

Name of Institution: Northeastern University
Name of Academic Unit: School of Architecture

Focus Evaluation Report

Master of Architecture [BS Major in Architecture (145 UG credits)+32 graduate credits]

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1. Plans for/Progress in Addressing Conditions from the 2012 Visiting Team Report

Condition I.1.2 Learning Culture and Social Equity:

- *Learning Culture: The program must demonstrate that it provides a positive and respectful learning environment that encourages the fundamental values of optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation between and among the members of its faculty, student body, administration, and staff in all learning environments both traditional and non-traditional.*

Further, the program must demonstrate that it encourages students and faculty to appreciate these values as guiding principles of professional conduct throughout their careers, and it addresses health-related issues, such as time management.

Finally, the program must document, through narrative and artifacts, its efforts to ensure that all members of the learning community: faculty, staff, and students are aware of these objectives and are advised as to the expectations for ensuring they are met in all elements of the learning culture.

- *Social Equity: The accredited degree program must provide faculty, students, and staff—irrespective of race, ethnicity, creed, national origin, gender, age, physical ability, or sexual orientation—with a culturally rich educational environment in which each person is equitably able to learn, teach, and work. This includes provisions for students with mobility or learning disabilities. The program must have a clear policy on diversity that is communicated to current and prospective faculty, students, and staff and that is reflected in the distribution of the program’s human, physical, and financial resources. Finally, the program must demonstrate that it has a plan in place to maintain or increase the diversity of its faculty, staff, and students when compared with diversity of the institution during the term of the next two accreditation cycles.*

2012 Team Assessment: Learning Culture—While the faculty values a rich learning culture that fosters time management, a sense of respect, and an innovative learning experience, there has been little interaction with students that supports this. The team was able to meet with only selected student leaders and roughly 5% of the student body to gain feedback on the student perspective of the program, diversity of opportunities, and resources that enrich and nurture a healthy learning environment.

While students and faculty both share a mutual respect for a positive studio culture, it was disappointing to find that neither party had heard of or were aware of a Studio Culture Policy, nor was the team able to find such documentation beyond a narrative that had not been crafted through a collaboration of students and faculty.

Environment—School facilities are accessible to persons with various disabilities. Exits and landings are graphically marked to denote and reserve wheelchair turning radii. Students and faculty alike express a sense of inclusion and equity in communications and the culture of the school...among peers and between students, staff, faculty, and administration. However, the diversity of the student body and faculty, in particular, has not improved since the last visit (2006).

Social Equity (Students)—During the past six years, the architecture student body has increased at a far greater rate than that of the university as a whole, in both undergraduate (27%) and graduate (148%) programs. Gender equity has remained balanced, at roughly 50:50. But the headcount of domestic minorities in the architecture programs has remained steady, reducing this component from 22% in 2006, to less than 17% of the total in 2011. Undergraduate admissions to architecture is highly centralized, with little apparent involvement from the school. The provost suggested that individual units can influence outcomes through strategic recruitment, but there is no evidence that

the School of Architecture is involved in undergraduate recruitment. The primary target for graduate recruitment is the school's own undergraduate population, though there are plans to begin recruiting other NEU undergraduate students to a 3-year, first professional M. Arch program, which they plan to implement in the very near future.

Social Equity (Faculty)—This is an area of concern, as diversity among the faculty is decreasing. At the last NAAB visit (2006), there were six full-time faculty, equally divided by gender and all appointed to tenure-related lines; all were identified as White. In 2011–12, the faculty has grown to 14 full time (four not tenure-related) for an increase of 133%, but only one of the eight recent hires is a woman, and one (not tenure-related) is identified as African American. The current faculty is 71% male and 93% White. Most of the faculty also shares educational backgrounds (terminal degrees from the same 1-2 schools). While the university has implemented several programs to promote greater diversity among faculty, there is no evidence that the School of Architecture has benefitted from these initiatives. Nor has the school provided 1) a plan to utilize these programs, or 2) a substantive plan to diversify its faculty in the near future. Although the school is involved in searches for two faculty dedicated to the architecture program and two interdisciplinary joint appointments, there is no evidence that these hires will yield results different than previous ones.

[2015 Program Response]:

Learning Culture:

The School of Architecture Studio Culture Policy has been updated since the 2012 accreditation visit in collaboration with both students and faculty members. This policy is posted online and is accessible to the whole community: <http://www.northeastern.edu/camd/architecture/community/students/facilities/studio-culture/>. The Studio Culture Policy is periodically reviewed and discussed at a large scale of the full School of Architecture student body at our “Town Hall” meetings, and at a small scale of our Student Advisory Council, which is an advisory and liaison group between the students, the faculty and the Director.

Environment:

The diversity of the student body at the School of Architecture has increased, especially with the increased proportion of international students. We have students from around the world with particular concentrations of students from China, the Middle East and Latin America. 33% of our students now identify as “nonresident aliens.”

