

# Special Program Focused Evaluation Report—College of Architecture, Texas Tech University

## **Background and Introduction:**

The July 27, 2010 letter from NAAB President, Wendy Ornelas, FAIA, specifies the Focused Evaluation as follows:

“As a result, the professional architecture program: Master of Architecture was formally granted a six-year term of accreditation with the stipulation that a focused evaluation be scheduled in two years to look at Professional Degrees and Curriculum and the progress that has been made in this area. 12. Professional Degrees and Curriculum”

The January 6, letter of Executive Director Andrea S. Rutledge, CAE, clarified this request as follows:

“Thus, the focused evaluation was based on the team’s Causes of Concern regarding a recent curriculum revision and its effect on student advising (2010 VTR, p. 4).”

The 2010 Visiting Team Report, page 4, Item 5, Causes for Concern makes the following statements:

“A. Curriculum Revision: The program has revised the curriculum extensively since the last team visit (2004) with the resulting need to methodically assess curricular effectiveness. These revisions also affect student advising processes to advise all students with such curricular complexity and increased points of access.

B. Studio Culture: Future attention should be paid to implementing and assessing the Studio Culture Policy (Condition 3.5) with the formal and ongoing input of students.

C. Physical Resources: The College of Architecture building does not fully comply with current standards for life safety and accessibility.”

## **i Program Response:**

For clarification, the 2010 Visiting Team found “ 12 Professional Degrees and Curriculum (II.2.1)” MET twice in its review of the program. From the 2010 VTR:

### **Condition 11, Professional Degrees and Curriculum (in 2004):**

*2010 Visiting Team Assessment: the team finds this Condition now MET through curricular revision; sufficient opportunity for “general studies” is provided through the university requirement that all students complete through the “Uniform Undergraduate Degree Requirement” (see University Catalog, pp. 42-48) comprised of five Requirements,*

*Foreign-Language Requirements, and Writing Intensive Requirements. A total of 47 "Core"/Elective hours is included in the curriculum inclusive of a 3 hour "Diversity" course that can be chosen from among 44 courses, two (2) of which are architecture options.*

### **Condition 12, Professional Degrees and Curriculum (in 2010)**

*2010 Visiting Team Assessment: Texas Tech University requires all students to complete "Uniform Undergraduate Degree Requirements" comprised of five components: General Requirements, Core Curriculum Requirements, Multicultural Requirements, Foreign-Language Requirements, and Writing Intensive Requirements. A total of 47 "Core"/Elective hours is included in the curriculum inclusive of a 3 hour "Diversity" course that can be chosen from among 44 courses, two (2) of which are architecture options.*

The College has continued to open up Core/Elective studies for our students. The curriculum has eliminated one professional course concerned with research methods in the profession in order to open up an additional art elective in the second semester of the second year, ARCH 2342 Creative Process. The College has seven full-time members of the faculty who are regionally and nationally recognized artists. These instructors teach the Creative Process course by focusing on art media. Art instruction is not available to the architecture students from the School of Art because they do not have the resources to address all of our students, so the College supports this Core study area with a stable of art instructors of its own. As they are encouraged to focus on their own media of expertise, they have made a significant impact on the cultural breadth of the professional curriculum.

#### **Curriculum Revision:**

In the end of 2007, the College began a curriculum revision process that lasted almost two years. This process was initiated in response to anticipated changes in the NAAB criteria that included an expanded set of requirements for Comprehensive Studio. Even though the 2010 review was to be on the 2004 Conditions, the College felt that the time was right to begin a thoughtful, engaged move to embrace the proposed Conditions. Every member of the faculty was involved in the process; with three different committees involved, the leadership for the process was distributed to half of the tenured and tenure track faculty members. This process was carefully documented for the Visiting Team. The Visiting Team arrived during the first academic year of implementation of the new curriculum.

