

**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 2011-12
Part II: NARRATIVE REPORT
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 method 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 2nd and 3rd 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." No further reporting on these issues is 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.

2011-12 Response

In spring 2011 the School of Architecture completed a strategic planning document, which received approval from the University Provost in fall (October 19) 2011. This strategic plan builds upon existing and on-going interdisciplinary collaborations that both enhance the School's teaching mission and extend its influence through civic engagement with the community. The Department of Architecture has been charged with developing an action plan for implementing the document, working in parallel with our colleagues in Landscape Architecture and Interior Design. Full articulation of the action plan is scheduled for the 2012-13 academic year.

Last year, under the leadership of Associate Professor of Architecture Tahar Messadi, Architecture has emerged as a key contributor to the university-wide undergraduate minor in sustainability and a graduate certificate in sustainability, both interdisciplinary programs created last year. The minor provides foundational knowledge and skills related to the emerging discipline of Sustainability organized around four thematic areas reflecting strength in scholarship of University of Arkansas academic colleges: Sustainability of Social Systems, Sustainability of Natural Systems, Sustainability of Built Systems (Architecture and Engineering), and Sustainability of Managed Systems (Agriculture and Business). Dr. Messadi currently serves as co-director of the University-wide initiative. By fall 2012, 110 students had declared the sustainability minor; of these, 38 are architecture majors.

The 21st 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 developing digital methods of craft and communication. Since his appointment to this Endowed Chair in 2010, Santiago Perez has established a digital fabrication laboratory which is fast emerging as a catalyst for cross-disciplinary work, including interdisciplinary, upper-level elective classes, with faculty and students in mathematics and engineering.

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. The UACDC'S pioneering research and design endeavors in the area of sustainable ecologies and communities continues to garner national and international recognition as well as having a demonstrated influence within the state in such critical areas as affordable housing and (light rail) mass transit.

Although formal structures for collaborative work with the business school have yet to be identified, in spring 2012, Mark Zweig, an adjunct professor in the Walton College of Business piloted an upper-level elective in architectural practice and entrepreneurship; the course is scheduled to be offered again in the 2012-13 academic year, and we hope to establish it as a permanent offering.

As we look forward to occupying a renovated and enlarged Vol Walker Hall by summer 2013, when—for the first time in the School's history— all three of our departments will be housed in the same building, discussions concerning ways and means of making curricular connections among the disciplines of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Interior Design are occurring, both among administrators and within the faculty.

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.

2011-12 Response

As noted in three previous Annual Reports (2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11), 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>. We are currently revising the format of our catalogue of studies copy, and paying careful attention to clear articulation of accreditation and licensing information and protocols for all of the School's professional disciplines.

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.

2011-12 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 have 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. In the upcoming academic year (2012-13), and, again, with a view toward the opportunities and challenges that will be presented by housing all of our design students in the same building, the Dean's Student Advisory Board will be charged with making recommendations to update the Studio Culture Policy; in addition, the group will be engaged in discussions concerning collaboration among the design disciplines.

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 are 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.

2011-12 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, including tenured, tenure-track and continuing clinical appointments. In academic year 2011-12, 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, all 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 continues to review its personnel document 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 elected all-school peer review committee, has been examined, and, due to the relatively small size of the School, the Provost has directed the Dean of the School of Architecture to develop, annually, a slate of prospective peer review committee members for approval by the full faculty.

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; and efforts to alleviate compression at the associate ranks began this year.

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. Campus-wide attention to the relationship between retention/graduation rates and advising has placed an intense focus on advising on campus, and Architecture believes that we have an effective model for both keeping students abreast of their progress toward the B.Arch. degree and providing mentoring that forms a foundation for success in the profession and for life-long learning.

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. We expect to see great interest among architecture students next year when a recently approved minor in Urban and Regional Planning, offered cooperatively by the departments of Landscape Architecture and Public Policy, becomes available.

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.

2011-12 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.

2011-12 Response

Concerns regarding salary compression are addressed in response to Condition 6, Human Resources; the matter of financial commitments for capital improvements has been addressed in the 2011 Focal Evaluation Report with regard to Condition 5, Physical Resources.

As was noted in the 2010-11 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

Building upon nearly three years of intensive discussion of curricular issues, the architecture faculty began to implement pedagogical changes for both foundation and advanced design studios in response to a revised set of goals and objects.

A new fourth-year comprehensive design studio provides a capstone for professional program students. Team-taught by Department Head Marlon Blackwell and Associate Professor Tahar Messadi, the comprehensive design studio offers a context within which design skills and potentials of students are assessed in preparation for their careers. Requirements of the comprehensive project measure students' abilities to conduct research relative to issues of project site, program, and building technology and to apply that knowledge in the resolution of spatial, structural, environmental and programmatic aspects of project design. Students are expected to demonstrate that they are prepared for advanced academic work in their fifth and final year, and that they are capable of applying these conceptual frameworks and skills in their future work outside the academy. In addition, the comprehensive project embraces the Department's commitment to civic engagement, inculcating the value of community leadership through design in all of our students. This year's project focused on new, infill construction for the Main Street "Creative Corridor" of Little Rock. Designing a multi-purpose arts center, incorporating performance, gallery, and office space into this historic setting invited students to confront challenging urban issues of historic preservation and revitalization together with careful and realistic design speculation. Through field trips to Little Rock, students engaged directly with community leaders and other stakeholders in the speculative development. Further, the Department enjoys the support of Little Rock architects Witsell Evans Rasco, who have supported the comprehensive studio by funding an award for an outstanding project and actively participating in design critiques, creating a much-desired partnership between the academy and our colleagues in practice.

