

To whom it may concern:

It is my understanding that you are considering the Career Discovery Program at Harvard's Graduate School of Design for an academic excellence award. I am sending this letter to you in support of the program due to the significant and positive impact it made on my professional development and career choices.

Before I entered the Career Discovery program, my knowledge of the landscape architecture field was limited to the smaller design projects that I helped build in Santa Fe, NM while working for a landscaping company. My experiences building these designs and my general interest in the field of landscaping pushed me to begin designing residential landscapes of my own. However, when I fell into the habit of "cookie-cutting" my desert landscape designs, I recognized the need for more formal education in design techniques in order to further my professional development and personal interest in the field.

My decision to enroll in Career Discovery in 1996 launched me on a career track that I have found exciting, challenging, and personally fulfilling. Career Discovery helped me broaden my perspective of landscape architecture as a field solely focused on residential designs to one that also works on much larger scales and in a myriad of different installations. The projects that I participated in while in the program ranged from mapping the different environments along Massachusetts Ave. in Cambridge, MA to redesigning an island in Boston Harbor. It was this final project – using a large amount of soil recovered from the Big Dig highway project in Boston to influence the re-design of a Boston Harbor island – that finally captured and focused my passion for designing.

Career Discovery was an intense and enlightening experience for me; the amount of work was daunting at first, but I was struck by the instructors' passion for design and for sharing their expertise with students. The time and effort the instructors gave allowed me to recognize my strengths and weaknesses, and I began to develop my own passion for the field. Additionally, the instructors did an excellent job in working with me to help me develop a formal thought-process about design while allowing me to establish my own style.

I have since received a Masters in Landscape Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania, worked at Hargreaves Associates in Cambridge on large public parks like the Clinton Presidential Library in Little Rock, AR and the Louisville Waterfront in Kentucky, and recently joined the firm of Reed Hilderbrand in Cambridge.

The education, direction, and creativity that I experienced in 1996 helped me find a career that I am passionate about, that I gain an immense amount of personal and professional satisfaction from, and one that I may not be in if not for the Career Discovery program.

Sincerely,

Michelle (Hollins) Crowley
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