Penn State Fayette

Campus Exterior Architectural Plan

May 2010
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Introduction and Purpose

Penn State’s Mission:

Penn State is a multi-campus public land-grant university that improves the lives of the people of Pennsylvania, the nation, and the world through integrated, high-quality programs in teaching, research, and service.

To assist in achieving this mission, a Campus Exterior Architecture Plan, know as a CEAP, is developed to suggest ways to improve the exterior aesthetic qualities of campus with low-cost and easy-to-implement concepts that can have meaningful impacts. The CEAP is a planning tool that is an outgrowth of the campus master planning process.

The CEAP includes graphic and narrative descriptions of existing conditions on campus and approximately 15-20 improvement concepts. Positive features may be identified as elements to emulate.

The improvement concepts are ranked or prioritized according to their visual impact and estimated cost. The concepts are not final designs. Further study and design are required prior to implementation.
Existing Conditions Inventory

Background:
A detailed site analysis, campus vision and future development strategy are fully documented in the campus master plan process. In addition to the analysis performed during the master planning process, a focused visual assessment of the campus exterior is conducted which establishes the foundation for the recommendations and concepts contained in this CEAP document.

General Observations:
The campus is situated along a major roadway bustling with traffic and commercial activity. Upon entering the campus and leaving your vehicle in one of the perimeter parking lots, the pedestrian friendly feel of the campus becomes evident. The landscape and buildings are well maintained and demonstrate to students, faculty and staff as well as the general public a genuine care and concern for their welfare.

With the exception of the President’s House on the outskirts of the campus, the architectural style of the buildings can be characterized as contemporary. Brick is the predominant building material with some stone and metal panel accents. This variety provides visual interest while maintaining a cohesive sense of place.

The academic core of buildings surround a sizable green space with mature shade tree specimens, meandering walkways and ample seating opportunities. The remainder of campus spills down a gently sloping hillside to the Community Building.

Several exterior elements including the bell tower and the water fountain add uniqueness to the campus landscape.

The most striking deficiency on the campus is the absence of strategically placed landscape plantings including trees, shrubs and groundcovers. In addition, the placement of seasonal perennial and annual flowers may be excessive given the limited time window for their impact.
Fayette Campus Exterior Architectural Plan

Campus Map

C A M P U S   B U I L D I N G S

1  Biomedical Building
2  Eberly Building
   Admissions / Student Aid
   Corporate Training Center
   Cub’s Den Child Care Center (rear)
3  Engineering Building
4  Library
   Coal and Coke Heritage Center
5  Maintenance Building
6  Community Center
   Auxiliary Gym
   Bird’s Nest Cafe
   Fitness Center
   Maggie Hardy Magerko Auditorium
   Main Arena
7  Pavilion
8  University House
   Office of the Chancellor
9  Williams Building
   Bookstore
   Cultural Center
   Outreach / Continuing Education
   Student Center
   Swimmer Hall Auditorium
The campus aesthetic is defined to a great extent by the buildings that comprise it.

At Fayette, the architecture of the campus is unified through the use of similar materials while at the same time being distinctive and interesting as a result of detailing and appropriate scale.
Benches, trash receptacles and tables are plentiful and uniform in color and design. An exception to this general statement is the patio on the north side of Williams Building.
Walkway lighting is uniform in style. There are a few antiquated fixtures around campus that over time should be replaced with the standard. "Cobra head" parking lot lights should be replaced with the “shoebox” style fixture to minimize light trespass and improve efficiency.
Consistent design and placement of directional and identification signs is key to a unified aesthetic as well as an intuitive and clear means of wayfinding. Consistent utilization of Penn State graphic standards throughout the system builds the University’s identity.

Signage upgrades prompted by CEAP recommendations made at other Commonwealth campuses has resulted in a complete renovation program at Fayette.

Deviation from the University’s graphic identity standards are noted.

The size, prominence and proliferation of no smoking pictographs should be evaluated in locations where new signage conveys this message.
The landscape of Fayette campus is characterized by mature shade trees, and large lawn expanses. Concrete walkways are appropriately located and sized creating a comfortable pedestrian friendly feel.

Mature trees dot the academic core. Understory plantings including shrubs and groundcover are minimal and those that do exist would benefit from renovation. Pruning is harshly aggressive in some instances.

Routine maintenance of trees and shrubs should include removal of dead wood and total replacement of poor quality or dead specimens.
Fayette campus is characterized by the presence of several unique site features. The bell tower is a sculptural focal element with the added benefit of musical refrains.

