

MSU Departmental Assessment Update - School of Architecture Spring 2007

Assessment Contact

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Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department

B.A. in Environmental Design, B.A.Ed
Master of Architecture, M.Arch

Assessment Activities

Following are the results of school wide on-line assessment survey as part of the School's on-going efforts to develop a Studio Culture Policy

The questions in the survey were reviewed by AIAS officers from schools throughout the United States as well as by faculty and AIAS students within MSU. This effort was undertaken in order to obtain the most effective and useful information from the survey. The survey was organized along four major categories. The first was to establish the background of the student—i.e. what year in the program, involvement in other activities, etc. The subsequent three categories were designed to evaluate the Pedagogy (what is being taught), the Methodology (how courses are taught) and Environment (the environment in which their education takes place. The Survey took place in Spring 2007. Twenty-nine percent of all first year students took the survey while 79% of our second year students responded to the survey, 80% of all third year students took the survey, only 26% of all fourth year students took the survey as most of our fourth year students were on foreign study or internship programs and 85% of all graduate students took the survey. Except for the fourth year students the participation was considered of a high level.

Following is a summary of some of the pertinent findings of the Studio Culture Survey and recommendations to address the issues raised within this survey.

1. "To what extent are the following design skills taught in the studios that you have taken?"

In response to this question on **Content** students could respond *Not at all, Not Very Often, Generally, Consistently* or *Always*

Between 75% to 95% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- Design as a process (95%)
- Oral Communication to supplement visual and graphic communication (80%)
- Design decisions based on community and society values (80%)
- Design decisions based on client and user values (80%)
- Analyzing and understanding the ethical implications of design (75%)

Between 60% to 70% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- Analyzing and understanding the social and political implications of design (68%)
- Analyzing and understanding the economic implications of design. (65%)

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- Written communication to supplement visual and graphic communication (50%)

2. “Which conditions best describes the teaching methodologies used in studios you have taken?”

In response to this question on **Pedagogy** students could respond *Not at all, Not Very Often, Generally, Consistently* or *Always*

Between 75% to 95% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- Creative and innovative design processes are taught (95%)
- Creative and innovative building designs are promoted (95%)
- Learning from the examples of other architect (95%)
- Clear expectations and objectives are given for assignments (90%)
- Diversity is recognized and encouraged in building design (90%)
- Creative and innovative teaching approaches are used (90%)
- Learning from the examples of other students (90%)
- Performance assessment is understandable (90%)
- Performance assessment is fair (85%)
- Diversity is recognized and encouraged in the design process (85%)
- Diversity is recognized and encouraged in architectural opinions (85%)

Between 60% to 70% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- Learning from the examples of other construction related professionals (70%)
- The opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with other architecture students is promoted (70%)

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- The opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with other professors is encouraged (55%)
- The opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with architectural and other professionals is encouraged (40%)

Less than 35% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- The opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with students in other majors is promoted (15%)

3. “What best describes the effectiveness of the project critique process?”

In response to this question on **Environment** students could respond *Very Destructive, Destructive, Indifferent, Constructive* or *Very Constructive*:

Between 75% to 95% of all students responded *Constructive* or *Very Constructive* to the following review processes:

- Conducted at individual desks (95%)
- Conducted within a group (75%)

Between 60% to 70% of all students responded *Constructive* or *Very Constructive* to the following review processes

- Juried critiques (mid-semester) (65%)
- Final critiques (65%)

4. “What best describes your feelings during the project during the critique process?”

In response to this question on **Environment** students could respond *Unnecessarily Stressful, Stressful, Indifferent, Engaging, Productively Intense*:

Between 75% to 95% of all students responded *Engaging* or *Productively Intense* to the following review processes:

- Conducted at individual desks (90%)

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Engaging* or *Productively Intense* to the following review processes:

- Conducted within a group (55%)
- Juried critiques (40%)
- Final critiques (40%)

5. In response to the next question “**The quantity of studio assignments on average is...**” students responded

- Not Enough (0%)
- Not challenging (2%)
- Appropriate (27%)
- Very challenging (60%)
- Too Demanding (11%)

6. “**Rate the degree to which you believe the following are valued in studio**”

In response to the next question on **Environment** students could respond *Disregarded*, *Not Important*, *Indifferent*, *Important* or *Very Important*:

Between 75% to 95% of all students responded *Important* or *Very Important* to the following statements:

