Texas A&M landscape architecture programs ranked among best in U.S.

Texas A&M’s undergraduate and graduate landscape architecture programs are among the best in the country, according to 2011 rankings recently published by the Design Futures Council, a leading design industry collaborative.

Texas A&M’s Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, a five-year professional degree program, was ranked second in the nation in the DFC’s Nov./Dec. 2010 DesignIntelligence newsletter, which also ranked the university’s Master of Landscape Architecture as the nation’s third best graduate program in the discipline.

“Clearly, the ranking is a reflection of the sustained dedication of our talented faculty, staff, and students,” said Forster Ndubisi, head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning. “It results from their relentless pursuit of excellence, the implementation of strong curricula, substantial investments in technology, as well as the unwavering support of our external advisory board and sustained efforts of the department and college to provide the best learning experiences for our students.”

The DFC rankings are based, in part, on survey responses from leading practitioners who have direct experience hiring and evaluating the performance of recent design graduates. Survey participants, drawn from a database of leading firms throughout the United States, were asked which college and university programs best prepare students for professional practice.

Urban planners’ paper cited as year’s best by Journal of the American Planning Association

A paper penned by an assistant professor of urban planning and a former graduate student at Texas A&M has shattered myths about the safety of suburban road and related community design, said associate editors at the Journal of the American Planning Association, who selected the paper for prestigious journal’s 2009 Best Paper Award.

The paper, “Safe Urban Form: Revisiting the Relationship Between Community Design and Traffic Safety,” was written by Eric Dumbaugh, a member of the Texas A&M Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning faculty since 2006, and Robert Rae, who earned a Master of Urban Planning degree from Texas A&M in 2008. It appeared in the quarterly journal’s 75th volume.

“The Best Paper Award is a high scholarly honor in the field of planning,” said Sam Brody, associate professor of urban planning and director of Texas A&M University at Galveston’s Center for Texas Beaches and Shores. Brody earned JAPA’s Best Paper Award in 2007.

Dumbaugh and Rae, who now works as an analyst in the Dallas office of the built environment consulting firm Kimley-Horn and Associates, received the award at the APA’s April 13 national planning conference in New Orleans.

In their paper, the authors demonstrate how many of the safety assumptions embedded in contemporary community design practice are not substantiated by empirical data.
FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

Department excels while navigating fiscal challenges

The 2010 – 11 academic year was very busy as the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning worked to strengthen the quality of its academic, research, service and engagement programs in the face of fiscal stress confronting the university and state of Texas.

Like many universities across the nation, Texas A&M is faced with rising enrollment demands and declining state funding. There appears to be widespread public doubt and concern with the cost, access to, and quality of higher education. We have heard calls for increased transparency, accountability, and outcome assessment in the delivery of education. As a result of declining state revenues, the last year has been challenging as we are increasingly called upon to do more with less.

In summer 2010, for example, all Texas A&M colleges were asked to make permanent 10% budget cuts that came in addition to prior college-level budget reductions made during the 2009/10 academic year. Though the effect at the departmental level was even more dramatic, we’ve adjusted accordingly and are operating as lean possible while re-emphasizing our priorities and exploring innovative ways to increase extramural funding. Fortunately, the department’s updated strategic plan and directions have helped us navigate through these challenging times.

**Action 2015: “Education First”**

One major university-level initiative was the development of Action 2015: “Education First,” a five-year strategic plan that challenges the university to redefine higher education by rejecting the traditional separation of teaching, research and service. Instead, the plan insists on “Education First,” as an inseparable and interdependent mix of missions that interrelate, stimulate and support one another in a way that develops a new model for an American university.

The plan, which will become the “new modus operandi” for all academic units in the university, has six goals:

1) Increasing graduation rates while providing high-impact learning experiences to help students to be competitive in the marketplace,

2) Elevating the impact of scholarship,

3) Diversifying our resource base,

4) Creating clear processes and effective resource allocation,

5) Ensuring public trust, and,

6) Recognizing and strengthening the contributions of a diverse community of faculty, staff and administrators who serve Texas A&M and the state of Texas.

In December 2010, LAUP faculty, staff and students gathered for first of a series of mini workshops aimed at ensuring that the department’s strategic directions and priorities are consistent with and enhance the Action 2015 goals. We were pleasantly surprised to find that LAUP had already undertaken numerous initiatives to that end, such as providing high-impact learning experiences through service projects, international programs and globalization initiatives, undergraduate research, and integrated learning, research and service initiatives.

**Engagement**

The department continues to provide myriad service learning and engagement opportunities coordinated through the its Outreach for Community Partnership Unit. Notable outreach projects for 2010 were state-of-the-community and future possibilities plans for the cities of Sealy, Cuero, Troy and Brownwood, Texas. These plans were developed by students enrolled in the Master of Urban Planning capstone course under the supervision of Dr. Elise Bright. Additionally, urban design plans for the cities of San Saba and Castroville, Texas were created by fourth-year landscape architecture students under the direction of Dr. Michael Murphy.

Another notable service learning project was a Master of Science in Land Development capstone class conducted by Geoffrey Booth, holder of the Youngblood Endowed Professorship, in the summer of 2010, in which students developed a design and financial package to leverage an existing Texas facility for Peckerwood Gardens in Hempstead in Texas.

Booth also led a stacked undergraduate and graduate interdisciplinary course in land development that was designed to achieved learning, research and service objectives using metrics outlined in a text book authored by outstanding alumnus Dennis Jerke MLA’ 78, to analyze and report on six Texas real estate projects. The students’ research was documented in videos and reports which can be viewed on the Real Estate Development Association website. One of these projects was conducted on behalf of the Texas Historical Commission.

Such projects integrate teaching, research, service and engagement activities seamlessly by enriching student’s learning and research experiences while providing valuable service to Texas communities. They are practical embodiments of the university’s emerging Education First model.

**Study Abroad**

Last year, we also re-examined the department’s study abroad programs, especially those in Bonn, Germany and Barcelona, Spain. The faculty and students in our undergraduate programs articulated a clear set of learning outcomes with the support of new courses and an explicitly documented measurement matrix.

Under the leadership of Dr. Chang-Shan Huang, 28 students participated last fall in the Bonn study abroad program. The students presented their research on the city’s greenway infrastructure to the Bonn City Council members last December and produced impressive large-format hard cover reports. Their work was also featured in Bonn’s newspapers. This was the first semester in which students in the newly established Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Sciences program participated in a long semester study abroad program.

**Articulated & Dual Degree Programs**

Last November, the Texas A&M Faculty Senate approved LAUP proposals for articulated degree programs, which will allow high-achieving students to earn a BS-URSC, as well as either a master’s degree in land development or urban planning, in five years. Also approved and awaiting final approval by the Texas A&M President and Board of Regents are dual degrees in MUP and MSLD, and Master of Science in Construction Management (MSCM) and MSLD.

Since 2008, the department has offered...
HRRC director pitches RAVON to White House

A presidential committee on disaster reduction learned about a proposal for a nationwide research initiative aimed at lessening the effects of natural disasters in an April 1 presentation from the director of Texas A&M’s Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center.

Walter Gillis Peacock, professor of urban planning, made the presentation at the White House Conference Center in Washington, D.C. to the President’s National Science and Technology Council’s Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction.

Plans for the initiative, called the Resiliency and Vulnerability Observatory Network, or RAVON, were developed at Texas A&M and funded by the National Science Foundation and the United States Geological Survey.

The researchers envision RAVON as a collection of nodes collaborating on a research agenda aimed at providing the social science community, policy makers and society with knowledge and predictive understanding needed to reduce vulnerability and enhance resiliency of those struck by natural hazards.

APA group picks urban triangle report as ‘best student project’

“Texas Urban Triangle: Framework for Future Growth,” a 140-page report researched by Texas A&M urban planning students, was named Best Student Project by the Central Texas section of the American Planning Association during a July 17, 2009 banquet in Bastrop.

The report, issued in May 2008, researched key strategic factors shaping the future growth of the mega-region, including current and future needs for water, energy, housing, education, transportation, and other infrastructure.

Principal investigator Michael Neuman, associate professor of urban planning, Elise Bright, professor of urban planning and master of urban planning coordinator, and graduate students participated in the project.

The Texas Urban Triangle is a triangular shaped region of the state of Texas formed by three interstate highways – I-35 to the west (Dallas-Fort Worth to San Antonio), I-45 to the east (Houston to Dallas), and I-10 to the south (San Antonio to Houston). The 60,000 square mile region contains most of the state’s largest cities and metropolitan areas as well as 17 million people, nearly 75 percent of Texas’ total population.[1] The region is comparable to Florida in population size and comparable to Georgia by area.

The goals of the project, as stated in its abstract, are:

• To provide a basis for current policy and planning decisions so that a more vibrant and attractive “Heart of Texas” – its metropolitan areas, counties, and cities – provides a more sustainable environment for its residents, and their descendents and newcomers, well into the future, and
• To determine what future research, particularly at the regional scale, is needed to provide a sound basis for public policy and private investment decisions.

Lindell, partners developing water utility emergency plans

Texas A&M urban planning professor Michael K. Lindell has partnered with civil engineering and public service scholars to research the development of emergency procedures for water utility operators.

For the two-year, $377,000 National Science Foundation project, he is teaming with Emily Zechman, assistant professor of environmental and water resources engineering, Kelly Brumbelow, associate professor of water resources engineering, and Jeryl Mumpower, professor of government and public service at Texas A&M.

“In the event that a contaminant is introduced to a water distribution system, utility operators must respond quickly to protect public health, while maintaining water availability for fire-fighting, minimizing unnecessary economic losses, and avoiding false alarms,” wrote the researchers in the project abstract, “An Agent-based Modeling Framework for Response Planning to Contamination Events for Water Utilities.”

Response planning, they added, can significantly reduce risk for water utilities and is an important step in protecting public health.

Plans of action for real-time utility response are difficult to design, they wrote, based on the range of uncertainty and variability in the location, time, type and duration of contaminant.

“Moreover,” they wrote, “knowledge of how water utility customers respond to emergency situations is very limited.”

The researchers are planning to use agent-based models (ABM) to simulate the interactions of utility operators, consumers and public health agencies and their impact on the propagation of the contaminant.

An ABM is a computational model for simulating the actions and interactions of autonomous individuals with a view to assessing their effects on the system as a whole. Such a model can simulate the simultaneous operations of multiple agents, in an attempt to re-create and predict the actions of complex phenomena.

From the ABM-generated simulation, the researchers will employ optimization methods to identify general rules for choosing response options and probabilistic outcomes.
Ndubisi

Continued from Page 2

a dual Master of Architecture (M.Arch) and MSLD degree, which several students have earned. In fact, LAUP is one of the few departments in the university offering approved dual graduate degree programs.

Also, a department proposal to rename the new “Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Sciences” to “Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning” has garnered official approval. The change was needed to align the degree name with the mission and goals of the program, as well as with the skills and knowledge provided by the Texas A&M University experience. The name change also strengthens the program’s brand identity.

Top-Ranked Programs, Faculty

The department continues to benefit from impressive increases in both the quality and number of students entering its academic programs. LAUP enrolled approximately 410 students for the 2009 – 10 academic year. The Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and Master of Landscape Architecture programs increased in national rankings from fifth and fourth places respectively in 2009, to second and third in 2010, as reported in DesignIntelligence’s annual rankings of “America’s Best Architecture and Design Schools.”

The landscape architecture programs’ rankings also improved in the publication’s skills and knowledge category, placing first in communications and computer applications), second in sustainable design practices and principles); and third in design.

The latest DesignIntelligence list of the nation’s most admired educators includes Dr. Jon Rodiek, professor of landscape architecture. Other LAUP faculty who made the list twice in previous years were Dr. Michael Murphy and myself, Dr. Forster Ndubisi.

Accreditation Visits & External Reviews

The Master of Landscape Architecture program is scheduled for an accreditation visit in February 2011. The last visit earned the program a full-fledged 6-year accreditation with all the standards for accreditation.

In January 2010, the department earned very favorable external review reports on its Master of Science in Land Development and Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Sciences programs. The four-person review team was divided into two-member sub-teams, with each reviewing one of the two programs.

According to the review report, the Ph.D. program, is very close to becoming an established source of scholars for research and faculty positions in leading research universities. The land development program was also noted to be in a good position to emerge as a major national and international force in property development education and research. The department is currently implementing review team recommendations aimed a moving both programs to the next level.

In other accreditation news, after a series of impressive annual program updates to the Planning Accreditation Board, the Master of Urban Planning program’s accreditation was extended a full seven-years, through Dec. 31, 2012.

Research

In the last LAUP newsletter, I noted that the department had articulated five research priority areas:
1) Community management of natural and human-induced hazards;
2) Environmental planning and landscape architecture;
3) Housing, community, and economic development;
4) Healthy communities; and
5) Transportation mobility, access, and urban form.

These are five areas in which LAUP faculty continue to demonstrate distinguishing excellence. Together they working on almost $7 million in on-going research grants and contracts within these areas of specialization. The department’s funded research program is very solid through the continuation of on-going research as well as new research.

In the past six months, LAUP faculty have received grants from the National Institute of Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and the National Science Foundation.

In December 2010 and January 2011, for instance, two faculty members received NSF grants as part of interdisciplinary research teams. One grant funds study of the relationships between land use change and carbon fixation along the U.S. Gulf Coast. The other NSF grant establishes a Census Research Data Center at Texas A&M. With this initiative, we join a few elite universities, such as UC Berkeley, Stanford, and Michigan, that house CRDCs.

Another NSF-funded grant, which creates a “Living Laboratory” for examining post-disaster community recovery and resilience in Galveston, Texas, has employed more than 40 students over the past three years. Students in multiple planning courses have been involved in the collection and analysis of data as well as in direct application of the results to create more disaster-resilient communities.

Faculty Changes

Dr. Kenneth Joh joined the department last fall as a tenure-track assistant professor with expertise in transportation planning. A welcome addition, he bolsters our departmental strength in transportation planning. Joh and the other full-time transportation faculty, Dr. Eric Dumbaugh, both hold joint appointments with Texas Transportation Institute (TTI).

Last January, Dr. Eric Bardenhagen also joined LAUP as a tenure-track assistant professor. As registered landscape architect and an urban planner, Bardenhagen’s prime teaching responsibilities will be in the landscape architecture programs.

Another member of our faculty, Michael Teal, was reappointed as an assistant professor of practice in the landscape architecture programs. Also, the department has launched a faculty search to replace Dr. Thomas Woodfin, who last January accepted a position as the Head of the Landscape Section in the College of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma at Norman. Woodfin was the associate department head and coordinator of our Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program. Associate Professor Jodi Naderi left Texas A&M in 2010 to become a chaired professor and head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Ball State University in Indiana.

Making a Difference

As we move toward the next academic year, I am grateful for the collective support of former students and friends of the department.

We have reconstituted a new advisory board for the MSLD program under the leadership of Geoffrey Booth, the program’s coordinator. As we navigate these challenging fiscal times, I am also especially grateful for the steadfast support of our advisory boards for both the landscape architecture and urban planning programs.

Our continued and steady progress toward distinguishing our programs at the next level of excellence requires the collective support of students, dedicated faculty and staff and especially the support of our internal and external constituents.
TFS sponsors MUP student interns in small Texas towns

Eight Master of Urban Planning students at Texas A&M, sponsored by the Texas Forest Service’s Emerging Communities program, served as interns during the summer of 2010 providing planning services to small towns facing growth pressures from adjacent or nearby metropolitan areas.

The communities, which have populations ranging in size from 400 to more than 5,000, included Celina, Ferris, Manor, Santa Fe, Willis, Cut-n-Shoot, Millican, Anderson and Wixon Valley.

Managed by 2010 Master of Urban Planning graduate Anita Hollmann, the students analyzed the towns’ existing and emerging conditions, assessed land suitability for development, reviewed existing planning documents and development regulations, and offered recommendations on how the communities can preserve their environmental resources in the face of increasing growth.

They provided their findings to the communities and presented the work in October 2010 at the American Planning Association conference in San Antonio.

“Cities this size often lack professional planning staff or do not have adequate capacity to undertake long-range planning, yet they face growth from neighboring communities over which they may have little control,” said Shannon Van Zandt, MUP program coordinator.

The Texas Forest Service’s Emerging Communities Initiative identifies rapidly growing communities and empowers them to manage their resources with the future in mind, provide them with a natural resource assistance network of local, state, public and private organizations.

Graduate students create master plan for Bellville

Five graduate students at Texas A&M spent their summer providing the city of Bellville, Texas, with a comprehensive master plan for a downtown revitalization.

“The future holds great promise for this little town, with its abundance of natural resources, a small community of people and most importantly, a wealth of open spaces to manage and develop wisely,” said the studio leader, Jon Rodiek, a professor of landscape architecture. Bellville, which had 4,494 residents in 2009, is located approximately 63 miles northwest of Houston on State Highway 36.

With a grant from the city’s economic development corporation, the students, in a 123-page final report, proposed guidelines for revitalization in 12 areas: street improvements to accommodate all types of vehicles, building facades, bicycle lanes, pedestrian paths, natural landscaping, artwork, shade structures, signage, parking, lighting, seating and drainage.

They formulated the project guidelines after several preparatory phases.

First, they conducted spatial, architectural and plant life surveys of the site and its surrounding areas, and prepared base maps and printouts. Then they analyzed needs for the 12 previously mentioned areas, performed photo surveys and prepared more base maps.

After creating design guidelines, students met with Bellville’s economic development corporation team for a preliminary review, then used the input to create their final report, which they presented August 23 in Bellville.

Master of Landscape Architecture students Samantha Giordano, John Martineau, Izel Medina, Wei-Li Lai and Yixiaio Liu and Urban and Regional Science Ph.D. student Tsung-Pei Cheng prepared the plan, which is available at the Bellville Economic Development Corporation’s website: http://www.bellvilleedc.com/BEDC-Revitalization.htm.
LAND students create plan for downtown Castroville

Fourth-year landscape architecture students at Texas A&M in a spring 2010 studio presented the south Texas city of Castroville with guidelines for the restoration and revitalization of its historic downtown area.

In a 427-page final report, students presented broad concepts and alternative design scenarios to an appreciative mayor.

“… project lays out a solid plan that will significantly help guide the city into the future,” said Castroville mayor Robert Lee. “(The students’) passion for the project resulted in something we can hold in our hands and our hearts and work toward implementing.”

Castroville is rich with historical, architectural and cultural resources to be preserved as the permanent heritage of the community, said Michael Murphy, professor of landscape architecture, who led the students’ efforts. The town of 2,664 people is located approximately 25 miles west of San Antonio.

Students in the studio, Landscape Architecture Design IV, performed the project as part of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning’s Partnership for Community Outreach, established in 2005 to coordinate the department’s service and outreach initiatives.

To formulate their concepts, students:
- Created an inventory of existing community resources documenting land use, circulation patterns, historic resources, community structure and open space;
- Analyzed existing and proposed conditions in Castroville that relate to future conservation and redevelopment activities, and
- Determined goals for downtown redevelopment, historic and open space resource conservation, adaptive reuse of existing facilities and urban expansion.

“To retain the elegant and charming conditions into which many generations of the community have been born, raised, and nurtured will require that the architectural and cultural heritage be treated with greater care and consideration — respectful not only of the values of the present, but also of the foundation on which that heritage has been conveyed over the last century and a half to the present generation — the inheritors of that culture – than the last half-century of modernism has allowed,” said a passage in the report’s conclusion.

“The class hopes the proposed design ideas will help shape an understanding of new possibilities for the future based on an understanding of the past and a recognition of its present,” said the report.
MSLD students develop proposal for sustaining Peckerwood Garden

Students in the Master of Science in Land Development program at Texas A&M developed a proposal aimed at providing sustained financial security for a place one lifestyle magazine writer calls “one of the world’s great gardens.”

The 40-acre Peckerwood Garden near Hempstead, Texas, established 39 years ago by John Fairey, a Texas A&M architecture professor, is a repository for more than 3,000 varieties of rare and unusual plants from Mexico, Asia and the United States.

“Part conservation project, part laboratory, it has quite literally changed the face of American gardening,” wrote Deborah Nevins about Peckerwood in the March 2004 issue of Departures magazine.

The garden is also home to a superb collection of Mexican folk art Fairey acquired during his many plant and seed-gathering expeditions to Mexico.

Though Fairey has offered his garden and art collection as a gift to Texas A&M University, the university has been reluctant to accept it because of the cost of sustaining it, said Geoffrey Booth, the associate professor of urban planning and MSLD program coordinator who led the student project.

“Students conceptualized, designed, and structured a development proposal that could provide financial security to the garden, diversify the use of the site while increasing its value, attraction and profile, and enhance the research, teaching and service dividend from the project,” said Booth. “It’s a proposal that could help Waller County and the Texas A&M conserve and preserve this unique treasure.”

Students take a look at the gardens and a building hosting the folk art collection.

MUP students’ post-Ike population studies in Galveston garner Texas APA award

A research project providing an estimate of Galveston’s post-Hurricane Ike population conducted last spring by students in Texas A&M’s Master of Urban Planning program has won a Student Award from the Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association.

The award was presented during a luncheon at the chapter’s Oct. 8 conference in San Antonio.

In its June 1, 2010 issue, The Galveston Daily News reported the students’ estimate that the city’s population had dipped below 50,000 residents. The 50,000 population figure is significant, wrote the Daily News’ Rhiannon Meyers, because it’s a benchmark for federal funding that pays for Galveston’s Island Transit System and housing repair programs.

The students’ research results prompted a Daily News editorial, as well as public dialogue about Galveston’s future and how its population decline should be addressed, said Shannon Van Zandt, director of Texas A&M’s Master of Urban Planning program.

To make their estimate, Van Zandt said, students developed a rigorous method sensitive to the unique development patterns of Galveston.

“The students researched available data sources and assessed their validity and reliability to determine the most accurate approach for creating a population estimate,” she said. “Where secondary data sources were found to be lacking, they undertook primary data collection themselves, developing and implementing strategies for data collection.”

Besides supporting the planning efforts by the city, Van Zandt said, the estimate has garnered interest from groups involved in creating plans for specific aspects of the city, including the school district, local healthcare facilities and the state demographer’s office.

The students presented their findings to Galveston’s Comprehensive Plan Committee, Long Term Recovery Committee, local advocacy groups and those interested in the island’s recovery at an April 19 public meeting at the McGuire Dent Recreation Center in Galveston.

Urban planning students suggest improvements for downtown Sealy

Master of Urban Planning students at Texas A&M proposed new sidewalks, signage, landscaping and vehicle, pedestrian and parking solutions to improve the historic downtown area of Sealy, a small Texas town 50 miles west of Houston.

Students, led by Elise Bright, professor of urban planning, also suggested downtown Sealy could benefit from a one- or two-screen specialty theater, a bar or pub with a dance floor and German or Czech restaurants, wrote Ashley Tompkins, managing editor of the Sealy News.

The recommendations came after working with the Sealy Economic Development Corporation during the Fall 2009 semester.

“I think it was important to get fresh ideas from people that don’t live here, who are trained in community planning and have a perspective of clarity that they can see our obvious needs,” said Sealy city manager Chris Coffman.

For details, see Tompkins’ story at http://www.sealynews.com
Myriad health-related research projects under way

A Texas A&M doctoral student’s research, determining whether small neighborhood schools, when compared to larger suburban schools, better promote students’ walking to school is just one of numerous health-related research projects Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning faculty and students are currently engaged in.

The one-year study, undertaken by Urban and Regional Science student Hyung Jin Kim and funded by a $124,680 Active Living Research Grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation could eventually help school districts design and place schools that would encourage more walking and promote their communities’ social cohesion.

Kim is the sixth LAUP student to earn RWJ dissertation grant since in the last six years, according to Chanam Lee, associate professor of urban planning, who is currently involved in several health and wellness research projects representing almost $4.5 million in grant funding.

Such project currently under way include:
- “Perceived and Actual Economic Values of Activity-Friendly Environments: Willingness-to-Pay and Willingness-to Use,” Lee, principal investigator;
- “Policy Interventions for Green, Healthy and Economic School Transportation: Global Information Systems-Based Simulation and Evaluation of Multiple Policy Interventions,” Lee, co-principal investigator;
- “The Role of Sidewalk Vegetation on Creating Pleasant Microclimate for Walking and Cycling,” a Ph.D. thesis project by Young-Jae Kim;
- “Rural Town Walkability: Measuring the Effect of the Built Environment,” Lee, co-principal investigator;
- “Statewide Evaluation of Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies in Texas,” Lee, co-investigator;

Except for the rural walkability study, funded by the National Institute of Health, the other projects are funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Also, Lee and Varni have completed nine additional RWJ projects representing approximately $5 million in research funding.

Additionally, Sherry Bame, professor of urban planning, is leading a study of phone calls to 2-1-1 for unmet needs, including medical, dental, home and mental health, during hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. The three-year $750,000 study is funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

“The impact of the findings has already moved Homeland Security, United Way Worldwide, and emergency management officials to review their disaster support services during these types of extended evacuation disasters,” said Bame.

She directed students in an urban and regional science class collecting sustainability indicators from several cities as they compared data for patterns of health care access barriers and measures of health risks for vulnerable populations, along with pattern differences due to economic and demographic disparities.

In her fall Environmental Health Planning and Policy course, students explored health threats from the built environment, natural environment, disasters, biohazards and epidemics.

In a spring course, Health Systems Planning and Policy, Bame’s students have explored patterns of disease risk, types of personnel and facilities needed to treat maladies and the impact of new technology.

Student-made videos highlight MSLD banquet

The screening of student-made videos and the first ever Master of Science in Land Development Video Awards highlighted the 26th Annual MSLD Alumni Banquet, held Feb. 9 at the Langford Architecture Center on the Texas A&M campus.

The six student videos and project reports, which can be viewed online at http://tiny.cc/MSLDbideos, focused on MSLD student team projects aimed at showing how excellent planning and design creates real estate value for selected properties.

Working in teams, students created the videos to accompany written reports detailing how the planning, design, delivery and management of real estate raised property value for six select Texas projects.

In producing the films, students referenced “Urban Design and the Bottom Line: Optimizing the Return on Perception,” a book written by Dennis Jerke ’78, an outstanding alumnus of the College of Architecture.

In his book, Jerke, a Master of Landscape Architecture graduate, champions the dividend generated from high-quality, pre-investment design and investigates the benefits and impact of good design upon all facets of an urban area — the community, businesses, employees, the general public, city officials and the developer.

Three of the projects examined projects undertaken by TBG Partners, an Austin-based landscape architecture and planning firm, including Market Street in The Woodlands, the Dallas Design District and Town Lake Park in Austin. The Town Lake Park video garnered first place honors in the TBG Partners category of the MSLD Video Awards competition.

The other three student projects featured work undertaken by the Texas Historical Commission, including the Lampasas County Courthouse, the University of St. Thomas in Houston, and the Wharton County Courthouse. In this category, the video featuring the Lampasas County Courthouse placed first.

The annual MSLD banquet, emceed by Geoffrey Booth, the Nicole and Kevin Youngblood Professor in Residential Land Development, attracted current and former MSLD students, faculty and friends of the program.
The research team will use NASA satellite imagery to characterize carbon sequestration storage within diverse wetland ecosystems along the Texas Gulf Coast.

**NSF funds greenhouse gas study**

TAMU-G research team to use NASA satellite imagery to eye coastal carbon sequestration

Funded by a three-year, $400,000 NASA grant, a Texas A&M at Galveston research team is investigating the amount of carbon sequestration capacity lost over the last decade from alterations to naturally occurring estuarine wetlands along the Gulf Coast.

Carbon sequestration is a biological process in which carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, is removed from the atmosphere and deposited in, for example, wetlands or tidal marshes.

The multidisciplinary study, led by principal investigator Patrick Louchouarn, associate professor of marine science, will examine relationships between carbon sequestration, coastal wetlands and changes in land use.

Joining Louchouarn as co-principals on the project are Anna Armitage, assistant professor of coastal and wetlands ecology, Wes Highfield, assistant research scientist in the Department of Marine Science, and Sam Brody, who holds the George P. Mitchell Chair in Sustainable Coasts in Department of Marine Sciences at TAMU-G, as well as a joint appointment to the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at Texas A&M University’s College of Architecture.

“This project represents the next generation of multidisciplinary research on sustainability and resiliency combining ecology, marine chemistry and planning, for which we hope to be in the forefront,” said Brody, who also directs the Center for Texas Beaches and Shores at TAMU-G and the Environmental Planning and Sustainability Research Unit at Texas A&M’s Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center.

The study’s four research objectives are to:

- Quantify carbon sequestration in coastal wetlands with special emphasis on marsh and mangrove plant communities along the Texas coast;
- Identify and measure the shift in vegetation structure that has occurred in estuarine wetlands over the last decade;
- Identify and measure the loss of naturally occurring estuarine wetlands over the last decade from land use change along the coast, and
- Measure the amount of carbon sequestration capacity lost due to recent human-induced changes in the landscape.

The research team will use NASA satellite imagery to characterize carbon sequestration storage within diverse wetland ecosystems and to measure the influence that land-use change and climate-induced ecosystem shifts — such as salt marsh to mangrove succession and wetlands to open water — may have on both the pools and fluxes of carbon sequestration within these systems.

Once they have quantified carbon sequestration potential on the Texas coast, the team will be able to estimate its storage potential in tidal estuarine wetlands throughout the Gulf of Mexico region.

Rankings

Continued from Page 1

DesignIntelligence editors compiled the rankings using data from the survey aided by information from several accrediting organizations, including the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board.

Both Texas A&M landscape architecture programs have made a steady march upward through the rankings since 2006, when the undergraduate program ranked 11th in the nation and the graduate program ranked 12th. This is the sixth straight year for both programs to make the collaborative’s top-ranked programs list.

Texas A&M landscape architecture programs also ranked at the top of a related Design Futures Council survey assessing the preparedness of recent graduates in a range of vital skills. Those results, also published in the latest issue of DesignIntelligence, ranked the programs’ graduates first nationally for their communications and computer application skills, third in design skills and tied for second with California Polytechnic State University in sustainable design practices and principles.

“It is extremely rewarding to have a prestigious organization like the Design Futures Council independently verify the high quality of our landscape architecture programs,” said Jorge Vanegas, dean of the Texas A&M University College of Architecture. “The success of these programs and their continuous advance in the rankings over the last many years underscores the talent and dedication of our administrators, educators and current and former students. These very impressive standings, including two first place rankings in the skills assessments of our graduates,” he said, “elevates the prestige of the entire college and raises the bar for all of our programs in our ongoing quest for excellence.”
Peacock earns Quarantelli Award

In recognition of his notable and significant theoretical work studying natural hazards and disasters, Walter Gillis Peacock, director of the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center at Texas A&M University, received the 2009 E. L. Quarantelli Award for Social Science Disaster Theory from the International Research Committee on Disasters.

The award was presented at the July 18 IRCD meeting at the Omni Interloken Resort in Broomfield, Colo., where Peacock presented a lecture on disaster research theory.

Peacock’s numerous contributions to sociological theory related to hazards and disaster phenomena includes several articles in journals such as the International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters, Natural Hazards Review, and Disasters as well as highly regarded book chapters such as “Cross-national and Comparative Disaster Research” in “Methods of Disaster Research” and “Shelter and Housing Recovery following Disasters” in “The Handbook of Disaster Research.”

Peacock has also published two books. His first, co-authored with Frederick L. Bates and entitled “Living Conditions, Disasters and Development” has just been released in a new paperback edition. He is perhaps best known for his co-edited book, with Betty Morrow and Hugh Gladwin, entitled “Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disasters.” This book documents the impacts and early recovery efforts from Hurricane Andrew that slammed into South Florida, and later Louisiana, causing 65 deaths and $38.5 billion in damages.

Peacock joined the Texas A&M faculty in 2002 and holds the Rodney L. Dockery Endowed Professorship in Housing and the Homeless. He also serves as interim executive associate dean of the Texas A&M College of Architecture, which houses the HHRC.

In the classroom, Peacock teaches planning methods and analysis, planning research methods, hazard mitigation and long-term recovery. His research focuses on urban and environmental planning, sustainability and community resilience, hazard mitigation, evacuation, long-term recovery, and quantitative methods.

Peacock earned a Ph.D. in Sociology in 1986 and a Master of Arts in Sociology in 1982, both from the University of Georgia, and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Columbus College in 1978.

The E. L. Quarantelli Award for Social Science Disaster Theory is named after one of the field’s most prominent researchers.

Grad programs earn favorable reviews

External review team investigated URSC Ph.D., MSLD offerings

The strengths of Texas A&M’s Ph.D in Urban and Regional Science and Master of Science in Land Development programs were acknowledged in two external reviews conducted in 2009.

Administrators and faculty from peer institutions with comparable programs reviewed both degree offerings. Reviewers from the University of Illinois and Cornell University evaluated the Ph.D. program, while reviewers from the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins University evaluated the MSLD program.

“Faculty members have effectively mentored URSC students, who are progressing through the program in less than five years on average,” reviewers wrote about the doctoral program.

“Many students leave the program with one or more publications, and (they) are taking their places in academic institutions; former students have begun to contribute to the literature on landscape, urban and environmental planning,” they concluded.

Reviewers also commented favorably of the MSLD program.

“... the conceptual foundation and potential for further development of the MSLD program is strong,” they wrote. “The program, by virtue of its location within the College of Architecture, is uniquely placed to teach and research real estate development conceptualization, design, delivery, and management.”

“This is critical,” said the reviewers, “as we enter a period of economic recovery where the future performance of the real estate industry and our cities will depend on the quality of the underlying real estate assets that are created and less so on exotic financial engineering and products that led to the recent recession.”

Dumbaugh garners awards recognizing teaching excellence

For his outstanding teaching skills, Eric Dumbaugh, assistant professor of urban planning, recently garnered awards from both Texas A&M University and The Texas A&M University System.

Texas A&M’s Center for Teaching Excellence named Dumbaugh a Montague Scholar in recognition of his early career excellence in teaching.

Established in 1991, the Montague Scholar award included a $6,500 grant to encourage further development of undergraduate teaching excellence. The award honors Kenneth Montague ’37, a distinguished alumus and outstanding trustee of the Texas A&M Foundation, who had a long and storied career in the Texas oil industry.

Dumbaugh and his eight fellow 2010-11 Montague Scholars were honored at a luncheon Nov. 10.

Dumbaugh also earned the Texas A&M University System’s Student-Led Award for Teaching Excellence (SLATE). In this, the second year for SLATE, the A&M System awarded $507,000 to 144 faculty systemwide. The awards are based on students’ responses from the uniform faculty evaluation, and, according to System Chancellor Kenneth W. Prince, the “honor is expressly designed to allow students to recognize those teachers who go above and beyond the typical expectations to deliver a first-rate education.”

In 2007, Dumbaugh, who is also co-ordinator of the College of Architecture’s Graduate Certificate in Transportation Planning, received the Transportation Research Board’s Award for Outstanding Paper in Geometric Design.

He earned a Ph.D. in civil and environmental engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology in 2005, a Master of City and Regional Planning degree and a Master of Science in Civil Engineering degree in 2002 from the Georgia Institute of Technology, and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from Florida State University in 1996.
Brody to facilitate HRRC projects as Mitchell Chair with joint appointment

Urban planning professor Sam Brody, the new holder of the George P. Mitchell '40 Chair in Sustainable Coasts at Texas A&M University at Galveston and a faculty fellow with Texas A&M’s Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center, is facilitating the center’s expansion to the university’s Galveston campus, putting the center at the doorstep of one of its major research areas.

Brody, who also serves in Galveston as director Center for Texas Beaches and Shores and as director of the HRRC’s Environmental Planning & Sustainability Research Unit, began a joint appointment in fall 2010 between the Aggie campuses in College Station and Galveston.

Brody’s said his joint appointment to the faculty of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at the College Station campus, and to the Department of Marine Sciences in Galveston, will foster collaboration between the two research centers.

The Center for Texas Beaches and Shores, headquartered at TAMUG, is dedicated to the conservation and protection of the Texas shoreline, bays and waterways through research in cooperation with government and private sector agencies. The Hazard Reduction & Recovery Center, facilitates research in hazard mitigation, disaster preparedness, response and recovery, and is one of only two centers worldwide to be designated a Collaborative Centre by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

“In terms of looking at coastal issues, from hurricanes, to flooding, to resiliency and social vulnerability, expanding the HRRC to the Galveston campus better connects the center to the communities we’re studying,” said Brody.

Brody’s coastal research initiatives were further advanced by his recent appointment as the George P. Mitchell ’40 Chair in Sustainable Coasts, a position that also provides funding for sustainable coastal communities research.

Prior to his appointment, Brody met with Mitchell, the energy and real estate magnate and original developer of The Woodlands, Texas who endowed the chair.

“Mitchell is really interested in sustainability, the built environment, and the coast, and when he asked me to do it, I couldn’t say no,” said Brody. “It’s a real honor.”

As holder of the Mitchell Chair and through his joint appointment, Brody will advance initiatives already underway at the HRRC and Texas A&M’s Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

“In response to an increasing interest in hazards and coastal sustainability, last year I started a coastal management track in Texas A&M’s Master of Urban Planning program,” said Brody. “Planning students can take coastal management courses in Galveston, and we’re setting up a curriculum where students in College Station can take courses either there or via video conference.

Hopefully, one day students in Galveston will be able to access our courses up here.”

Among the HRRC’s projects benefitting from the center’s expansion to Galveston is the Coastal Communities Planning Atlas, launched in 2008, which allows anyone with an Internet connection to see the likely effects of development two counties deep along the Texas coast.

“Now we’ve taken it to the next step, where the program is able to, with real data at the parcel level, run development scenarios,” he said. “Say you wanted to change farmland to residential development. It’ll then go into the server, run an analysis, and the user can understand the consequences of that action,” he said.

HRRC director Walt Peacock is the principal investigator of “Status and Trends of Coastal Vulnerability to Natural Hazards,” a study running through 2012 examining coastal vulnerability to natural hazards, including the state’s mitigation plan and its applicability to its coastal management plan, an assessment of the effectiveness of construction codes and land use policies, and an assessment of the physical and social vulnerabilities of coastal populations to facilitate planning and policy development related to hazard mitigation and response.

Shannon Van Zandt, assistant professor of urban planning, is the principal investigator in an HRRC project researching Galveston’s recovery from Hurricane Ike.

With a grant from the NSF, graduate students and faculty members are collecting data on structures, businesses, households and policy decision making to capture long-term recovery trajectories for households, housing and business and adaptive decision making and management.
MUP coordinator building on program’s success

Shannon van Zandt, the new coordinator of Texas A&M’s Master of Urban Planning program, plans to build on the many successes of her predecessor, Elise Bright.

“I look at what Dr. Bright did, and I have to make sure the program continues to grow,” said Van Zandt, an assistant professor of urban planning. “She set a strong positive trajectory that I am challenged to maintain and improve upon. The number and quality of program applicants have improved each year. I hope to build on that and continue to expand the program.”

Bright will continue at Texas A&M as a professor of urban planning.

Van Zandt said Bright oversaw a dramatic increase in the number of program applicants, their geographic diversity and their overall GRE scores. She also implemented a revision of the curriculum and streamlined the program’s emphasis areas.

Bright also initiated a proactive approach to marketing the program, said Van Zandt, reaching out to former students and connecting the program with the professional planning community, particularly within Texas.

Van Zandt has been on the Texas A&M faculty since 2005, after earning a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. She also earned a Master of Urban Planning degree from Texas A&M in 1997 and a Bachelor of Environmental Design degree from Texas A&M in 1993 with the distinction summa cum laude. She is also a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

“As a native Texan and Aggie, I’ve been able to hit the ground running,” said Van Zandt. “Texas is not a planning-friendly state, for better or worse. I want to challenge students to know what is possible; what works and doesn’t work in other states, but also help them understand that local planning must be responsive to residents and citizens. Often, it’s as much about the process of planning as it is about the product.”

Van Zandt teaches many of the core planning courses, including Structure and Function of Human Settlements, Advanced Planning Methods, Planning Theory and History, and has also taught the Applied Planning Studio. Her spring class project — developing the most accurate estimate of Galveston’s post-Ike population available — won the student project award from APA Texas.

She also teaches elective courses in housing policy and neighborhood revitalization.

“I have every planning student during their first year of the program,” Van Zandt said. “I get to know them, and this helps me match their skills and interests with appropriate coursework, potential internships, and ultimately, jobs.”

In her first six months on the job, Van Zandt successfully shepherded the MUP program to an extension of its accreditation from the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB), an external review organization that accredits university planning programs. She also created an internship program with the Texas Forest Service’s Emerging Communities initiative, which provided eight summer internships for planning students to work with local foresters to identify existing development threats to small communities’ tree canopies and other environmental resources.

“All nine of the program’s spring graduates were gainfully employed within six months of graduation,” she said. “That’s impressive, in the current economy.”

Van Zandt’s research projects also provide real-life experience for students. Her work with the Beaumont Housing Authority has generated service-learning projects for six courses in the department; the products of these classes have won two awards from the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials. Her NSF-funded research in Galveston has involved more than 30 undergraduate and graduate students from both College Station and Galveston in applied field research on Galveston Island looking at social vulnerability, community recovery, and resilience since Hurricane Ike in 2008.

Dumbaugh, Joh engaging two TTI research projects

Two Texas A&M urban planning faculty members are researching mobility issues as Texas Transportation Institute research scientists.

Eric Dumbaugh and Ken Joh, assistant professors of urban planning, were appointed to their TTI posts by Katherine Turnbull, the institute’s executive associate director, as part of an ongoing partnership between TTI and the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

Dumbaugh and Joh are collaborating on “Linking Traffic Safety;” Joh is also working on “Transit Data Collection and Analysis.”

The two are working in TTI’s Southwest Region University Transportation Center, which focuses its research efforts on enhancing mobility, accessibility and efficiency, promoting safety and a safe environment, development of the transportation workforce and supporting economic growth and trade.

Li tapped to serve on 2 national committees

Ming-Han Li, associate professor of landscape architecture at Texas A&M, has been appointed to leadership posts in two national organizations.

Li will be serving a two-year term as second vice president of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, which advocates for landscape architecture programs, provides a forum for dialogue about landscape architectural education and fosters and disseminates landscape architectural scholarship.

He’ll be coordinating surveys of members conducted by CELA’s regional directors, communicating with regional directors to assist with regional meetings and other duties.

Li has also been appointed to a landscape and environmental design committee that’s part of the National Research Council, a private, nonprofit institution that provides expertise in science and technology to the government, the public and the scientific and engineering communities.

The NRC is jointly administered by the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine.

Li’s committee will focus on design parameters that relate to protection, conservation, restoration and enhancement of transportation systems, facilities and their associated environments.

The committee promotes research to advance design principles and practices.
Naderi takes post at Ball State University as endowed professor, department chair

Jody Naderi, who served as an associate professor of landscape architecture at Texas A&M since 2000, has taken a new job as the Irving Distinguished Professor of Landscape Architecture and chair of the landscape architecture department at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind.

While teaching at Texas A&M Naderi earned numerous awards, including teaching awards in 2000, 2001 and 2003. Her research focuses on sacred landscapes, interdisciplinary practice, urban design, pedestrian health and transportation.

Woodfin takes University of Oklahoma post as head of landscape architecture section

After almost three decades on the faculty of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Thomas Woodfin, associate professor of landscape architecture has left Texas A&M to serve as head of the landscape section in the College of Architecture at the University of Oklahoma at Norman.

Woodfin, who earned a landscape architecture degree from Texas A&M in 1976, an MLA degree at Harvard in 1981 and finished his Ph.D. degree in historic geography in 2007 at Texas A&M, served as associate head of LAUP and was coordinator of the department’s Bachelor of Landscape Architecture program. He also served the College of Architecture as associate dean for international studies and led LAUP’s study abroad program in Bonn, Germany.

His scholarly interests focused on the history of landscape architecture and cartography and community design advocacy for mobility.

Outstanding alum’s book profits to fund two college endowments

Two endowments at the Texas A&M College of Architecture will soon benefit from proceeds generated by sales of a book, coauthored by an Outstanding alum, that touts a holistic approach to urban planning and design.

Dennis Jerke, who earned a MLA degree from Texas A&M in 1978, is co-author of “Urban Design and the Bottom Line: Optimizing the Return on Perception,” a book project he spearheaded while serving as managing principal for Jacobs, a Fort Worth architecture, engineering and construction firm. Douglas R. Porter, an urban planner, and Terry J. Lassar, an urban development and public policy expert, were also contributing authors.

Jerke recently donated his proceeds from the book, published by the Urban Land Institute, to fund two endowments benefiting the discretionary accounts for the architecture and landscape architecture and urban planning departments at Texas A&M.

“Discretionary endowments are tremendously appreciated,” said Larry Zuber, director of development for the Texas A&M College of Architecture. “They allow departments to take advantage of a wide range of opportunities to help current students and to connect with former students. That includes scholarships, student projects and travel, publications and special events such as scholarship banquets and former student gatherings. Such flexible funds are even more valuable in the current economic climate, when money from the state barely covers the basics.”

When “Urban Design and the Bottom Line” was published in 2009 it earned an Award of Excellence from the Texas Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. Using verifiable figures and drawing on professional experience, the book makes an argument for the “dividend” generated from high-quality, preinvestment design and investigates the benefits and impact of good design upon all facets of an urban area — the community, businesses, employees, the general public, city officials and the developer.

“Return on Perception,” a term trademarked by Jerke, is the book’s underlying theme. Lavishly illustrated with photographs and plans, the book makes the case for value-added design, showing the impact of trails, parks, and amenities, landscapes and streetscapes, transportation and urban waterways, the built environment and conservation, on the bottom line. A final chapter explains how to put all of the pieces together for the greatest impact and value.

Recently retired, Jerke previously lead Jacobs’ national land planning and landscape architecture initiatives in large-scale projects. He expanded the firm’s urban design and planning practice from one to seven U.S. locations, encompassing a 70-person team.

“Urban Design and the Bottom Line: Optimizing the Return on Perception” (978-087420-996-9; Urban Land Institute, 2008) is available everywhere books are sold and through the Urban Land Institute at www.uli.org or by calling 1.800.321.5011.
Rodiek is one of 25 most admired educators in U.S.

For “exemplifying excellence in design education leadership,” Jon Rodiek, professor of landscape architecture at Texas A&M, was recently named one of the nation’s most admired educators by the Design Future’s Council, a leading design industry collaborative.

Rodiek was one of 25 U.S. design educators to make the 2011 most admired list, published in the DFC’s Nov. 3, 2010 DesignIntelligence newsletter. The top educators are selected annually by the DFC from the disciplines of architecture, interior design, industrial design and landscape architecture with extensive input from hundreds of design professionals, academic department heads and students.

Rodiek, a leading voice in the field of landscape planning research, also serves as coordinator of Texas A&M’s Master of Landscape Architecture program and is a Fellow in the American Society of Landscape Architects. He joined the College of Architecture faculty in 1988.

Widely recognized as a superb teacher and mentor, Rodiek is known for advocating the application of relevant scientific information in design decisions. He has conducted precedent-setting work in developing design and planning techniques for mined land reclamation, wildlife habitat protection, wetland identification and arid land planning.

He is also a sought-after authority on wetland classification and interpretation and the assessment and evaluation of landscape and wildlife habitat. His writings on these topics have been presented at conferences around the world.

In 1990, he began a two-decade tenure as editor of Landscape and Urban Planning, an international journal of landscape ecology, landscape planning, and landscape; the journal is based on the premise that research linked to practice will ultimately improve the human-made landscape. He has also authored dozens of major manuscripts for peer-reviewed journals.

The honor is yet another in a long list of accolades Rodiek has received throughout his distinguished teaching career, which began at the University of Arizona in 1974.

In 2004, he was recognized as an international leader in landscape planning as the inaugural recipient of the Fábos Medal, an award honoring the legacy of landscape architecture pioneer Julius Gy. Fábos, the principal developer of the Metropolitan Landscape Planning System for landscape assessment and planning.

In June 2000, he earned the Award of Distinction from the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture. He received a Distinguished Achievement Award in teaching from Texas A&M in 1996, a National Team Leadership Award from the Professional Division of the American Association of University Administrators in 1990 and a U.S. Forest Service Certificate of Merit in 1976.

In 2001, Rodiek was named a Distinguished Alumnus of the University of Massachusetts where, between 1967 and 1974, he earned four degrees: Ph.D., M.S., M.L.A. and B.L.A.

Other Texas A&M College of Architecture faculty on past years’ DesignIntelligence Most Admired Educators lists include Forster Ndubisi, head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, Michael Murphy, professor of landscape architecture, and former dean, J. Thomas Regan.

Best Paper

Continued from Page 1

evidence.

“Local land development codes are responsible for the creation of environments that lead to traffic-related injuries and deaths — ironically in the interests of making communities safer,” said Dumbaugh.

The paper presents a historical review of safety considerations that helped shape conventional community design practice, followed by results of models developed from a geographic information system database of crash incidence and urban form.

While it may be true that disconnecting local street networks and relocating non-residential uses to arterial thoroughfares can reduce neighborhood traffic volumes, these community design configurations appear to substitute one set of safety problems for another,” the authors argue. “Surface arterial thoroughfares, arterial-oriented commercial uses, and big box stores were all found to be associated with an increased incidence of traffic-related crashes and injuries, while higher-density communities with more traditional, pedestrian-oriented retail configurations were found to be associated with fewer crashes.”

Dumbaugh and Rae said the results of their study suggest that access should be strictly managed along arterial thoroughfares, and that commercial and retail uses should be located away from these roadways, or at least oriented towards lower-speed access lanes that limit their connections to the arterial system.

“The paper is an excellent piece of research that reinforces the notion of evidence-based design,” said the JAPA editors in the award announcement. “The authors focus on a critical issue associated with urban design, the research design is well-conceived, the statistical analysis is rigorous, and the implications to the practice of urban design are powerful.”

As previously noted, the new Best Paper Award marks the second time in three years a paper by a faculty member from the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning has been so honored by JAPA.

Sam Brody’s paper, “The Rising Costs of Floods: Examining the Impact of Planning and Development Decisions on Property Damage in Florida,” was published in 2007, winning the JAPA Volume 73 Best Paper Award.

It was written with Praveen Maghelal, a 2007 graduate of Texas A&M’s Urban and Regional Science Ph.D. program, Wesley E. Highfield, who earned a Ph.D. in the program in 2008 and a Master of Urban Planning in 2004, and Ph.D. student Himanshu Grover.
Articulated, dual degree program offerings planned

The Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning is breaking new ground at Texas A&M University with plans to offer the university’s first articulated and dual degree programs.

On Jan. 25, university president Bowen Loftin approved department proposals for articulated 3+2 degree programs that will allow high-achieving students to earn, within five years, both a Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning and either a Master of Science in Land Development or a Master of Urban Planning.

In place since 2008, the department offers a three-year dual degree program that culminates in a Master of Architecture and Master of Science in Land Development. Last spring, three students took advantage of this offering, simultaneously earning their M.Arch and MSDL degrees.

Also approved by the president are dual three-year degrees combining a MSLD with either a Master of Urban Planning or a Master of Science in Construction Management.

In other degree-related business, last May the Faculty Senate approved renaming the department’s newest undergraduate degree, the “Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Sciences,” to “Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Planning.” With approval by the president, the name change takes effect May 15, 2011.

Forster Ndubisi, head of the department, said the name change, which has gained initial approval, is needed to align the degree name with the mission and goals of the program, as well as with the skills and knowledge provided by the Texas A&M University experience. The name change, he said, also strengthens the program’s brand identity.

The BS-URS program emphasizes problem solving, communication skills and critical thinking to create communities that are healthy, efficient, accessible, and resilient, according to program coordinator Don Sweeney, associate professor of urban planning.

“The BS-URS rounds out the department’s academic degree programs,” said Ndubisi, “taking advantage of the skills and expertise of its faculty while providing a broad-based, multidisciplinary education from which students can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to create livable, sustainable and safe communities.”

Residential designs by alum’s firm earn ASLA Professional Awards

Two residential designs created by a former landscape architecture student’s firm earned 2010 American Society of Landscape Architects Professional Awards.

The Hocker Design Group was recognized by the ASLA for its work on the Power House, an urban garden within the walls of a former electric substation, and The Pool House, an urban retreat for an artist and car enthusiast.

The firm was founded in 2005 by principal David Hocker, who earned a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from Texas A&M in 2001.

The substation incorporated into the Power House was built in 1923 by Dallas Power and Light Company in a mixed residential and commercial area of town. Vacant for 20 years, the three-story substation was transformed into a single-family residence; it’s Hocker-designed garden, which occupies a large portion of the nearly half-acre site, is organized into spaces that directly relate back to its original industrial predecessor.

The Pool House, functioning as a center for family and social gatherings, is a series of transitional garden spaces.

The central spine of the site is a six-foot high privacy wall, a stainless steel cage filled with blue recycled glass slag. It’s lit from within, and emits a smoldering glow at night.

“Very unique and playful,” said the awards jury. “The detailing is exquisite. The informality of it all just works. The glass wall when lit up is lovely. Very elegant plants collection. The proportions are spot on.”

For a more detailed story and photos of the award-winning Hocker designs, visit http://tiny.cc/hocker-asla.

Ph.D. student earns Weirus Spirit Award

Edward L. Tarlton, who is pursuing a doctorate in Urban and Regional Science with an emphasis in housing and community development at Texas A&M University, received the 2010 Buck Weirus Spirit Award.

Each year, the Association of Former Students, which sponsors the award, recognizes exemplary students who create positive experiences throughout the Aggie community, impact student life at Texas A&M and enhance the Aggie spirit through participating in student organizations, Aggie traditions and university events.

Since 2007, Tarlton has been active in many roles, including mentoring, serving on committees and volunteering for numerous campus organizations.

“Being involved in campus life is one of the best ways I have seen to impact and promote the service culture here at Texas A&M,” said Tarlton. “At A&M the dedication to community service and reaching out to others has resonated deeply within me. Additionally, involvement in many memorable campus events has built teamwork and cemented lifelong friendships.”

“The desire to serve challenges me to demonstrate my integrity, leadership and planning capabilities,” he said. “The experiences created for all participants has allowed for invaluable exchanges.”

The award is named for Richard “Buck” Weirus ’42, who served as executive director of The Association of Former Students from 1964 to 1980. The award was established in 1982 by The Association of Former Students to honor his leadership, vision and support of student involvement.
Gene Schrickel Jr. ’50 Endowed Scholarship in Landscape Architecture: Ying Liang, Yixiao Liu, Dizi Shi, Naishi Bu and Menleigh Williamson.


ASLA Texas Chapter Scholarship: Tyson Gaspard.

TBG Partners/Robert Castro Memorial Award: Elizabeth Chapman.

Michael D. Murphy Endowed Scholarship: Kirá Smith.

Antonio F. Sarabando Jr. “Sprint of Place Award”: Grant Jones.

Landscape Architecture Development Scholarships: Zheng Lu, Prajakta Kedar and Ashley Timmerman.

Donald B. Austin Scholarship: Arianna Rojo.

Jesus Hinojosa Endowed Urban Planning Scholarship: Hee Ju Kim.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE & URBAN PLANNING 2010-2011 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

BLA student Arianna Rojo receives the Donald B. Austin Scholarship during the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning’s Spring 2010 Awards Ceremony. Joining Rojo are Forster Ndubisi, department head, Daryle Benkendorfer, who established the scholarship and Donald Austin, professor emeritus and namesake of the scholarship.

Dr. Katherine F. Turnbull Scholarship: Jonathan Brooks.

Jesus “Chuy” Hinojosa Academic Excellence Award: Dustin Henry, Anita Hollmann, Stuart Sandidge, Travis Scott and Sonja Willems.

2010 Buck Weirus Spirit Award: Edward Tarlton.


AICP Outstanding Student Award: Dustin Henry.

Master of Science in Land Development Departmental Scholarship: Patrick Stites, Alisan Morris and Stephanie Lersner.

Bachelor of Science in Urban & Regional Science Departmental Scholarships: Cody Balzen, Liza Brown and Carlos Espinosa.

3D/International Endowed Scholarship: Kristina Benson.

Urban and Regional Science Doctoral Departmental Scholarships: Hyun Kim Young Re Noh.

History Maker Homes Endowed Scholarships: Morgan Hester, Ridwan Quaium and Saheum Hong.

R. Joseph Reeves Endowed Memorial Scholarship: Gony Mustafa Sharif.