

DPLA Strategic Plan

Directions, Priorities & Strategic Goals—Fall 2020

This brief document provides a snapshot summary of the overarching future directions, priorities, and strategic goals for the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture as of Fall 2020. This strategic plan is a living document and is intended to link with more focused strategic plans developed by the department’s degree programs, outreach programs, and research/design labs. The intention is for the Department Chair to review and refine this plan annually with input from faculty, staff, students, and additional stakeholders.

Outline

- I. Context: Mission, Vision, Expectations, and Commitments
- II. Current Snapshot
- III. Strategic Advantages
- IV. Continuing and Anticipated Challenges
- V. Strategic Goals
- VI. Monitoring, Review, and Renewal

I. CONTEXT

Our department reflects the mission and values of the University of Wisconsin–Madison [[link here](#)] and the College of Letters and Science [[link here](#)].

UW–Madison Department of Planning & Landscape Architecture

Mission

Our scholarship and educational activities will advance sustainable and livable communities, cities, and regions that are vibrant, thriving, and resilient. We do this through integrative teaching, research, and public engagement that seeks solutions to serve human needs and protect the integrity of natural environments. The department, based upon the disciplines of landscape architecture and urban and regional planning, provides opportunities to explore interdisciplinary research, design, planning, and policy analysis at local, regional, and global scales.

Department Vision

We are a dynamic network of scholars and stakeholders working to advance healthy, prosperous, equitable and sustainable built and natural environments in the tradition of the Wisconsin Idea and from the local to the global scale.

The Wisconsin Idea signifies a commitment to public service in higher education and research to reinforce scholarship that influence people’s lives and communities. This is the guiding philosophy of the University of Wisconsin and a value of the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture.

Expectations for department inclusion, diversity, and collegiality

The Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture is committed to establishing and maintaining a supportive climate of inclusion, diversity, and collegiality among our interactions and through our actions and policies. We envision a department in which all individuals are engaged in a vibrant learning community, where ideas, experiences, and perspectives are supported, nurtured, and developed to their highest levels. *Attitudes, behaviors, and standards* within our community will demonstrate inclusion and respect for individual needs, abilities, and potential.

We commit to the expectation that all members of the new department will treat each other with dignity and respect and that inequitable treatment, incivility, bullying, and harassment will not be tolerated (from Enhancing Department Climate, WISELI 2015). Because of our shared interests and mutual goals, all members of the new department commit to supporting collegial and collaborative efforts that ensure the success of the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture. We value all forms of scholarly inquiry.

Commitment to Our Learning Community

The Faculty, Staff, and Students of the Department of Planning and Landscape Architecture are committed to:

- Value and respect all members of our community, faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students.
- Maintain a diverse, inclusive, vibrant, stimulating, welcoming, and excellent academic experience and work environment.
- Prevent identity-based discrimination in the department. [What is identity-based discrimination and misconduct? Please see definitions at <https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/> or the FAQ at <https://doso.students.wisc.edu/bias-or-hate-reporting/>]
- Prevent identity-based misconduct in the department.
- Support survivors of identity-based misconduct.
- Support student organizations and student initiatives.
- Be aware of students' needs and concerns and address concerns that come to our attention.
- Create a department environment that models mutual respect, safety, and accountability.
- Hear and honor the input we receive through the climate surveys and other sources of input.
- Actively seek and encourage student, staff and faculty input in department decision making.
- Demonstrate commitment to diversity and inclusion through our decisions and actions.
- Communicate with all members of the department about changes, actions, and progress towards achieving our goals.

We will continue to monitor, evaluate, and take steps to improve our everyday interactions, classroom instruction, delivery of academic and research programs, and professional development activities.

II. CURRENT SNAPSHOT

As of May 2020, the department is completing its third academic year as an independent unit with the College of Letters and Science, building upon the programs, faculty, staff, and students of the former departments of Landscape Architecture (in CALS) and Urban & Regional Planning (jointly in CALS/L&S). We continue to refine our programs and administrative systems to meet the breadth of needs of our academic, research, and outreach programs in the context of our mission, vision, expectations, and commitments.

