

The need for a Sustainable Campus Landscape Director

The campus landscapes are classrooms where the University teaches our students how to treat Nature. For well over a century the lesson plan has been a failure. There has been loss after loss of entire sections of the landscape. The trees are planted in strict rows of the same species of trees, all the same age. Each part of the University claims sovereignty over their part of the landscape...Krannert, Housing, ACES, Engineering...and our F and S unit cannot overrule them. Every new building project relegates the surrounding landscape design to a remote company where knowledge of our climate and soils is minimum. Most of the building budgets have little or no landscape money by project end.

We need a Sustainable Campus Landscape Director at the University level whose Office can set the landscape policy for the all of each campus. That policy would be set on the basis of ecological principles with full knowledge of soil and climate conditions. The Director would insure that these landscapes were explained to the students (and staff and faculty) and available for research. Perhaps most important, the Director would be a single agent for these landscape with the University Foundation. There are people of wealth who would be amenable to make landscape endowments, people who might never give for a building project.

The appointment of such a director at the University level has been under discussion for years. President Easter appears to favor such an appointment. Yet elements of the campus seem resistant to change. F and S for example would, with this new Director, continue with landscape construction and maintenance as they always have. The Sustainable Landscape Director would determine the policies of species choice and arrangement and which parts of the landscape could attract endowments.

It is abundantly clear that sustainability is on the minds of today's students. It is time we recognized that our biggest and most effective classroom is the campus landscape.

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