

Director of Campus Grounds and Landscape Position Description

The [University of Texas at Austin](https://www.utexas.edu) seeks a visionary and experienced grounds and landscape professional to serve in the newly created role of Director of Campus Grounds and Landscape. This inaugural position is being created to enhance the focus on the campus environment, experience, and overall aesthetic in support of the University of Texas brand.

Reporting to Brent Stringfellow, Associate Vice President for Campus Operations and University Architect, the Director is responsible for leading the team that stewards the constructed and natural outdoor campus environments. In this role, they will be the chief advocate for the campus grounds and landscape, ensuring that the UT Austin campus reflects the tradition and beauty for which it enjoys its national reputation. This role will sustain the campus grounds as a critical part of making UT Austin one of the most recognizable universities in the world.

Campus Grounds



Nearly 140 years ago, The University of Texas at Austin opened with one building, eight professors, and 221 students. Today, UT ranks among the top 40 universities in the world. It is both a community — more than 51,000 students in 18 colleges and schools, their teachers, researchers, and staff — and a nation, Longhorn Nation, with a global network of nearly half a million alumni.

The University's grounds - the Forty Acres, the nickname for the campus because that was the size of the original tract set aside by the state - reflects the university's aspirations and commitment to

excellence and while the current main campus extends over 400 acres, the original campus remains a critical part of the character, experience, and mission of the Longhorn community.

The campus is an immense and beautiful world with dozens of museums, libraries, centers, institutes, and special venues spread across the campus and the city, each with its own unique exhibits and programming. The campus is designed to enhance the experience of not just current students, faculty, and staff but also community members and visitors from around the world, the many campus destinations educate, delight and amaze.

- Acres on main campus: 431
- Main campus: 150 buildings totaling over 18,000,000 square feet
- Libraries: 17
- Volumes in UT Libraries: More than 10 million
- Museums: 7
- Works at the Blanton Museum of Art: 17,000+
- Specimens in the Texas Science & Natural History Museum collection: 5.7 million
- Student organizations: 1,000+
- Career centers: 15

Campus Grounds Department

The inaugural Director of Grounds will unite a newly integrated team, drawing from existing departments within Campus Operations, and build a cohesive and agile department, with the opportunity to expand and evolve as needed to achieve the strategic objectives and goals.

The newly integrated team will come in large part from the current Landscape Services team, which includes [Landscape and Pest Services](#), [Landscape Design and Installation](#), [Irrigation & Water Conservation](#), [Pest Control](#), [Urban Forestry](#), and the [Pollinator Program](#). This role will also highly coordinate with the planning team, and other teams within Campus Operations that perform grounds tasks, including power washing, painting, and repairs.

Landscape Services manages over 500 acres across Main Campus and local satellite facilities like the Dell Medical School, Waller Creek, and the J.J. Pickle Research Campus. The campus landscape is divided into various zones where maintenance crews use sustainable practices and equipment such as an organic fertilization program, a centrally controlled irrigation system that is constantly monitoring water flow, battery-operated equipment, propane and battery mowers, and top dressing using organic compost. The team also supports various large events each year.

The Landscape Design & Installation team skillfully improves the campus by renovating existing or non-functioning landscapes, mitigating drainage problems, and creating fresh, new plantings. The team also oversees the greenhouses which play an integral part of the work on campus.

Water conservation is a top priority for the irrigation section of Landscape Services and the university uses a central irrigation system to assist in managing the irrigation usage across campus. In 2011 a new irrigation system and centralized digital control center was installed to improve water

conservation and avoid energy consumption and related costs. Since 2011, the University has reduced irrigation water usage by 66 percent (more than 100 million gallons annually), resulting in an estimated average annual cost avoidance of close to \$1 million, despite a significant drought.

The Landscape and Pest Services branch is a group of devoted landscape professionals striving to create and maintain a safe, sustainable, and beautiful landscape. Their goal is to provide the University with a picturesque, interactive, and natural environment that enhances the learning atmosphere, evokes exceptional first impressions, and conjures lasting memories. They value and understand the significance of "What starts here changes the world."

The Urban Forest team is dedicated to managing the campus urban forest and since 2008 the university has been honored as an Arbor Day Foundation Tree Campus Higher Education. To support its preservation and management, UT Austin commissioned an inventory and assessment of nearly 5,000 trees on the Main Campus in 2016. Information was collected about each tree including species, size, condition, and geographic location. The data was also used to develop a detailed and quantified analysis of the current structure, function, and value of the university's urban forest. The tree inventory is available to view online at [TreeKeeper](#).