Faculty and Staff:

15 tenure track faculty
 5 Permanent Instructional academic staff
 4-5 recurring short-term instructional appointments
 7 Outreach and research academic staff
 5 Administrative team members
 36 faculty and staff in the department

Students:

	Graduates past 2 academic years	Current Students	Admission goal for new students next Academic Year
LUS Major	1	7	20
BLA/BSLA	25	37	22
MSLA	4	9	2-3
MS URPL	23	29	25
PhD URPL	3	14	1-3

Other metrics:

- An important measure for L&S: the ratio of “% credit hours per % 101 payroll within L&S” = 0.40, based on 2,817 total student credit hours [for AY18-19] (target = 0.80 and 5,650 SCH by AY22-23)
- Other measures important to L&S for faculty: articles over the past 4 years, citations over the past 5 years, awards, grants over the past 5 years, books over the past 10 years, conference proceedings over the past 4 years
- **[other measures to be added in the future such as additional research and publications metrics, rankings, student/program awards, diversity, more...]**

III. STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

PLA has multiple strategic advantages and assets, including the faculty, staff, and students and alumni who make the department what it is. Several additional items are highlighted here.

- The scope and breadth of issues and societal challenges encompassed by our fields across urban, rural, and regional contexts, along with their multiple dimensions (human, socio-economic, institutional, environmental).
- Accredited landscape architecture and urban planning programs with professional applied-thinking emphasis and links to professional associations and alumni.
- An institutional environment that supports teaching, research, service, and a connection to practice.
- Support for the Wisconsin Idea and our proximity to urban, rural, and highly valued environmental places for putting that idea into practice through teaching, research, outreach, and professional development.
- A future orientation grounded in understanding of context, cultural, systems and interdisciplinary approaches to thinking and problem solving.
- Strong relationships with other UW–Madison units, including a long history with the Division of Extension, and partner connections throughout UW System.

IV. CHALLENGES

We continue to address multiple challenges identified by students, staff, and faculty around achieving our mission and vision and meeting our community expectations and commitments to students. In addition to working on those improvements, we have several high-level challenges to keep in mind.

- Financial limitations associated with dependency on state/UW-funding resources (including limited independent revenue, research and foundation funds).
- Low and fluctuating student enrollment numbers in courses and degree programs.
- Risks of departmental fragmentation and loss if our communications, interactions, disciplinary alignments drift or become neglected.
- Disadvantages associated with being a small unit on a large campus and with poor public understanding of our professional fields and research areas.

V. STRATEGIC GOALS

Overarching Goals

1. Strengthen department cohesion to ensure welcoming and inclusive workplace and learning environments

- 2. Focus on our students and achieve high levels of student satisfaction**
- 3. Strengthen our research and academic degree programs as reflected in accreditation, national standing, and student enrollments**
- 4. Reinforce relationships with campus and communities through the Wisconsin Idea via scholarship that integrates academic, professional, and community interests**
- 5. Secure the financial health of the Department to ensure we have the resources and capacity to accomplish our goals**

We strive for these goals while looking to the future to identify and act upon new and emerging needs and opportunities.

Guiding Priority Actions

1. Strengthen department cohesion to ensure welcoming and inclusive workplace and learning environments

- Move entire department into a combined physical space with upgraded facilities by 2025.
- Establish and support events and opportunities for cross-program, community-building faculty and student engagement (e.g., continue lecture and recognition events while hosting new symposia and exchange opportunities).
- Ensure open lines of communication within the department by sharing information proactively and responding to needs of the department community.
- Nurture engagement with alumni and professional associations through regular activities and communication.
- Expand the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of our department faculty, staff, and students through hiring opportunities, student recruitment, and shared experiences.
- Support research and scholarship opportunities for faculty, staff, and students and share new results and findings within the department.
- Explore opportunities for departmental connections with aligned programs at UW Milwaukee through joint projects and communications.
- Pursue opportunities to incorporate new technologies and reinforce foundational elements related to cross-cutting aspects of Planning, Landscape Architecture, and related fields.
- Reinforce connections between department and campus diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and practices, such as the department climate committee as well as anti-racism and gender equity in our research, teaching, outreach, and department life.

