



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE SINCE 1926

Department of Landscape Architecture  
The University of Wisconsin - Madison

AUTUMN 2013

## Greetings

from John Harrington and the Landscape Architecture Department

*Welcome to the fall issue of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Landscape Architecture Department newsletter. Despite the colder temps and shorter days, the Department has had a very warm and bright fall.*

We recently finished an accreditation visit that was all we could wish for. As part of the accreditation process, we wrote an extensive report on the Department's faculty and staff resources, curriculum, student numbers and graduation success, alumni support, budget and facilities. The Department hosted a visit in November by a team composed of one practitioner, one academic administrator and one landscape architecture program faculty member. Our team this year included Ken Fowler (Rialto Group), Vini Nathan (Dean of Architecture Auburn University), and Judith Wasserman (University of Georgia). To receive accreditation, we are required to meet seven standards. If any of these are met with weakness, the visiting team can make recommendations that must be addressed before the next visit, and the progress in doing so is reported on annually to the accreditation board. I'm happy to report that our Department passed all standards with no recommendations! The committee commented on our extremely strong alumni support. Thank you!

During the visit, we also learned that the Department was ranked 14th in the **Design Intelligence** rankings of accredited landscape architecture programs. These rankings are based on employer reactions to students they hire. Inherently, these rankings are biased toward



the larger programs that graduate large numbers of students. Our Department is one of the smaller landscape architecture programs in the country. To be ranked in the top 20 speaks well of this program and the students we graduate.

The Department's newest edition of **Contour** is on our website. If you have not yet seen this document, I encourage you to do so. It is a catalog of our seniors' capstone projects, and their work is exceptional.

This fall, we also announced the University of Wisconsin-Anderson Japanese Gardens Internship. This is joint internship with the **Anderson Japanese Gardens** in Rockford, Illinois. It is a competitive internship open to rising juniors and seniors. The internship runs for 10 weeks and rotates through all aspects of activities at the Anderson Garden, including design, management, marketing and event planning. Other duties include maintenance, planting, construction and other "hands-on" work. The internship includes trip(s) to visit with

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Hoichi Kurisu, the head designer of the garden, either in his Portland office or at one of his active construction sites. Finally, the intern will work with staff at the Rosecrance Garden located at the **Rosecrance Griffin Williamson Campus**, an adolescent substance abuse facility. The student will also be given time to work on his/her own project.



I just returned from the **American Society of Landscape Architects** Annual Convention where I had the opportunity to visit with alumni and practitioners who employ our former students.

Their reports about our students were very positive. The Alumni Tailgate was well attended; perhaps one of the larger groups of alumni there. I noted that the convention brochure used a photo of our alumni gathering last year to promote this year's tailgate.

At the annual meeting of administrators from landscape architecture programs across the country at the ASLA Convention, some concerns facing the profession were discussed. One is the pressure on landscape architecture programs at public institutions where budgets are tightening and another is a decline in students selecting landscape architecture as a career. Your help in promoting the profession to high school students or young college students that you might interact with is needed. The attending department chairs also recognized a lack of diversity in the profession. Again, your help in promoting the profession to minorities and ethnic groups is needed.

At the same time, the profession is being recognized in areas beyond its traditional design discipline. At the recent **International Society for Ecological Restoration** Conference, held in Madison this year, several sessions focused on landscape architecture and its contribution to this field. One ecologist noted that, based on his recent experiences, he would always want to involve a landscape architect on restoration projects as their contribution in the planning and design process was invaluable. Our newly revamped website contains a link to an article highlighting

this relationship between ecologists and landscape architects published in *The Dirt*, a weekly blog that covers the latest news on the built and natural environments and features stories on landscape architecture.

Much has happened in the Department since our last newsletter, and I can't report on all of it here, but one last item I am happy to share is about our new hires. We recently hired Travis Flohr to teach GIS for design and planning. Travis has a BLA and MLA from Penn State and is finishing a PhD at the University of Colorado in Denver. We have also initiated a search for a faculty specialist in environment and behavior. This position requires at



least one degree in landscape architecture and will teach studios, seminars and lecture courses. And, this spring, we are hiring an academic staff position to teach advanced computer graphics to our students.

Please continue to send us updates as to what you are up to, job changes, new projects that you are involved with, family updates, etc. We enjoy hearing from and about you. With your permission, we will also publish these updates in future newsletters in a section on alumni news.

As we approach the holiday season, I wish you all good health and happiness in the year to come.

Best,

*John*

We always enjoy hearing from our alumni. Please share your news concerning employment, promotions and family with us.

**Council Ring**

Autumn 2013

**Editor/Designer:** Mary Sussman

**Contributors:** Elyse Eastman, John Harrington, Mary Sussman

# LABash is back in March 2014

by Elyse Eastman

**UW-Madison** will be hosting this academic year's **LABash**, an annual conference for students in Landscape Architecture. The conference will be held March 27th through 29th and will feature a variety of lectures, workshops, charrettes, and social events. It is a



great opportunity for the Landscape Architecture Department to showcase current student work and celebrate the success of the program. It is recognized as a great networking event for students in the

United States and Canada and provides an opportunity for attendees to learn about different landscape architecture programs throughout the country.