The dramatic display of the water fountain at the Community Building visually anchors this end of campus.
Improvement Concepts

The following figures describe and illustrate possible solutions to specific aesthetic and functional shortcomings on campus, most of which are addressable through the CEAP program. In addition to the recommendations that follow, there are routine maintenance tasks that will enhance the aesthetic appeal of campus. Suggestions include:

► Mulch landscape beds annually
► Eradicate weeds and other invasive vegetation
► Fertilize lawn areas
► Re-seed lawn areas abutting sidewalks killed by deicing chemicals
► Seal and re-stripe paved areas
► Tree pruning and maintenance as recommended by University arborist
► Power wash soiled and/or stained surfaces

An implementation priority matrix has been prepared that lists improvement projects and recommends the order in which the concepts/projects could be executed. The implementation ranking is intended as a guideline for realizing the most significant impacts early in the plan implementation.

Location specific concepts/projects are keyed to the map with numbers corresponding to the listing on the matrix at the end of this report.
The appearance of the existing maintenance building could be improved by repainting in a neutral color and enclosing the service yard with a view obscuring fence.
Pavilion Improvements
Improvement Recommendation

The existing pavilion building would benefit from a fresh coat of paint in a slightly darker shade.

Additional landscape plantings are also proposed.
Paint Color
Improvement Recommendation

It may be overlooked by the eye of some but the color choices made for doors, handrails and other site or building features can distract from the visual quality of the whole.

In the instance illustrated here, the eye is drawn to the white egress doors and handrails instead of the primary building entrances. Strong contrasting color is an effective accent design strategy when applied appropriately however it can also draw attention to subordinate elements.

Recommend that the contrasting effect of the existing secondary egress doors and handrails be diminished by painting a coordinating color that matches other trim on the building.
Site Furnishings
Improvement Recommendation

Site furnishings designed in a style “family” are aesthetically unifying. The campus has invested wisely in new benches and trash receptacles. Other furnishings match the color and style.

Freestanding landscape planters should be appropriately scaled for the space they occupy and be constructed of durable, quality material.
Williams Patio
Improvement Recommendation

Site furnishings on the patio outside of the Williams Building are outdated and inconsistent with other furnishings on campus.

Recommend replacement with new tables and trash receptacles. There is also an opportunity to enhance this space with appropriately scaled planter(s) for display of seasonal flowers.
Replacement of any antiquated, inefficient pedestrian walkway and parking lot lighting is recommended. Metal halide lamps in cut-off luminaires mounted to poles are recommended for pedestrian walkways. High pressure sodium type lamps are acceptable for parking lot lights. Color/finish for all fixtures should be consistent campus wide. Avoid the use of bollards due to vulnerability to snow removal operations and vandalism. It is also recommended that wall mounted “utility style” fixtures be avoided.
The academic core of campus between Eberly Building and Williams Building is planted with a mix of deciduous shade trees and evergreen trees arranged in an informal, naturalistic configuration. The quantity and variety of tree species is pleasing. The remainder of campus should emulate the quality of the core. Circulation routes and gathering spaces benefit from the spatial definition and shade offered by trees.

The informal, natural aesthetic quality is illustrated conceptually on the following plan.

The trees illustrated here are examples of suitable species offered for consideration.
The installation of deciduous and evergreen trees is illustrated conceptually on this aerial view of campus. Pedestrian and vehicular circulation paths and intersections are highlighted while open turf areas are preserved for possible future development.
The parking lot between the Biomedical Technology Center and Route 119 is a vast uninterrupted expanse of paving. The view of campus by northbound traffic is adequately screened. The southbound view, however, lacks a vegetated screen. This first impression of campus can be improved through the installation of additional landscape plantings as shown conceptually in the green shaded areas of the photograph at left and on the following page.
The first impression of the campus from a southerly approach is one of parked cars.

Recommend that the area between the lot and the cartway be planted with trees and shrubs to screen and soften this first impression.

The existing planters on the concrete medians are undersized. Rather than drawing attention to the medians it is recommended that the planters be relocated to the campus core.
Improvement Recommendation

The walkways, tree placement and mounded contours of the landscape in core campus create an attractive and comfortable pedestrian scale.

The character of the space could be enhanced through an understory ornamental vegetation layer that accentuates existing view corridors and provides greater visual interest.
Turf covering the existing earth mounds is a maintenance problem. Mowers scalp the turf along sharp grade transitions.

By planting the mounds with low shrubs and groundcovers, the visual effect of the grading makes more sense. Ornamental landscape plantings add interest and frame selective view corridors from pedestrian walkways into the green space.
The existing fountain is a dramatic visual and potentially interactive feature. The Community Center and plaza area partially surround the fountain but access to the feature itself is limited to one narrow walkway. Furnishings in the plaza don’t enhance the strong geometry of the space.