The Pollinator Program seeks to raise awareness of the vital role native pollinators play in the landscape. The team works to create and maintain a safe, sustainable, and beautiful landscape that provides pollinator habitats by increasing native plants, nesting sites, and reduced pesticide use. UT Austin earned the designation of Bee Campus USA in 2020, officially recognizing our campus for meeting a set of commitments for creating sustainable habitats for pollinators.

The landscape services team also includes extensive partnering with the [Johnson Wildflower Center](#), the Botanic Garden of Texas and part of the University of Texas at Austin.

The Position

The Director will work with campus stakeholders to provide a strategic and aspirational vision for the grounds and an understanding of the operational and technical requirements to manage the grounds daily. The Director may find themselves leading landscape design teams for a new building or walking campus, assessing safety, maintenance, or aesthetic appearance issues. This leader oversees a staff of over 100, including specialists in landscape, construction, and planning. Depending on their background, the Director may also serve as the University Landscape Architect.

Position Functions:

- Lead the creation, curation, implementation, and management of UT Austin's constructed and natural outdoor environments. Curate an exceptional on-campus experience for all students, patients, faculty, staff, stakeholders, and visitors. Ensure the entire campus environment redefines and meets the highest standards of a world-class university. This includes:
 - Guiding efforts across a multi-disciplinary team to plan, implement, and maintain campus landscape and grounds projects following a financially sustainable

- operational plan.
- Develop, train, and enforce maintenance and design standards for exterior grounds and landscape. Coordinate those efforts using the University's building design guidelines.
- Develop and implement a beautiful, cohesive landscape and grounds plan for all UT Austin properties. Lead development and implementation of the Campus Grounds and Landscape Framework plans. Confirm foundational principles and guidelines for campus development and operational strategy. Define campus neighborhoods and districts to inform design decisions and communicate expectations to the university community and partners.
- Work with other operations units to assess, troubleshoot, and improve student, faculty, and visitor experience navigating and moving around all UT properties. Integrate exterior signage and wayfinding planning and oversight as part of overall grounds responsibility. Coordinate grounds work with current campus mobility plans for pedestrian, vehicular, and multi-modal traffic.
- Serve as a contributor and resource to all major capital projects. Review plans and specifications and take responsibility for the integration of project landscape and exterior design elements into all projects.
- Additional critical duties will include:
 - Serve as a Subject Matter Expert to advise staff and educate team members on emerging trends and best practices to support the university's sustainability, consistency, and aesthetic goals.
 - Lead efforts to create a safe working environment and culture, including knowledge of safety and environmental compliance requirements.
 - Collaborate with the Utilities and Energy Management, Planning, and Environmental Health and Safety teams to identify and address stormwater drainage issues throughout campus.
 - Coordinating with the [Landmarks art program](#)
 - Report and update University leadership on the campus grounds' status, plans, and initiatives.

Qualifications

The Director of Grounds and Landscape will inspire and guide dynamic teams in crafting and sustaining the beauty and functionality of the university's outdoor spaces. This visionary leader will blend creativity with collaboration, fostering a culture of teamwork and innovation. They will be a strategic thinker who confidently partners and sets the course for innovation and a customer-focused leader who drives continuous improvement. With honesty, respect, and integrity, they will lead with purpose.

Required Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree with 5 to 7 years of supervisory and/or project/process management experience
- Demonstrated leadership experience in landscape management, maintenance, and construction, with experience working with sustainability programs

- In-depth knowledge of landscape construction standards, techniques, and grounds maintenance practices, particularly in public gardens, higher education, resorts, or similar institutions
- Expertise in urban forestry principles and safety, environmental, and accessibility regulations, with experience ensuring compliance and mitigating risks
- Proven ability to supervise and develop teams of professionals and contracted service providers
- Strong communication, collaboration, and interpersonal skills, with proficiency in written and oral communication
- Detail-oriented and results-driven, with demonstrated ability to work independently, make decisions autonomously, and implement strategic initiatives
- Experience managing projects, budgets, procurement, and safety compliance programs.
- Proficient in computer skills, including office software, financial management systems, email applications, work management software, and centralized irrigation systems
- Ability to work on-site during emergencies, inclement weather, or events, and travel as needed, including overnight stays

Preferred Qualifications

- Degree in horticulture, forestry, landscape architecture, business, engineering, or a related field
- Relevant professional credentials, certifications, or registration
- Demonstrated knowledge maintenance management software programs

To Apply

The University of Texas at Austin has retained [Opus Partners](#) to support this recruitment. Kenna Boyd, Associate Partner, Katie Dean, Partner, and Abigail Maynard, Senior Associate, are leading the search. Inquiries, applications, and nominations should be sent to abigail.maynard@opuspartners.net. Required application materials include a resume and cover letter that addresses the responsibilities and qualifications of the role. The search process will unfold with the greatest possible attention to candidate confidentiality.

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