

**University of Arkansas  
Fay Jones School of Architecture  
Department of Architecture**

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Last Program Visit: February 16-20, 2008  
Focused Evaluation Report Submitted: June 30, 2011

**NAAB Annual Report**

**Part II: RESPONSES TO THE MOST RECENT VISITING TEAM REPORT**

**1.4. Conditions/Criteria Not Met**

**Condition 4: Social Equity**

Visiting Team Comments:

*As noted in the 2002 Visiting Team Report, social equity continues to be a problem. The department has had some demonstrable success, specifically in recruitment of a minority faculty member, and in modest gains in the number of minority students matriculating at the department. However, the team is concerned that both the pool of minority applicants continues to be shallow and that the department's methods of assessing "diversity" is overly dependent on tally up the numbers of minority faculty and students. The department should recognize that all members of the community bear responsibility for creating a robust intellectual environment, and using culturally diverse precedents, where projects and practitioners are introduced into a student's vocabulary. The team urges the department to engage its considerable ingenuity to develop and implement a creative plan to build a deeper pool of minority applicants.*

**Condition 5: Physical Resources**

Visiting Team Comments:

*To the department's credit, the physical facilities have undergone substantial renovation since the last NAAB visit, which have made the first floor wheelchair-accessible, and provided two (locked) accessible rest rooms on that level. However, the only available wheelchair route to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor is an ancient non ADA-elevator, which is in perpetual repair, and does not give access to the studios and woodshop space in the basement. Overall, the building is not a welcoming environment for a person with mobility challenges.*

**Focused Evaluation Program Report, submitted June 30, 2011.**

On November 4, 2011, the University received notification from the NAAB President Kin DuBois that "in conjunction with the Focused Evaluation Team Report, the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB) has found that the changes made or planned by the program to remove the identified deficiencies are satisfied." In keeping with that finding, no further reporting on these issues will be offered.

## 1.5. Causes of Concern

### Condition 1: Program Response to NAAB Perspectives

#### 1.1 Architecture, Education, and the Academic Context

##### Visiting Team Comments

*While the department is highly regarded by the university administration, and there is appreciable knowledge about the program, the school and department have not developed sufficiently meaningful teaching and research relationships across campus. With a business department that is leading the development of integrated education, and engineering soon to follow, it appears obvious that joint courses and research could be initiated. Such models of collaboration are common to practice and would benefit the department community and curriculum. While the team acknowledges the laudable contributions of the architecture faculty to the honors program, these teaching opportunities are most often an overload to core required course teaching assignments in the architecture program.*

*As the University of Arkansas has signed the Climate Change Protocol, there is an inherent expectation for the department to provide a response, and leadership with respect to sustainability issues regarding both land and building design. Despite the team's repeated attempts to determine the connection between the department of architecture and the department of landscape architecture, the future of this natural liaison remains unclear and may be a missed opportunity for contributing to a holistic approach to environmental design and sustainability.*

##### 2010-11 Response

Since the Team Visit, the School of Architecture has been involved actively in crafting a Strategic Plan, which was completed in spring 2011; currently, we are awaiting approval of the plan by our University Provost. This strategic plan builds upon existing and on-going interdisciplinary collaborations that both enhance the School's teaching mission and extend its influence through outreach into the community.

Under the leadership of Associate Professor of Architecture Tahar Messadi, Architecture and Landscape Architecture faculty have been involved in the creation and implementation, during the 2010-11 academic year, of a university-wide minor in sustainability and a graduate certificate in sustainability, both interdisciplinary programs. Dr. Messadi has been appointed co-director of the University-wide initiative.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Endowed Chair for Integrated Practice establishes a hallmark for significant collaboration among those professional disciplines and building crafts engaged in the construction process through scholarly and practical investigation of Building Information Modeling software. Santiago Perez who joined the faculty in fall 2010, has been appointed to this endowed chair, and has established a digital fabrication laboratory. Professor Perez has begun to create cross-disciplinary connections with faculty in mathematics and engineering as the potential of the facility evolves.

The University of Arkansas Community Design Center (UACDC) collaborates regularly with the Department of Landscape Architecture, the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, and the Center for Business and Economic Research in the Sam Walton College of Business, and the UACDC'S pioneering research and design endeavors in the area of sustainable ecologies and communities is nationally recognized.