Recommend the addition of walkways to encourage and accommodate pedestrian movement through the fountain plaza. Provide a permanent low seat wall at the perimeter of the plaza. Relocate formal bench seating to the building plaza. Replace landscape shrubs and perennials with turf behind the new seat wall to reduce visual distraction with the water feature and to improve maintainability. Establish a permanent landscaped edge between building plaza and turf collar surrounding the fountain.
Unsightly transformers, AC units and other utility infrastructure are necessary for the operation of the campus.

Recommend that landscape planting and/or view obstructing fence material be installed to diminish the negative visual impact of utilities.

Examples of unscreened utility infrastructure at the campus
The before and after photo simulations shown here illustrate the dramatic effect on visual quality that landscaping and screen fence can have.
The beautifying effect of a simple landscape planting along the face of the Engineering Building is illustrated here.
The campus has astutely recognized the need for renovations to the existing landscape surrounding the Library.

As with other campus landscapes it is recommended that the plant choices be permanent with at least three season interest. In this instance due to the steep slope the vegetation must also stabilize and retain soil.

Areas beneath building overhangs that cannot support growth should be edged and mulched with stone.
The landscape planting at the base of the bell tower is too informal as well as being a visual distraction to the bell tower.

To better accent this focal element, it is recommended that the planting scheme be simplified. Provide a carpet of liriope perennial that will bloom continuously through the summer. In winter the grassy effect of the foliage will provide limited aesthetic character. Recommend supplementing the liriope with a mass of daffodil bulbs that will provide a striking burst of color in the early spring.
The facade of the Biomedical Building creates a harsh environment for pedestrians. The existing yew shrub foundation planting is severely pruned.

Recommend that the existing shrubs be allowed to grow and take on greater size and less formal character. The addition of appropriate tree species can soften and “humanize” the scale of the building at the pedestrian level.
The patio on the north side of the Eberly Building is appropriately furnished providing a pleasant outdoor gathering space for building occupants.

Recommend installation of landscape plantings including shade trees to further enhance the quality and comfort of the patio.
Improvement Recommendation

**Planters**

The use of perennial and annual flowering plants should be limited to high impact areas. The aesthetic value of this type of plant display peaks when the campus is least populated. Perennials and annuals also require the most intensive maintenance effort.

A more dramatic visual effect can be achieved by confining annuals and perennials to appropriately scaled containers placed strategically near building entrances and outdoor gathering spaces.

Recommend the replacement of perennial and annual beds with shrubs and groundcovers that have multi-season appeal.

Examples of container plantings designed to incorporate all types of vegetation with dramatic visual effect.

Perennial and annual flower displays beyond their peak quickly become unsightly. During most of the school year these beds have little aesthetic value.
Site walls around Williams Building appear to be good structural condition. They are however in need of cleaning to remove dirt and other discoloration.

Recommend a power washing to brighten the masonry.
The patio at the entrance to the Library is well defined and appropriately scaled.

Recommend the placement of furnishings to make the space comfortable and usable. This photo simulation also illustrates the effect that focused installation of perennial/annual flowers in containers can have.
Walkway Connection
Improvement Recommendation

An aerial perspective of pedestrian circulation paths often reveals routes that are not evident at ground level.

It is recommended that a new segment of walkway be installed that connects the parking lot and University House walkway south of Biomedical Building with existing walks to core campus. Incorporating the existing bell tower into the walkway system will generate more traffic to and around this significant feature.
Penn State Fayette
Campus Exterior Architectural Plan
Project Prioritization Matrix
Winter 2009

Proposed exterior improvement projects have been assessed with respect to the following criteria and assigned an implementation priority value.

Criteria include:
Visual Impact - degree to which the project improves the visual quality of the campus
Cost - level of capital investment required to implement the project (assumes no volunteer or donor contribution)

The projects with the highest numeric score should be given the highest priority for implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>VISUAL IMPACT</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance Building</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pavilion Improvements</td>
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<td>Paint Color</td>
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<td>2 - $15,001 to $25,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site Furnishings</td>
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<td>3 - $5,001 to $15,000</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Williams Patio</td>
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<td>4 - Major Impact</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 - Little or no impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tree Planting*</td>
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<td>Parking Lot Landscaping</td>
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<td>3 - $5,001 to $15,000</td>
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<td>Library Landscape</td>
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<td>1 - Little or no impact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bell Tower Landscaping</td>
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<td>Landscape Enhancement (bio Medical Building)</td>
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<td>Library Building Patio</td>
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<td>Planters*</td>
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<td>2 - $15,001 to $25,000</td>
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</table>

* Phased implementation can reduce the cost to manageable amounts
Note:
Cost ranges identified in this matrix are for planning purposes only. Actual costs will be dependent upon fully developed plans for the respective project. Some of the projects listed above can be broken down into smaller pieces and implemented in phases.