

Landscape Design Guidelines – Muhlenberg College 2015
An Introduction



“The appearance of our landscape and campus determines our customers impressions of our institutions to a large degree. People naturally assume that if the building and grounds appear well cared for, then the faculty and students must be well cared for, too. Grounds (and facilities) management is arguably the most important job at schools, colleges, and universities today.”

Thomas Flood, ASLA, EFP
Elon University

Landscape Design Guideline Principles

Truly beautiful campuses have a distinct character, either through the architecture or the landscape, or both, that sets it apart from other campuses. It provides for qualities that make it unique, memorable, and creates a strong sense of place. Through this it makes students, faculty, and staff proud to be a part of the community. Quality of the campus plays a role in student acceptance, retention, and caliber. The role that campus beauty plays in attracting students and contributing to their happiness as a student is well documented. Academic excellence needs to be manifested by excellence in the campus landscape. Muhlenberg Campus is a mature, aesthetically pleasing campus. The architecture is wonderful, and should be highlighted in the landscape design. The urban campus blends into the West End of the city, but keeps its identity through unique architecture, pedestrian pathways, and landscape treatments.

These guidelines are to be used when developing or enhancing Campus landscapes. The physical change or development of the landscapes and open spaces shall follow these principles:



Create/ Reinforce the College’s Identity:

The mission of the college shall be reflected in the college landscape. Great landscapes will strengthen the identity of Muhlenberg and its campus as a continuously evolving setting with a historic beginning.

- Enhancements shall be historically respectful, relevant to current times, and forward in thought process.
- Unity of the campus shall be achieved through the use of materials, plant selection, and spatial design.
- Preserve the architectural strength that exists on Academic Row, and Main Campus.

Collaborate with Campus:

Design spaces to enhance and build upon the network of campus spaces through consistency and familiarity.

- The site hardscapes, furnishings, plantings, and details should be uniform in its presentation. The goal is to utilize a common palette of construction and plant material to provide unity.
- Landscapes shall reflect the need for living laboratories that will serve both students and faculty.
- Enhance the Campus as an Arboretum through visibility and function.

Bolster Sustainability through:

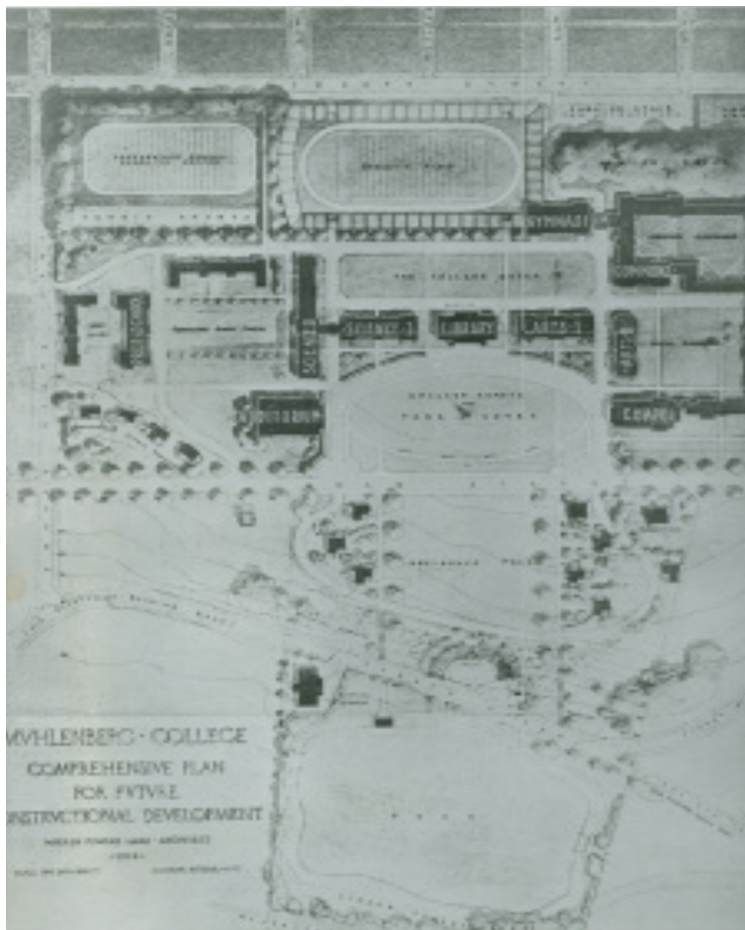
Enhancing and preserving natural environments and systems across the campus and adjacent property.

