

Date: November 29, 2011  
To: James O'Hanlin Acting Dean College of Architecture  
From: Thomas Laging,  
Director, Architecture Program

Subject: NAAB 2011

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Please find the following NAAB annual report. The Accessibility deficiency was again addressed, as were the causes for concern in the focus areas of Digital Fabrication and Sustainability. The third area of concern, Space and Facilities, continues to be challenging for us.

Issues in the report, but outside the required narrative, include: budget, administrative, enrollment and curricular changes to the program.

Annual NAAB report

Architecture Program, University of Nebraska –Lincoln

## Part II Narrative Report

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### Conditions Not Met:

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#### 13.14 Accessibility

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*.... Out of the 34 criterion we have found only one that is not met. After reviewing coursework from throughout the program, we do not feel there is an apparent ability among the student body to produce designs conscious of individuals with disabilities.*

We believe we have made significant progress addressing the accessibility issue. Accessibility has been embedded deeply into the design sequence and in several focused areas of the overall curriculum. The issues of ramps and stair geometry are introduced into design studios beginning in the second year. Our end of term studio review process allows us to reflect on the degree of success in achieving the accessibility criterion. Although we missed last term's post semester faculty review because of administrative disruptions we can easily demonstrate evidence of meeting this criteria.

The site planning adjunct to the third year studio ARCH 360 / LA 360 continues to do an accessibility sketch design. The problem involves a ramping system and exterior stair access to the University's Sheldon Art Gallery.

A professional design build elective ARCH 466/566/866 transformed a previously inaccessible camel exhibit at the Lincoln Children's Zoo to a more interactive and completely accessible display. The class also utilized parametric techniques to assist in the design. The exhibit was a state AIA award winner.

Issues related to ADA compliance, building codes, life safety, construction and technology integration are also covered in ARCH 430 the adjunct to the tectonics studio. Turning radiuses, ramp slopes, stair geometry and safe havens are covered in a lecture format in this course. Students are evaluated by examination and projects in this course.

## Causes of Concern

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### Signature Programs: Digital Design and Fabrication

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The program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has taken on the challenge to be among the academic leaders in digital design and fabrication. Our faculty embraced this effort by hiring four faculty with strong digital skills in design and research. The faculty group took the initiative to sponsor the first Regional ACADIA conference on Parametric Design in March 2011. The Conference received very good reviews from attendees and produced a high quality conference publication.

Fabrication increasingly requires additional staff resources and equipment to meet the student demand. We are currently reasonably equipped with the basics: two laser cutters, a 3D printer, and a cad cam router. However as demand for more and advanced equipment develops we will need to have both additional staff and technical support. To answer these future needs we are currently putting forward competitive proposals for what our central administration calls "cluster hires." This could help our digital initiative with a partial appointment of a tenure track faculty and allow us to share faculty, technicians and equipment with other design related program.

We are continuing our conversations with the College of Engineering to develop a joint Industrial Design Program. Just as we did in the development of the Landscape Architecture Program, this could yield greater opportunities for our students and positive synergy in both faculty and facility resources in the area of digital design. We believe these actions could move this digital design effort toward a signature status within the University.

### Signature Programs: The Health Care Initiative

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We continue to evolve our partnership with HDR Health Care and the two sponsored vertical studios in the Haymarket area. We are exploring a stronger relationship with the College of Public Health at the UN Medical Center in Omaha. We think this could develop into a certificate program or a joint degree program with Public Health. The relationship would also allow us to broaden the studio sequence with more diverse educational and research opportunities across the university.

### Sustainability:

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We continue looking at how we "green" the curriculum. An imperative of the school and the profession's future is the fulfillment of the goal of carbon neutrality. From a curricular perspective this means embedding ecological literacy deeply into both our design studio sequence and its supporting curriculum. Several faculty are investing in research program integrating building industry players and their energy-related goals

We continue to work co-operatively with faculty from architectural engineering and construction management programs at The Durham School in Omaha. We are jointly researching zero energy, single-family housing models for the middle-class market in conjunction with several of the states largest and most energy-conscious homebuilders. A second zero net energy house in Omaha was

recently opened as result of these efforts focused on an \$80,000 grant. This research has provided release time for one of our faculty.

Another of our faculty has completed a REI: Renewable Energy Infrastructures grant. The AIA Upjohn Research grant combined with the Nebraska Center for Energy Sciences grant have totaled more than \$60,000 dollars. This has enabled research and publication of an urban- based energy farm.

More recently we participated in a joint grant to study lighting with the interior design faculty and Kansas State University. The grant ("Lighting across the Curriculum") was awarded by the Nuckolls Fund.

#### Space and Facilities:

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We continue to be well situated in studio spaces off of campus. However; the objective of consolidating space near Architecture Hall remains a challenge.