### **Condition 3: Public Information**

#### Visiting Team Comments

*Although language was available to the public via the web site, navigation to the NAAB Conditions of Accreditation was unclear. All students, first through fifth year, were not fundamentally aware of the criteria when asked about them in student sessions.*

#### 2010-11 Response

As noted in two previous Annual Reports (2008-09, 2009-10), the School of Architecture website continues to maintain a direct link to the NAAB website. The link is included in with information detailing the School's "degrees and programs." See <http://architecture.uark.edu/285.php>. An additional link to the NAAB website is included with information for "Current Students" concerning licensure; see <http://architecture.uark.edu/153.php>.

### **Condition 5: Studio Culture**

#### Visiting Team Comments

*It is important to note that when asked about the Studio Culture Policy, students were not aware that the report had been written or had access to it. Dialogue between students and administration needs to be strengthened and made an integral part of the dynamic of the department of architecture.*

#### 2010-11 Response

As noted in previous Annual Reports, the Department engages in cyclic review and self-study of its Studio Culture Policy. All students are exposed to the Studio Culture Policy in the first-year Leadership By Design class, which also discusses the implications and responsibilities attached to the policy. Additionally, the faculty is encouraged to address studio culture in all design studio course syllabi.

Dialogue between the students and administrators has been facilitated through the operation of the Dean's Student Advisory Board. Composed of a diverse sampling of the School of Architecture student population, the Student Advisory Board was conceived to give students in the School an increased sense of empowerment. It meets regularly to consider a broad spectrum of student concerns, including studio policy.

### **Condition 6: Human Resource Development**

#### Visiting Team Comments

*There is a lack of a clear and comprehensive plan for the professional/academic development of pre- and post-tenure faculty. The team noted inconsistencies in policies governing teaching and service loads, research leaves (OCDAs) and*

*financial support for research/creative work. Communication about these issues between the department administrators and faculty is ad hoc. Of greatest concern is the disproportionate relationship between untenured and tenured faculty and the apparent lack of strategic hiring policies and faculty development planning. All faculty need to be provided with regular opportunities to offer new courses, which will allow them to explore emerging interest and ultimately identify additional areas in which they will be consistent contributors to the curriculum.*

*The team is concerned that while there has been some improvement since the last visit faculty salaries at all ranks at the department of architecture continue to lag behind both the regional and university averages.*

*The team also notes some concern with efficacy of student advising with respect to the development of minors within and beyond the department. The emphasis of the advising office appears to address the needs of prospective and incoming students over those of students in the program.*

#### 2010-11 Response

As noted in previous Annual Reports, the School respectfully disagrees with the Visiting Teams assessment that “there is a lack of a clear and comprehensive plan for the professional/academic development of pre-and post-tenure faculty.” With regard to the matter of personal professional development for the faculty and policies governing equitable access to resources and opportunities, the School believes that the Team may have overlooked both University guidelines, published and available online in its *Faculty Handbook*, and the Department of Architecture Personnel Document. In accordance with the Department personnel document, faculty annual review procedures include the articulation of a personal professional development plan that is discussed with the department head to identify mutually agreeable strategies for its implementation. Furthermore, faculty research and creative activity is supported directly by research funds provided by the Dean of the School of Architecture; funds are made available to faculty at all ranks. In academic year 2010-11, the Architecture Department Head made additional (competitive) awards to support summer research and scholarship from department funds. Without exception, faculty receives 100% support for presentation of scholarly and/or creative work at the meetings of professional and learned societies. With regard to teaching opportunities consistent with fostering faculty development, each semester, faculty are invited to submit proposals for elective courses in areas of inquiry consistent with their expertise and interests; typically, all such proposals are accommodated.

The Department plans to review its personnel document during the 2011-12 academic year with particular regard to clarifying the roles and responsibilities of continuing “clinical” appointments. Efficacy of the Board of Trustees mandated peer review structure, which dictates an all-school peer review committee, also will be examined.

The School of Architecture administration is keenly aware of the problem of salary compression, and has expressed its concerns to the Provost, who is cognizant of compression as an issue that impacts the entire campus faculty. Although the average salary of architecture faculty has increased due to the competitive salaries offered to new hires, salary compression remains a concern.

