

# School of Landscape Architecture & Planning

Mission Statement | 5-year Strategic Plan  
Fall 2020 to Spring 2025

By Faculties in the School

## School Overview

The University of Florida College of Design, Construction & Planning is home to the School of Landscape Architecture & Planning (SLA&P), which represents the integrated and synergistic teaching, research, and service across the Departments of Landscape Architecture (LA) and Urban and Regional Planning (URP), and multiple associated research Centers.

The relationship between the School and its Departments are defined by Article VI of the UF Constitution, which describes a school as “a unit subordinate to a college organized for a special program of studies. A school may consist of two or more departments or may consist of no departments,” whereas a department is a unit “organized for an academic discipline or field of study.” The members of the School consist of all faculty in the Departments, and “the program of a school shall be conducted by the school faculty through a director.” SLA&P has a director and co-director who are also the respective Department chairs.

The purpose of the SLA&P Mission Statement and Strategic Plan is to document and communicate the aims of the School’s program over the five years from 2020 to 2025, as they have been identified through a shared governance process involving the School’s director and co-director, an ad hoc faculty committee of the School, and all the faculty of the School. The SLA&P Plan focuses on the integrated and synergistic activities of the School, whereas the Departments maintain separate mission statements and strategic plans focused on their respective units and disciplines. The Plan will be a “living document” and updated as needed by the School’s faculty and in accordance with the Bylaws. The effectiveness of the Plan’s approach will also be evaluated prior to creating the next five-year plan.

## School History

The School of Landscape Architecture & Planning was established in 2009 to foster multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary synergies in teaching, research, and service, as well as to achieve administrative benefits and efficiencies, while maintaining its two Departments’ disciplinary identities and professional accreditations.

In 2015, an ad hoc faculty committee of the College of Design, Construction & Planning reviewed the School’s structure to identify future administrative alternatives. The SLA&P faculty acted on the committee’s report by voting on specific actions to enhance integration within the School. These actions are represented in the School’s Bylaws and Departmental and College policies, as well as ongoing SLA&P initiatives, such as a School lecture series and website.

## School Mission and Vision

Florida is a microcosm of impacts and strategies to address national and global issues requiring an understanding of social-environmental systems, including urbanization and modernization, demographic trends, social justice, climate change and hazards, and environmental sustainability. The School of Landscape Architecture & Planning is strategically situated to address such issues through interdisciplinary teaching, research, and service. We work at a range of scales – site, neighborhood, city, and region; built environment – rural, small town, suburban, and urban; and contexts – both domestic and international. We bring our combined expertise to projects by collaborating across the academy and professions, and with governmental and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, community leaders, and members of the public.

### Mission

The School's mission is to advance the design and planning of integrated built and natural environments to enhance local, regional, state, national, and global sustainability and resilience. The School achieves this mission by preparing landscape architects and urban and regional planners for ethical, interdisciplinary practice; through research to develop new theories, methodologies, and technologies for fostering integrated design and planning; and by leading integrated professional practices and public services throughout Florida, the nation, and the world.

### Vision

The School's vision is to be the leading integrated design and planning program by building on the strategic synergies of the two disciplines (below). Our teaching, research, and service will take advantage of faculty expertise and collaborative experiences along five interrelated substantive and methodological **strategic synergies**:

- **People:** Socio-cultural, economic, and human needs, impacts, and responses, including social and environmental justice, health and the built environment, resource-based economic development, historic/cultural heritage and landscapes, and community engagement.
- **Sustainability:** Land use and conservation, including green and blue infrastructure, water and natural resource management, low impact design, and landscape performance; also, relationships between transportation and land use, rural and regional planning, and impact assessment.
- **Resiliency:** Adaptive policy, planning and design, including for natural hazards and climate change, and the systems within social-ecological systems that combine to create resilient communities and landscapes.

- **Design:** Design thinking, including pedagogical research, multidisciplinary learning, and new methods of creative design.
- **Technology:** Geospatial analysis and infrastructure modeling, including geographic information systems (GIS) assessment and design, visualization, 3-D modeling, integrated transportation and land use modeling, big data and social media analysis, and decision support tools.

## School Goals

The School will achieve its mission and vision through the goals of 1) disciplinary synergies, 2) organizational efficiencies and advantages, and 3) shared culture and community.

### Disciplinary Synergies

Disciplinary synergies, via interdisciplinary science, design, and practice, will define the School through the integration of our disciplinary expertise and interests.

### Shared Culture and Community

The School's culture will value interdisciplinarity and collaboration, while respecting the individual disciplines and Departments, and foster a sense of community through shared purpose and mutual support among the School's faculty, students, and staff.

