Combing PASSIONS

Horses grazing, flowers blooming. Grasses growing. Seasons changing. These scenes are created by landscape architecture students helping other students the Cowboy way.

The Charles and Linda Cline Equine Teaching Center's grand opening was Feb. 16, showcasing facilities and recognizing those involved in creating the new facility. Eight landscape architecture students aided in the aesthetics of the Charles and Linda Cline Equine Teaching Center by designing a low-maintenance landscape.

"It is a student place," said Cheryl Mihalko, assistant professor of horticulture and landscape architecture. "Dr. Cynda Clary, associate dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, wanted students to be involved in developing the landscape setting."

Mihalko coordinated with Janina Beck-Williams, facilities and project manager for the OSU Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, to arrange for students to design the landscape.

As a co-adviser of OSU's student chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Mihalko told students of the opportunity to help at the new center.

"My role was participating in a design charrette," said Daniel Jordan, landscape architecture senior, "which is basically a brainstorming session where any ideas go on the paper to keep refining them until you have a couple concepts."

Landscape architecture students' class assignments are mostly theoretical projects, but they always appreciate a real site and actual client, Mihalko said.

They started the project with the creativity and a yearning for hands-on experience for their career paths, she said.

A challenge for many students is the creativity brain block, Jordan said.

"Don't fall into analysis paralysis and just stare at the problem," Jordan said. "Keep moving the pen on the paper, and eventually, you will have a solution."

Capturing ideas down on paper and running with them is a takeaway for students and a life lesson in any career path, Jordan said.

"Because this was a real-world opportunity and students would get to see their design ideas incorporated into the new setting, it was not difficult to get participation," Mihalko said.

At the time of the charrette, introductions to landscape architecture and landscape management classes were offered.

"I encouraged them to attend even though they had not yet taken design or the graphics presentation course," Mihalko said. "I told them they would be put on a team with more advanced students who would take the lead."

"This project let them be a part of something that was actually going to be built," Mihalko said. "They viewed it as an opportunity to make a legacy on campus."

Mihalko provided the base map material and site photographs for students as they worked in groups of four to complete a preliminary plan.

They offered ideas on how to create a functional area for students to make the most of the landscaping, she said.

"A couple of teams proposed pulling the outdoor seating space slightly away from the building to capture more afternoon light and have higher visibility," said Dave Brown, landscape design coordinator for the department. "There was a proposal to have a hitching post or two."

Brown often is asked to take part in assisting in the program's projects, including working with students, he said.

"My group worked to come up with
a design and plant list that we felt met the needs of the users while increasing the outdoor aesthetic value,” Jordan said.

Students developed design plans with low-maintenance materials and high-quality visuals, Jordan said.

Jordan said the biggest challenge the group faced was choosing drought-tolerant plant material that was maintained easily and fit with the design vision.

“We used several native grasses,” Jordan said. “My favorite plant we used is Salvia greggii, a small perennial shrub that has bright blooms. We used it for the color and texture change.”

The design charrette produced ideas and plans that could be taken to the next level of design, Brown said.

The final design incorporated a seating area centered in the front of the building with hitching posts framing the pebble garden, Brown said.

“When the preliminary drawings were collected and students had explained their concepts, Brown consolidated the ideas into one plan.

“I took elements of some of the designs and began to develop the final plans for the area,” Brown said. “I did the planning under the direction of leadership from the equine center and the college to make sure there was a good marriage between the student concepts, the developing plan and the needs of the school.

“The best results come from an open mind, taking input and advice from others, and remaining fluid throughout the process,” Brown said.

With proposals for an outdoor seating space, students had different initial concepts, but with compromise, the final design came together, he said.

“The final design has the seating area connecting three building entrances and centered in the crook of the building,” Brown said. “We used the hitching posts similar to ornamental fencing to help us frame the area.”

Challenges of designing an outdoor space for the new center included working in the budget and creating a simple but enhancing outdoor design for the facility. The price and function, hardscape and plant material choices were vital, he said.

“We have a great team that has a broad spectrum of knowledge that helps us get there,” Brown said.

To assist in the budget, facilities management donated items such as benches and flowerpots, Beck-Williams said.

“This was a great experience and success that we will repeat in future DASNR projects,” Beck-Williams said. 

Landscape architecture senior Daniel Jordan works at the classroom design studio to finalize details on design layouts. Photo by Sabrina Wilber.