

High-Profile Focus: Society for College and University Planning

Benefits of Open Space and Landscape to Campus Development

By John Copley, ASLA, Principal and Lynn Wolff, FASLA, President & Principal Copley Wolff Design Group

As landscape architects, we are encouraged by the development of new open spaces and landscapes, not only for our work, but also for its impact on society as a whole. Our beliefs and anecdotal observations about the beneficial effects of open spaces on human behavior over the last 25 years in practice have been recently confirmed by academic studies, papers and publications:

- Economic

The Urban Land Institute (<http://www.uli.org>) and Trust for Public Land (<http://www.tpl.org/>) studies have shown that people and potential student customers react positively to a well planned, designed and maintained landscape.

Also many of our projects are executed as early economic initiatives to set the visual stage for future economic development. If it looks nice, feels safe, warm and comfortable, customers react with their wallets. Specifically for the campus application, the “parent trap” is a critical component for signing new applicants and their parents. The view from the admissions office and the stroll to the main quad is one of the main determinants to securing the hearts and minds of new students and

their parents. •

Health

Open spaces are required to maintain a healthy student body and population. Multiple exercise opportunities that are integrated into everyday life make for a healthier population, reduce medical costs and increase productivity. Recent University of Illinois studies

(<http://www.lhhl.uiuc.edu/>) have shown that views of and access to open space is also better for overall health and safety. •

Social

Open spaces are the democratic gathering spaces for our society. People need to interact, communicate and mingle among each other. Social interaction is facilitated with well designed open spaces. •

Political

Open space development at campus edges partially or fully developed by institutions can offset, mitigate or even soothe the long term town – gown relationships.

With these benefits in mind, a new opportunity for fundraising and development should be to consider the

campus landscape as potential naming or donation opportunities. Recent examples in Texas have shown a willingness of alumni to donate resources specifically for campus landscape upgrades or landscape development associated with a new building project.

In conclusion, while the funding challenges to construct and maintain campus landscapes are in direct competition for other critical needs, the benefits far outweigh these costs in the big picture. It is important for campus decision makers to keep this balance in mind.

John Copley and Lynn Wolff are principals at Copley Wolff Design Group, a landscape architecture and planning firm located in downtown Boston. The firm’s work includes urban landscapes, campus landscapes, cultural and historic interpretation, the integration of art, and community participation. Overlooking historic Boston Common, the office comprises eleven landscape architects, two LEED professionals, planners, architects and graphic designers and is a certified Woman-owned Business Enterprise (WBE) and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE.)



Copley



Wolff