Once students have completed the comprehensive studio and a required study abroad semester during the fourth year, they are eligible to elect one of a set of

diversely conceived option studios, developed around diverse and tangible architectural issues that both advance the profession and find resonance with the community. The fifth-year option studios provide students opportunities for speculative design, research and outreach in a range of studio settings, involving research and creative activities for the resolution of complex problems pertaining to the civic realm within which architecture contextually operates. The education experience of the studios thus hinges on reflective and projective practice to address current professional obligations. In fall 2011, option studios included a local outreach endeavor with the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, and an international outreach effort through the John Williams Visiting Professor Studio, led by South African architect Peter Rich that brought our students to Kigali, Rwanda; spring options included the design of an artists' retreat for the South Main (SOMA) district of Little Rock. The Design Build studio, in which an affordable modular house is designed and constructed during the course of fall and spring semesters, and the University of Arkansas Community Design Center (UACDC) Studio, which involved students in urban planning and housing design for the South Main and Pettaway neighborhoods of central Little Rock, are staples of the fifth-year curriculum.

The faculty also approved changes to the requirements of the professional curriculum in the areas of building technology and first-year "design methods." The first year courses, ARCH 1212 and ARCH 1222 have been redesigned as "Design Thinking I: Foundations in Technology" and "Design Thinking II: Foundations in History," to provide platforms for upper level courses in these curricular areas as well as to offer a more rigorous introduction to design thinking in service of foundation design. In the technology area, the faculty has created two discrete structures courses, (ARCH 2113 and ARCH 2123), two in environmental technology (ARCH 2132 and ARCH 4156), and a course focused on building materials and assemblies (ARCH 3134).

In concert with ongoing discussions about curriculum and the revisions of the professional program curriculum that they influence, faculty participate in a Curriculum Review at the conclusion of each semester, through which they can assess learning and teaching throughout the professional curriculum. The Curriculum Review, a daylong event, involves all members of the faculty in a frank and self-reflective discussion and critique of the term's accomplishment, affording real opportunity to effect coordination and foster collaboration across the curriculum. The spring semester curriculum review brought together studio faculty and faculty responsible for the knowledge base courses in technology and history that are co-requisite to the studios for intensive and proactive conversations that both assessed learning during the 2011-12 academic year and catalyzed planning for the coming academic year.

International Programs

The department's international programs in Rome and Latin America, distinguished components of the architecture curriculum, continue to thrive.

As the University of Arkansas Rome Center has grown through our collaborative relationships with peer institutions, including Auburn University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Philadelphia University, and, most recently, Louisiana State University, as well as a renewed relationship with the university's J. William

Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. In addition to the established courses in the design studio and the urban morphology of the city, and course work in historic preservation and sustainability in Rome, is diversifying the opportunities available to our students as they explore scholarship, design and practice in a global context.

This year, in response to State Department concerns about the welfare of Americans traveling in Mexico, the Department was forced to relocate its Mexico summer program. Seeking a location that shared Mexico's blend of pre-colonial, colonial, and contemporary architecture, the faculty selected Peru as the site of this summer's program. From an anchor location in Cuzco, students and faculty traveled to Lima and, at summer's end, hiked the Incan trail. We expect to return to Mexico, with a revised program of study, in summer 2013.

Faculty

- David Buege completed the third year of his three-year appointment as the Fay Jones Distinguished Professor. He will join the faculty permanently in Fall 2012 as a full professor of architecture with the right of tenure.
- South African architect Peter Rich was appointed John Williams Distinguished Professor for the Fall 2011 semester.
- Other visiting faculty included: Allison Turner, AIA, LEED AP; Bob Kohler, AIA; Mark Wise, who assumed continued to lead the department's Design-Build Initiative, and Justin Hershberger and Bradley Edwards who contributed to the first-year studio teaching team.
- Associate Professor Kory Smith resigned his appointment to accept a position at the University of Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning; Clinical Associate Professor Pia Sarpaneva resigned her appointment to accept a position at the College of Architecture, Planning and Design, Kansas State University.
- Three additions to our faculty, with terms of appointment to begin in Fall 2012 are: Mark Manack, AIA, and Frank Jacobus, RA, tenure-track assistant professors, and Amber Ellett, RA, LEED AP as visiting assistant professor.

Footnote to Part 1

Please note that current data for section F, items 1 and 2 (Total number of catalogued titles in architecture library collection and total number of catalogues titles that have Library of Congress NA 720-729) was not available. Numbers of holdings listed are approximate, based upon previously documented statistics.