

MSU Departmental Assessment Update 2009

Department: School of Architecture

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Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department

B.A. in Environmental Design, B.A.Ed

Master of Architecture, M.Arch

Architecture Assessment and Outcomes Update Spring 2007

Assessment Activities

Since the Spring 2007 Assessment update the School of Architecture has undertaken a number of major assessment activities which are described below along with the analysis of the outcomes and the impact on future curriculum and program changes and development.

- Faculty-Course Evaluations
- Review Week
- School Exhibits
- Portfolio Review
- SDRE and LDRE Reviews
- Exit Questionnaire
- Studio Culture Survey
- Curriculum Committee
- Architecture Program Report

Faculty-Course Evaluations

Two types of faculty-course evaluations are completed in each class. The results of these course evaluations are made available to the instructor and to the Director of the school. Comments and scores from these evaluations are discussed with each faculty member during the course of their annual review.

Review Week

Review week continues to be an on-going and successful assessment activity within the school. Faculty are assigned to sit on reviews of design studio courses (faculty are rotated from semester to semester so that over time each faculty member will be on a review of every other faculty member's class). The review week scheduled was expanded so that first year students have their own week of review which provides them with more final review time. In addition, this allows more faculty to be involved with first year reviews and also reduces the burn-out that happens with faculty having to sit on a very large number of reviews during one week. The graduate reviews occur during finals week which has benefited graduate students and faculty in a similar manner. The reviews provide faculty with a means to evaluate the quality of student work across the program. These reviews also provide assessment that is discussed at faculty meetings and studio coordination meetings for the subsequent semester.

School Exhibits

The School initiated a new series of exhibits that focused upon the curriculum within each year. A special exhibit of first year first semester work was displayed in the lower gallery and one of the School's faculty meetings was held in the gallery and was devoted to a presentation, discussion and evaluation of the first year work and curriculum. A similar exhibit for first year second semester took place in the spring semester along with a separate exhibit of the coursework in second year. These exhibits provided the faculty with a chance to hear and see the work that is taking place in parts of the program outside of their own area. It also provided for a chance to have other faculty provide feedback on the quality of the work. In general, the comments on the first year work were very positive as there is a stronger emphasis on the idea of space—with the architectural form resulting from the use and development of that space. The introduction of graphics was becoming much stronger in the first year curriculum and the results were very promising. This has allowed us to build a stronger graphics foundation in the first year which should help us to explore new topics or greater depth of current topics in the second year graphics curriculum.

During the second year exhibit there was much discussion on the shift that was made in the design studio and the need to provide more design opportunities in the fall semester. There was a sense that students were coming into the second semester with stronger graphic skills and a better understanding of the concepts of structural systems—although some faculty felt that upper division students did not understand the detailed aspects of structural systems. There were some new developments in the second

year history sequence as a focus on text, graphics, hands on projects and digital resources were being introduced into the teaching methodology. In the area of graphics, the faculty believed that strong hand graphics are still vital to the student's education and that at times the digital applications can dominate. There was also some concern that digital applications can result in cookie-cutter solutions. But there was some good assessment of utilizing the digital applications to explore three-dimensional surfaces and space. The use of customizable software programs was also encouraging. In general, the faculty continues to support the emphasis on hand graphics in both the graphics curriculum and the design studios.

In general, faculty feedback to these types of 'curricular exhibits' was positive. It is the intent of the school to undertake a similar exhibit in 2009-2010 for the third year and fourth year of the program. A review of the graduate program would take place in 2010-2011 once the three-semester graduate program was in place.

Portfolio Review

The portfolio review continues to take place for admission into the second year of the program and into the graduate program. Five faculty are involved with each review process allowing for a large percentage of the faculty to review the overall quality of student work at each level. These reviews provide a mechanism for assuring that a consistent quality level is obtained before a student can move on to the next phase of the program. If students are found to have an unacceptable quality of work in their portfolio they are given the opportunity to meet with a faculty member, Director, or Graduate Coordinator to review the portfolio and work toward improving the quality of the portfolio prior to reapplying. At the undergraduate level, monthly meetings are made available to the students who fall into this category.

Studio Dominant Review Evaluation (SDRE) and Lecture Dominant Review Evaluation (LDRE)

The SDRE and LDRE were conducted for faculty who are approaching their tenure, promotion or retention reviews and will be included as part of their internal peer teaching assessment of their Promotion and Tenure dossier.

