

Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture
Landscape Contracting Option
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Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
B.S., Landscape Contracting	Graduation rates	59
	Exit interviews	2
	Internship reports	9
	Internship cooperator reviews	9
	External reviews	0
	Student Career Days	15

Analysis and Findings

Graduation Rates

During the 2003-2004 academic year 59 students declared Landscape Contracting as their major. Nine students graduated from the program during that time and 19 either dropped from the program or transferred to a different program resulting in a graduation retention rate of 68%.

Exit Interviews

Of the nine students who graduated from the Landscape Contracting program this year, two completed exit interview forms. These students were both transfers and spent between 2 ½ and three years in our department earning their degree and gave the department an overall rating of average. Some of the departmental weaknesses listed were: a lack of hands on experience, lack of practicality in LA classes, and some professors not up to date with computer technology. Arboriculture, Turf, AutoCad, Planting Design, and Design I were listed as excellent courses. Courses that were not viewed favorably were: Design II (student's comment was, "no instruction"), and Construction III (student's comment was, "This class was the single most disappointing class I have ever had."). Suggestions the students made were: more instruction on computer programs like AutoCAD, LandCAD, and Photoshop, and taking Speech before Design I.

Internship Reports

This year, there were nine Landscape Contracting students who did internships and the internship program was rated highly by each student. 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 all 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 our students ratings ranging from average, to very good, and excellent. All thought the internship program was valuable and all but one said they would like to participate in the program again. The one cooperator who did not want to participate again was closing her business for personal reasons.

Business, irrigation, and Spanish courses were listed as areas of study that would benefit the students. And although most students were very highly rated by their cooperators, self-motivation, problem solving, communication, sales, and business skills were suggestions for student improvement. One cooperator stated that to improve the student could, "Graduate and work with us full-time!"

Suggestions for improving the internship program itself were:

- Add irrigation design and installation and lighting design and installation to the list of suggested tasks.
- Make sure students are aware that they will be expected to work as hard as any other employee.
- Have contact between advisors and cooperators.
- Have the employer give the students weekly homework.

Overall, students and cooperators alike were pleased with the internship program.

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 2004 the OSU Associated Landscape Contractors of America (ALCA) Club attended the ALCA Student Career Days at Columbus Community College in Columbus, Ohio. Fifteen OSU students and two faculty advisors attended with 49 other schools and approximately 1000 industry professionals. Our ranking this year was 25th out of 50 schools, which is similar to last year's ranking of 26th out of 51 schools.

Seven hundred fifty-nine students competed this year. To be competitive for the top individual rankings and earn a scholarship (there are scholarships for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place) students must compete in five events. It is not possible for everyone to compete in five events so we chose two students to compete in five events and each of them finished in the top 10! One student placed fourth overall, just five points behind third place thereby just missing the third place scholarship.

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 four students received internships resulting from interviews conducted at 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.

Although we have not 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 held a membership drive last fall to recruit students for the ALCA Student Career Days and plan to do so again next fall.

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.