

Spring, 2014
Rutgers University
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
The Department of Landscape Architecture

LANDSCAPE ENTERPRISE

11:550:436

3 Credits

Instructor: **Dominick Mondì**, CNLP

Executive Director, New Jersey Nursery and Landscape Association

Email: Dominick.Mondi@gmail.com

Phone: 609-414-6161

Textbook: Business Principles of Landscape Contracting

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Landscape Enterprise is designed to be applicable to both landscape industry and landscape architecture majors interested in understanding the business management side of the profession, especially for those interested in one day starting or owning their own company. Topics included will be both general business items as well as those licenses, regulations, best management practices and standards specific to the green industry. Topics will be presented with information applicable to a variety of landscape businesses, including design only firms, landscape construction, landscape maintenance, design build, and combinations of the above.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The purposes of this class it to provide practical and relevant information to prepare students for business careers in the green industry. Upon completions students should:

- Have an understanding of basic financial tools used in business management, including reading and interpreting income statements, balance sheets, and performance ratios.
- Understand the management aspects of a landscape business including time, asset, and inventory tracking, job costing, and efficient job management.
- Gain a deeper insight into the different segments of the landscape industry, including maintenance, design/build, landscape architecture and design only firms.
- Develop personal business and career goals.

REQUIREMENTS:

Students will be required to participate in classroom discussions, in class projects, as well as assigned work and readings. It is the students responsibility to come to class prepared, especially since in class work and group assignments will be a factor in assigning grades.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

Landscape Enterprise, Spring 2014, will meet Monday evenings from 5:45pm – 8:45pm

January 27, Week 1

Ain't Nobody's Business But Yours: Getting Started In the Landscape Industry

Understanding what you want from your business or your career is going to be key in this course. We will start off by discussing all that is available to you as a career in the green industry, and work in groups and as a class to refine your passions and perspectives into clear professional goals.

- Personal assessment: Goals for a green industry career
- Understand the various industry business models and careers

February 3, Week 2

Creation: Designing Your Business Or Career

Step one is knowing what you want to do. The next 13 weeks are about how to do it. When you get started it is going to be important to understand what factors in the industry or market may influence your business and develop a strategic plan from that analysis.

- The green industry job market
- The growth, decline, and hopeful rebound of the horticultural industries
- Understand how do use information about the industry to make good decisions
- How does the economy, housing market, and other factors influence the industry
- What is the real value of horticultural goods and services?

February 10, Week 3

The Importance of Profit: Finances, Budgeting, and Financial Projections

At the end of the day, business is measured in money. Making money most likely is the inspiration for choosing this career path, but is an indicator business health and career success. Because of that, understanding how to track and manage money in a business is important, and knowing how to read and react to financial data is essential.

- How to read and react to a balance sheet and income statement
- The importance of financial controls and bookkeeping in a business
- Understanding profit in terms of growth, investment, and covering liabilities
- Review of some industry standard financial ratios and performance matrixes
- $\text{Direct Costs} + \text{Overhead Costs} + \text{Profit} = \text{Selling Price}$

February 17, Week 4

Love/Hate Relationship: The Design Build Dynamic

The work of a designer or architect is only imagination until a project gets build. Conversely, the craftsman is just a laborer without a well thought out plan to guide it work. These two sides of the trade are intrinsically connected, yet often at odds. It is important that both sides of the equation have a healthy understanding of the process.

- Understand the separate but equal roles of the LA and Contractor
- Design Only business model and how it can work (and not work!)
- Design/Build landscape company: how to recover design costs
- Should I charge for my design services? How much?

February 24, Week 5

It's In The Details: Track Everything to Be Successful

Managers and Owners can only make informed decisions about their business if they have good controls in place to track everything and supply data that that can be used to set direction. Good employee management and clear procedures can go a long way to collecting the right data.

- Understanding and tracking overhead
- Job costing, estimating, project management

March 3, Week 6

It's More Than The Law: The Importance of Professionalism

The landscape industry is more heavily regulated then most people realize. Federal, state and local agencies all have something to say about how you conduct your business. It is important to know and follow these rules. They are not just there for your health, er, actually, many of them are!

- The importance of licenses, certifications, and registrations on a business
- Overview of all license and certifications required for landscape business
- Licensed Landscape Architects: What they can and can't do
- Regulations and rules that affect landscape professionals
- How to be a compliant business
- What does it mean to be a landscape PROFESSIONAL?

March 10, Week 7

Now, Tell Some One!: Develop a Marketing Strategy

All the best business plans turn on the marketing plan. You can be the best designer, hire the best employees, and perform the highest quality work, and if no one knows about it, it is all for not. Marketing is simply placing an ad in the spring and hoping to book enough work to get you to the fall, it should permeate every aspect of the organization.

- Understanding marketing as a part of your company culture
- Customer service as part of your marketing plan
- Vision, Mission, and Purpose

- Internal and outward messaging as part of your marketing plan
- Specific outbound marketing tools for the landscape and design industries
- B2B vs. B2C
- The role of technology and marketing your green industry business or career

March 17, SPRING BREAK

March 24, Week 8

Becoming a Landscape Architect: The Praxis

March 31, Week 9

Tools of the Trade: Professional Associations and Certifications

There are lots of associations and societies which help guide and lift different aspects of the green industry. These organizations can provide great value, especially for young professionals, who might be looking to advance their careers. They also provide service and support to the entire industry through a variety of activities.

