



Advocating, advancing, and evaluating quality education in Landscape Architecture

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Accreditation and Education
Director

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David Rifkind
Chair and Professor
Department of Landscape Architecture +
Environmental and Urban Design
College of Architecture + the Arts
Florida International University
Miami, Florida

Dear Professor Rifkind:

The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) at its August 2-3, 2019 meeting considered the deferred action taken at the February 2019 meeting on the accreditation of the course of study leading to the first professional MLA degree at Florida International University and decided to defer action until the next scheduled LAAB meeting. Deferment is not deemed to be an adverse action and therefore is not subject to appeal. Additionally, the program will remain accredited until a final decision is reached by the board.

LAAB Accreditation Standards state a graduate first-professional program must be a master's program equivalent to at least three academic years' duration. See LAAB Accreditation Standards, Minimum Requirements for Achieving Accreditation, p. 3. FIU offers MLA degrees with "tracks" of 5-years, 3-years, 2-years, and 1-year. In accredited MLA programs with an Advanced Placement (AP) option, the presumption is made that all of the students graduating with the MLA degree have met the curricular requirements of the full professional curriculum, either within the 3 years of the MLA program or within a shorter timeframe if credit can be awarded for prior course work. Typically, students who are awarded credit for prior course work have an earned LAAB-accredited undergraduate degree, which ensures previous coursework has met LAAB's standards. See LAAB Accreditation Standard 3B, Curriculum, p. 10-11.

As part of FIU's response to the previous deferral, the university provided information related to students enrolled in its 2-year and 1-year "tracks" such as student name, previous degree, institution which granted the degree, and whether the degree program was accredited. However, FIU did not provide the criteria used to determine the amount of credit awarded or how students placed in these "tracks" would fulfill the curriculum requirements in LAAB Accreditation Standard 3B, Curriculum prior to graduation. In addition, the materials FIU submitted suggest that the University is giving credit for courses based on the completion of an undergraduate degree in architecture, urban planning, environmental design, or architectural design even if that degree is not accredited. It also seems from the information provided that FIU is permitting students to articulate both LAAB accredited degrees and non-LAAB accredited degrees. It is therefore, not clear that all students meet the curricular requirements of Standard 3B at program completion.

Therefore, in response to the deferral, LAAB requests FIU to submit documentation that graduates completing the LAAB accredited degree have completed the expected curriculum requirements of a full professional curriculum pursuant to Standard 3B. For all students listed in the program's deferral response dated July 15, 2019, please provide documentation demonstrating which courses in the students' undergraduate degree or previous academic experience were identified to justify the waiver from: Graduate Design 1 and 2, Computer Practices in Landscape Architecture 2 and 3, Landscape Construction, and one elective course. Additionally, please provide an updated policy for determining the criteria for awarding credit for prior course work, speaking specifically to comparability of course content and rigor, and ensuring the student will graduate having completed the expected curriculum requirements of a full professional curriculum under Standard 3B.

Also, please note that the LAAB accredits programs and not individual "tracks." Please update FIU's website and other materials referencing the program and its accreditation accordingly and submit documentation of such updates with your response.

A response to the foregoing is due on or before December 1, 2019.

In deferring its decision, LAAB considered the institution's response to the accreditation deferral letter, the program's self-evaluation report, the visiting team report, and the institution's response to the team report.

Sincerely,



Rodney Swink, FASLA, PLA
LAAB Chair

cc: Mark B. Rosenberg, President