Welcome CED Alumni

On April 22, our nation will celebrate our 40th Earth Day. Earth Day began when people realized that the “progress” of society was causing pollution and waste, creating a rapidly less liveable environment. Since the era of the environmental movement, many landscape architects, historic preservationists, and planners have been on the forefront of conserving our resources and changing our relationship with the natural world to be one of stewardship. This weekend, we welcome alumni that have been an integral part of our evolving relationship with the environment. We hope that as current students mingle with previous generations, the lessons those alumni impart will help those students as they go forward to summer jobs, classes, internships, travels, and studies abroad this summer to carry these great changes into the future.

News From a Graduate

May 2009 - at the moment I graduated from the College of Environmental Design - I had no employment prospects. Not a single one.

I quickly learned that, with the economy in the poor state that it was, I would have to greatly expand my understanding of what it means to start my landscape architecture career. I focused my job search on the public sector and began shopping around within the National Park Service - and within a few months I found myself sitting a desk in Frederick Law Olmsted’s bedroom.

The work I do at Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site is incredibly fulfilling. With the Good Neighbors Program I work with education professionals, renowned scholars, modern landscape practitioners, and the forward-thinking park staff to design and pilot an education program for elementary students. The Park Rangers that I work alongside have found my landscape architecture skills to be invaluable, from designing educational landscape models to interpreting historic drawings of the Olmsted Firm.

One major component of Good Neighbors involves the design and construction of a park landscape model by third grade students. The education team, with my help, have worked to create carefully engineered landscape components that, when assembled by the young students, create a detailed park model at 1”=10’ scale. The model can be assembled and disassembled by one group of students and then reassembled in an entirely different design by the next group - and most importantly, each park design is based on a set of realistic client requests.

The Museum of Modern Art is currently exhibiting the work Rising Tides: Projects for New York’s Waterfront. Five interdisciplinary teams, including landscape architects, re-envision the coastlines around New York Harbor in light of the potential for sea level rise. The project includes drawings, models, and analyses on proposals that featuring dynamic ecology based coastlines. www.moma.org
“News from a Graduate” continued...

Although it is surely not what I imagined I would be doing a year from my graduation, any doubts that I am putting my landscape architecture skills to their best use fade away as I watch the young students’ eyes light up. I am assisting the National Park Service to teach the next generation of park users, nature stewards, and landscape designers. Together, we guide students to enjoy parks, appreciate nature, and learn that the design of public landscapes is a complex, creative process.

I feel that I have gained an incredible depth of knowledge that will start my career on a solid footing. Recently, it has the great pleasure of sharing the program with a group of fourth-year CED students and even one of my former professors.

— Sam Valentine, BLA, LEED AP

Covington’s Metropolitan Design Studio Visits Fairsted

Recently, nine of the Metropolitan Design Studio students visited Fairsted, Frederick Law Olmsted’s Boston home and office. Fairsted is a national historic site maintained by the National Park Service. Fairsted is officially closed for restoration work, but one of the College of Environmental Design’s 2009 graduates and a current Fairsted employee, Sam Valentine (see above), arranged a private tour. Olmsted’s meticulously restored garden and office are definitely worth the effort of walking to in Boston’s cranky weather. If you have the chance to visit, demand a peek into Olmsted’s vaults-- but the introduction to the Good Neighbors educational program was most riveting.

Good Neighbors is a new educational tool that strives to spark interest in landscape architecture as a career path by engaging third-grade students that like art, math and the outdoors. Simultaneously, Good Neighbors creates ad hoc ambassadors for Olmsted’s Boston area parks, ensuring that the jewels in the Emerald Necklace secure a place in Boston’s 21st-century cultural identity.

Good Neighbors is a three-part interdisciplinary learning program. First, park rangers visit students in the classroom to establish baseline knowledge of Olmsted’s contributions to the national park system, as well as general knowledge about the field of landscape architecture. Then, students tour the grounds of Fairsted to explore and draw the landscape. After visiting Fairsted, the students visit a practicing landscape architecture firm in the Boston area.

Good Neighbors surpasses the educational value of a standard field trip program. Good Neighbors presents a well-rounded view of landscape architecture, approaching the field from its many angles: historical and contemporary, visual and tactile, horticultural and cultural.