2. Focus on our students and achieve high levels of student satisfaction

- Nurture and reinforce student engagement in degree programs and the life of the department by supporting student associations and individual student needs.

- Facilitate and support positive student experiences around academic and professional practice of planning, landscape architecture, and our related fields in the department.
- Provide clear communication to students about degree/program expectations, advising, department activities, and professional opportunities.
- Ensure high quality in our teaching and course offerings through continuing professional development for instructors and adaptation to changing needs.

3. Strengthen our research and academic degree programs as reflected in accreditation, national standing, and student enrollments

- By July 2021, complete and update strategic plans for each degree program that identify continuing and emerging program needs and establish program goals and priorities.
- Define the Wisconsin brand for each degree program.
- Exceed accreditation expectations for our professional degree programs.
- Coordinate and improve our student recruitment efforts.
- Pursue opportunities for courses that serve multiple programs (e.g., combined workshops/studios, common research and seminar courses, modules for technology or the art of professional practice).
- When feasible, explore and initiate new degree or certificate programs that reflect emerging needs in the realm of planning, landscape architecture, and ecological restoration.
- Improve the stature of our programs through increasing publication of research and scholarly work among program faculty, staff, and students.

4. Reinforce relationships with campus and communities through the Wisconsin Idea via scholarship that integrates academic, professional, and community interests

- Market our department activities and contributions and increase our visibility *through social media, professional associations, research, and published works*.
- Support partnerships with campus entities who share similar/overlapping missions and goals.
- Continue and strengthen *the long legacy of* funding and partnership relationships with the Division of Extension.
- Support projects and initiatives advanced by our Research and Outreach programs (such as Earth Partnership, Kaufman Lab, Heath and Built Environment Lab, Environmental Design Lab).

5. Secure the financial health of the Department to ensure we have the resources and capacity to accomplish our goals

- Pursue new opportunities to add funding and personnel that will advance our long-term mission and program needs (e.g., where appropriate, cluster hires, Target of Opportunity candidates, partial appointments, and spousal hires; and including academic staff and faculty positions).
- Anticipate personnel changes over a 5-year horizon, and as opportunities arise, consider a balance of instructional positions to meet the department's varied teaching and

advising needs (e.g., TAs, short-term staff, adjunct, Lecturer, Professor of Practice, tenure track faculty).

- Facilitate acquisition of extramural funding through support for grant submission, award management, and project staffing.
- Demonstrate value to college and campus by improving in their key metrics (e.g., increase Student Credit Hours, increase enrollment, publish scholarly works, generate extramural funding).
- Improve breadth of financial resources available to us through private giving and organizational partnerships.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, REVIEW, AND RENEWAL

Individual strategic actions will occur at the committee and department level, through proposals and follow through activities that align with these strategic goals and priorities. These may include activities such as: initiating new courses that draw large enrollment through the LUS Major Program Committee; organizing a new winter recruitment event for admitted students or students considering any of our degree programs; starting a new intra-department student design competition; improving opportunities for students to connect with alumni; or hosting a weekly writing group or coffee chat. Many such ideas were generated through suggestions from students, staff, and faculty during this past academic year.

Annually, the Department will review and refine this plan to document progress and adapt to changing circumstances. Opportunities for input by students, staff, and faculty will emerge throughout each year and could include informal discussions, special meetings, program-level or committee discussions, online surveys or other forums. The intention is to maintain priorities and strategic goals that serve our mission and reflect the need of our departmental community.