- The role associations play in the green industry
- The importance of participating in your trade association

April 7, Week 10

Industry Segments: Landscape Maintenance

The managed outdoor environment is a growing, even maturing, segment of the green industry. As landscape techniques evolve to include more unique features, like native plantings, meadows, storm water systems, and other green features, the emphasis on maintenance to ensure landscape performance will grow. A company may be entirely maintenance, or have it as a division of the company.

- Corporate vs. residential landscape maintenance
- Maintaining Municipal Parks and Public Gardens
- The importance of operational efficiency for landscape maintenance managers
- Guest Lecturer: To Be Determined

April 14, Week 11

Industry Segments: Design/Build Contractor

Building a successful design/build landscape company can have a greater return on investment than other landscape business models, but also requires the most coordination, capital investment, and planning. It is important to focus on both arts, design and build, to be unique and successful.

- Recovering design costs – direct bill or overhead calculation
- Employee roles: Designer, Sales, Project Manager
- Managing sub-contractors with construction specialities
- Guest Lecturer: To Be Determined

April 21, Week 12

Allied Industry Segments: Tree Care, Irrigation, Lighting, Suppliers

There are a lot products and services that are essential to creating and maintaining great landscapes that are not directly the responsibility of the landscaper, but which they may engage in or hire subcontractors to perform. Building a strong network of allied professionals is a trademark of successful businesses, and sometimes these trades can offer rewarding careers of their own.

- Nursery growers, greenhouses, re-wholesalers, plant brokers, and garden centers
- Brick, Paver, Stone, and wood.
- Irrigation, lighting, and water features
- Arborists, Licensed Tree Experts, and other arboriculture companies
- Guest Lecturer: To Be Determined

April 28, Week 13

Finding Your Niche: What Is Your Unique Selling Position?

The landscape industry is maturing. Cost tracking and employee management and training is now essential, and it alone will not differentiate you from other successful companies. The idea of a USP brings us back to the beginning.

- What products or services make your business truly unique?
- What, beyond pricing, can you offer to consumers to differentiate from competition?

May 5, Week 14

Completing and Presenting the Finished Plan

Present your business plan and final project proposals to the class.

BASIS FOR GRADING:

While the assignment of grades is ultimately the purview of the instructor, the department uses the following guideline for understanding appropriate grading in its courses:

A – Outstanding –This not only means fulfilling the requirements, but impressing and going beyond the initial expectations of the project. The student has demonstrated a superior grasp of the subject matter coupled with a high degree of creative or logical expression, and strong ability to present these ideas in an organized and analytical manner.

B – Very Good – The student has demonstrated a solid grasp of the material with an ability to organize and examine the material in an organized, critical, and constructive manner. The projects and in-class performance reveal a solid understanding of the issues and related theories or literature.

C – Acceptable –The student has shown a moderate ability to grasp concepts and theories for the class, producing work that , while basically adequate, is not in any way exceptional. This performance in class display a basic familiarity with the relevant literature and techniques.

D – Unacceptable – The work demonstrates a minimal understanding of the fundamental nature of the material or the assignment with a performance that does not adequately examine the course material critically or constructively. Students cannot graduate from the Landscape Architecture program with 2 D's in required 550 classes.

F – Failure – The student has demonstrated a lack of understanding or familiarity with course concepts and materials. Their performance has been inadequate. Failure is often the result of limited effort and poor attendance which may indicate that the student is not in the proper field of study.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

The learning objectives of this course can only be met through participation. The class is designed to build on student interaction during in class assignments and from discussion of readings and exercises. Students are expected to complete assigned readings and exercises before the start of class. Students should be prepared to discuss the readings and raise questions or ideas. The instructor will keep track of participation to assure equity.

There will be a strict attendance policy. Students are expected to attend all classes. Missing more than 1 class will result in a grade reduction. The only acceptable absences beyond one class period are health and family emergencies, and both require contacting the professor BEFORE the day of absence.

OWNERSHIP OF STUDENT WORK:

Submitted drawings, models, photographs, or written papers for any project assigned in Landscape Architecture courses are considered the property of the Department and may be retained in its archives for exhibition and accreditation purposes. All projects will be graded and returned to the student at a location designated by the instructor. Should your work be retained by the Department, you will be given the opportunity to obtain a print or photographic record of your work. Department files are OFF LIMITS to students.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY:

Every member of that community bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld. Only through a genuine partnership among students, faculty, staff, and administrators will the University be able to maintain the necessary commitment to academic integrity. Please look at the full description at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>.

The website includes definitions of cheating, plagiarism, paraphrasing, multiple submission, fabrication, facilitating cheating or plagiarism, denying others access, and fair use of citations and common knowledge.

LATE SUBMISSION PENALTIES:

Assignments are expected to be completed by the assigned due dates. Late submissions will be reduced by one letter grade for each week late they are submitted. Work not turned in as a result of an APPROVED absence will be granted a one week extension without penalty.

OFFICE HOURS:

Office hours are by appointment only. In person meetings will only be scheduled immediately prior to or after the scheduled class time. Phone meetings may be available on a more flexible schedule.

READINGS:

Required Text – Business Principles of Landscape Contracting, Steven M. Cohan, Ph.D.
Supplemental readings will be provided throughout the class

USE OF FACILITIES:

Lecture and lab work cannot be taught without reliable facilities. But your use of the facilities is dependent upon responsible use with particular regard to the clearly established rules about their use as specified in the student handbook: http://landarch.rutgers.edu/current_students/student%20handbook/StudentHandbook_web_Sect1.pdf. These rules cover access to Blake Hall, vandalism, table assignments, personalization of work space, smoking and drinking, use of the lockers, access to the reference collection, and basic rules governing the use of the computer lab. Failure to observe rules may result in loss of access.