



# DAVID SHIMMEL '13

**GRADUATE DEGREE:** Master of Landscape Architecture

**UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE:** B.A. In Visual Communications - Furman University

**CURRENT JOB:** Designer at Landworks Studio

## WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO PURSUE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE?

As a young child, I was encouraged to be outside and experience, first-hand, the natural world. I was also always inspired by how humanity and nature were contemplated and depicted in art, literature, parks, and gardens; I loved to draw; and, like many people, wanted to do my small part to make the world a better place. No other profession, really, encapsulates all those interests but landscape architecture.

## WHICH SUBJECTS DO YOU FEEL MOST PREPARED YOU FOR AN MLA DEGREE?

My undergrad program exposed me to an intensive core curriculum in history, art, literature, science, philosophy, etc. which gave me a depth and breadth of knowledge that helped me to think both critically and creatively. In addition, I took full advantage of campus opportunities to engage with outside professionals and, thus, was exposed to a broad-range of opinions and experiences in different fields. I attended, for instance, a variety of presentations from local practitioners, city officials, and educators on the topics of sustainability and conservation and connected with several landscape architects in a local firm that was attempting to mitigate stormwater run-off into the campus lake.

## WHY DID YOU CHOOSE OSU FOR YOUR MLA DEGREE?

I attended the Knowlton School of Architecture's Spring Graduate Open House where I met faculty and other prospective students. I was encouraged by the comprehensive curriculum that was presented as well as by the extracurricular opportunities such as extended field trips; visits to local arboretums, stone yards, and various sites; and internships. I also felt energized by the environment and atmosphere of the building as I walked around visiting the studio spaces, library, and impressive workshop and fabrication lab.

## WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB AFTER GRADUATING FROM THE MLA PROGRAM?

I spent my first year teaching part-time at Knowlton in the landscape architecture section. I co-instructed a sophomore studio and graphics workshop sequence during the fall semester with Karla Trott and, during the spring semester, I had the opportunity to lead the same courses. Being part-time, I also worked on several publications, competitions, and helped other faculty members with various projects.

## WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT JOB?

I work with Michael Blier at Landworks Studio in Boston, MA. We are a small, innovative design firm working on a variety of scales within the region and abroad. We focus on creating expressive landscape spaces that offer inventive solutions to questions that are, invariably, complex. Our work seeks to create linkages between civic landscapes, ecological processes, material performativity, and programmatically diverse spaces.

## HOW DID YOUR TIME IN THE PROGRAM PREPARE YOU FOR A CAREER IN YOUR FIELD?

Knowlton equips graduating students with a broad knowledge base as opposed to forcing students into a singular expertise. The school also builds flexibility into the curriculum enabling students to independently pursue particular areas of interest both internal (e.g. urban planning, digital fabrication, or landscape theory) and external (soil science, horticulture, ecological engineering, etc.) to the school. There is also a good balance of classes that augment the core design studio from technical courses that teach grading and stormwater and digital fabrication to history and theory classes.

## DESCRIBE A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE YOU HAD IN GRADUATE SCHOOL.

Knowlton does a great job of bringing in well-known practitioners and educators to lecture and engage students. Some of my fondest memories were getting to interact with the likes of Adriaan Geuze, Doug Reed, Laurie Olin, and Keith Myers and hearing their many incredible stories about the profession. The best aspect of the Knowlton experience, though, might be the collegiality and camaraderie that develops through sleepless nights spent together trying to perfect imperfect designs; through frequent opportunities for collaboration; and through an abundance of help, encouragement, and positive feedback so generously extended. You feel as if everyone is really on a quest together – both students and professors – and deep bonds are formed in the process. You learn through true teamwork how to strive and excel.