Penn State
Wilkes-Barre

Campus Exterior Architectural Plan
Spring 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, known 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 also 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.
Background:
A walking tour focused on assessment of the campus exterior established the foundation for the recommendations and concepts contained in this CEAP document.

General Observations:
Since the mid 1960’s, Penn State Wilkes-Barre has been located on the former estate of coal baron John N. Conyngham II in Lehman Township, thirteen miles from Wilkes-Barre. Significant architecture and landscape elements remain from the original 1930’s era construction.

The heart of the campus is Hayfield House, a stone mansion sited at the high point of surrounding rolling hills. The campus contains fine examples of dry-laid stone stacked walls and 15 acres of arboretum remnants. There is not an interior campus green - open lawn areas are outward-facing, probably as was the fashion when the estate was developed, taking advantage of long views from Hayfield House. University Drive is a strong central vehicular artery into the core of campus, as defined by Hayfield House and the new Nesbitt Academic Commons. An opportunity exists to strengthen the visual entrance sequence into campus along this drive and to redefine this corridor as a pedestrian zone.

Most of campus parking is relegated to the campus perimeter and along entrance drives. Parking is also available in the enclosed courtyard at Hayfield House. Pedestrian circulation in the campus core is functional, although opportunities exist to better define pedestrian-only pathways. Existing exterior gathering spaces can be enhanced to be more inviting. Upgraded signage and wayfinding for the campus has been developed and implemented.
Major architectural modifications, additions, and new construction are beyond the scope of this CEAP. However, the aesthetic character of campus is defined to a great extent by the structures that comprise it. Stone masonry is the predominant building material of most buildings on campus.
Site Furnishings
Existing Conditions Inventory

Benches, trash receptacles, tables and bike racks across the campus are varied in design, color and material.

It is recommended that a standard design for furnishings be selected that will aid in unifying the campus aesthetic.

In addition to aesthetic appropriateness, the longevity and maintenance of site furnishings should be considered when specifying.
The landscape aesthetic of the campus can be characterized as park-like with the remnant woodland in the center of campus and large open grassy lawns on the periphery. A swale passes through campus between two wetland areas. Remnant stacked stone walls evoke the campus’ gentlemen’s farm past.

Turf areas appear to be weed-free and well maintained. Any and all invasive plant species should be eradicated. Some trees appear stressed.

Both formal and informal outdoor gathering spaces exist on campus though there is opportunity for more.
Pedestrian Circulation

Existing Conditions Inventory

Some redundancies exist in the current network of sidewalks on campus. The use of concrete in lieu of asphalt for walkway surfacing is recommended.
Unique Features

Existing Conditions Inventory

The character and aesthetic of the campus is dominated by the historic 1930's era Hayfield House and associated landscape remnants. The campus landscape is punctuated by fine examples of dry-laid stacked stone walls.
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
► Focus the use of annual and perennial plantings
► 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

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.
Demolish Inspector’s House

The ramshackle Inspector’s House is an attractive nuisance that should be demolished and cleared.
Assess Hayfield House Balcony

Improvement Recommendation

Assess Hayfield House balcony for structural integrity and complete any suggested improvements. Trim of Hayfield House needs repainted.
Hayfield House Entrance

Improvement Recommendation

Replace the industrial doors on Hayfield House with more architecturally appropriate choices. All doors on the same planar surface should match. Directories for interior spaces should be located inside the building.
Opportunities exist across campus to screen utility equipment from view. Supplemental landscape plantings will not only obscure views but will add interest and beauty to the campus. An effort should be made to avoid “soldiering” screening plants around these fixtures, which can draw even more attention to the problem.
Science Building Entrance

The entrances to the Science Building should be enhanced to convey a more welcoming feeling. This is the point where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are in closest contact with the campus architecture.

Possible treatments include powerwashing of concrete facades, planters, new lighting, new campus standard furnishings, and complimentary landscaping.
Site furnishings designed in a style “family” are aesthetically unifying. A simple, classic design that can work with both the historic and contemporary buildings on campus should be chosen. Powder coated metal is attractive, comfortable and durable. Planters should be appropriately sized for the space they occupy and be constructed of durable, quality material.
Hayfield House Front Patio Furnishings

Furnish the front patio of Hayfield House with appropriately sized tables and chairs. Wrought iron would be an historically-appropriate material.
A variety of exterior light fixture types are present on campus. As with site furnishings, it is recommended that design standards for parking lot/roadway and pedestrian site lighting be identified and implemented across campus. Full Cut-off luminaires that mitigate light pollution should be used. Metal Halide lamps on pedestrian walkways is recommended.
Plant Along Drainageway

Improvement Recommendation

Treat the drainageway between the two designated wetland areas on campus as a part of that wetland system. Ornamental native plantings will beautify this landscape element, reduce the grass-cutting burden, and promote Penn State’s commitment to environmentally sustainable landscape practices.
Remove Volleyball Sandpit

Improvement Recommendation

Remove little-used and poorly-placed sand volleyball pit and replace with turf.
Maintain and Interpret Stacked Stone Walls

Great care should be taken to maintain the stacked stone walls - a unique feature at the Wilkes-Barre campus. The Dry Stone Conservancy is a non-profit organization promoting the craft of dry stone masonry and can be a resource for maintenance information (http://www.drystone.org/) An opportunity exists to encourage a deeper understanding and connection to this campus through signs at Hayfield House and the stone walls to interpret the evocative story of the Wilkes-Barre campus history.
Replace Industrial Gate

Replace industrial metal gate in stacked stone wall along University Drive with wooden gate to better complement the historical site feature.
The Commons Building is the primary gathering spot for Wilkes-Barre students, despite the tired condition of the front entry plaza. This new plaza design will provide a more functional layout with new furnishings and walkways. It is aligned with architectural elements of this historic stone building.