With the nature of the problem made clear to upper administration, we are confident that gains will be made once the current economic downturn has reversed. Furthermore, the Provost's office has provided funds to alleviate compression at the full professor ranks; we expect parallel efforts to be directed to the benefit of associate professors in the future.

The School of Architecture professional advising staff works in close collaboration with department faculty to serve our community of students, and to promote retention. Both 5-year professional program students and 4-year architectural studies students are assigned a faculty advisor in the fall semester of their third year in the respective programs. With a view toward identifying the most productive coupling of students and faculty advisors, the Advising Center queries students, through a survey instrument, about their professional goals and what they hope to achieve through the advising process. To the greatest extent possible, assignments of faculty advisors are predicated upon students' responses to the questionnaire.

Through the aegis of faculty advising, we expect increased attention to the cultivation of minor areas of study. Currently, architecture students are pursuing minors in business, anthropology, world languages, and historic preservation (offered through cooperation with the Department of Geography) as well as completing the internal minor concentration in History of Architecture and Urbanism.

#### **Condition 9: Information Resources**

##### Visiting Team Comments

*The library's ongoing problem is a general lack of funding. In the short term, this has led to an inability to acquire contemporary books in the field of architecture and landscape architecture, and forced mandatory cuts in the acquisition of periodical and serial publications.*

*The facility is also seriously overcrowded, and lacks adequate space for expansion of its collection and the creation of comfortable reading and study spaces. Ultimately, it will need expansion.*

##### 2010-11 Response

Library funding, beyond the domain of the School of Architecture, remains an area of concern.

Although the Fine Arts Library will remain in its remote location in the University Fine Arts Center, the Vol Walker Hall renovation plan includes the creation of a periodicals reading room, integrated with our Media Center.

#### **Condition 10: Financial Resources**

##### Visiting Team Comments

*While financial resources have been primarily met there are deficiencies in the area of faculty salaries, which fall below both university and national averages. There is additional deficiency in an immediate financial commitment to capital improvements for the physical plant, particularly the shortcomings of ongoing*

*accessibility issues. And lastly, there is a lack of commitment regarding capital investment per student. As example, the under-funding of students attending the Rome program where cultural tours and significant site visits have been curtailed in light of the weakened US dollar against the Euro.*

#### 2010-11 Response

Concerns regarding salary compression are addressed in response to Condition 6, Human Resources; the matter of financial commitments for capital improvements is addressed with regard to Condition 5, Physical Resources.

As was noted in the 2009-10 Annual Report, successful development efforts document the School's commitment to securing capital investments that directly benefit our students. For example, a substantial gift in our previous capital campaign, when fully funded, will provide nearly \$40,000 annually to students for international study; funds from this gift were awarded to architecture students in 2008-09. The University will embark upon another capital campaign beginning in 2012, and increasing our levels of support for our students, particularly those from under-represented populations, again, will be prominent among the School of Architecture's goals.

### **Changes in Program Since Last Annual NAAB Report**

#### Curriculum Development

In 2008-09 the faculty began a self-study of the professional program structure and its curriculum. A faculty vote in fall 2010 adopted changes to the design studio sequence, including the institution of a fourth-year comprehensive project, and the creation of "option studios" in the fifth year, focused on faculty research and civic engagement. Discussions concerning refinements of the architectural history and architectural technology sequences resulted in revision of the technology sequence, and the addition of two "design thinking" courses in the first year of the curriculum: one focused on foundations in technology; the other on foundations in history of architecture.

#### Faculty

- Associate Professor Kory Smith was granted an Off Campus Duty Assignment during spring semester 2011.
- David Buege completed the second year of his three-year appointment as the Fay Jones Distinguished Professor.
- Tom Kundig was appointed John Williams Distinguished Professor for the Fall 2010 semester.
- Other visiting faculty included: Russell Rudzinski, who was appointed Clinical Assistant Professor in spring 2010; Allison Turner; Bob Kohler, AIA; and Mark Wise, who assumed leadership of the Design-Build initiative.
- Assistant Professor Santiago Perez joined the faculty as the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Endowed Chair for Integrated Technology.