

# Department of Landscape Architecture

## Department Policies

DATE: December 10, 2010

SUBJECT: LA AOP 01.01 – PRINCIPLES FOR DEPARTMENT GOVERNANCE

### PREAMBLE

The mission of the Department of Landscape Architecture can best be achieved through cooperation, collaboration, and consultation among the membership of the entire department community. Achievement of our mission requires an understanding and commitment to the formal and informal decision processes by which the department conducts its work and maintains its standards. It also requires recognition by the department community that the department of landscape architecture must ultimately respond to legitimate external entities and forces that shape policy and render decisions.

Members of the department community need to understand the department's mission and their part in its achievement. They need to understand how formal authority is shared, the scope and form of their involvement in governance, and the need for those in authority to achieve balance between codification and discretion. This understanding enhances each member's ability to sustain and strengthen the essential nature of the department and facilitates effective department governance and responsiveness to the needs of the people of Mississippi.

Central to effective and efficient department governance is open consultation, communication, and participation in decisions and decision-making bodies, and understanding of the responsibilities and limitations of authority by all members of the department community. Success of the department depends on collegial relationships and mutual respect among the faculty, professional and support staff, students, administrative officers, and representatives of external entities.

All members of the department community must be accountable for their roles and responsibilities. Policies and procedures to measure performance in these roles and responsibilities are essential to achieving the mission and goals of the department.

Mississippi State and the Department of Landscape Architecture recognize the value of diverse opinions in decision-making and pursue its mission in an atmosphere of shared governance and open communication. Faculty and staff are involved in policy formulation and in implementing the learning, research and service missions of the department. Faculty and staff also recognize their shared accountability for the performance of the department in carrying out its mission.

In the spirit of promoting effective governance of the department, the following statements of policy relative to members of the department community are adopted. The policies are designed to generate and promote understanding, candor, trust, accountability, and participation in the processes that accomplish the mission and goals of the department.

## **Principles**

**Authority.** The department head is responsible for exercising administrative authority in the department. The department head reports to and consults with other officials of the university and with the faculty, professional and support staff, and students.

**Consultation.** To facilitate open communication and effective department governance, the department head and other administrative officers of the university will exercise due diligence in consulting with the faculty, professional and support staff, students, and external constituents on issues affecting them. Consultation is characterized by early discussions with the affected constituencies, jointly formulated procedures for consultation, reasonable deadlines within the constraints of the academic calendar, access to appropriate information, adequate feedback, and timely communication of decisions to the affected constituencies.

**Representation.** Effective department governance generally requires that the faculty, professional and support staff, students, and external constituents be represented on budgetary and decision-, policy-, and procedure-making entities. Appropriate representation of these groups is normally obtained through the department's committee structure. Elected and appointed representatives should be selected specifically for the roles in which they will serve to the extent possible. When temporary special committees, study groups, or task forces are established by the department head to address matters affecting the mission of the department, a majority of the membership should be composed of elected representatives drawn from the departmental faculty. Professional and support staff, students, and external constituencies should be included as appropriate. The department head may appoint the chairs of these bodies.

*Faculty Representation.* Full-time landscape architecture faculty represents the committees within the department and should have appropriate representation on matters affecting them.

Faculty represents the department on college and university-level committees composed of elected representatives from the general faculty.

*Professional and Support Staff Representation.* The department staff should have appropriate representation on matters affecting them. Consultation with the staff should be conducted through the department's committee structure and through normal administrative channels.

*Student Representation.* The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) and the Professional Land Care Network's (PLANET) student chapters are the official student representatives of the department. Undergraduate and graduate students should be

represented on appropriate student and department committees and as a committee member of external entities related to the department. Consultation with students should be conducted through their elected representatives and/or the student associations.

*Administrative Representation.* The department head represents the department on councils, committees, and task forces of the university.

*External Entities Representation.* To advance the mission of the department, the officers of the administration may appoint members of external entities to serve on councils, committees, and task forces.

### **Roles and Responsibilities.**

*Administration.* The department of landscape architecture is administered by a department head who is normally appointed by the dean, taking into consideration the advice and counsel of a screening committee. An administrative assignment or reassignment for the department head is the responsibility of the dean. Tenure does not exist for administrative assignments. Each department head is to report on his or her performance at least annually through a conference with the dean.