Exit Questionnaire

The Exit Questionnaire is also utilized for faculty who are who are approaching their tenure, promotion or retention reviews and is included as part of their internal peer teaching assessment of their Promotion and Tenure dossier. It was not undertaken in 2008 but will be undertaken in 2009.

Studio Culture Survey Assessment

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 five 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 four categories were designed to evaluate the area of Design Skills, 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 2008. The assessment which follows below looks for positive or negative trends between the two surveys.

Design Skills

11. To what extent are the following basic design skills taught in the studio that you have taken?

*Areas showing an **improvement** of at least 5% since 2007*

- Written communication to supplement graphic communication (overall mean rating increased)
- Design as a process

*Areas showing a **decline** of at least 5% since 2007*

- Design decisions based on client and users values

Areas that have **remained the same** (an increase or decrease of less than 5%) since 2007

- Oral Communication (overall mean rating increased)
- Design decisions based on community and social values
- Analyzing and understanding the ethical implications of design (overall mean rating decreased)
- Analyzing and understanding the economic implications of design

Pedagogy

13. Which condition best describes the teaching methodologies used in studios you have taken?

Areas showing an **improvement** of at least 5% since 2007

- Opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with other architecture students (overall mean rating increased)
- Opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with other professors
- Opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with other architectural and other professions
- Diversity is recognized and encouraged in the design process (overall mean rating increased)
- Performance assessment is understandable

Areas showing a **decline** of at least 5% since 2007

- Clear expectations and objectives are given for assignments (overall mean rating declined)
- Creative and innovative design processes are taught
- Learning from the examples of other architects* (overall mean rating decreased)
- Learning from the examples of other construction related professionals (overall mean rating decreased)

Areas that have **remained the same** (an increase or decrease of less than 5%) since 2007

- Opportunity for collaborative research/investigation with students in other majors
- Diversity is recognized and encouraged in the design process
- Diversity is recognized and encouraged in architectural opinions
- Performance assessment is fair
- Creative and innovative teaching approaches are used
- Creative and innovative building designs are promoted
- Learning from the examples of other students
- Learning from the examples of other construction related professionals

14. What best describes the effectiveness of the project critique process?

Areas showing an **improvement** of at least 5% since 2007

- None were identified

Areas showing a **decline** of at least 5% since 2007

- Conducted at individual desks
- Conducted within a group*
- Juried critiques* (overall mean rating increased by two levels)

Areas that have **remained the same** (an increase or decrease of less than 5%) since 2007

- Final critiques

15. What best describes your feelings during the project critique process?

Areas showing an **improvement** of at least 5% since 2007

- Conducted within a group
- Juried critiques
- Final critiques

Areas showing a **decline** of at least 5% since 2007

- Conducted at individual desks*

Areas that have **remained the same** (an increase or decrease of less than 5%) since 2007

- None were identified

Academic Environment

16. Rate the degree to which you believe the following are valued in studio

Areas showing an **improvement** of at least 5% since 2007

- Leadership and accountability of students within the student body
- Personal non-studio activities (friends, family, own time) (overall mean rating increased)

Areas showing a **decline** of at least 5% since 2007

- Leadership and accountability for architects within the architectural profession*
- Your personal capabilities*
- Time spent on studio assignments
- Time spent on non-studio assignments

Areas that have **remained the same** (an increase or decrease of less than 5%) since 2007

- Leadership and accountability of architects within the building industry
- Leadership and accountability for architects within the architectural profession
- Community project and student service participation
- Non-studio courses (overall mean rating decreased)
- Time management

Perspectives

17. Please check the choice which most accurately reflects your opinion with regard to the statement on the left.

Areas showing an **improvement** of at least 5% since 2007

- I feel my opinion matters within the School of Architecture
- I feel I am getting a quality education in the School of Architecture at MSU

Areas showing a **decline** of at least 5% since 2007

- None were identified

Areas that have **remained the same** (an increase or decrease of less than 5%) since 2007

- Students have the latitude to develop personal approaches in higher level studios.
- The occurrence and schedule of school-oriented activities and events are readily available to students

The above assessment does track closely to some of the conclusions from the NAAB Visiting Team Report which also saw an improvement in writing and collaborative outcomes within the school. Some of the items showing a decrease were a result of a shift from a high rating of *Always* to the next rating of *Consistently*. As such while this is a decrease the general perception within the school remains positive. This occurred in those topics that are identified with an asterisk (*). Those items that have shown an overall drop in the mean rating will be discussed at the fall faculty meetings and the curriculum committee will utilize these discussions to develop strategies for addressing these areas. A follow-up survey will be conducted in Fall 2009 in order to assess the success of these efforts and to gain a larger sample of fourth year student participants since most fourth year students are gone during the Spring semester.