### Organizational Efficiencies and Advantages

The School will internally share resources (such as staff, faculty representation, courses, and initiatives) to efficiently support the teaching, research, and service activities. Externally, the School will represent the coordinated interests of its Departments and faculty.

## School Objectives and Initiatives

The above goals will be fulfilled through a series of objectives and initiatives that align with the three primary areas of faculty and Departmental responsibility - Teaching, Research, and Service - as well as the cross-cutting areas of Communications and Organizational Capacity Building. The objectives and initiatives were developed to be "SMART," i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, although the details for implementation will be addressed through annual action plans, performance monitoring, reporting, and review. In general, the initiatives are listed in order of ease of implementation. Initiatives requiring significant effort should be examined more closely for feasibility. A matrix at the end of this section shows how the objectives support the School's goals above.

## Teaching and Curricula

The School's Departments will continue to offer high-quality disciplinary instruction to students. At the same time, the School will increase efforts to teach collaboratively and encourage additional student and faculty interactions, and student collaborations, across the Departments.

### 1. Teach collaboratively

- a. Introduce interdisciplinary topics in both undergraduate and graduate courses. Jointly guest lecture in the other department's courses.
- b. Encourage faculty of LA and URP to cross-serve on graduate terminal project, master's thesis/project, and doctoral committees.
- c. Communicate teaching activities, such as curricula and specific courses, across the Departments to increase faculty awareness of what is being taught. Consider a formal structure (e.g., lunch & learn) to share teaching topics methods, activities, and accomplishments.
- d. Establish joint courses. Assign similar topics or project sites in LA and URP studios, and plan for joint field trips and studio reviews. Offer an interdisciplinary (LA and URP) studio annually.
- e. Identify strategic areas for interdisciplinary curricular expansion to increase outreach and attract students; focus on high-enrollment general education courses.
- f. Revisit establishing a joint degree or certificate Program that integrates the strengths of the School.

### 2. Facilitate faculty-student interactions

- a. Encourage students to take at least one course offered by the other Department. Provide guidance to students about entry level courses and required sequencing.
- b. Share resources (e.g., data, software, equipment, materials, and facilities) for faculty-student collaborations.
- c. Promote the current URP Minor to LA graduate students. Consider creating an LA Minor for URP students, such as building upon the LA regional planning course.
- d. Jointly participate in existing satellite Programs (Orlando, Sarasota, St. Augustine, Nantucket) and study abroad opportunities, and explore establishing a new interdisciplinary off-site Program.

### 3. Encourage student collaborations

- a. Include on the website select interdisciplinary student work and opportunities for LA and URP student collaborations.
- b. Encourage collaborations between LA and URP students for competitions (Witters, ULI, Hanes).
- c. Host joint student events, including fall and spring welcomes, and combined student chapter meetings.

## Research and Creative Scholarship

The School will expand high-impact integrated research and creative scholarship, collaborate within research Centers and Institutions, and share research opportunities and resources.

### 1. Conduct high-impact research and creative scholarship

- a. Develop new interdisciplinary information, theories, methodologies, and technologies for guiding landscape architecture and urban and regional planning professionals.
- b. Perform research that advances fundamental interdisciplinary knowledge and addresses urgent social needs for integrated natural and built environments.

### 2. Collaborate and share resources

- a. Encourage senior faculty to mentor junior faculty across Departments, such as for interdisciplinary grants, grand challenges, publications, and conferences.
- b. Facilitate faculty research collaborations with FIBER and other interdisciplinary research Centers, Institutions, and Programs within the School, College, and University (e.g., Florida Climate Institute and UF Water Institute).
- c. Share resources (e.g., data, software, equipment, materials, and facilities) for collaborative research.
- d. Co-advise Ph.D. students on dissertation research and create shared high standards for doctoral education. Similarly coordinate for post-doc recruitment and management.
- e. Broadly communicate research opportunities across the School through a variety of approaches, such as regular brainstorming meetings, research roundtables, research sharing networks (e.g. ResearchGate), and web pages associating faculty to the School's themes, thus making their research more searchable.

## Service to the University, the Professions, and the Public

SLA&P will efficiently contribute to shared governance of the College and University, advance interdisciplinarity within the professions, and conduct interdisciplinary public service.

### 1. Streamline College and University service

- a. Review Departmental service within the College to determine if responsibilities unnecessarily overlap and whether they can be consolidated.
- b. Identify University committees where School representation can be implemented to promote SLA&P visibility (if not constrained by the College or University constitutions).