- Time spent on studio assignments (90%)
- Time management (85%)
- Your personal capabilities (75%)

Between 60% to 70% of all students responded *Important* or *Very Important* to the following statements:

- Leadership and accountability of architects within the building industry (70%)
- Leadership and accountability for architects with the architectural profession (65%)

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Important* or *Very Important* to the following statements:

- Leadership and accountability of students with the student body (50%)
- Non-studio courses (40%)
- Community project and student service participation (35%)
- Time spent on non-studio assignments (35%)
- Personal non-studio activities friends, family, own time) (35%)

7. **Please check the choice with most accurately reflects your opinion with regard to the following statements**”

In response to this question on Environment students could respond *I don't know*, *Strongly Disagree*, *Disagree*, *Agree* or *Strongly Agree*:

Between 75% to 95% of all students responded *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to the following statements:
I feel I am getting a quality education in the School of Architecture at MSU (90%)

Between 60% to 70% of all students responded *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to the following statements:
Students have the latitude to develop personal approaches in higher level studios (65%)
The occurrence and schedule of school-oriented activities and events are readily available to students(65%)

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to the following statements:
I feel my opinion matters within the School of Architecture (50%)

Development of a basic structure to address assessment results

Based upon the discussions that occurred at the Fall 2006 Studio Forum and the early results of the Studio Culture Survey, the students of Tau Sigma Delta began to develop an initial draft of the Studio Culture Policy. The initial drafts were developed after meetings with faculty, students, and staff. The Tau Sigma Delta students developed a series of drafts—initially using the basic organization of the survey—Pedagogy, Methodology and Environment—as the basic organizational structure for the studio culture policy. Next the students developed an overall vision statement for each of these three sections. The intent behind having a vision statement such as this was to provide future students and faculty with a guide for the aspirations of the studio culture policy for each section. The students felt that while specific action items within the studio culture policy may change, there needs to be an overriding philosophy that did not change from year to year and this philosophy was to be reflected in the initial paragraph of each section on Content, Pedagogy, and Environment as listed below.

“Vision Statement

As a School of Architecture, we strive for excellence in design and in other areas which are beneficial to a well-rounded education and personal development. This is predicated on the belief that truly great architects and professionals possess multiple skills which enhance their real-world abilities and contributions to society. These skills include commitment to quality of work, diligence, and competence, as well as efficiency, time management, interpersonal skills, and the development of other abilities through extracurricular pursuits.

Content – What is taught

The nature of the curriculum should be progressive and proactive with regards to the direction of the profession of architecture. Traditional skills and the development of artistic abilities must be balanced with cutting edge technologies and an education that is adaptive to current global issues and trends. Collaboration, coursework balance, and diversity of resources are all beneficial to a multi-disciplinary education.

Pedagogy – How it is taught

The faculty and staff are an integral part of a diverse academic and professional community. As such, their unique attitudes and professional interests should be seen as an asset to a well-rounded education. Professionalism, exemplified in conduct and ethics, serves as a window to the architectural profession. Faculty have a great potential for impacting students and the future of the profession; therefore, they have a direct responsibility, through their interactions with students, communication style, and work patterns, to foster behavior and values supportive of a holistic and balanced education and lifestyle.

Environment – The environment in which it is taught

A healthy environment for the School of Architecture relies on the integrity of both the physical workspace and the academic community which it houses. The unique nature of the studio should encourage peer evaluation and discourse, self-discipline, collaboration, and critical thought. Maintaining a positive physical work environment is recognized as a vital component that supports creativity, academic rigor, and productivity. The behavior of the community should reflect the stature of an academic institution, promoting open and timely communication, respect, safety, and character.”

In recognizing that issues may change over time, the Tau Sigma Delta students believed that it was important for future students to remain involved with its development and refinement—that the policy should continue to be a fluid document built upon the basic philosophy developed for each component. As such the students recommended that a Council of students be selected by their fellow students each year to review, refine and change the studio culture policy as needed to respond to both on-going and new issues related to studio culture. This council of students will be instituted for the first time in the coming academic year 2007-08. The members of the council will be elected each year.