Responses to Spring 2008 Assessment

In the Spring 2008 assessment update there were 5 recommendations that resulted from the 2007 Studio Culture Survey. They are shown below along with the Spring 2009 assessment response taken from the 2008 Studio Culture Survey:

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.

- **2009 Assessment Response:** The Curriculum committee and studio coordinators have worked to develop a standardized series of criteria for each design studio—which includes number of projects. The projects in the first year studio have been reduced in number so that a longer period of time can be spent for more in-depth exploration of ideas. Similarly, all other design studios typically have only one to two studio projects each semester which has appeared to help with this issue.

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

- **2009 Assessment Response:** The 2008 Studio Culture Survey has shown a marked improvement in the quality of the juried critique process with the mean rating improving from ‘Stressful’ to “Engaging”.

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

- **2009 Assessment Response:** Some faculty have utilized this checklist for final reviews but the usage is still inconsistent across the curriculum. In addition, the 2008 Studio Culture Survey confirms that ‘clear expectation and objectives for assignments’ has gone from a mean rating of “Consistently” to “Generally”. This issue will need to be addressed during the coming year.

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

- **2009 Assessment Response:** The curriculum exhibits have helped a great deal in this area as faculty are now being exposed to what is occurring in other years and courses. In addition, studio coordinators are now actively engaging the instructors of non-studio courses to increase this communication. In addition, now that all non-studio courses are taught by faculty who also teach design studio, there is a greater cross-pollination between all courses.

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.

- **2009 Assessment Response:** ARCH 456 will now replace ARCH 457 as the capstone course. All non-studio required courses will be completed prior to students taking ARCH 456 so that students will be able to utilize this course as a true synthesis course—eliminating the problem of taking ARCH 457 with two other rigorous non-studio courses.

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).

- **2009 Assessment Response:** The School has tried to incorporate more studios and electives that allow students to work on projects for non-profit groups or social issues (i.e. Kumbu Climbing School, Kenya Housing Studio, Hawaii Sustainable Agricultural Community, etc.) so that students can participate in activities such as this as part of their education. Time constraints are still an issue within the program but the School is still

attempting to address this through scheduling of project deadlines. But there is still work that needs to be done in this area.

Curriculum Committee

The curriculum committee has continued to meet on a regular basis to review and plan for the implementation of the three-semester graduate program which will start in Spring 2010. The current graduate program is a two-semester program. The committee has reviewed the faculty assessments of the design studio sequence and has developed the following proposal, which is predicated on the previous shift of ARCH 457 Architectural Design V from the undergraduate to the graduate program as ARCH 557 Architectural Design Studio.

- In this proposal, ARCH 456 Architectural Design IV will replace ARCH 457 as the undergraduate capstone studio and will now meet the NAAB Student Performance Criteria associated with the undergraduate capstone studio.
- ARCH 557 will become a second graduate level option studio allowing students more diverse choices of design studio in their graduate program.
- The committee is also proposing that all students undertake a Plan B thesis option as part of their final semester of design studio. This would replace the current scenario where students can choose from a Plan A or a Plan B Thesis option.
- The curriculum committee also reviewed the history/theory component in the upper division and graduate courses and proposed a revision to the course schedule in the graduate level design studios that would provide a dedicated 2-hour session for seminar discussions on a series of readings that would be coordinated across the various design studio sections.
 - This came in response to one of the Causes of Concern from the NAAB Accreditation Visiting Team Report.

This proposal was developed over the Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 semesters. It was presented to the entire faculty at a series of faculty meetings in March and April 2009. Discussions are still on-going and will be resumed at the Fall Semester 2009 Start-up Retreat. It is anticipated that future revisions and final action on this proposal will take place during Fall Semester 2009 with implementation occurring during Spring, Summer and Fall of 2010.

Architecture Program Report (APR)

In February 2008, the School of Architecture submitted its revised Architecture Program Report (APR) which was a 368 page report and self-assessment of the Architecture program and included the following categories—referred to as the Thirteen Conditions of Accreditation:

- 1. Program Response to NAAB Perspectives**
- 2. Program Self-Assessment Procedures**
3. Public Information
4. Social Equity
- 5. Studio Culture**
6. Human Resources
7. Human Resource Development
8. Physical Resources
9. Information Resources
10. Financial Resources
11. Administrative Structure
- 12. Professional Degrees and Curriculum**
- 13. Student Performance Criteria**

Student Performance Criteria includes 34 different student performance categories in which students must demonstrate competency in the student outcomes.