### 2. Integrate service to the LA and URP professions

- a. Jointly engage LA and URP faculty and students in professional development and networking activities.
  - b. Identify and participate in interdisciplinary professional service opportunities.
- 3. Bridge public service**
- a. Conduct interdisciplinary applied teaching, research, and professional practice that has public service aims, especially at the local community level.
  - b. Recognize and support the interdisciplinary public services provided by the Centers, such as the provision of data by GeoPlan and the Shimberg Center.

## Communications

The School will enhance communication across the Departments, including faculty, students, staff, and alumni, as well as develop efficient, coordinated public communication strategies. Communication strategies that cut across the teaching, research, and service objectives are discussed here.

- 1. Internally communicate and engage**
- a. Use information and communication technologies to internally facilitate integrated teaching, research, and service, such as by posting interdisciplinary opportunities.
  - b. Enhance the School's lobby to reflect SLA&P activities and accomplishments.
  - c. Periodically hold joint socials to bring together faculty, students, and staff.
- 2. Reach out to the public**
- a. Routinely recognize the School by listing it on presentations and business cards.
  - b. Communicate the School's teaching, research, and service to the public through the SLA&P website and other media outlets. Cross-reference this content on the Departments', Centers', and College websites, and individual faculty pages.
  - c. Develop a social media strategy for the School.
  - d. Jointly establish a School newsletter to represent the combined accomplishments of both Departments, including the interdisciplinary efforts.
  - e. Celebrate School milestones, such as the 15-year anniversary in 2024.
  - f. Professionally create School branding, including graphic design materials.
- 3. Host joint public events**
- a. Build on the SLA&P speaker series aimed at faculty, students, alumni, and professionals. Invite speakers (lecturers, visiting scholars, and practitioners) who exemplify the bridging of both disciplines.

Leverage the research Centers and Institutes for recruiting speakers and marketing the series.

- b. Explore the potential of a SLA&P symposium to showcase faculty and student work and to develop new collaborations.

## Organizational Capacity Building

The School will build organizational capacity to support the above objectives and initiatives.

1. **Coordinate staff initiatives with faculty**
  - a. Strengthen communications between staff and faculty to align priorities and expectations.
  - b. Involve staff in identifying opportunities for efficiencies, clarifying responsibilities, and seeking and implementing initiatives.
  - c. Reward staff productivity and collaboration, including through faculty nominations of staff for College and University awards.
2. **Coordinate faculty efforts**
  - a. Give credit for faculty interdisciplinary collaborations through annual evaluations and through formal recognition (awards).
  - b. Incentivize interdisciplinary activities through various means, such as start-up funds, reduced teaching loads, and teaching assistantships.
  - c. Explore joint faculty appointments and Centers across the School, and possibly beyond, for strengthening interdisciplinary relationships. Consider hiring interdisciplinary faculty with expertise across LA and URP. Host visiting lecturers, scholars, and practitioners who bridge both disciplines, and require them and their faculty sponsor to present their work at a School event.
3. **Coordinate student efforts**
  - a. Coordinate student recruitment efforts.
  - b. Support joint student voice in School governance.
4. **Coordinate Development, alumni, and professional relations**
  - a. Work with DCP Development staff to represent the School at events.
  - b. Continue to promote joint Advisory Council efforts.
  - c. Increase School representation at career fairs and consider hosting a SLA&P career event.
  - d. Identify additional funds to support the School's interdisciplinary and collaborative activities.
5. **Learn from similar programs across the country**
  - a. Continue to observe and network with other university programs that combine LA and URP, in order to identify opportunities and best practices.
  - b. Consider co-hosting events with similar programs and participating in interuniversity forums oriented towards such programs.



## Matrix of Objectives and Goals

The matrix below lists the objectives and the goals they most strongly support.

	Disciplinary Synergies	Shared Culture and Community	Organizational Efficiencies and Advantages
<b>Teaching and Curricula</b>			
1. Teach collaboratively	X		X
2. Facilitate faculty-student interactions	X		
3. Encourage student collaborations	X	X	
<b>Research and Creative Scholarship</b>			
1. Conduct high-impact research	X		
2. Collaborate and share resources	X	X	X
<b>Service</b>			
1. Streamline College and University service			X
2. Integrate service to the professions	X		
3. Bridge public service	X	X	
<b>Communications</b>			
1. Internally communicate and engage		X	
2. Reach out to the public		X	X
3. Host joint public events	X	X	
<b>Organizational Capacity Building</b>			
1. Coordinate staff with faculty			X
2. Coordinate faculty	X	X	
3. Coordinate students	X	X	
4. Coordinate Development, alumni, and professional relations	X	X	X
5. Learn from similar programs	X	X	X