CHAIR’S LETTER  
22 September 2017

Dear alumni and friends,

As we approach the beginning of a new academic year we are excited to welcome a strong incoming class of undergraduate and graduate students. I am writing to let you know about what has been happening recently in the Department, and what we are looking forward to in the coming 2017-2018 academic year.

STUDENT RECOGNITION

It is always an honor and pleasure to acknowledge the accomplishments of our students. They are dedicated and work extremely hard to succeed in our program and we celebrate them all. I would like to particularly recognize David de la Cruz (MLA 2017), selected as the 2017 National Olmsted Scholar sponsored by the Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF). David will be using the award to work on environmental justice issues in his home community in South Central Los Angeles. He plans to develop collaborative partnerships with educators and staff in under-resourced schools to identify and implement projects that will cultivate and connect student’s self-expression with practices of environmental remediation. David has been an inspiration to many of us while in the program, and we look forward to following his progress as he continues to forge his professional path.

We are also fortunate to celebrate significant recognition from the 2017 ASLA Student Awards. Hillary Pritchett (MLA/MArch 2016), one of our first concurrent program graduate students with the Department of Architecture, received an Honor Award in the General Design Category for her thesis project, “Concrete Nurse Logs: Spawning Biodiversity from Ballard’s Century-Old Locks.” Jessica Hamilton (MLA 2017) also received an Honor Award in the Communications Category for her thesis project, “Tactile MapTile: Working Towards Inclusive Cartography.” Finally, the 2016
Design/Build team of graduate and undergraduate students led by Professor Daniel Winterbottom received an Honor Award in the Community Service Category for their powerful project, “Earth and Sky Garden: A Therapeutic Garden for the Puget Sound Veterans Affairs Hospital.”

Over the past year, our students have excelled in design studio working on a wide array of projects from campus planning for the Wild Dog Research Initiative in Szinda, Zimbabwe to urban design visioning for development near planned light rail transit hubs to speculating on conditions of social and cultural equity in our rapidly growing city. This past year, our graduate capstone studio, “MakerScapes,” worked with local youth and nonprofit organizations to design and build a “kit of parts” for supporting the establishment of a youth farm in south Seattle. An inspiring year for sure, and we congratulate all of the students for their eager engagement and strong work.

ALUMNI RECOGNITION

Our alumni continue to do fantastic work furthering the profession of landscape architecture regionally and globally. We would particularly like to recognize the firm Gustafson, Guthrie, Nichol (GGN) for receiving the 2017 ASLA Firm Award. This award is the highest honor the ASLA may bestow upon a landscape architecture firm in recognition of distinguished and influential work. In the submittal for the award, design critic Aaron Betsky wrote, “I know few other design firms that are better able to expose and explore what it means to shape the land, and to thus unearth beauty that exhilarates and astonishes, than GGN.” High praise and a well deserved award for founding principals Kathryn Gustafson, Jennifer Guthrie (BLA 1993), and Shannon Nichol (BLA 1997) and the rest of their team. We thank them for their continued dedication and commitment to the profession and the department.

Another of our alumni, Brice Maryman (MLA 2003) was selected to receive the newly established LAF Fellowship for Innovation and Leadership. The award enables Brice to investigate his project “HomeLand.” His work explores the spatial manifestations of homelessness on the urban landscape, documents current management approaches, and offers comprehensive, community-based spatial strategies at the region, city and neighborhood scales to create better, more successful public spaces for all. We congratulate Brice and are humbled by his dedication and deep commitment to his profession and community.

DEPARTMENT INITIATIVES + EVENTS

On our 48th anniversary of the founding of the department, we continue to build on the strong foundations of our predecessors focusing on issues of urban ecological design, engaged through initiatives in social justice and activism, ecological infrastructure, ecological learning and literacy, and human and environmental health.

A primary initiative among students and faculty was the establishment of Design Justice Seattle, a collaborative pursuit for a more equitable future for Seattle and the larger metropolitan region. Spurred by recent political events at the national level this newly formed group partners with a wide range of interests to develop an evolving design process that responds to social and environmental injustices. The group hosted a local “Design as Protest” event in January that attracted more than 300 students and local professionals to explore how the allied design and planning professions can better serve our communities by confronting issues that directly
impact vulnerable populations. We look forward to supporting and furthering the focus and energy of this group in collective and productive ways.

Another initiative was the establishment of a new program of drawing workshops. Organized by Professor Thaisa Way and supported by GGN, “Design in Drawing” was a yearlong workshop series partnering with practitioners to provide short investigations into drawing as a means of thinking and an active form of dialogue. Bringing together students and professionals the series was such a success; we are taking the opportunity to extend it into the coming year.

This past year we were also able to host a wide variety of notable lectures including landscape architect Kate Orff of SCAPE in New York. This coming spring we are looking forward to welcoming Gina Ford of Sasaki Associates. Stay tuned for more information on this event.

