

Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
Prepared by Lou Anella

Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
<i>B.S. Landscape Contracting</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation rates • Exit interviews • Internship reports • Internship cooperator reviews • External reviews • Student Career Days 	54 0 2 2 0 9

Analysis and Findings:

Graduation Rates

During the 2002-2003 academic year 54 students declared Landscape Contracting as their major. Five students graduated from the program during that time and eleven either dropped from the program or transferred to a different program resulting in a graduation retention rate of 80%.

Exit Interviews

We only had five Landscape Contracting students graduate this year and none of them opted to complete and exit interview form or to have a personal exit interview with the Department Head. Although we would prefer to have students fill out exit interview forms to get their impressions of the Landscape Contracting program, we do hope that no news is good news.

Internship Reports

This year there were only two Landscape Contracting students who did internships but the internship program was rated highly by each student. The internship students gave their cooperators ratings of excellent or very good. One student suggested that students should do internships, "away from home, outside their comfort-zone." The internship was a valuable experience for this student and he has since graduated and has taken a full-time position with the same company.

Each student was required to write an internship report and to present an internship seminar to their fellow students and the faculty. Internship reports outlined the work experience gained and seminars gave the students a chance to practice their public speaking. Many students presented computer generated Power Point seminars. Seminars were attended by the director of the Landscape Contracting program, the Landscape Contracting assessment coordinator, and various faculty.

The internship was a positive experience for both students; each one said they would recommend an internship with their cooperator, and thought college credit was appropriate for the internship. Overall, the internship was regarded as one of their best academic experiences.

Internship Cooperator Reviews

Internship cooperators also found the internship program to be valuable. Cooperators gave students ratings of excellent or very good and one student received excellent for each characteristic evaluated. One cooperator thought the student was "fairly well" prepared for the job but mentioned that courses are not offered teaching how to handle a crew. I'm not sure if he was suggesting that such courses should be offered or if he was just reflecting on how difficult it is to teach such skills in the classroom.

The other cooperator said he would not be willing to participate in the internship program because he wanted to keep the same intern employed! So both of the students who did internships this year were offered jobs

when the internship was over: one a full-time position after graduation, and the other a part-time position while she finishes school. Offering our students jobs is perhaps the highest assessment we can receive.

Overall the cooperators were impressed with our students, with their willingness to work, ability to solve problems, and academic preparation.

External Review

An ALCA Accreditation Team visited the Landscape Contracting program at OSU in April of 1999. The team gave provisional accreditation at that time and presented the Department with a list of requirements for full accreditation. On May 31, 2002 we received a letter giving full accreditation for a seven-year period. The next accreditation visit is projected for 2006.

Student Career Days

In March of 2003 the OSU Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) Club attended the ALCA Student Career Days at Hinds Community College in Jackson, Mississippi. Nine OSU students and two faculty advisors attended with 51 other schools and approximately 1000 industry professionals. Bringing only nine students does not allow us to compete in all events so our ranking does not accurately reflect the success of the individuals who attended. Our ranking this year was 26th out of 51 schools, which is similar to last year's ranking of 25th out of 48 schools.

Six hundred seventy-one students competed this year and to be competitive for the top ranking, individuals must compete in five events. We had only two students compete in five events and they ranked in the top 5% while we had one student rank in the top 10% even though he competed in only four events. Our students competed in twenty events and ranked in the top third five times. One team of students ranked in the top third despite the fact that points were taken off their score for using "antiquated equipment." That tells us that we are competing effectively with other schools and that we need to update our equipment.

Most of the students from OSU were not graduating this year so we did not have students interviewing for full-time positions but we did have a few that were interested in internships. At least one student was offered an internship while attending the Career Days. The students also had the opportunity to interact with industry professionals and students from other schools on an informal basis.

Uses of Assessment Results:

Internship information was shared with faculty during the department's internship seminar where faculty gather to hear cooperator and student evaluations and discuss possible changes. Results of the ALCA Student Career Days have been shared during faculty meetings and with the Landscape Contracting Program Advisory Committee who helped train our students for the event.

Past student internship evaluations and comments from industry led to the requirement that all landscape contracting students complete an internship. Similarly, discussions are now taking place to decide if attending the ALCA Student Career Days should be mandatory. I made a point this year of asking our students if they thought Career Days was a valuable experience since we may require it in the future. Everyone said it was a valuable experience, well worth the financial and time commitment.

Although we have not yet made attendance at ALCA Student Career Days mandatory, we have committed to telling our advisees that we expect them to attend. Also, the student officers of the OSU ALCA club have committed to holding a membership drive next fall to recruit students for the ALCA Student Career Days.

This assessment report will be forwarded to: the Department Head, Landscape Contracting Program Director, Horticulture and Landscape Architecture advisors and faculty, and the Landscape Contracting Program Advisory Committee. Elements of this report will be used to make curriculum and program recommendations to the Department Head and the Program Director.