Students in Utah State University’s Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning recently received the American Planning Association – Utah Chapter’s highest honor for creating an open space plan for a rapidly growing part of the Wasatch Front.

Students in the fall 2015 Recreation Design and Open Space Planning Studio, taught by Assistant Professor Ole Sleipness, collaborated with the City of Draper and landscape architecture firm Logan Simpson to generate a conceptual design for approximately 4,000 acres of public open space. The Draper Open Space Master Plan was officially adopted by the city in April.

“It’s really important for our students to experience working on actual projects with real-world constraints,” Sleipness said. “By working with real projects and real clients, they gain valuable experience in applying their design skills to solving tangible needs."

The students visited the open space areas, met with representatives of the city and Logan Simpson, and created design alternatives for the areas in order to maximize recreation opportunities.

“We had to take into consideration the steep topography, erosion control, storm water management and several other factors,” said David Durfee, a student who worked on the project. “We were able to work with the cities to solve those issues. It really showed me how important open space integration is within communities.”

Jeremy Call, a senior planner at Logan Simpson and USU alumnus, reached out to the department to get the class involved with the project.

“One of the benefits of our department and our program is our really large and active alumni base,” Sleipness said. “Oftentimes our alumni will bring opportunities for our students to be involved in, allowing us to work on collaborative projects like this one.”

For more information about USU’s Department of Landscape Architecture and Applied Sciences, visit laep.usu.edu.

PHOTO ATTACHED: Students in the fall 2015 Recreation Design and Open Space Planning Studio evaluating open space areas of Draper City.

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