

# UT's Master of Landscape Architecture program off to a great start

It used to be that Tennesseans wanting a degree in landscape architecture had to leave the state to obtain one. But that changed last fall when UT launched its own Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) program.

"People would go out of the state to earn the degree and few would return," says Plant Sciences Associate Professor Curtis Stewart. "In Tennessee we have a shortage of landscape architects."

With his help and that of other faculty in the program, that situation will soon start to change. Ten students in the inaugural class are finishing the first of three years in the professional degree program, which is jointly operated by UT's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and College of Architecture and Design.

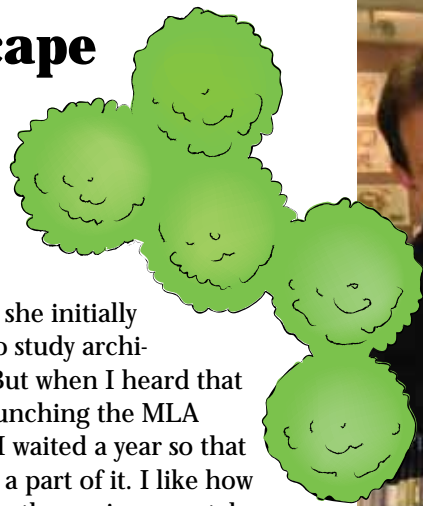
While architects generally design physical spaces such as buildings, landscape architects address a broad range of issues. "Anything from storm-water control and flooding to water quality, utilization and protection of public lands to how to properly plan communities, we cover all of that and more," Stewart says. "That's what makes landscape architecture so interesting."

Maudy Budipradigdo says she initially planned to study architecture. "But when I heard that UT was launching the MLA program, I waited a year so that I could be a part of it. I like how it addresses the environmental problems that we're dealing with now, such as global warming and scarcity of natural resources."

Student Beth Hawkins is one of two students with undergraduate degrees in cultural anthropology. She says she was drawn to the program for its emphasis on sustainability. "I am really concerned about environmental conservation. That's at the top of my concerns, it's not just about aesthetics."

And that suits Professor Stewart just fine. "When we sat down to craft the program, we discussed how we wanted our graduates to contribute to society.

"With the rich natural resources that surround us, we felt there was a niche for us, being the flagship university and being situated where we are. We wanted to be responsible designers using sustainable practices, to look at the rural and cultural uniqueness of this region, and incorporate that into the program."



Another asset is that MLA students collaborate with architecture students, learning how both disciplines can serve each other.

Because demand for professional landscape architects is hot, Stewart and his colleagues are excited about what lies ahead for the program and its graduates.

*MLA student Zeke Cooper, right, discusses his plan for a five-acre community park with Associate Professor Garry Menendez, left, and student Chris Chandler.*