



## Landscape architecture students stand and deliver senior project presentations



Graduating senior Kimberly Chan presented "Landscaping for Hope: Further Development of the Kigali Memorial Centre, Rwanda." (Cheng Saechao/UC Davis)

University of California, Davis  
*June 21, 2007*

It isn't easy to get into the Landscape Architecture Program at UC Davis, and it's even harder to get out. In an annual rite of passage, all graduating seniors present projects that are the culmination of two quarters of intensive effort and extensive review. Senior projects typically include designs, maps, renderings, and a lengthy written report. Based on their findings, seniors present their original research or design in front of faculty, community clients, friends and family.

"This gives our students an opportunity to integrate the knowledge they have gotten during their entire university experience into one project," says landscape architecture Professor Mark Francis, faculty advisor for the projects this year. "It is a lot of work, but they produce outstanding projects and are very proud of the results."

Landscape architecture is a broad field that includes virtually any planned outdoor area. It might be as small as a private garden or as large as San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. It covers everything from drainage to lighting, from access ramps to play structures. In wildlife areas, landscape architects might design a trail system, a fish ladder, or a nature museum.

"Landscape architecture is not just lawns or backyards," explains graduating senior Kimberly Chan, who presented a design for the expansion of an existing national genocide memorial in Rwanda. "It's not simply designing the physical world. Landscape architecture can change people's perspectives. It can provide healing and education."

UC Davis is the only University of California campus to offer a professionally accredited undergraduate degree in landscape architecture. The program is part of the Department of Environmental Design and graduates approximately 40 undergraduate students per year. Students are admitted into the major

at the end of sophomore year through an application/portfolio process. The program also offers graduate degrees.

This year, 42 graduating seniors from landscape architecture presented their projects in five concurrent sessions at an all-day event in the Memorial Union. Topics ranged from theoretical analyses to practical designs. One student used behavior mapping to study how women experience the Davis landscape in terms of personal safety. Another analyzed public outdoor eating spaces such as Sproul Plaza in Berkeley with the goal of identifying design guidelines for future spaces.

Chris Chisam, a track team member during his years at UC Davis, combined his athletic and academic interests to design the first master plan for the Vochatzer Multi-purpose Track and Field Stadium adjacent to the new football stadium on LaRue. University officials and others at Chisam's presentation estimated that the campus would pay \$250,000 in consulting fees for a proposal of such scope and detail.

Graduating senior Daniel Mummy, originally from Placerville, worked with faculty, staff, and students to design a community garden for his former high school and has spent several weekends organizing volunteers to help construct it. Mummy sees the garden as an outdoor classroom and a bridge between school and community. He hopes the site will eventually be incorporated into a broader land management program and the environmental sciences curriculum at his former high school.

Kate Green, a 22-year-old student from Redding, California, designed a landscape plan for an eight-acre site around the Little Flock Children's Home in southern India. Green learned of the orphanage through her church, which sends volunteers there every year. Little Flock has 10 cabins situated on a flat dirt area and houses 27 orphans.

Through her research, Green discovered the most immediate needs at the site were for shade near the cabins and play areas for the children. Capturing water runoff during the monsoon season to help sustain plants during the dry season was also a priority. In her landscape design, she selected fruit-bearing plants that will thrive in the tropical climate and eventually reduce the cost of feeding the children at the orphanage.

Green will be among the first group of volunteers arriving at Little Flock this summer to begin implementation of the initial phase of her landscape plan. During her two-week stint in India, Green will focus on planting shade trees and building rudimentary play structures with rope and wood that are straight out of the pages of a Boy Scout handbook. "I'm so excited about going over there and helping those kids," says Green. "My heart is really into this."

Another international project this year was presented by senior Kimberly Chan, originally from San Francisco. Chan traveled to Rwanda in April to do research for her design of an expansion of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre. The national genocide memorial, established in 2004 in the capital city of Kigali, honors the estimated one million people killed during a 100-day slaughter in 1994.

"It was important to find a project I loved," says Chan, "and this was a most amazing opportunity for me." The memorial center was built through Aegis Trust, a genocide-prevention charity based in England that Chan discovered through hours of Internet research. Aegis paid half of Chan's airfare to Rwanda, and the department covered the other half with scholarship funds designated specifically for senior projects from the Sierra Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The two weeks she spent in Rwanda helped educate Chan to the cultural and political sensitivities of the assignment.

The existing site includes massive concrete tombs that contain the mass graves of approximately 250,000 victims. It also has memorial gardens and a small museum dedicated to the history of the Rwandan genocide. The eternal flame that burns at the center is visible from downtown Kigali, and

thousands of people visit the memorial to grieve.

Chan's design for an expansion of the existing center includes a long, forested pathway leading to the graves and then to the exhibition museum. She intends for the pathway to symbolize the many years of peace in Rwanda during the pre-colonial period. When visitors return down the same lengthy path to leave the memorial, they will walk past signs posted on the trees with single words intended to renew the spirit of Rwandans: "forgiveness," "happiness," "children."

If the Aegis Trust is able to sponsor an international design competition for the expansion of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre, Chan will enter her work. If not, she will donate her "Landscaping for Hope" design to the Rwandan government. Chan plans to continue her study of landscape memorials, either in graduate school or on the job.

While some landscape architecture students design senior projects that ultimately have an impact on the regional or even global community, Professor Francis stresses that implementation of projects is not the primary goal. The program emphasizes the process of developing a project that reflects a student's interests, doing research, writing a report, creating graphics, and presenting the work before a committee.

The landscape architecture senior projects, which have been a graduation requirement for more than 20 years, are time consuming for faculty as well as students. Like master's degree candidates, students have to assemble a three-member committee to guide and approve their work. Landscape architecture faculty end up with multiple senior projects to read and review.

"It's an extra," concedes Professor Francis. "It is a lot of work, but we do it because we believe it is a critical step in the professional education and development of our students. Many of our alumni say it was one of the most memorable parts of their time at UC Davis." —*Robin DeRieux*

A complete listing of past landscape architecture senior projects is available at <http://lda.ucdavis.edu/people/projects.html>.

Media contact(s):

- Mark Francis, Department of Environmental Design, (530) 752-6031, [mofrancis@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mofrancis@ucdavis.edu)
- Robin DeRieux, UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, (530) 752-8244, [rderieux@ucdavis.edu](mailto:rderieux@ucdavis.edu)

| UC Davis | Our College | Students & Majors | Alumni & Friends | Faculty  
Recruitment | Faculty & Staff |  
| Departments & Programs | Research | Extension & Outreach | News &  
Events | Giving |

Contact: [webadmin@caes.ucdavis.edu](mailto:webadmin@caes.ucdavis.edu)

General and Student Information: (530) 752-0108 Fax: (530) 752-9049  
CA&ES Dean's Office · University of California · One Shields Avenue · Davis, CA · 95616-

8571

Visit us on campus in 150 Mrak Hall.