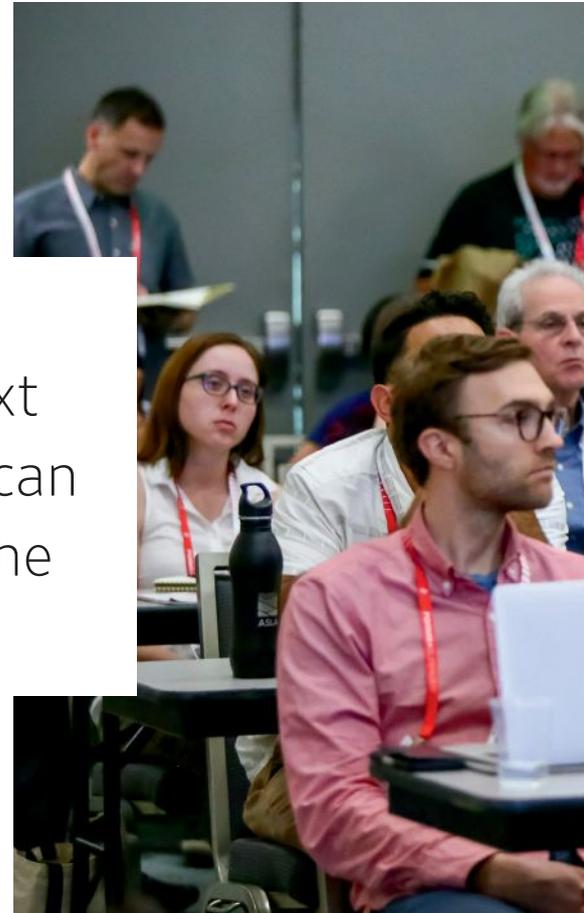


BE THE TEACHER

Landscape architects do not always know the broader context in which products and services can be best used. Suppliers bridge the gaps through LA CES courses.

BY RUSS KLETTKE



Executive Summary

- ▶ **LA CES educates landscape architects on topics providers know best.**
- ▶ **LA CES courses must meet specific criteria.**
- ▶ **This is not marketing per se; courses are primarily about improving professional competencies.**

Because landscape architecture is a dynamic profession, ongoing education of landscape architects is absolutely a requirement. Suppliers, too, need to adapt and grow with the industry and practice.

This is why the LA CES (Landscape Architecture Continuing Education System) program is an ideal link between the experiences and knowledge of providers and landscape architects. The courses



help designers stay up to date in the profession and enable them to nurture their own areas of expertise. And because continuing education units, CEUs, are required of landscape architects in many jurisdictions, the incentive is strong for many to take LA CES courses on an ongoing basis.

To be clear, a LA CES course is not a product demonstration. The courses are subject to the collective of standards and scrutiny of several organizations – ASLA, Canadian Society of Landscape Architects, Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture, Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards, Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board, and Landscape

Architecture Foundation – which ensure they achieve a broad and essential educational function.

Three providers learn as they teach

Many (but not all) course providers have products to sell to the industry. That said, here are three companies that transcend product features to teach to the specific needs and interests of landscape architects and their clients:

Proven Winners, a national plant propagator and wholesaler, offers several classes throughout the year targeting landscape professionals that address plant selection, landscape design, and issues in residential, campus, and commercial projects. **Tom Ewing**, who manages landscape program development at the company, says the presentations range from current pest and diseases issues to landscape project features, design elements, and design software. They use cooperative education extension specialists, design software experts, landscape business owners, and certified landscape architects for instruction.

Ewing says the goal isn't necessarily to maximize the class size. "Often, smaller numbers provide more interaction and Q&A," he says. "We get the best attendee response with presenters who can share actual project experiences and design solutions."



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The ‘before’ and ‘after’ for landscape projects are well received.”

Kalamazoo Gourmet Grills, an outdoor kitchen provider, offers a class on wellbeing in the outdoor space. “It’s become even more critical since the pandemic that we focus on homeowner emotions and health,” says **Lisa Rodriguez**, vice president of sales and head of the firm’s continuing education program. Another class is about assessing a client’s outdoor cooking and entertaining needs, kitchen design principles, equipment options, how to conduct a site assessment, common outdoor misconceptions, and design mistakes.

In a recent LA CES class, Kalamazoo’s designer-instructors identified unexpected regional differences in countertops – concrete and soapstone on the West Coast, granite in the Midwest – that enlightened teachers and students alike.

Vectorworks, which provides software for landscape design, engages practicing landscape architects for its classes (“Collaborative Design Tools for Landscape Architects” and “Open BIM and IFC for Landscape Architecture”) because “the audience prefers to learn about advanced workflows from external practitioners,” says **Tyler French**, a senior marketing specialist with the company.

French qualifies that with very new content, not yet in wide distribution and application, they have an internal team of landscape architects who teach. But in either case, the learning goes in two directions. “Though our instructors are identified as experts in the topics presented, each one values and learns from the interaction with the audience and the feedback received,” he says.

Apply to become an approved provider

There are currently 260 approved LA CES course providers, several of which provide multiple classes – illustrating how there is a broad range of subjects that meet the program criteria. But applicants should heed what **Gary Kesler**, **FASLA**, **FCELA**, and a representative of the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board, has to say about applicant shortcomings. Some lack clarity and precision on learning objectives and outcomes, as well how to measure participants’ achievement of the learning objectives. Successful applications demonstrate a commitment to “a meaningful, engaging course where the instructor understands the needs of the audience, and the audience knows what to expect,” he says.

EJ Bolduc, **FASLA**, **PLA** and a consultant with **CHW**, a multidisciplinary firm, concurs with Kesler that

some applicants fail to include the requisite three learning objectives for each course application. But he compliments the industry for the depth of the course offerings that have succeeded. “There is a pretty diverse selection of classes to choose from,” he notes. “The sheer number and wide variety of offerings allow exemplary options for just about any topic you might be interested in.”

Vectorworks provides numerous LA CES courses, and they recommend other providers to join in. “Start small by offering content that is directly in your company’s wheelhouse and grow from there,” says Tyler French. ■

No endorsement of products or suppliers mentioned is intended or implied.

In-person vs. virtual instruction

LA CES course providers learned in 2020 that virtual instruction can work, even though all yearned for a return to in-person meetings. “From our November virtual event, we learned several things,” says Tom Ewing. “Registration numbers were strong because we reached a wider audience. But because of that we needed to broaden regionally. And, we found it’s best to break the presentations into segments over several days rather than one long online session.”

Kalamazoo Gourmet Grills’ Rodriguez says relationship building with in-person classes is her preference. Still, they’ve gotten more proficient, out of necessity, at designing strictly-timed online classes – and using high quality speakers. She also says a good way to generate ideas for CES classes is to ask potential students which subjects interest them.

Who to contact

Think you might have a qualifying class idea? See the guidelines here:

<https://laces.asla.org/ApprovedProviderGuidelines.aspx>

Other questions can be directed to:

Whitney Mitchell, Manager, Professional Development

LACES@asla.org



American Society of
Landscape Architects