

Background Information Regarding UW-La Crosse Exterior Master Planning

Introduction

The University of Wisconsin La Crosse is about to embark on an exciting and intense effort to develop a Campus Exterior Master Plan that will guide the exterior physical development of the campus so that it supports the instructional, research and public service missions of UW-La Crosse. It will require input from representatives of the various constituencies on campus as well as neighbors and other stakeholders in the larger surrounding community. Significant effort will be required to produce a consensus based comprehensive guideline for all future exterior development of campus facilities. However, the reward of ensuring the preservation and enhancement of our campus presence and identity is a great one. In addition, the very practical benefits of gathering detailed information about the campus infrastructure and compiling that data in a format that can be easily accessed and interpreted, will save significant time, effort, and consequently money, when developing future building projects that are required to support the UWL academic mission.

Why Is An Exterior Campus Master Plan Needed?

As required every biennium, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse produces a Physical Development Plan that is submitted to the Division of Capital Planning and Budget at UW System Administration. The campus is also currently in the process of completing a long range Strategic Plan. Facility needs have emerged, and will continue to emerge, as a result of the issues examined in these documents.

Renovations and additions to existing buildings, construction of new facilities, enhancement of pedestrian and vehicle transportation routes, and revisions and additions to exterior monumental and way-finding signage, are some of the very visible activities that will occur on this campus in the coming years as part of the effort to address the various space and circulation issues.

In order to implement these solutions in a consistent, coherent manner, the university is commencing a process to develop an Exterior Master Plan. The Plan will provide guidance for all exterior physical developments on the campus for many years into the future. It will ensure that any additions of building space or exterior physical renovations to the campus grounds will result in an appropriate physical appearance and presence, and that the functionality of the campus is enhanced, instead of hindered by such activities. It will, in essence, be a roadmap for future development of all of the campus exterior spaces.

How Will The Plan Be Developed?

With the assistance of UW System Administration and the Department of Administration-Division of State Facilities, UW-La Crosse has hired a consultant to assist in the preparation of the Exterior Master Plan. The selected consultant, SmithGroup JJR (located in Madison, WI) has extensive experience in exploring planning issues and in developing the type of document that is used as a Master Plan. They have assembled a team that has expertise in facility planning, architecture, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, landscape architecture and computer aided drafting in order to prepare the final documents that will comprise the Plan. One of the member firms of SmithGroup JJR's team is River Architects, a local architectural group that has significant experience with campus building projects.

While representatives of UW System Administration and the Department of Facilities Development will provide assistance with the development of the Plan, it will be an effort that will remain anchored here at UW-La Crosse. The UWL Campus Planning Office will be facilitating the process, and coordinating the review and implementation of the Plan with the Joint Physical Facilities Committee.

The first step in the process will be a very intense three day schedule of listening sessions with the various campus constituency and stakeholder groups. The consultants and representatives of UW System Administration and Division of State Facilities will be on campus on November 18th, 19th and 20th to conduct these initial listening sessions. In addition, the campus, while having its own unique identity that needs to be maintained and enhanced, is also an integral part of the overall larger community of the La Crosse area. The plan must recognize this, and so there will also be meeting times allocated for the participation of community members, local elected officials and City of La Crosse department heads (City Planning, Engineering, Public Works, etc.).

After this initial three days of workshops, the consultant will continue to collect data regarding the physical aspects of the campus. They will also analyze the information they gathered from the stakeholder listening sessions and begin to explore alternative concepts that could be included in the Plan. Throughout the next ten to twelve months we will engage with the consultants in an iterative process of documenting these concepts, presenting them back to the university community and refining them based on the feedback they gather from the presentations.

How Can I Find Out More About This Process?

The Master Planning process has just begun. As the actual planning activities begin to occur, there will be updated information posted on the UW-La Crosse Campus Planning website, <http://www.uwlax.edu/camplan/>, in the form of brief reviews or summaries of activities, any graphics that may be produced during planning, or any other information that can be posted there. Also, at any time throughout the planning process, questions can be directed to Matt Lewis, Campus Planner at 785-8019, or at lewis.matt@uwlax.edu.