The items in bold are the items most directly related to curricular aspects of the program.

In March 2008, the NAAB site visit team visited the School to undertake an accreditation site visit review which lasted four days. The NAAB site team issues a Visiting Team Report (VTR) which identifies conditions that are Not Met, Met and Well Met as well as Causes for Concern.

The VTR found only two areas of deficiencies during their visit—**Conditions Not Met.**

- One condition involved the ADA accessibility of one of our classrooms (Physical Resources) and the other
- One condition was one of the 34 student performance criteria—Building Service Systems.

The VTR identified eight **Conditions that were Well Met** and included

- Architectural Education and Registration (one of five Program Response to NAAB Perspectives)
- Architectural Education and the Profession (one of five Program Response to NAAB Perspectives)
- Speaking and Writing Skills (one of 34 Student Performance Criteria)
- Graphic Skills (one of 34 Student Performance Criteria)
- Fundamental Design Skills (one of 34 Student Performance Criteria)
- Collaborative Skills (one of 34 Student Performance Criteria)
- Building Structures (one of 34 Student Performance Criteria)
- Building Envelope Systems (one of 34 Student Performance Criteria)

The remaining **Conditions were considered Met** and include the remaining 25 Student Performance Criteria

Critical Thinking Skills	Life-Safety
Research Skills	Building Systems Integration
Formal Ordering Skills	Building Materials and Assemblies
Fundamental Design Skills	Construction Cost Control
Western Traditions	Technical Documentation
Non-Western Traditions	Client Role in Architecture
National and Regional Traditions	Comprehensive Design
Use of Precedents	Architect's Administrative Roles
Human Behavior	Architectural Practice
Human Diversity	Professional Development
Accessibility	Leadership
Sustainable Design	Legal Responsibilities
Program Preparation	Ethics and professional Judgment
Site Conditions	

In addition, the VTR identified 5 areas of concern:

- Enhance and clarify mission and vision statement as a public process. It is advised to seek to engage components of the university and public to a larger degree.
- Delineate lines of structured communication within the program
- Re-examine history/theory sequence both in placement within the program and instruction. Investigate ways to provide history/theory in upper division as a requirement rather than an elective.
- Review year-round program impacts on student financial aid/summer work and faculty time for research and for building maintenance.
- Undertake a thorough, facilitated discussion about the facilities with the participation of the Provost.

As a result of the VTR findings:

Responses to Conditions Not Met

- As a result of this assessment additional curriculum content on Building Service Systems was added in ARCH 331 Environmental Controls I and ARCH 332 Environmental Controls II in order to address this deficiency.

- The issue of accessibility, while not a curricular item, still need to be addressed. Discussion with facilities and the upper administration will take place once the Director's Search is completed in Summer 2009.

Responses to Causes of Concern

- A new tenure-track faculty member has been hired to teach in the history theory sequence. This faculty member's expertise is in design and history/theory.
- The history sequence has been shifted to an earlier location in the curriculum so that it gains a more prominent location within the educational structure and provides students with this foundation of knowledge sooner in the sequence of courses.
- The year-round program has been shifted from the undergraduate studio sequence to the graduate level sequence which allows for greater flexibility in student schedules to accommodate work schedules and provides students with greater access to financial aid as a graduate student.
- The strategic use of fiscal year adjunct faculty and visiting faculty in the summer semester is intended to allow tenure-track faculty to maintain a balanced teaching/research schedule.
- The curriculum committee is continuing its efforts at reviewing the overall mission statement and pedagogy of the year-round graduate program to provide a clear, focused direction to the curriculum. The graduate studios are being structured to build upon this focus and to engage larger university/public issues and projects. Some examples of recent graduate studios include: sustainable agricultural community design for the Big Island of Hawaii, masterplan for Old Faithful district in Yellowstone National Park, Kumbu Climbing School in Portse, Nepal, Blackmore Day Use Pavilion in Gallatin National Forest.
- Administrative structure and lines of communication will be redefined once the Director's Search is completed in Summer 2009.

The School will be submitting an annual report on each of these items in November of each year. The report in 2008 included only statistical information. Subsequent annual reports will include statistical information and narrative descriptions of the progress made on each Condition Not Met and Causes of Concern.

The School received a full six-term accreditation (the longest term given) with no conditions attached. The next NAAB site visit will take place in 2014.