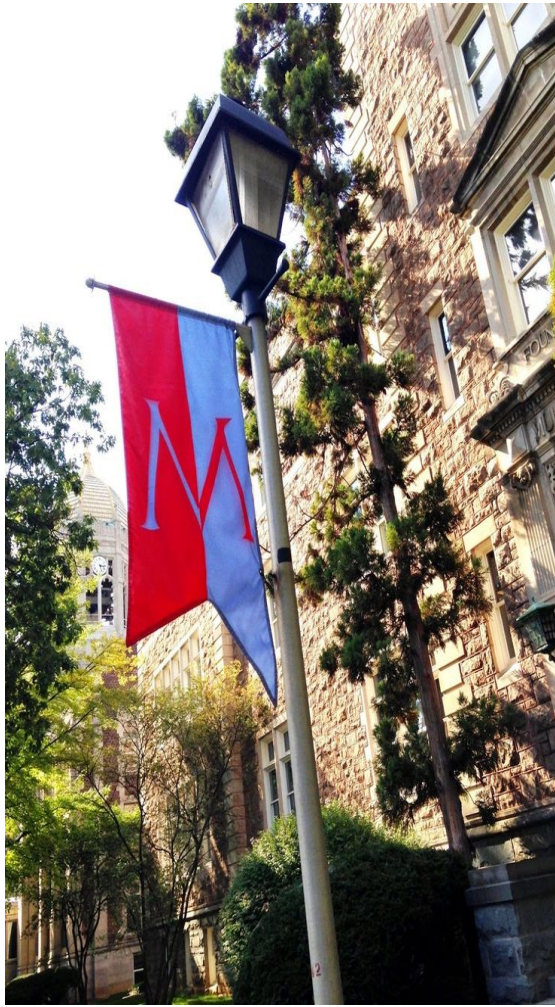
- Promote the use of multi-seasonal spaces and materials for aesthetics on Campus.

Plant Selection:

Plants for use on the Campus should be selected to enhance the architecture, enhance the open – space, and create a sense of space. The sense of place and community will be further advanced by establishing a campus wide landscape “vocabulary”. They should support a sustainable landscape when possible. The use of the space , and the architecture of the building may dictate that non-native and more formal plant material be selected. There is also the need for diversification for educational purposes.

- Micro-climate , use, and space shall help to determine plantings.
- The Campus currently has a small, but varied selection of plant material. We need to expand on this list.
- Select species with their ultimate height in mind. Pruning should not be necessary to maintain the tallest height of the tree or shrub.
- Pruning can create a plant that is more formal or architectural, and may not be appropriate for the setting. It also puts a small burden on Plant Operations by generating extra maintenance.
- Large shrubs should be placed judiciously on campus. Their size can break-up an intimate space or entry, cause safety issues
- Foundation plantings should also be used sparingly. They tend to complicate the space and take away from the architecture. We currently have three examples located all along Academic Row. Trumbauer now has no plantings, Haas has minimal, and Ettinger still has the original foundation plantings. Haas is accented just enough , but still allows the buildings architecture to shine through. Ettinger is covered up and may need to be updated. Trumbauer may be too sparse- nothing to tie it to the other parts and buildings of campus, and new plantings should be considered.





Memorials and Art:

Campus features including memorials and art can add to the landscape and should be encouraged on the Campus. There needs to be an established protocol for memorial plantings to promote the idea of integrating with the landscapes, rather than randomly placed. Establish a size for the tree or planting, and create an alternative system of attribution-discontinue the use of plaques. Direct designation of the memorial may be decided by plant operations or the president. Art installations shall require a review by Committee as well as an endowment for the upkeep of said piece.

Signage:

Signage shall be provided across campus to promote Campus brand and identity for visitors and students.

Sidewalks and Pathways:

Universally accessible routes should be provided through campus whenever possible per ADA standards. Path design and size to be determined by level of use, thus providing a hierarchy of connections throughout campus.

Site Furnishings:

Site furnishings and amenities – such as trash receptacles- shall provide unity and simplicity. They shall fit the use and context of the space, and be selected from existing material.



Landscape Areas:

Entrances to Campus:

Muhlenberg College main entrances exist along Chew Street and Liberty Street. They are the Campus connection to the community and to visitors as they enter the Main Campus area. The landscaping should :

- Provide a hierarchy of entrances – main and secondary- through scale and material.
- Provide a consistent use of material through all entry areas on campus.
- Primary to be dominant through use of walls, lighting, formal plantings, and signage.
- Secondary to be smaller in scale, perhaps just simple signage, and less formal plantings.

Plantings should have a formal feel to them, and can include the following:

- Dogwoods, Cherry Tree, Stewartia
- Paperbark Maple, Small Maples
- River birch
- Evergreens like Cryptomeria, Cypress, Southern Magnolia
- Hollies of many varieties
- English Yew
- Flowering Hydrangea
- Viburnum
- Phase out the use of Burning Bush and Barberry. Burning Bush is now listed on the Pennsylvania invasive plants species,
- Space for annual plantings of color

This is a small sample of the type of plant material recommended for these areas to provide year round color and interest, a formal look, and mix of heights.



Open Spaces:

These are large, open green spaces that enhance the identity of the College. They allow for large gatherings of students, faculty, and staff. They can be ceremonial too. Pedestrian routes shall provide direct routes to, through, and around these spaces. The College Green is an example on our Campus.