This autumn we will be hosting an exhibit in the Gould Hall gallery that will celebrate the life and career of Kenichi Nakano. A dear member of our community Kenichi was first a student in the department, then professor and always a mentor. His more than 30-year career helped to shape the contemporary profession of landscape architecture in the Pacific Northwest. Whether you knew him or not, please join us on the evening of Thursday, November 16- to celebrate Kenichi’s work and commitment to the profession.

FACULTY
The faculty has had another productive year of teaching, scholarship, and service. Working collaboratively with internal and external design research teams, the faculty have presented papers at conferences around the globe, participated in design competitions, published in scholarly journals, and edited several books. Of particular note is Design as Democracy: Techniques for Collective Creativity (Island Press) co-edited by Jeff Hou, and including a chapter contribution by Daniel Winterbottom. Another book is the forthcoming River Cities / City Rivers (Harvard Press) edited by Thaisa Way.

Nancy Rottle continues as Director of the Green Futures Lab (GFL) in the College of Built Environments, working on a wide array of regional projects that engage participatory processes and ecological priorities into the planning and design of built environments. The Washington State Chapter of ASLA recently recognized the GFL with a Merit Award for Analysis and Planning for their project, “Regional Open Space Strategy for Central Puget Sound.”

Lynne Manzo served as the Chair for the Board of Directors for the Environmental Design Research Association. A challenging position of service for advancing thinking and research in the field Lynne led admirably, and is now enjoying an academic sabbatical to return in 2018.

Iain Robertson continues to seek out the processes and practices for revealing creativity from a wide variety of angles. He recently taught a seminar on creativity for the UW Honors program and presented at the 2017 VentureWell Conference for innovation and entrepreneurship in education.
Julie Johnson is expanding her research into the educational relationships between children and their environment. She was recently a member of an international research team that was granted a significant award for their project titled, “PlayScapes for Learning, Health and Relationships in Early Childhood Development & Education.” The project is in collaboration with researchers from Queen Maud University in Norway.

Most recently, Ben Spencer and PhD Candidate Leann Andrews were awarded a pilot research grant through the University of Washington Population Health Initiative. The project titled, “InterACTION Labs” is an interdisciplinary, action-oriented program to improve human and animal health, environmental resilience and social equity through participatory design, implementation and assessment of built projects, processes and technologies in vulnerable communities. The pilot project will take place in Claverito, Iquitos, Peru – a floating informal urban community on the Amazon River.

As is longstanding tradition in the department, many of the faculty have in the recent past or will soon direct study abroad opportunities in Denmark, Canada, China, Croatia, Italy, Japan, Nepal, Peru, Sweden, and Taiwan. I am sure that many of you took advantage of the opportunity to study abroad while in school and recognize the benefits for the individual student and the program. We strongly encourage all of our students to enroll in these opportunities.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
We continue to work towards our goals within the University of Washington’s Capital Campaign. Our fundraising priorities are focused in two areas. The first is in student scholarships. As a department, we operate under the fundamental precept that our commitment is to the education of the whole student. We recognize that financial constraints are often the primary reason why students don’t succeed in our department and the larger university. Although we distribute all of the support we can on an annual basis, we are still able to only offer 33% of our students’ financial assistance. We are continually in the process of raising funds that will directly support student scholarships to help in alleviating some of the students’ pressures.

Our second priority is in raising the necessary support for a 2-year teaching fellowship. We recognize that to fully commit to educating the whole student, we are obligated to providing the opportunity and training necessary to successfully teach the next generation of our profession. As a field that is often one step behind public need, and one step ahead of public understanding we will always be in need of creative practitioners and educators that can push upon and stretch the nebulous bounds of our profession. Our hope is within this priority we will be able to support the growth and development of the next generation of educators in landscape architecture and urbanism.

If you are interested in supporting either of these priorities or to make a general gift to the department you may do so here.
GRATITUDE
For the past 8 years, Jeff Hou has served as Chair of the department. With a lead by example approach he successfully steered us through the turbulence of academic restructuring, economic downturns, and educating in a rapidly evolving profession. While quite the ride we certainly ended up in a much better place than we started with a strong and recognized program, excellent students, and engaged faculty. For that we are eternally grateful. Jeff has also accepted a position as the Director for the newly created Institute for Built Environments Innovation (iBE) here in the College of Built Environments. The iBE will serve to consolidate efforts in innovation and transdisciplinary research, serving as a hub for connecting public issues with academic expertise.

I would also like to recognize Dean John Schaufelberger. Five years ago he took on the difficult job of leading the College of Built Environments. He has worked tirelessly to promote the work of the allied design, construction, and planning fields represented in the College. He will be stepping down from this position in the coming year, and we are in the process of identifying the next Dean of the college to begin in the summer of 2018.

While this letter certainly may be too long, I believe it reflects the amount and quality of work that our students, staff, and faculty were engaged with in the past year. On behalf of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington, I thank you for your continued support and we hope to see you at the university for one of our many events, at the ASLA reception in October in Los Angeles, around Seattle, or wherever our paths may cross.

Sincerely,

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