The College occupies a portion of Brace Hall with the Landscape program, but we have not been able to secure additional space there to consolidate our studios closer to Architecture Hall. Our requests for additional space in the now empty building are being put off as the Physics Department continues to project defense related research needs in parts of Brace and in the building linked with it. The University central administration is suggesting Brace Hall is not an option for College programs. We are now exploring how to optimize space use with in the existing Architecture building complex.

#### Budget, Administrative and Enrollment Changes

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##### Less with Less

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Budget issues are a central concern of almost everyone everywhere. Nebraska is no exception. The College of Architecture in turn, has experienced budget pressures affecting our requests to fill leadership and tenure track positions. Last year the University implemented a retirement buy out program netting 81 faculty positions university wide including one from the architecture program. We filled one tenure track history line however were not given the second history line necessary cover the 12 hours of required undergraduate history.

"Program shrinking" will continue to plague us into the near future as the administrations priority has become funded research using a "cluster hire approach" around specific signature programs. We are submitting proposals for hires focused on Healthcare, Visual Literacy and Digital Driven Design shared with other faculties.

The during the summer the central administration instituted a program of differential tuition for the Colleges of Engineering and Business netting some moneys to distribute university wide. Differential tuition will now be extended to Architecture to replace our professional fees.

## Leadership

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Dean Wayne Drummond stepped down in April after eleven years as the Dean. A non-design interim dean, Prof. James O'Hanlin, was administratively appointed.

Over the summer the College was then asked to prepare a strategic plan with a series of options including merging with other university colleges. The issues the administration had with the College emerged over four months as being the following: 1. The College is too small and therefore had too many administrators and not enough support structure. 2. Hiring a new dean would be expensive and saving could be gained from a merger. 3. The College was too insulated and did not participate broadly in the University. 4. Space was not available in Brace Hall because a federal defense grant maybe housed there.

The Faculty's strategic plan termed the "September Plan" attempted to address these concerns and others aligned with the central administration's enrollment, retention, research goals and initiatives.

In early November the College was allowed to move forward with a deans search to begin in mid-December. Work has also begun on goals identified in the "September Plan."

## Recruiting and Enrollment Concerns

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Last spring we experienced significant drop in enrollment in the second year of the program. The number of our third year sections this fall dropped from three to two. This smaller cohort is moving through curriculum and will impact various levels of the program. We are exploring relationships with several schools in China to compensate for this drop.

The first cohort of students who apply to the fifth year for admission to the last two years of the program began in the fall. As we predicted this has raised some questions about recruitment of students outside of our program and how we can provide incentives to worthy candidates.

Because of these concerns coupled with the Universities enrollment goals we are advancing our recruitment efforts at both the high school level and the professional program level. We have formed a study committee to recommend specific recruiting strategies and appointed a vice chairman for the Architecture Program who has the specific authority to meet both undergraduate and graduate recruiting goals. We will increase resources for this effort to the extent that they are made available through differential tuition.

## Changes to the Program

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### 120 Hour Undergraduate Degree

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This fall, in an effort to reduce the cost of undergraduate education, the board of regents limited all undergraduate degree programs to under 120 credit hours. Currently at 129 credit hours, our program is exploring alternative plans to cut nine hours. This will go into effect in the fall of 2012.

### Collaboration Among College Programs

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In an attempt to better use our resources, the College has created more points of collaboration among the programs in the College. The search for new faculty this year focused on faculty who can bring expertise to more than one of the programs in the College. We were fortunate to have hired both a tenure track urban designer and an architectural historian who we believe will fit well with our integrated program model.

As part of this collaborative effort we have developed a single professional practice class and a single research methods class to serve all our programs. We are also embracing an initiative to offer more on line courses in all the programs. Collaboration has historically been a part of the College culture and we continue to move forward with this effort.

### Beginning Architectural Design:

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The program continues to evolve the pre-architecture and beginning architectural design sequence. The Landscape, Interior Design and Architecture are closely integrated in this studio sequence. The beginning design faculty reorganized the problems for the second year and generated a more integrated set of goals and objectives. This package was presented at the [2011 National Beginning Design Conference](#) we hosted last April. The program changes received positive feedback from the conference.

### Conclusion

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The Architecture Program at Nebraska continues to work hard at meeting the NAAB criteria. We believe the Program raised its regional and national profile by hosting two successful major conferences last spring. In the past year the program faculty have published and given papers at a wide variety of venues regionally, nationally and internationally. They have been awarded many research grants and design awards and most importantly mentored and taught students the fundamentals of the profession.

After many months of soul searching preparing the "September Plan" we have emerged with objectives more aligned with those of the University. The central administration is now permitting a search for a new dean of Architecture to move forward. We now look forward to positive momentum as an intact College of Architecture.