The most enchanting piece of Good Neighbors is at Fairsted. Liza Stearns and Sam Valentine, the Education Specialist and Education Intern respectively, demonstrated the program by requesting that we participate in a simulation of Good Neighbors. We didn’t mind; even our professor enjoyed acting like a nine-year old. Typically, the third graders spend an hour pretending to be landscape architects. They divide into groups and design a park on a 24x36 topographic model. Each group is given a real-life client and specific design objectives. The children site pathways, water systems, trees, pavilions, benches, continued on page 3...

Metro Design Students participate in the Good Neighbors Program

Congratulations

Professor David Spooner

voted
Teacher of the Year
2010

Congratulations
Hands on Athens is an annual event hosted by the Athens-Clarke Heritage Foundation that works “to assist low-income homeowners in historic neighborhoods to maintain, repair, and restore their properties as part of an overall neighborhood revitalization” (ACHF). With the help of many hard-working volunteers, our team completed work on several houses this year. Traditionally focused on exterior repairs, HOA allowed our group to break from the trend and tackle interior renovations to make the houses more livable both inside and out. Some of the major projects included rebuilding a dilapidated kitchen, removing an interior wall, tile work, installing new cabinetry and flooring, and painting the exterior of one of the houses. Thanks to everyone who volunteered—we couldn’t have done it without you!

— Cat Dunleavy, 4th year BLA

Students with Hands On Athens

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April is Landscape Architecture Month

That’s right... ASLA announced April as the month to celebrate and educate others about our profession. This will be the seventh year that National Landscape Architecture Month will be celebrated, beginning in 2004. The month of April encompasses both Earth Day (April 22nd) and Frederick Law Olmsted’s Birthday (April 26th) making it the ideal month for landscape architects. Landscape Architecture firms around the country are getting involved in their local communities offering free workshops and lectures to the public in celebration of the nationally recognized month. This year is the 40th anniversary of Earth Day since it was declared in 1970. Organizations all around the country are hosting celebrations for this day, including the Odum School of Ecology, which held a viewing of *Earth Days* and a roundtable discussion.

Frederick Law Olmsted would be 188 years old on April 26th had he lived past the ripe old age of 81. We remember his most recognized work in New York, the wonderful Central Park, yet he also designed extensively around the nation. The Biltmore Estate grounds in Asheville, North Carolina are a great example close to home. We should remember, celebrate, and educate the public about his contributions to our country and our profession this month and always. In honor of National Landscape Architecture Month, ASLA is providing visitors to their website with a free online viewing of the Landscape Architecture magazine April edition. They also have recently put together a great website that showcases current projects by landscape architects as a resource with which to educate those friends of yours that just do not understand what you do or want to do. Visit http://www.asla.org/sustainablelandscapes/.

Have fun celebrating Earth Day, FLO’s birthday, and enjoy last days of classes in this wonderful month of April!

—Elizabeth Brighton, 4th year BLA

Know Your Profs

Georgia Harrison is a registered landscape architect as well as one of our professors in the College of Environment and Design. She has a bachelor’s degree in biology and a master’s in landscape architecture from the University of Virginia. Before teaching, she worked in the field for 16 years for firms in the Southeast including her own firm in upstate South Carolina. The decision to leave her practice and begin teaching was difficult, but ultimately the opportunity to continue learning brought her to the University of Georgia where she earned the Dean’s Award for Innovation in Teaching in 2009.

Her professional background guides her teaching approach from a pragmatic point of view. Her design philosophy is grounded in form-building, with a strong awareness of and design response to cultural, environmental and physical contexts. Designers are the stewards of the built environment, and she advocates using materials and methods that consider the long term perspective, for the benefit of future generations.

The creative process requires designers to think differently from those in other professions, Harrison says, and students new to the discipline must be open to alternative ways of approaching their learning. She sees students getting attached to one idea too soon, and encourages them to be willing to explore other options in the concept development phase. Harrison also recommends that students consider self-employment as an ultimate career goal, because of the potential for personal satisfaction and success with design. They should consider their early experiences in offices as formative, and should glean whatever they can that will benefit them in the future. Their professional life will be a continuing journey, a process where learning never stops.

—Robert Evans, 4th year BLA

Say it at the CED

We would love to hear your suggestions, opinions, or requests. “You CED it” is also looking for new students to get involved writing and editing the newsletter for Fall 2010. Contact the editor Agustina Hein at gslaofficers@gmail.com.