Job prospects:

Will there be jobs for us?

A professor told me I should have a big black box here to represent the current job outlook for landscape architects. Yet while things may look grim, I’m writing this to lift your spirits. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the employment of landscape architects is supposed to grow faster than the average for all other occupations, at 16%, through the year 2016. US News and World Report ranked us as one of the top 30 best careers and gave our profession an “A” in job market outlook on their report card of selected criteria.

Now that you feel all warm and fuzzy inside, here’s a chilling fact—5.7 million jobs were lost in this country from July 2008 to July 2009. Competition for jobs will be fierce. According to the ASLA Business Quarterly, one in seven firms, or 14%, plan to hire in this upcoming quarter of 2009—a slight increase from the 11.2% in the previous quarter. “We remain cautiously optimistic that these positive signs point to the start of a real recovery. However, many hurdles still exist for firms. Private sector projects face challenges in securing financing, strong competition exists for limited public work and larger firms are finding many projects coming from overseas,” said Nancy Somerville, Executive Vice President and CEO of ASLA.

The BLS reports that mean salaries for Landscape Architects are highest in developing areas like Olympia, Washington, Asheville, North Carolina, and Fresno, California. In major cities, the highest mean salaries are in San Francisco, New York and Dallas. The highest numbers of Landscape Architecture jobs are in the greater Denver and Seattle areas and salaries are generally highest in the West and lowest in the East. In the end, don’t spend your time researching the job/salary outlook like I have. Spend your time honing your technical skills. If you can’t find a job—you have options. The obvious one for BLA’s would be to go to graduate school—pursue your educational interests. For MLA students and for those that five years is more than enough school, consider international career opportunities in high-demand places like China. There are opportunities out there for us, and each month, each year, the outlook is slowly brightening. Keep your chins up!

— Elizabeth Brighton, Fourth Year BLA Student

Know Your Profs

Professor Sungkyung Lee is our newest professor at the College of Environment and Design and brings her unique perspective to the college. She attended Dong-A University in South Korea for her undergraduate degree and the University of Illinois for her master’s degree and Ph.D. Her primary focus has been linking research into design. Her master’s degree and Ph.D. Her primary focus has been linking research into design. Her master’s degree and Ph.D. Her primary focus has been linking research into design. Her master’s degree and Ph.D. Her primary focus has been linking research into design.

Although South Korea and the United States may look very different in urban areas, Professor Lee notes some key similarities. In Atlanta, the sprawl has been mostly horizontal, spreading outward with automobiles. Some say the solution is to increase the density of American urban development. However, cities in Korea also are undergoing sprawl but on a vertical scale where the old inner cities become an eyesore. Some of her studies have been comparing these two forms of sprawl and how cities are losing their culturally and historically rich centers. Is higher density the answer to sprawl?

Look for Professor Lee in graphics classes for historical preservation and portfolio graphics in the fall, and planning and computer graphics classes in the spring.

— Robert Evans, Fourth Year BLA Student