



Advocating, advancing, and evaluating quality education in Landscape Architecture

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August 28, 2020

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Matthew Kirkwood, ASLA
Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Landscape Architecture
North Dakota State University
Fargo, ND

Dear Professor Kirkwood:

The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) at its July 30-31, 2020 meeting considered the deferred action taken at the February 2020 meeting on the initial accreditation of the course of study leading to the professional MLA degree at North Dakota State University (NDSU) and decided to grant initial accreditation for a period of two (2) years. This status is subject to review of annual reports and maintenance of good standing.

In response to the March 16, 2020 deferral letter, NDSU informed LAAB that the Department of Landscape Architecture is now an independent department, no longer shared with Architecture. This move facilitated the Department's ability to develop its own curriculum and update the MLA program, accordingly, to address accreditation concerns. This process resulted in a change in the structure and curriculum sequence following a "3+2" model.

NDSU also provided an updated Professional Curriculum Structure document outlining the new "3+2" model, which includes a note informing students that:

- Application to the MLA program occurs at the conclusion of the first year.
- Transfer students may be accepted into the third year with approved transcripts.
- Students apply to the Graduate School during the third year.
- After three years of undergraduate study the student officially enters the MLA Graduate School and has two years of graduate study.

The response also includes an action plan as requested in the deferral letter. The action plan states that:

- The updated curriculum will become official at the university level for the Spring 2021 Semester.
- The course content has been approved by the Landscape Architecture faculty and will be incorporated in the Fall 2020 syllabi.
- The course sequencing and numbering method changes were communicated to the registrar, and the Department, College, and University curriculum committee chairs and will be officially reviewed and recorded in September 2020.

The clarifications made by NDSU in the June 30 response address the issues and concerns stated by LAAB in the deferral letter. Based on those clarifications and the action plan to implement the revisions officially by Fall 2021, LAAB believes a two-year accreditation period will allow the program enough time to fully implement the revisions outlined.

Accreditation is awarded on a time-certain basis. The two-year period of accreditation ends June 30, 2022. Accordingly, the MLA program at North Dakota State University is next scheduled for a review during the spring of 2022. As stated in the LAAB Accreditation Procedures, accreditation applies to degrees awarded within two years prior to initial accreditation.

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

Enclosed is a list of recommendations affecting accreditation that should be considered and addressed in time for the next scheduled review. This list was developed by LAAB from the materials reviewed during the meeting.

On behalf of the visiting team, I would like to thank you for the hospitality extended to them by the faculty, staff, and students.

Sincerely,



Joy Lyndes, ASLA
LAAB Chair

Enclosure

cc: Dean L. Bresciani, President

**North Dakota State University
MLA Program
LAAB Meeting
July 30-31, 2020**

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations Affecting Accreditation

1. Provide consistent and accurate information in the MLA program materials and descriptions (Standard 1).
2. As the program is restructured, the LA program is to be responsible for the leadership and management functions of the program (Standard 2).
3. The research methods and thesis preparation course work should be developed over a timelier sequence and with content that is appropriate to the range of research methods that are commonly used in professional practice (Standard 3).
4. Expand the thesis expectation to include a final document that includes a critique, summary and conclusions of the research as it includes the applied research of the design project (Standard 3).
5. The program must ensure that qualified graduate faculty serve as the primary advisors for all Master's thesis work (Standard 5).

Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board

Interim Report

Date:

Section 1.

Name of Institution:

Name of Department:

Name of Program:

Date of Decision Letter:

Section 2.

Recommendation Affecting Accreditation: (Describe verbatim the Recommendation Affecting Accreditation identified in the Decision Letter that is the subject of this Report and attach the Decision Letter. If Decision Letter identified more than one (1) Recommendation Affecting Accreditation, complete an Interim Report for each Recommendation.)

Section 3.

Action Taken by Program: (Describe the action taken by the Program to address the Recommendation Affecting Accreditation identified in Section 2 of this Report. Attach any appropriate documentation that supports the action taken by the Program)