

## **ABSTRACT**

*Professional projects in landscape architecture require a broad spectrum of knowledge and skills for their successful execution. In particular, design theory, sociology, grading and drainage, plant materials, and construction are vitally interrelated in the creation of successful spaces. Realizing students' struggle to integrate knowledge from these several sources within the confines of a typical curricular structure, the authors have embarked on an innovative strategy to foster the connection of knowledge areas. Beginning in 2012 faculty at Purdue University began to address the shortcomings of a traditionally structured curriculum by leading juniors in an integrated project experience: the integration of several course topics in our junior-level curriculum through a single, encompassing, iterative project. This single problem asks students to integrate knowledge from four different technical and creative areas-- design studio, grading and stormwater design, plant material, and construction documentation—to create a project that is a seamless whole, replicating the complete project process and iterative nature of a professional office setting.*

*The pedagogical literature has indicated the potential for an integrated project approach to address some of these concerns and to assist in the achievement of student learning outcomes (Levy 1980, Steinitz 1990). Furthermore, the project process seemed to have the potential to present and encourage student work habits and design processes that more closely mirror the expectations of professional offices. The authors have measured the degree to which this method is effective in improving student perception of knowledge, skills, and abilities. A trial study which used pre- and post-condition evaluative surveys to measure student preferences and response to the integrated project process (Rotar, Barbarash, et.al. 2014) showed promising trends; this more complete study's results indicate a statistically significant increase in student perception of their abilities to integrate these four topics into stronger design solutions.*

*This paper reviews the project process and presents the results of our study of student responses to that process. Furthermore, we will reflect on the successes and challenges encountered during the project and discuss next steps in determining whether or not actual improvements in student learning outcomes are measurable.*