The walkway that leads from the Commons Building entrance through the plaza will continue across University Drive on a raised table to connect to the Multipurpose Building entrance walk. This traffic-calming device will signal that this is a pedestrian zone.

A non-functioning turnaround in front of the contemporary Multipurpose Building will be removed. Hedging will align with the front of the Commons Building to encourage the sense that the new plaza, the street, and the opposite side of University Drive is a pedestrian zone. Hedges will also screen the view of parked cars from University Drive. A redundant walkway that is currently mistaken for a vehicular road will be removed and replaced with turf.

Landscaping is primarily low maintenance shrubs and groundcovers to keep the visual focus on the building. Landscape color will be restricted to planters. An improved pedestrian-scaled lighting scheme is also included in the design.
Plant Slope at Gym Entrance

Improvement Recommendation

The planting bed at the University Drive entrance to the Multi-purpose Building is too steep for mowing and should, therefore be planted with low shrubs and groundcover for ease of maintenance. Suggested groundcover: Bearberry (Arctostaphylos Uva-Ursi)
Shade Trees at Large Expanses of Building

Long unbroken expanses of building frontages appear harsh. Plant appropriately sized shade and evergreen trees along the west sides of the Athletic & Recreation Building and the Murphy Student Services Center to mitigate.
Remove Seating Areas

Seating areas along University Drive appear random in the landscape and residential in nature. Remove and replace with turf.
Remove Putting Green

Improvement Recommendation

If the small putting green in the lawn south of Hayfield House is not in use it should be removed.
Remove Outdoor Postboards

Improvement Recommendation

The rustic character of lumber and shingle style exterior post boards is not compatible with the image of quality and permanence of a Penn State campus. Management of content is often irregular or inconsistent.

Space for managed posting of relevant notices should be limited to interior locations in common areas of buildings.

It is recommended that the existing exterior post boards be removed from campus.
Student Services Landscaping

Improvement Recommendation

The entrance to the Student Services Building appears barren. Remove existing concrete seat and pavers, and plant trees, hedges, and groundcover as shown to create a more inviting entrance. New benches, trash receptacle, and planter complete the treatment.
Sidewalk Realignments & Pavement Reduction

Improvement Recommendation

Move Conyngham Lane to align with the center of Hayfield House. Proposed alignment also removes sidewalk redundancy in front of Nesbitt Academic Commons. Provide concrete sidewalk connection to gazebo and pond. Pavement reduction and a new concrete sidewalk connection from parking to Hayfield House creates a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Several options are proposed for the parking spaces between the Commons Building and Hayfield House. This option would improve the line of sight into campus when approaching on University Drive, but would not address the safety concern for pedestrians walking behind parked cars.
Sidewalk Realignments & Pavement Reduction

This alignment allows for pedestrian movement on a dedicated sidewalk. The visual clutter of parked cars is also reduced for visitors on University Drive. Hedging or trees can be planted in the strip between the sidewalk and University Drive to camouflage the parked cars.
In this layout, parking is removed entirely from this stretch of University Drive. This option has the biggest visual impact on the pedestrian feel of the campus core. The resulting distance to campus center: ~790’

Existing distance from Wilkes-Barre North Lot to center of campus: 927’

Main parking to center of campus – other campuses:
- Altoona: 734’
- Berks: 451’
- Brandywine: 876’
- Fayette: 326’
- Beaver: 798’
- Hazleton: 988’
- Mont Alto: 860’
Gazebo Landscaping

Improvement Recommendation

Plant shrubs and groundcover at Gazebo. Maintain an open view to the pond.
Replace Stairs from Parking

Improvement Recommendation

The timber and asphalt stairs from the north parking lot appear temporary. Replace with concrete stairs which will be safer and easier to maintain in the winter.
A new sidewalk is required to accommodate pedestrian movement from the parking lot to the Science Building.
Bell Atlantic Building Lighting and Landscaping

Replace awkward and inappropriate light fixtures with campus standards, as shown. Hedging, shade and ornamental trees, groundcover, and site furnishings present a more welcoming finish to the Bell Atlantic Building.
Screen Maintenance Areas

Improvement Recommendation

Screen maintenance areas from view with evergreen trees and shrubs. The woody debris that is discarded in the maintenance area next to the Commons Building should be chipped, composted, and used for landscaping. Contact the University Park Central Support Services Supervisor for information on composting.
Establish a Campus Tree Program

Establish a database accounting of campus trees to ensure a net gain of significant trees over time. A campus inventory should include a ranking of value to encourage appropriate replacements for lost specimens when opportunities arise for new installations. Diseased and/or dying trees should be pruned or removed and trunks should be ground or removed to avoid the perception that campus trees are in decline.
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.

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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.