



UMass Amherst's Educational Effectiveness Plan (EEP) provides departments with an ongoing structure for conducting systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of their efforts to support student success. Departments initially developed and submitted their EEP inquiry plans and evidence gathering strategies in spring 2018 and are asked to provide updates on their progress on a regular basis. EEP activity is also incorporated into the University's strategic planning process – with departments including their EEP progress and findings into their 2021 Strategic Planning Refresh. What follows is the department's most current reporting, as synthesized by the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA).

Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning EEP

Note: This is a summary only of the Landscape Architecture Program.

Landscape Architecture

Identify the evidence you currently use (beyond GPA) to determine that your undergraduates have achieved the objectives you have for them.

- SRTI review of courses by Department Personnel Committee and Department Chair. We periodically customize SRTIs by adding course-specific learning objectives to the SRTI evaluation form.
- The program is reviewed for accreditation every 6 years by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board, and evaluated on the professional standards set by LAAB.
- Studio courses present final projects at department-wide public presentations attended by faculty and invited guests. Periodically, during the studio presentations, faculty have used the course learning objectives to evaluate how well objectives have been achieved for that particular studio class. We then use this evidence to discuss course changes at faculty curriculum planning meetings. The physical space where students meet for their studio classes is a transparent learning environment in which students interact with faculty and their classmates, and engage in an iterative process of assessing their work in the context of the learning objectives and experiential goals of the studio class and the BSLA program.
- The Integrated Experience capstone course includes a reflection paper and capstone project. For LandArch 494LI, BSLA students write papers in which they reflect on their courses in the major as well as general education courses. In addition, other courses use class exams, projects, and final papers.
- BSLA accreditation requires a survey of alumni every 6 years to determine how learning objectives translate into career skills
- UMass graduating senior surveys.

Please describe the focus of your inquiry and explain why this inquiry is important to your department right now.

Line of Inquiry 2018: The learning objectives for the BSLA program have traditionally been framed by the professional requirements of the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB). Through the process of this EEP we have viewed the learning objectives through relevant VALUE rubrics established by the AACU. Although we do need to continue to conform our curriculum to give our students a working knowledge of the information, processes, and techniques used in the landscape design and planning professions, this EEP process has added a new perspective to our teaching and learning goals.

Progress your department has made toward addressing your line of inquiry, and the types of evidence that you have collected to inform your inquiry.

Our learning objectives continue to be framed by our professional requirements. To maintain our program accreditation, we are required to submit a report annually that includes a survey of alumni one year out. As required by LAAB, the accreditation board, specific questions are asked regarding their satisfaction with the professional skills learned at UMass. The lowest scoring categories were graphics and computer skills. We have since added a semester of graphics and are currently in the process of hiring a new faculty member who will teach the computer graphics class. This year we added one new question to the alumni survey to gauge the alumni's overall satisfaction with the program: "Imagine that a prospective Landscape Architecture student asked your opinion about whether or not they should apply to the UMass BSLA program. What would you encourage them to do?" Of the responses, 92% selected the response, "strongly encourage them to apply."

The BSLA program is due for accreditation review in fall 2022, so we will spend much of the 2021-2022 academic year preparing the report for the accreditation visit. In terms of the VALUE learning objectives that we articulated in our 2018 EEP report, we began to develop program-based learning objects that would be in the syllabus for all required classes and would then become questions for each class' SRTI evaluation. This would give us a way of determining if all classes were meeting program-based learning objectives. Faculty are expected to add course-based questions to their SRTI evaluations. We looked at and analyzed the course-based SRTI questions from all the required classes with an eye on finding common threads so that we could evaluate the learning objects common in all of our required classes.

What are your department's next steps regarding your continuing and/or upcoming EEP line of inquiry?

We need to re-examine the SLOs that we developed from VALUE and their relationship to our professional learning objectives, and look for the intersections between the two and ways to achieve and evaluate those objectives. In the future, we may consider broadening our questions for the annual one-year-out alumni survey, including an open-ended question

inviting input into the curriculum. We also need to begin the process of focus groups with our senior class. If we want to use the SRTI questions to assess student success in our major, we need to re-think the way in which we want to develop those questions, and what we hope to achieve by way of SRTI questions.

During the remaining half of spring semester, we plan to reach out to OAPA for assistance in developing focus groups with seniors, and initiate our first focus groups before the class of 2020 graduates. We also plan to consider what open-ended question would be helpful for the annual LAAB report (due in August) and to get faculty input on that. The faculty annual retreat is the forum for discussion of the BSLA curriculum and ways in which we can move forward with our self-evaluation process: this would be the place to open up the discussion for using the studio presentations as a venue for evaluating students' learning outcomes. In fall 2020, we are considering initiating studio reviews as part of evaluating SLOs.

In spring 2021, we plan to continue with senior focus groups, and to begin working on the BSLA 6-year Self Evaluation Report for upcoming accreditation, including collection of data to support the responses to our last accreditation report.

What are the Student Learning Objectives for your department or program(s)?

Landscape Architecture, B.S.

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Students demonstrate mastery of the skills and knowledge necessary for the profession of landscape architecture including design history and theory; natural and cultural systems; design and planning at various scales; site implementation; written, verbal and visual communication; and professional values and ethics.
- **INQUIRY & ANALYSIS:** Students investigate and analyze a range of conditions that could impact their design, from site conditions to case studies, drawing conclusions from their inquiry in order to make applications to their own design work.
- **CRITICAL THINKING + CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING:** Students envision solutions to design problems through a process in which they generate ideas and explore design solutions, combining knowledge of design precedents with existing site conditions and project requirements, weighing real-world constraints, synthesizing information, evaluating and revising alternatives, and testing their conclusions against relevant criteria, before selecting and refining one solution.
- **TEAMWORK:** Students work in collaboration with other students as members of design teams, learning to recognize and facilitate the range of talents and contributions found in multi-disciplinary project teams.
- **EFFECTIVE ORAL, VISUAL & WRITTEN COMMUNICATION:** Students communicate verbally and with visual and written documents to clearly and convincingly demonstrate their design process and explain their final proposal to a variety of audiences.

- CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: Students are able to engage a community that has a particular need, and respond to those needs as part of the design process, envisioning transformations that are socially and culturally appropriate.
- INTEGRATIVE LEARNING: Students integrate knowledge and skills that they learn, building their knowledge across three years of curriculum, integrating that knowledge and synthesizing their learning into new, increasingly complex projects.

Experiential Goals

- To work collaboratively in the pedagogical setting of the design studio where students share their work, observe and assess each other's work, and interact with their classmates in order to learn from each other; and to develop collaborative and interpersonal skills through team-based learning experiences. (Learning Objectives 3, 4, & 7 above.)
- To engage real sites, to document existing site conditions, to analyze and evaluate the site conditions and to communicate recommended actions, often to real-world stakeholders. (Learning Objective 2 above.)
- To envision design solutions through the material making of 3-D models and 2-D drawings and digital representations, and to develop design solutions through direct engagement with materials and technologies. (Learning Objectives 3 & 5 above.)
- To interact in a professional manner with different stakeholders concerned with real world design and planning projects, including public officials, community leaders, and residents. (Learning Objectives 5 & 6 above.)
- To participate in civic engagement in studios that apply knowledge and skills to an identifiable public need. (Learning Objective 6 above.)
- To participate in public presentations of design projects. (Learning Objectives 5 & 7 above.)
- Although not a program requirement, study abroad and internships are strongly encouraged