## HISTORY

The history of the conference dates back to 1970, when the first LABash was held at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. Students from Guelph started the event to provide landscape architecture students, as well as students from similar fields, an opportunity to network with other students and professionals in the field, observe other programs, and celebrate landscape architecture.

Since then, the event continued at a different school annually. A handful of students from UW-Madison's Landscape Architecture Department has been attending the



conference every year for at least the past several years. UW-Madison's attendees of LABash 2012 won in the bid to host the conference in

## WHAT TO EXPECT

The theme for this year's event, "naturally designed," plays on the environmental tradition of the Landscape

Architecture program here at Madison. The UW-Madison's Landscape Architecture Department offers a program that focuses on ecology as a foundation for design and encourages naturalistic and restorative ideals. Moreover, the theme reflects the physical setting of the school, being situated at the core of Madison's urban setting while still containing a variety of natural areas. The students look forward to showcasing the environmental work being done in Madison, as well as showcasing what it means to be a student at the UW-Madison. In addition, the planning committee is looking into ways to market the Landscape Architecture program to the student body on campus, for example by showcasing displays and the products of workshops in various locations around campus. Part of the planning includes coordinating social events each night of the conference. The planning committee is currently looking into holding an event at the Madison Children's Museum, as well as a couple other venues on/near campus.

**Save the Date**  
**March 27-29, 2014**

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The students hope to receive support from UW alumni in a variety of ways. Several students from the planning committee will be hosting an alumni mixer in celebration of this event. The mixer is tentatively scheduled for March 27, 2014. Location and details about the alumni mixer will be released within the coming months, and donations toward LABash will be encouraged. However, donations can be sent at any time prior to the event. If you would like to support the department and the students who are planning this event at this time, please email [labash2014@gmail.com](mailto:labash2014@gmail.com) for more information. Last, a list of alumni as potential speakers and workshop hosts has been compiled for the event and anticipated to be set soon.

If you would like more information about the conference, please check online at [LABash2014.com](http://LABash2014.com). Updates will be made frequently as more information becomes available in the coming months.





## Integrative design builds community and expands creativity

by Mary Sussman

Imagine a circle of equals in which everyone has a chance to speak and to think design in a way that respects all viewpoints and encourages innovative thinking.

“Instead of one or two people in charge with sub-consultants working independently, you begin with a circle of equal minds who understand each other’s value,” says **James Steiner**, senior lecturer in landscape architecture.



Steiner has recently been hired to be the outreach coordinator for UW-Madison’s **Center for**

**Integrative Design** (C4iD) in the School of Human Ecology and is on the planning committee for Design Summit 3, which will be held on February 20, 2014, at the **Wisconsin Institute for Discovery** (WID). He expects this year’s event to be bigger than ever, with the goal to feature a nationally known speaker on innovative thinking as part of the event.

“Integrative design thinking is a way to solve many creative problems,” Steiner says. “Essentially you have the problem in front of you and a time frame in which to solve it.”

Steiner says the philosophy behind integrative design thinking is that the collective mindset can freely and efficiently solve the problem in a more innovative way than having individuals struggle to work independently. The process requires more communication is at regular intervals but by the end the team members have bought in.

**C4iD**, while initially directed at promoting design thinking on the UW campus, is reaching out to an expanding circle of designers in Wisconsin. Steiner says they are inviting members in the corporate community and others who incorporate design thinking as part of their teaching or work to Design Summit 3. This includes IT software designers, web designers, 2D designers, product designers,

artists, engineers, architects, and landscape architects.

“Last year, a valuable takeaway from the event was the realization that all these different people identified themselves as designers,” he says. “A primary focus of the integrative design process is that it is interdisciplinary. You take people with a shared, collaborative mindset and put them together for a specific creative purpose. Then you start to solve problems in a fluid, somewhat organic way. The process is being applied in medicine, business, communications, to almost any kind of creative problem that has a human-centered focus to it.”

Steiner says a current example of design thinking in academia is the “d school” at Stanford University, a hub for innovators that integrates design thinking between students, faculty, and business professionals. He hopes that one day the Center for Integrative Design could become a similar hub for design thinking on the UW-Madison campus.

“In my observation, there’s still some mystery between what is taught in design studies, architecture, engineering and landscape architecture,” he says.

“One of my personal goals with C4iD is to break down walls and use the integrative process to foster better communication between design thinkers.”

“One of my personal goals with C4iD is to break down walls and use the integrative process to foster better communication between design thinkers. Ag Hall is literally next door to the place where interior design, textile design and apparel design are being taught, and yet we don’t fully understand what they do.”

Steiner says people in different disciplines have more in common than they realize. “Many people in business and academia are operating in what are termed ‘silos,’ essentially trying to solve problems in an isolated, non-interactive way,” he says.

