Advocating, advancing, and evaluating quality education in Landscape Architecture

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Dear Professor Russell:

The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) at its July 29-30, 2021 meeting granted candidacy status to the course of study leading to the professional MLA degree at University of Cincinnati. This status is subject to review of annual reports and maintenance of good standing.

Candidacy is an accreditation classification granted to any program which is in the planning or early stages of development or an intermediate stage of program implementation. This accreditation classification provides evidence to the educational institution, licensing bodies, and the public that at the time of evaluation, the developing education program appears to have the potential for meeting the standards set forth in the requirements for an accredited educational program in landscape architecture.

After achieving candidacy status, a program must apply for initial accreditation within one year of when its first graduating class will occur. If initial accreditation is not granted, the program can retain its candidacy status for one additional year.

In making its decision, LAAB considered the program's self-evaluation report, the candidacy review report, and the program's response to that report.

Enclosed is a list of recommendations affecting accreditation and considerations for improvement to be addressed and in compliance with accreditation standards by the initial accreditation visit. This list was developed by LAAB from the materials reviewed during the meeting.

The program is reminded that LAAB published revised Accreditation Standards in January 2021 that clearly lay out the requirements of the degree length and degree title for an accredited graduate professional degree in the Minimum Requirements for Achieving and Maintaining Accredited Status as follows:

3. A professional program offering an accredited graduate professional degree must meet the following degree-length requirements:

    a. The graduate professional program, leading to a Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA), must be a single degree program that has a minimum number of total credit hours equivalent to its institution's definition of three academic years of full-time graduate enrollment.

    b. A professional program may allow for advanced placement of up to one academic year of study, provided it has a clearly articulated policy and criteria for advanced placement and demonstrates how the professional program determines whether an applicant meets the criteria. The advance placement may be counted towards the minimum requirements referenced in 3.a. above.

    c. Any professional program that offers a degree with Master of Landscape Architecture or MLA in the degree title must meet the requirements of the LAAB accreditation standards. This includes a professional program that offers an MLA degree with an advanced placement track or pathway. Any institution that offers a program or track leading to a degree with the words "Master of Landscape Architecture" or "MLA" in the title and does not comply with these Standards is not eligible to offer any accredited MLA degree.

4. An institution may offer a program leading to a degree with the title "Master of Science in Landscape Architecture" or "Master of Arts in Landscape Architecture" that is not an accredited degree in Landscape Architecture without jeopardizing the institution's accredited degree in Landscape Architecture. In offering such a degree, an institution must disclose that the degree is not accredited in its public statements and to CLARB.

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

Sincerely,

Jack Ahern, PhD, FASLA, FCELA
LAAB Chair

Enclosure

cc: Neville G. Pinto, President

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Recommendations Affecting Accreditation

1. Refine the description of the MLA degree program to make more clear that it is a single degree program with track options that are appropriate for students who enter with no previous disciplinary background, or with some disciplinary background or with an LAAB-accredited undergraduate degree background (Standard 1).

Considerations for Improvement

1. Update the mission and objectives in a manner that provides plans for enrollment growth of both students and faculty into the future (Standard 1).

2. Develop strategies for giving the Landscape Architecture Program a more visible presence in the DAAP building and in the community and state (Standard 1).

3. Edit the program website and MLA Handbook to update the accuracy of the program's mission, objectives, educational experiences, accreditation status, student achievement, program costs for a full-time student for one academic year, estimated housing costs per year, average costs of books and materials per year, student retention and graduation rates, number of degrees per year, percentage of students with timely graduation (Standard 1).

4. Develop strategies and cultures of improved communication and shared governance within the School of Planning and the DAAP College that will help the Landscape Architecture program advance its mission (Standard 2).

5. Evaluate MLA capstone projects and their course deliverables with a goal to encourage deeper development of applied research and of technical design (Standard 3).

6. Enhance the visibility and values of curricular opportunities afforded by certificate programs and co-op learning experiences (Standard 3).

7. Develop, support, and implement strategies of effective student recruitment (Standard 4).

8. Explore strategies for more effective recruiting amongst University of Cincinnati undergraduate students (this includes undergraduate programs in DAAP and in other majors in other UC colleges (Standard 4).

9. Provide and implement plans for long-term stability and future expansion and renewal of faculty. Renewal presumes future retirements or vacancies that will need to be replaced. Expansion and renewal should also create opportunities for more landscape architecture

faculty participation in research, scholarship, service, curriculum enrichment, and creative exploration (Standard 5).

10. Broaden the mission and objectives in a manner that encourages and facilitates faculty and program participation and collaboration with the missions and programs across the School of Planning and the DAAP College (Standard 5).

11. Develop and implement strategies to provide resources and opportunities for landscape architecture faculty to make meaningful contributions to interdisciplinary programs and to DAAP Strategic Futures (Standard 5).

12. Develop School of Planning faculty development policies and practices that encourage and grant Graduate Faculty Status to a significant portion of Landscape Architecture Faculty with continuing appointments and terminal MLA degrees and the associated faculty privileges of serving as Chair of MLA thesis committees (Standard 5).

13. Continue enhancing the visibility and the contributions of the achievements of the landscape architecture students and the faculty to its various constituencies and communities within the institution, the region and the professional communities (Standard 6).

14. Evaluate the studio space needs to accommodate full cohorts of student enrollment and make plans to provide and equip those spaces as enrollment grows (Standard 7).

15. Develop means for enhancing the sense of presence of the Landscape Architecture Program and improve program identity at the arrival of the School of Planning office and at the primary entries into the DAAP building complex (Standard 7).

16. Enhance the landscape architecture identity and wayfinding from DAAP building entries to the SOP office for guest and visitors (Standard 7).