

STUDENTS, NOT AGRONOMICS MAKE SCHOOL LANDSCAPES DIFFERENT AT LOYOLA



Loyola Marymount University sits on 100 acres of prime Los Angeles, CA real estate. It really wouldn't be that hard to maintain except for the 3400 students that keep getting in the way.

Superintendent of Pavements and Grounds Jim Kriste is very safety conscious and goes out of his way to avoid any close encounters with the student body. "We have an unwritten policy to control spraying," said Kriste. "We spray only when needed, use the least toxic chemical possible and finish spraying by 7 a.m." If the wind isn't bad, the grounds crew will use a small 3-gallon sprayer throughout the day.

Sometimes the best laid plans go awry. Due to a weed problem on one of the athletic fields Kriste decided to treat it with 2,4-D. The field was a haven for joggers who would stretch on the field and then do their running on the track that encircled the field. Kriste locked up the field, leaving only one entrance open to allow students in and out. Signs were placed at the entrance and all around the field warning students that pesticide spraying was taking place and, therefore, not to lay on the lawn.

"Well, sure enough, the joggers came in, plopped right down on the grass and proceeded to do their stretching exercises," bemoaned Kriste. "Sometimes I think they like to complain when its to their advantage."

Like many other schools, Loyola is wary of their student population when they are operating equipment. Kriste is responsible for 65 acres of the 100 acre campus. The mall and gardens areas are mowed twice a week while turf areas near classrooms are mowed only once per week, 6-8 a.m. "If we don't get those areas in the morning, then we don't get them" said Kriste. "It's just too noisy. Most likely the windows are open and the next thing you know you have instructors hollering."

In at least one instance student interference led to decreased maintenance. The dormitories had grass growing right up to the sides of the buildings. Occasionally the students' desire to leave their windows open and the grounds crew's desire to irrigate came into conflict; especially when a strong wind blew the water into the students' rooms. Kriste solved that problem by removing the turfgrass

and replacing it with wood chips and shrubs. Both the shrubs and the student's cross-ventilation are co-existing peacefully.

To Kriste, the student body is an occupational hazard, a part of the job that has to be dealt with and often scheduled around. At Loyola he has been hit with some other problems that do not necessarily come with the territory. Construction projects have been one of the biggest thorns in Kriste's side. "Almost every construction job on campus has caused problems," said Kriste. "They have taken manpower away from the maintenance effort to repair." Typically, the problems involve trucks not parking where they are supposed to or simply creating there own pathways on carefully cultivated turfgrass. "The problems have not been anything we can't handle, but it takes time and you never have enough time anyway," added Kriste.

Budgeting has not been a major problem for the grounds crew, due to Loyola's belief that maintenance is still a high priority. Kriste writes up his budget proposal in February and has it approved in August. Final approval is usually made in September, when the administration gets it final enrollment tallies. Generally the school takes the preceding year's budget and adds an inflation adjustment to it. For 81-82 that figure was 6%, for a bottom line figure of \$55,000. Kriste then takes that base figure and splits it up so that he can accomplish the most. Over the past few years Kriste has relegated the most money to landscape maintenance. "That is the money I use to buy my chemicals, fertilizer, plants and seed," said Kriste. "Since I have the room I usually buy a year's supply of chemicals and store them." He buys fertilizer as he needs.

Kriste is a firm believer that his

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Most mowing has to be done before 8:00 AM.

job is to maintain what is there and not get involved in too many re-landscaping jobs that take time away from normal maintenance projects. His equipment purchases are made with maintenance in mind, not construction. For the occasional construction job the crew will rent equipment. The sluggish economy hasn't hurt Kriste's equipment purchases, yet. "We've convinced the administration that if you want a good job you have to buy good equipment," said Kriste. "If we can't increase manpower then let us increase productivity with better equipment." This year Kriste is scouting for a five-gang mower, an aerifier and a turf sweeper.

Kriste has a staff of eight that toils at keeping Loyola looking picturesque. Being a small, private university these men are called on to do a little bit of everything. As Kriste puts it, "We're responsible for everything outside of the buildings." That includes streets, parking lots, underground leaks, trenching for electrical and irrigation lines, chemical pest control, landscape maintenance and irrigation. To keep the equipment running Kriste has two mechanics, yet parts availability is continually a problem. Loyola doesn't have the room to store parts and usually their parts orders are small. "Our down time will fluctuate because it can take us forever to get parts," said Kriste.

While the Loyola administration gives maintenance high priority they aren't fond of contracting

work out. Structural pest control is one of the few jobs contracted out consistently. Kriste would like to see some of the irrigation jobs contracted out, but has yet to win approval. "Some of the irrigation jobs we do would have taken an outside contractor two days," said Kriste. "They took us three weeks. Not because we're slow, but we have other maintenance areas that need work." Kriste also noted that with some jobs there is a lot of equipment which has to be rented.

In discussing management practices Kriste noted that it would probably be helpful to compute a maintenance cost per acre. He cited an instance when the school was building a new pavillion. Kriste sent in a proposal breaking down what it would cost to maintain the area. His final figure was that it would take 2½ men per day to keep up the area. The school's response was "do the best you can with your current manpower in the area" (which was one man per day). "Maintenance per acre estimates would be helpful to show why an area is not up to par," commented Kriste.

Athletic fields at many schools are overused and subsequently undermaintained. Students and coaches at Loyola do their best to keep up with that tradition. The collegiate baseball season runs from September to May and the Babe Ruth league goes from February until July. That leaves from mid-July until mid-September for Kriste to get the field in shape and during that period other organiza-

tions are using the campus and fields. The fields are basically perennial ryegrass and Kriste seeds in December to fill in whatever bare spots have popped up. The Loyola coach is a fanatic for green fields and Kriste tries to accommodate by battling the February frost and continually overseeding (especially during the summer).

The coach teaches the team to hit line drives so Kriste cuts the grass down to ¾-in. and turfsweeps to pick up the cuttings. The result is a faster field and a happy coach. Kriste also aerifies, although he has had to convince the athletes the sports shoes with cleats *do not* aerify the turf.

Kriste would like to schedule the campus for five aerifications between June and September to really get it in shape but with all the student activities, scheduling maintenance practices is one of his most difficult management chores. It seems that the campus is always gearing up for some event. The biggest is graduation at the end of May. On any given day there are usually 1500 of the 3400 students on campus. On graduation day that number balloons up to 10,000. In June there is the law school graduation. July, the grounds crew is preparing for the baseball season. In August the cheerleaders work out on the fields and in September the crew gears up for Open House.

"Every new event or student function throws us off," said Kriste. In February and March the school hosts Special Games for the handicapped, Mayfair, Cinco de Mayo celebration and Black History Week. "We try not to crisis-manage. I don't like surprises. It's always in the back of my mind that the president of the school will say that he wants a certain area cleaned up." An unannounced Los Angeles Laker basketball practice had 4000 people and 2000 cars flooding the campus, many of both category making their own paths. Until they create a campus without students, grounds managers like Jim Kriste will be called on to perform their special sort of magic that keeps "Academic America" beautiful.