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“It’s as if you believe that your neighbor doesn’t want to know you and you ignore him. Then one day you actually do get together and discover that you have many things in common and a lot of mutual interests. That’s what I’m finding. There is interest in design thinking and people are curious about the process.”

To help encourage design thinking, C4iD is working with the Department of Landscape Architecture to develop new programs. These programs include a summer design studio, which blends architecture, interior design, and landscape architecture, and an independent study project with Jojin Van Winkle, an artist and graduate student from Virginia, who is exploring how moving image and sound can promote a greater understanding of environmental issues and human compassion.

In addition, C4iD is organizing an integrative process workshop for **LABash**, a student-run landscape

architecture conference that attracts students from all over North America. LABash will be held on the UW-Madison campus on March 27-29, 2014.

On January 4th, 2014, Steiner will be hosting an interactive display for children at WID’s Saturday Science on Climate Change and Energy Resources, a winter event that attracts hundreds of local children interested in science and the environment.

In addition to these programs and events, Steiner is collaborating with **Charlie Quagliana**, an adjunct professor in the civil and environmental engineering department to create an integrative design class for spring 2014. Engineering and landscape architecture students will work together to do pond and site restoration at **Taliesin** in Spring Green, Wis. The students will explore solutions to restore parts of the site to the way it was in the 50s and work

collectively on ideas to restore water quality as well as redesign bridges, roads and dams on this historic site.

“Our collaboration on the Taliesin project will be a good example of how the process can have value,” Steiner says “Instead of the engineering students thinking ‘landscape architects can’t talk about bridges and structures because they don’t know about those.’ And the landscape architecture students thinking ‘engineers can’t talk about plant ecology, because they don’t know about that.’”

He says that design thinking is about getting people to understand the other person’s thought process, so the whole team leaves with a broader understanding and appreciation of how the problem is solved. In order to make the integrative process work, teams must share a common interest in solving the problem, have respect for each other’s value to the team, and promote a willingness to listen and learn.

## UW GEODESIGN CERTIFICATE MOVES AHEAD

by Mary Sussman

**G**eodesign is an emerging field that incorporates technology into the process of design. By tying places to geographic locations using coordinates, geodesign allows a landscape architect to evaluate the environment as he/she develops a design.

“I think landscape architects have always done geodesign in the sense that we collaborate with multiple disciplines and often integrate stakeholder and user input to evaluate the environment, and design and planning proposals from multiple standpoints,” says **Doug Hadley**, senior lecturer in landscape architecture.

What is new about geodesign is that it uses geographic information systems (GIS) and other nascent technology to help the designer more effectively collaborate with natural and social sciences, more efficiently include stakeholder and user input, and more accurately evaluate the impact of different design choices on geographic places.

“I think what really distinguishes geodesign is its ability to use models to evaluate outcomes accurately and quickly,” Hadley says.

Currently, landscape architects scientifically map where the wetlands or steep slopes are and create algorithms to determine how they interact and affect a design proposal, or how a design proposal affects them. Then at some point a decision is made and a plan is developed.

But with geodesign and the use of evaluation models, designers can model impacts. Using geodesign software such as **City Engine** or **Community Viz** means that planners can evaluate design alternatives quickly.

“In an urban context I can design a city block to include five-story buildings specifying certain types of building materials and fenestration and see how much it costs and then, within minutes, create a completely different build-out scenario and make a comparison between the two,” Hadley explains.

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Designers can see the effects of different street layouts on stormwater runoff by creating alternative scenarios that could include curbs or no curbs, medians or no medians, and a variety of other factors.

“And I can do it on the fly,” Hadley says. “These types of evaluations can be done at a number of different scales for a number of different purposes, and along a continuum of environmental contexts ranging from wild landscapes to very urban landscapes.”

The speed of the process allows a designer to immediately show his clients the impact of a particular model without having to go back to the office to recalculate.

“If it’s set up properly, we can show somebody in real time, right in front

of them, that alternative A has these quantifiable impacts on habitat, stormwater runoff, or flooding, for example, and then change the model’s inputs and illustrate how Alternative B has different impacts upon these systems,” Hadley says.

Hadley is part of the cross-UW system Geodesign Committee, which is a collaboration between the UW-Madison Department of Landscape Architecture and the GIS Center at Stevens Point. The committee is developing an online post-baccalaureate certificate in geodesign for the University of Wisconsin system.

While still in the planning stages, Hadley anticipates that it will be a 15-credit continuing education capstone certificate that will appeal to those already working in the field

or professionals who would like to work in the field. It will require five three-credit courses to complete. A student would be able to complete the certificate in a year but could take longer if it would fit better into their schedule.

The Geodesign Committee is working with Wisconsin’s state cartographer, Howard Veregin. UW-Madison landscape architecture professors Janet Silbernagel and John Harrington have been working with Hadley on the committee, along with Keith Rice, Doug Miskowiak, Tim Kennedy and Gene Martin of UW-Stevens Point.

The Geodesign Committee has been meeting regularly and hopes to have a package ready to put before the approval committee by early 2014.

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