The department head, in regular consultation with the faculty and dean, is responsible for: (1) the implementation of procedures for the selection of personnel and their subsequent annual performance reviews, including the College and University procedures associated with promotion and tenure; (2) working with the departmental faculty in the development, coordination, implementation, and periodic review of academic programs and course offerings; (3) fiscal management of the departmental budget; and, (4) the provision of quality services to the various clientele the department is designed to serve.

At the end of each three-year period, the dean will conduct a thorough review and evaluation of a department head. This review and evaluation will be based upon data solicited from faculty, staff, students, and other appropriate individuals. Following this review and evaluation, the dean regarding the continued administrative appointment of the department head will make a decision. The preceding paragraphs are in accordance with [AOP 10.02](#) – Academic Administrators and Directors.

The department head articulates long-range departmental goals and sees that high standards are maintained in all departmental programs. The department head exerts a major influence on the specific direction of change, not only through basic judgments on budgets and staff, but also in the continuous evaluation of existing department programs and in the planning of overall program direction. Such evaluation and planning necessitates the participation of faculty, staff, students, representatives of external entities, and is accomplished through the department's committee structure.

The department head is also responsible for maintaining fair employment practices, promotion procedures, and wage and salary distribution.

*Faculty.* The principal responsibilities of the faculty are teaching, research, and service. Because an important additional responsibility of the faculty is to ensure that the department fulfills its educational mission, the faculty must be involved in the generation and implementation of policies that impact the department's mission. On matters primarily affecting the academic mission of the department (curriculum, subject matter and methods of instruction, advising, degree requirements, faculty scholarship, faculty status, faculty service), the principal responsibility for formulating and evaluating ideas lies with the faculty. The faculty advises the administration through appropriate channels on these matters. The administration customarily follows this advice. On those extraordinary occasions when this advice is not followed, the administration will identify the reasons that render the proffered advice unwise or impracticable and so inform the faculty. A less direct but no less important role of the faculty is to advise the officers of the university about certain administrative matters that are intrinsically related to the health of the department. Among these matters are:

1. Assessment of faculty performance;
2. Selection of college or university representatives;
3. Determination of departmental priorities; and
4. Establishment of principles for determining salaries.

*Professional and Support Staff.* The primary role of the staff is to support the faculty and the administration in fulfilling the department's mission. The staff conducts the day-to-day affairs of the department, provides essential input to the faculty and administration in planning and decision-making processes, and reports on the operations of the department for internal (management) and external (accountability) purposes. On matters of departmental governance affecting the academic mission of the department, the staff's role is advisory only.

*Students.* The purpose of the Student Chapters of ASLA and PLANET associations is to stimulate department-wide student involvement that leads to achievement of the department's mission. The voice of students is important in all aspects of the department, and students should provide input, when appropriate, through departmental committees, councils, and task forces.

*Administrative Councils and Committees.* Administrative councils and committees play important roles in the governance of the department. These councils and committees may be composed of faculty, staff, students, administrators, and representatives of external entities. The members are elected by the appropriate bodies or are appointed by the department head to advise the administration in the development of departmental policy, procedure, and practice. The department head will publish a listing of the department's committees with the membership of each annually.

## **Participation**

***Evaluation. Evaluation of Administrators, Staff and Faculty.*** The performance of faculty, staff, and administrative officers should be evaluated periodically. Students should participate in periodic evaluation of the instructional faculty, and those evaluations should be considered important sources of guidance to improve course content and overall learning and teaching effectiveness. The faculty, staff, administrative officers, and students should participate in periodic evaluations of those responsible for the units affecting their roles in the departmental community. The role of the various groups in such evaluations should be in accordance with their legitimate interest in the performance of the person being evaluated and the group's competence to make evaluative judgments. Evaluations should conform to commonly accepted procedures of evaluation established in consultation with those being evaluated and those evaluating.

***Financial Decisions.*** Representatives chosen by the faculty, staff, and students should be included in department level discussions of resource allocation and budgetary policy and procedures. The administration may choose additional faculty, students, and staff to participate in discussions of these issues.

***Administrative, Faculty, and Professional Staff Appointments.*** All professional positions will be filled in consultation with the affected faculty, staff, and students, and with the appropriate external constituencies. On those extraordinary occasions when the advice of a search committee is not followed, the administrator making the appointment will inform the committee of the reasons that render the proffered advice unwise or impracticable.

For the department head and for permanent faculty and staff positions, search committees will contain a majority of elected representatives of the faculty and staff.