#### **Studio Culture:**

The Studio Culture policy was written as part of the College's contribution to the University's Quality Enhancement Plan, which focused on Ethics. The QEP was required by SACS-COC, the accrediting body of the University. It was written with that goal in mind and was not fully engaged when the Visiting Team arrived.

## Physical Resources:

The College was updated for issues of accessibility in 2004. As part of this renovation the restrooms on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> floors were converted to accommodate the Texas Accessibility Standards. This was not a question at the time of the Visiting Team's review. The question most present, at the time of the review, was the mandate from the State Fire Marshal that all tall buildings at institutions of higher education across the state be sprinkled. This project was delayed at the time.

## **ii Changes that Have Been Made:**

### Curriculum Revision:

**Assessment:** The college has methodically assessed the changes made in the curriculum during the two year period, 2008-2009, leading up to the Visiting Team arrival in 2010. Since the visit, at the end of each semester, the College has invited external reviewers to review all of the design work—this past year 14 external reviewers were brought in. During the three days of reviews at the end of each semester, the Chair and the Associate Dean for Academics discuss the studio work with the external reviewers. Then they meet in the Community Lounge, on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor, to discuss: comments made by the external reviewers, learning outcomes, the evidence of NAAB SPC that were not met in the last VTR, the design curriculum and the integration of other courses into the curriculum. Notes are taken by the College Administration. The College Administration then spends the next two days reviewing all of the comments and reviewing the work of the studios and the adjacent curriculum. These notes will result in level-wide communications to the faculty regarding specific areas of the curriculum. In the fall, the general conversation was aimed at the role of the coordinator in the core studios—second and third year. This past semester, the faculty discussion focused on the expectations of core studios, 2502 and 3502—second and third year respectively. A copy of the general notes sent to faculty teaching second year second semester studio is attached to this report. Individual instructors also receive combined feedback from the external reviewers, the faculty meeting on Dead Day and the Administration's review. A sample of these notes from across the curriculum is attached. This process, while involved, has helped us build a shared set of aspirations for each level of design and the curriculum that supports it. It also gives the Administration of the College an ongoing sense of curricular effectiveness.

**Advising:** The College has three full time advisors for 800 students and one half time advisor for the El Paso program—50 students. The Lubbock advisors have a combined advising experience of 25 years. All students must be individually advised, each semester, in order to register to continue with their studies in Architecture. Outside of advising related to course registration, the Advising

Office is open from 8 am to 5pm Monday through Friday. Advisors are available to students by appointment, dropping, telephoning and emailing. Advisors hold general meetings two times a year to discuss common issues and they will meet with the Administration whenever major changes are made to the curriculum. After advising, students are encouraged to fill out a survey of advising effectiveness. A copy of this survey and recent results are attached. Students who experience suspensions and/or probation problems are asked to fill out a Probation/Suspension Academic Self-Assessment survey. A copy of this survey and the letter that accompanies it is attached. While the changes prior to 2010 were extensive, the advising process has been excellent. The Director of Academic Studies, who oversees advising sits on the Deans' Council—the policy making body of the College—and the Coordinator of Advising sits on the Administrative Council—the coordinating body of the College.

#### Studio Culture:

As was suggested by the Visiting Team at their exit interview, the College has revised the Studio Culture Policy with a committee of faculty members and students. A copy of the new Studio Culture Policy is attached to this report. A copy of the Studio Culture Task Force Meeting Minutes are also attached. The Studio Culture Policy is on the College web page and is distributed to all design students at the beginning of the academic year.

#### Physical Resources:

The renovation of the College of Architecture to address life safety issues raised by the State Fire Marshal's Office has begun this month. Please see the attached April 16, 2012 letter from the Texas Department of Insurance that outlines the scope of work to be addressed by this project. Please also find the attached May 25, 2012 letter from the University Sr. Project Manager Debbie Griffin acknowledging that work is beginning in May of 2012 and that it is scheduled to be substantially complete August 15, 2013.