Next the students analyzed the issues that were raised at the Studio Forum in the context of the vision statement they had developed. This resulted in the following list of issues that the Studio Culture Policy was being designed to address. The Tau Sigma Delta students recognized that some issues may be of major importance one year but may be less critical in three to five years. This middle section of the Studio

Culture Policy was intended to identify the most common issues that the policy would address, but would allow for issues to be added or deleted if future Studio Forum discussions warranted such a change.

Content Issues

Issues include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Coordination between classes
- Vertical and horizontal integration
- Provision for development of a diversity of skills and areas of expertise
- Cumulative nature of studio experiences and testability
- Curriculum balance and adaptation
- Focus on critical thought
- Emphasis on high standards of quality

Pedagogy Issues

Including, but not limited to, the following issues:

- Student Mentorship
- Quality versus Quantity, tradeoffs with regards to workload
- Clarity of expectations and syllabus
- Grading methodology
- Distribution of time spent with students
- Experience of upper-level faculty
- Critique and evaluation of work by faculty and students
- Group work, collaboration, and real-world experiences
- Coordination between faculty members
- Communication of credit hour expectations

Environment Issues

Including, but not limited to, the following issues:

- Student voice and ability to communicate with faculty
- Campus perceptions and relations
- Support of a balanced life
- Brotherhood and camaraderie
- Respect for personal time and endeavors
- Respect of personal and communal property and workspace
- Timely and considerate communication of administrative, curriculum, and course-specific issues

Preliminary Recommendations

The third part of the Studio Culture Policy that the Tau Sigma Delta students developed was to look at the issues raised in the Studio Forum and to develop a set of recommendations for changes and policies that the School should implement. These recommendations are listed as "Recommendations for implementation based on 2006-2007 Studio Culture Forum" These recommendations were developed during the final two weeks of Spring Semester 2007. In order to gain feedback and eventual approval from the students and faculty on these recommendations we are continuing the review process throughout the Summer and Fall Semesters 2007. The Studio Culture Policy Draft containing these recommendations was e-mailed to all students with a request for their comments and feedback. In addition, separate meetings were held with all second year summer semester students (approximately 50 students) and fourth year summer semester students (approximately 25 students) in which they were asked to comment on the proposed studio culture policy. Thus far some of the recommendations that have been proposed would start to address some of the areas with the Studio Culture Survey that received less than 50% support from the general student body. These items are listed below with the proposed recommendations from the Studio Culture Policy draft developed by Tau Sigma Delta students

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

- The opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with architectural and other professionals is encouraged (40%)

Less than 35% of all students responded *Generally, Consistently* or *Always* to the following statements:

The opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with students in other majors is promoted (15%)

Recommendation: Project scope and scale should be reduced to allow for further development. The school should require one group project for every student by the time they graduate, potentially in a designated semester. Evaluation and grading of group projects should be reflected in a hybrid of a peer review and design review.

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Engaging* or *Productively Intense* to the following review processes:

Juried critiques (40%)

Final critiques (40%)

Recommendation: Encourage critique by guest jurors in every studio. Create guidelines addressing expectations and acceptable conduct.

Recommendation: At the end of each year, students will be evaluated in a comprehensive manner. Develop a checklist that outlines specific requirements for material and understanding for each year. Students and professors should both have this checklist so that accountability can be bilaterally maintained. A student has two chances to successfully pass a design course

Between 35% to 55% of all students responded *Important* or *Very Important* to the following statements:

Leadership and accountability of students with the student body (50%)

Non-studio courses (40%)

Community project and student service participation (35%)

Time spent on non-studio assignments (35%)

Personal non-studio activities (friends, family, own time) (35%)

Recommendation: Actively and visibly increase coordination and communication between studio and support classes.

Recommendation: Streamline ARCH 457 with respect to the studio sequence and ARCH 356/ARCH 551/552/553. Establish better preparation in ARCH 356 and integration with other fourth year coursework. Utilize already completed projects from prior years or better integrate ARCH 457 projects so that it is developed as part of support classes. Studio work should be a generator for support classes, providing the design project material which is explored in the particular course.

Recommendation: If it is really important to the school for their students to volunteer, consider making this part of studio (i.e. students can learn practical construction experience through Habitat for Humanity and the school could gain some positive publicity).

Final Recommendations

The above recommendations are being reviewed by students, faculty and staff during AY 07-08 to develop final policy recommendations for implementation by the School of Architecture. These final policies will be reviewed and adopted in Spring 2008 as part of our National Architectural Accrediting Board site visit.