</b>	6	<b>LA 599/699: Thesis/Creative Component</b>
3	LA 481: Construction I	3	LA 482: Construction II
3	<b>LA 541: Research Methods</b>	3	<b>Concentration Electives (500-level)</b>
2	<b>LA 580: Thesis Prep</b>		
14	<i>Credits</i>	12	<i>Credits</i>
<b><i>This optional thesis MLA curriculum shows 90 total credits: 38 graduate level credits; 52 bachelor’s level credits.</i></b>			

(Briefly summarized, this table shows 6 concentration electives substituted with LA 541, LA 580, and the time left open by taking a studio during the summer leaves 6 credits of intensive thesis in the spring of the last year). Alternatively, students *not* desiring to study abroad may also complete a thesis by appending 1 to 2 additional semesters completed in the summer and/or fall following completion of the third year.

## **9. Estimated Number of Students/Projected Enrollments**

Historically, the department has enrolled an average of 15 students in the graduate program, but has seen a steady decline over the past 6-8 years. The majority of enrollees are seeking the first professional degree. With the proposed degree specializations, our target cohort size is 15 students (twelve MLA 1 students pursuing first professional degrees and three MSLA students pursuing research degrees).

## **10. Resources**

The department of landscape architecture, like most programs offering both bachelor's and master's degrees, is able to find synergy between the two programs in offering the 1<sup>st</sup> professional degree classes and studios. Existing bachelor's degree courses will meet many of the accreditation requirements.

The master's level concentrations for the MLA will be met by current 500-level course offerings in the department that include:

### Current 500-Level LA Classes

- LA 501: LA Theory (3)
- LA 541: Research Methods (3)
- LA 567: Advanced GIS Modeling (3)
- LA 578A, 578B, 578C...578N: Special Topics (2-3)
- LA 582: Graduate Seminar (3) (renamed, revised for 2011-13 catalog)
- LA 590: Independent Study (var)
- LA 591: Environmental Law and Planning (3 cr)
- DSN S 564: Advanced Option Studio (6 cr)

We also propose dual-listing two upper level studios (LA 404/504: Advanced Landscape Design and LA 401/501: Community Design) thereby bolstering course content for a distinctively graduate-level studio. We also hope to cross-list two CRP graduate-level GIS classes (CRP 552/553) with LA, since these classes are consistently taught by LA faculty for that department. Finally, over the next catalog cycle we anticipate that a few existing graduate courses (LA 562, LA 572, LA 565) will be dropped in favor of developing new graduate courses or increasing special topics courses listed as 578. These changes will allow us to easily meet student needs with existing faculty resources.

In addition, the MLA will utilize existing graduate courses in other departments in the college and across campus, which is necessary and appropriate given the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of landscape architecture. In the past, these have included:

### 500-level Courses fulfilling Concentration Elective requirements:

- Arch 519: Middle Eastern Cities
- Arch 527: History, Theory, and Criticism of Chinese Architecture
- Arch 535: Advanced 3Dimensional Studio
- Arch 567: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration
- Arch 528A, 528B...528E: Topical Studies in Architecture

Arch 571: Design for All People  
Arch 575: Contemporary Urban Design Theory  
CRP 504: Why Change Anything  
CRP 545: Transportation Policy Planning  
CRP 552: Geographic Data Management and Planning Analysis  
CRP 553: Analytical Planning/GIS  
CRP 584: Sustainable Communities  
(and others in these departments, NREM, and other departments)

We expect current budget concerns will spur the development of increased interdisciplinary offerings within the college, particularly in terms of graduate level studios.

Finally, faculty in the department of landscape architecture are highly productive in research relative to the other design disciplines in the college, and therefore have elevated demand and resources for research/scholarship-oriented students. The department has an increasing number of faculty with the Ph.D. in addition to professional degrees, and we therefore expect this trend in increasing research to continue. Consequently, program growth is expected to fund additional faculty lines over time.

**11. What Future Financial Support is needed?**

None anticipated.

*Note: this document has, as of 3/29/10, been approved by*

LA Department Graduate Curriculum Committee;

LA Department Faculty;

College of Design Academic Affairs Council;

College of Design Faculty;

Graduate College Curriculum Committee;

Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee