Ndubisi reviews first year at LAUP’s helm

Coordinators developing strategic plans for all five department programs

It is my pleasure to share observations about the department noted during my first year as department head.

The Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (LAUP) has recently recruited three faculty members under the university’s Faculty Reinvestment Program. Faculty members are hired based on their research experience and potential, and the quality of their teaching. We are also in the process of completing searches for transportation and land development positions. We expect these new faculty members to join us in fall 2005. Judy Pruitt joined us fall 2004 as the newest member of our staff support team.

The department has embarked on strategic planning initiatives for all programs to solidify and enhance the quality and delivery of its current undergraduate and graduate programs. During the strategic planning process we agreed that as a department to strive to create, apply, and disseminate knowledge to enhance functional, healthy, and sustainable human environments.

In March, we had an accreditation visit for our Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program under the leadership of Dr. Jon Rodiek. Preliminary results from the visit substantiate what we have known all along—we have a very solid MLA program.

We are also in the process of preparing a self-study report for our Master of Urban Planning (MUP) program, which is coordi-
Faculty, students excel during Ndubisi’s first year as department head

Last February, the Texas A&M University Student Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects once again delivered an extremely successful annual workshop. Dubbed “Spectrums,” the 2005 symposium theme was chosen to signify the varying ideas that make landscape architecture a thriving discipline.

The 2005 workshop committee, chaired by Beth Larkin and staffed by Lindsay Landers, Jason Hayes, and Leslie Ilits, worked throughout the fall to develop the program and attract speakers and professionals from around the state. The formal program included morning and early afternoon presentations, a half-day design charrette, a round table discussion, and a portfolio preparation session.

The two-day event was opened by Dr. Forster Ndubisi, head of Texas A&M’s Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning. Workshop speakers and session topics included David Pitt on “smart growth,” Chet Williams examining golf course design; Brandi Reeves sharing her personal experiences as a landscape architect; Jennifer Appel discussing green roofs; John Moon with a presentation on interactive graphic techniques; Bruce G. Smith discussing careers in land development; Scott Stanley showcasing SWA’s China projects; Bobby Eichholz, who talked about LEED Criteria; Lynn Miller, who discussed historical research on Benjamin Banneker and Washington, D.C.; and Atef Sharkawy, who discussed the development of healthy communities.

Ten firms brought a wide range of projects for the design charrette reflecting the workshop theme of variety in landscape architecture. Capping each day were evening socials—a semi-formal dinner and “casino night” on Friday; and a game night at a local pub on Saturday.

Advisory boards provide valuable input from the industries, strengthening LAUP programs and building professional partnerships.

Established a new Industry Advisory Council for the Master of Land Development (MSLD) program. The advisory council held its first meeting and banquet on April 2, 2005 under the leadership of Dr. Sharkawy and students in the MSLD program. These advisory boards provide valuable input from industry that strengthens the quality of our program offerings and sustains valuable connections to the professional community.

Students help Groveton residents revitalize scenic historic cemetery

In the 19th century, cemetery design was a mainstay of many landscape architects, but today, fewer opportunities exist to do these sorts of projects. At the same time, many historic cemeteries have lost much of their traditional character and are in need of revitalization.

The residents of Groveton in Trinity County, Texas recently enlisted fourth-year landscape architecture students to help them restore character to their Glenwood Cemetery, which was established in 1899. Though quite beautiful, the wooded, rolling cemetery was in need of additional plantings and new structures to enhance and maintain its unique rural romantic-style.

After a site reconnaissance and research visit, class members developed several proposals for different treatments of the cemetery, all of which emphasized and enhanced the historic character of the grounds. Faculty also worked with a citizen’s group to explore ways to locate unmarked graves, which are numerous at the Glenwood site.

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Prior to developing site plans for the Wendish Museum in Sabine, Texas, LAUP 321 students and faculty toured the facility and researched its archives to learn more about Wendish design traditions. The museum preserves the history of the Texas Wendis, Slavic immigrants from Lusatia, in eastern Germany.

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Sixteen students were honored last April at the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning’s annual Student Scholarship and Awards Banquet. The honored students represented all five programs in the department.

Gene Schreidel Jr.’s Endowed Scholarship in Landscape Architecture
Robert Folzenlogen and Jason Hayes
Samuel E. Garrett Jr.’s Endowed Memorial Scholarship
Elizabeth Larkin
Robert F. & Florence H. White Endowed Scholarship in Landscape Architecture
Jeffrey Boute
ASLA Texas Chapter Maurice Philips Scholarship
Paul Samson
Antonio F. Sarabando Jr.’s “Spirit of Place Award”
Holly Dawson
TBG Partners/Robert Castro Memorial Scholarship
Michael West

Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association Scholarship Established by the Education Foundation of the Texas Chapter APA
Kristina Harp and Ji Li
R. Joseph Reeves Endowed Memorial Scholarship
Bo Yang
MSLD Gibson Scholarship
Annie Walters and Tim Beest
Colonel James E. Ray ’53 Endowed Scholarship
Kitiptap Supasirisin
Jesus Hinjosa Endowed Urban Planning Scholarship
Sudha Arlikatti
Wolfgang Roeseler Scholarship
Wes Highfield – Fall
Sudha Arlikatti, Jonathan Lynch, Praveen Maghelal, and Robert Folzenlogen

Dr. Michael D. Murphy has just published a new book, Landscape Architectural Theory: An Evolving Body of Thought. His point of departure is the nature of landscape architecture as a process, responding to biological, physical and cultural systems. As practiced, he wrote, “design is our way of managing the continuing process of change to enhance quality of life and create meaningful and compelling places as settings for human activity.” Following an introductory section, Murphy discusses theories influencing landscape architecture in two broad categories: substantive theory and procedural theory. Areas of substantive theory include biophysical conditions and human behavior. Procedural theories include design and programming process, as well as theories related to collaborative design. This work is an important addition to the very small body of literature that synthesizes the broad and varied theories upon which landscape architecture depends.Published in 2005 by Wave Land Press, Landscape Architectural Theory: An Evolving Body of Thought continues Murphy’s lifelong commitment to advancing landscape architecture as a discipline and profession.

NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION
A&M landscape architecture students pose with instructor Tom Woodfin during groundbreaking ceremonies for Mustang Way, a park the students designed around a frequently traveled road connecting two Bryan ISD schools and adjacent to the city’s largest Habitat for Humanity neighborhood, Sharon’s Court. The park, designed on land owned by the school district, is a project of the Milam-Jones Neighborhood Association and the Bryan Rotary Club. The trees to be planted at the park will be donated by Keep Brazos Beautiful. The plans and additional details about the Mustang Way project will be featured in the Fall 2005 issue of the newsletter.

A&M student’s transit center design places first in state ASLA competition

A team from Texas A&M’s Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning earned first place honors in a design competition held last spring in Austin by the Texas Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). The competition engaged teams from landscape architecture programs at Texas universities in a one-day charrette. The teams included students, a faculty sponsor and a former student in practice. The Aggie team was composed of Yen Wang and Yan Long, master of landscape architecture students; Margarita Padilla and Amanda Stewart, fifth-year bachelor of landscape architecture students; Tom Woodfin, a member of the ASLA Texas Chapter Board of Directors; and students Holly Dawson and Elizabeth Larkin that was part of the design project that earned second place honors at the Environmental Design Research Association conference in Vancouver, Canada in May.

Of the 16 awards made for student design proposals, five were taken by fourth-year landscape architecture students from a design studio conducted by Ming-Han Li and Nancy Volkman. Holly Dawson and Elizabeth Larkin were awarded the highest prize given to an A&M student, 2nd place overall in the competition.

Aggies’ active living designs earn EDRA honors in Vancouver

Designing for “active living” is currently a hot research topic in design and behavior studies. Fuelled by such wide-ranging concerns as overuse of automobiles and childhood obesity, many researchers, agencies, and cities are putting greater emphasis on creating places that allow people to incorporate physical activity into their daily schedule. It was this topic of active living that provided the theme for a design competition held at the Environmental Design Research Association conference in Vancouver, Canada in May.

Above, a sketch of a proposed town center design. At left, a sketch of the overall design.

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AWARD-WINNING DESIGN

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See Aggie, Page 8
Taner Özdiş visiting downtown Bryan, one of his Main Street communities.

GRADUATE RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Texas Main Street Program By TANER OZDIL Dr. Andrew Sedin, dissertation advisor

The Main Street Program, like 45 other state programs in the United States, has utilized a four-point approach (design, promotion, organization, and economic restructuring) to assist and revitalize communities throughout Texas over two decades. The program claims to be one of the strongest of such programs in the United States. This research is an attempt to find and analyze the urban design and economic activity taking place within the 79 active Main Street program cities in Texas from data sources external to the programs themselves. The indicators that comprise the four-point approach and the economic activity such as employment, the number of existing business, are measured. The preliminary results have shown that Main Street communities perform better economic activity than non-Street communities.

Noel Bowman, MUP 2005, has been studying unmet health needs in the Brazos Valley. Working with Dr. Sherry Bame, he mapped the distribution of telephone calls from people requesting information and referrals for health and human service needs from the new 2-1-1 emergency helpline. As of 9-1-1, the new 2-1-1 number is being implemented nation-wide, but was initially only in Central Texas. Noel applied GIS methods to depict the distribution of community needs, as revealed by the callers. This project is intended to help agencies and policy makers set priorities for developing outreach services, as well as allocate funds to target-risk populations needing medical, dental, and pharmaceutical services.

Exploring the Effects of Local Development Regulations on Landscape By JINKKI KIM Dr. Christopher D. Ellis, dissertation advisor

An ecological approach to land-use planning is essential to maintain the long-term sustainability of ecosystem benefits, services, and resources in urban communities. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between ecological landscape structure and local development regulations over time. Comparative analysis was conducted between two areas that had similar pre-development ecological conditions, but were developed under vastly different regulatory environments. These woodlands (regulated to protect ecological conditions) and the North Houston area (which followed tradition subdivision regulations) were examined at three different developmental time periods: predevelopment, early development (after 10 years), and mature development (after 30 years). It was found that the ecologically planned community, the Woodlands, had a less fragmented forest pattern, and the more restrictive development guidelines there resulted in more ecologically structured environments, in contrast to the North Houston area. Understanding how elements of local development regulations affect ecological landscape patterns is important for landscape architects, planners, and administrators because it can lead to better strategies for planning and designing sustainable communities.

Healthy Transportation — Healthy Communities: Comparing Ecological Suitability Index using GIS and Testing Significance of Pedestrian Variables on Choices of Transit by PRIYA KUMAR MAGHELAL Dr. Christopher Ellis, dissertation advisor

Health and transportation professionals encourage and promote methods to improve the overall health of communities. This dissertation, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (Active Living Research Dissertation Grant), addresses three immediate urban issues: increasing pedestrian activity in communities along transit stations; measuring the suitability of walking in 1, 1/2, 1/4 mile around the Dallas Area Rapid Transit stations; and the significance of pedestrian determinants in choosing transit as a travel mode. The dissertation analyzed spatial data using the ordered weighted averaging method to study the pedestrian suitability of each light rail station and to understand its direct effect on transit ridership.

Master of Landscape Architecture Program

The academic year 2004-05 has been a very busy one for the Master of Landscape Architecture (MSLA) program. Toggling the list of important events was a five-year-accreditation review March 19-23. The team was favorably impressed with what they saw and passed the program on all nine areas considered. On April 18, they recommended in-accreditation for six years more. The program will graduate 14 MLA students this year and has accepted 22 new students into this fall’s class of 2008. Thirty-four students will continue in the program.

The summer internship program continues to flourish. This past summer students were placed in JRW, EDAW, EDSA, Design Workshop, Carol Johnson, Walker and Macy, as well as other outstanding firms. The faculty played a large role in this success. Professors Tom Henehan, Chris Ellis, Chang-Shan Huang, Ming-Han Li and Jodi Nadler successfully earned MLA students through to their final projects.

Master of Land Development Program

On Saturday April 2, the Master of Land Development (MSLD) program held its first reunion and banquet. The reunion reception and networking with Rick Rodriquez conducting a “Connection Deals” session. In the evening, 80 students, faculty, former students and partners got together at the College Station Hilton. Dean Regan and Dr. Nhabak provided an overview of the College of Architecture and how the college and department, then a video of program missions was shown. The program has recently cleared everyone’s thoughts before the recognition award recipients were announced. This year’s honorees included: Andrew Olsson, the 2005 Appreciation Award; Rick Reetz, the Class of 1984 Award, Milan Vucic, the Class of 1994 Award, and Jeremiah Gann, the Class of 1999 Award. To a standing ovation, Atif Shukurwaiy received a surprise recognition award for “outstanding dedication, sacrifice and support to the MSLD program, its students and alumni.”

Master of Urban Planning Program

The MUP program welcomed new leadership in January when Dr. Else Briggs joined the faculty as program coordinator and professor. Dr. Briggs was off to a running start with the program’s re-accreditation self-study report due in June. The report is a component of ecological and evaluation of the entire MUP program. Its preparation involves communicating with students, alumni, faculty and many other stakeholders.

“T thousands of people attended the program’s re-accreditation report to gain a view in-depth in the MSLD program very rapidly,” Bright said. She is also working with Dr. Tom Woodfin, the Dean and the Texas A&M University Council on/offers with local development practitioners, as well as a political strategy for planning and designing sustainable communities.

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Bright joins faculty as MUP coordinator

Elise M. Bright, Ph.D., was appointed last spring as professor and coordinator of the Master of Urban Planning program at Texas A&M University. Before coming to A&M, she taught at the University of Texas at Arlington for 17 years. She completed undergraduate work at the University of Arizona, graduating magna cum laude, and joined the Arizona welfare department as a social worker.

Bright holds a Master in City Planning degree from Harvard and a Doctor of Environmental Design degree from Texas A&M. She worked in planning positions and as a consultant throughout the United States for 12 years before joining academia. For the past decade she conducted extensive research for the National Center for Central City Revitalization. Her book chronicling this effort, Reviving America’s Forgotten Neighborhoods, published by Routledge/Taylor and Francis in 2000, won the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning Paul Davidoff Award for Best Book on Social Justice.

Bright’s current research focuses on the effects of property tax over appraisal in low income neighborhoods and the importance of regional containment in central city health. She has lectured on these issues at symposia around the world.

Bright’s other areas of expertise include economic development, zoning, environmental planning, and impact assessment.

She is president of P&B Remodeling and Development, a firm specializing in renovating and selling homes for moderate income buyers. When time allows, this mother of three jogs, plays the fiddle, and studies to obtain a real estate license.

Aggie landscape students place first in Texas ASLA competition

Continued from page 3

Judging the charette were the planning consultant team from Bosse and Compton and landowners from the area involved in the competition.

“I believe that our approach proved successful because we did three scenarios: the first, five years’ into the future with a town center and bus transit station before the rail is built, the second showed ten years’ growth, where the downtown city center has begun to grow with housing and mixed-use, and the third, twenty years’ into the future with the bus transit station converted to commuter rail and a fully-developed mixed-use downtown commercial and residential sector.

The A&M student’s downtown park, planned for the 100 percent corner at the two highways’ intersection, retained a small-town square sense of place as the community grew around it over time” Woodfin explained.

“Roberto Garcia’s vision and the students’ enthusiasm at embracing a difficult design challenge were keys to the winning design.”

“Also,” Woodfin added, “our students’ ability to sketch quickly and communicate their ideas effectively made the finished drawings strong communications documents.