A more manicured aesthetic is appropriate for this type of space. Designs with traditional turf and trees as primary elements are good. Focal points can be enhanced through the use of foundation plantings and creation of focal points.

Student and pedestrian safety shall be considered in the placement of plantings.

The open space is a great place to highlight and feature single, planted trees like

- All Types of Oak, Beech, Elm, etc.
- Black Gum
- Sycamore
- Refer to data base listing to ensure that balance is kept as far as selection
- The Norway and Sugar Maple should be avoided in future plantings.

Pedestrian Mall:

We do not have a pedestrian mall in the purest of forms, but we do have the Front walkway along Academic Row. There is limited vehicular traffic, and provides a direct connection from one end of the main campus to the other. The trees that line the walkway create an important experience to the users of this space and shall be treated as such. These are considered the iconic experiences of the Campus, and our walkway at Muhlenberg provides such an experience. The banners add color, brand, and feel to the walkway.

Existing trees are ok, but may have been planted too shallow or mulched improperly thus providing a challenge to integrate wholly into the Landscape.

The material of choice for the walkway is blacktop and concrete curbing. When improvements occur, this combination of material should be changed to allow for a more unifying, architecturally appropriate material. Carrying of the bluestone paver from Parents Plaza to the each building entry should be considered.

Storm water management shall be incorporated in a way that is both attractive and functional. A more formal, manicured landscape for these areas is desired.



Plantings for this area shall be a replacement of existing if needed. These trees are too shallow, but to remove them would change one of the iconic areas of campus. Careful consideration needs to be placed on maintaining them as well as changing them.

If and/ or when they are replaced, perhaps planting:

- Zelkova
- Elm
- Hornbeam

Plaza Areas:

Plazas are large areas of hardscape that support pedestrian traffic into buildings, provide outdoor seating and dining, and allow for events to occur. Parents Plaza is our main plaza area on Campus. It provides tables for dining, a stage for events, and is a major entry point to Seegers' and the surrounding buildings. Walls provide seating as well as enhance the formal shape and plantings. The Freshmen Quad is a smaller, but still popular plaza type area. The current planting in Parents Plaza is struggling due to all the hardscape- it inhibits true growth. The space also gets quite a bit of foot traffic – even though the areas are raised. Students are constantly stepping on plants to hang banners, etc. Moving forward, some method of displaying banners and posters may need to be integrated into the design. This can be through both a structure and planting hardy, steppable type plants. Seasonal color should be added through the use of perennials.

Some plantings for this area(s):

- Enhance the existing Trees and shrubs by increasing the use of the liriopie ground cover.
- Remove Viburnum at stage area and replace with something lower and fuller, like:
- Oak leaf Hydrangea
- Clethra
- Pieris
- Mountain Laurel
- Holly
- Carolina allspice
- Liriopie
- Coneflower
- Black Eyed Susan
- Ornamental Grass
- Bellflower

Steppables like:

- Sedum
- Dianthus
- Ajuga

Proposed Areas to address going forward:

Front of the Library:

The front of the Library is currently under consideration for an update. A consultant is reviewing options for hardscape changes. One of the goals of the design process is to try and tie the front entrance in visually with the front entries of other buildings on campus.

Add another plaza area , possibly near Moyer:

The Moyer building sits at the East end of Academic Row. It creates a termination point for the area, and connects campus to the East Hall residence. The addition of a small, outdoor seating or social space would provide structure for social activities or just informal student gatherings. An outdoor classroom is another possibility to balance out the space.

East Fire lane:

The East fire lane is an area that is used to connect campus to the MILE properties, and used as an entrance point to campus. The existing plant material is lineal, and does not unite the buildings in proximity to it. The entrance is not enhanced or strengthened through its use. The open lawn areas and trees would be accentuated through minimal use of plants along the north and south side of the lane. The large, spectacular trees in the Chapel lawn area would be easier to see, and play a stronger role in the landscape. A better sense of entry can be created through some simple changes to the end along Twenty-third street. It is also an opportunity to tie the buildings on the east side of campus to Academic Row.

Chew Street and Gabriel House Garden:

The gardens at the Wescoe School have historical significance. They have existed and been a part of, Muhlenberg's identity on Chew Street. The spaces are used by both students and community members.

This would be a complete renovation of the gardens to bring up to date , creating some nice, very usable space for students and community. Through this the presentation of the College along Chew street could be dramatically improved. This is a very visible area,. Some enhancements of the connections to the South side would also be appropriate during this project. Opening up views to Muhlenberg's iconic Clock tower from Chew Street would provide a central "entry " or sign/ wall for the Campus with the Haas Clock tower as a backdrop.

Landscape Spaces help to bring together a campus through connections. They are needed to balance the building of roads, parking lots, and buildings. As Muhlenberg continues to grow and evolve, it will be important to provide a well thought out campus landscape.