Social Equity (Students):

The growth of the student body at the School of Architecture has leveled off since the 2012 accreditation visit. In fact, undergraduate enrollments have declined in that period, but this was counter balanced by an increase in graduate students.

The female student population has increased substantially to the female-to-male ratio of 57 to 43. The percentage total of domestic minority students has remained almost constant at 18%, a slight increase. Although the undergraduate admissions is still managed centrally at the upper levels of the University, the School of Architecture has embarked on a robust effort to recruit a more diverse student body for both the undergraduate and graduate degree programs. For example, both the former and current Directors have consistently participated in college recruitment fairs in urban centers, including Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and here in Boston.

Social Equity (Faculty):

The faculty has transformed since the 2012 accreditation visit. We now have 17 full time faculty members, 14 of whom are tenured or tenure-track faculty, and 4 of whom are full-time non-tenure-track. The gender ratio for full-time faculty is now 5 women, or 29%, and 12 men, or 71%. 82% of the faculty members are white; three are either Asian or Latina.

All members of a faculty search committee are required to attend a “Gender and Diversity Workshop” at the University center called the *Advance Office of Faculty Development*. There is also the opportunity now to seek

“opportunity hires.” This is a targeted hiring process for woman and minority candidates whose academic research and pedagogy aligns well with the mission and standards of an academic unit. The School of Architecture has exercised this opportunity for a recent tenure-track addition to the faculty.

Condition I.2.1 Human Resources & Human Resource Development:

- *Faculty & Staff:*
 - *An accredited degree program must have appropriate human resources to support student learning and achievement. This includes full and part-time instructional faculty, administrative leadership, and technical, administrative, and other support staff. Programs are required to document personnel policies, which may include but are not limited to faculty and staff position descriptions¹.*
 - *Accredited programs must document the policies they have in place to further Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) and other diversity initiatives.*
 - *An accredited degree program must demonstrate that it balances the workloads of all faculty and staff to support a tutorial exchange between the student and teacher that promotes student achievement.*
 - *An accredited degree program must demonstrate that an IDP Education Coordinator has been appointed within each accredited degree program, trained in the issues of IDP, and has regular communication with students and is fulfilling the requirements as outlined in the IDP Education Coordinator position description and regularly attends IDP Coordinator training and development programs.*
 - *An accredited degree program must demonstrate it is able to provide opportunities for all faculty and staff to pursue professional development that contributes to program improvement.*
 - *Accredited programs must document the criteria used for determining rank, reappointment, tenure and promotion as well as eligibility requirements for professional development resources.*

2012 Team Assessment: The team found sufficient evidence that this criterion has been met. The faculty and staff of this program are extremely dedicated, passionate about their teaching, and bring a positive attitude to the leadership of the school, which is a plus for the health and continuous success of the architecture programs.

Tenure and Promotion policies are in place and were shared with the team. The faculty is aware of these policies. The process for promotion to associate professor rank, with tenure, is clear. However, the process and criteria for promotion from associate to full professor rank is less clear (to the faculty). Evidence of this confusion was found in the team’s discussion with the faculty and in the fact that there have been only two promotions since the last visit—one is the school director (to full) and the second is another administrator (granted associate professor rank, with indefinite tenure).

The college reserves funds to support faculty development (@ \$2000 x FTE), and department chairs have some discretion regarding allocation/distribution. However, faculty perceives that these funds “have disappeared,” making research and conference attendance difficult if not impossible.

Expected and standard faculty workloads are defined by the university and vary by type of appointment. Junior faculty receives teaching release time to support research and preparation for first T&P review, and tenured faculty are eligible for paid sabbatical after seven years of service. University programs support teaching (with workshops and other resources), though few faculty have participated. The team wonders if these opportunities have been clearly communicated to the faculty.

¹ A list of the policies and other documents to be made available in the team room during an accreditation visit is in Appendix 3.

Eight additional full-time faculty lines have been established since the last accreditation visit, bringing the total to 14 (from six) and improving overall student-to-FT faculty ratios from 47:1 to 27:1. Nevertheless, faculty report larger class sizes (e.g., studios increased from 10 to 14); the reasons for this were unclear. Faculty recruitment is at an all-time high, with an institutional interest in developing multidisciplinary hires throughout the entire institution. The college is currently adding five new positions that will impact the balance at the School of Architecture, since they are multidisciplinary positions and will be shared by the School of Architecture.

With the changed institutional structure, FT architecture faculty has greater responsibilities for governance, administrative roles, and developing new degree programs; some received teaching release time to compensate for this. Questions remain regarding the school's ability to maintain a level of quality instruction as new programs and students come on line, along with persistent (if not increased) expectations for research/creative work.

The school is still supported by just one staff member--not enough--but staff capacity was improved when they were able to replace the former junior level staff position with a senior level assistant. There is much praise from faculty and students alike for Mary Hughes's performance in this role. There is welcome promise of additional support, with a search underway for a second (junior level) staff position, per the dean's new staffing policy.

[2015 Program Response]:

Faculty and Staff:

The processes for tenure and promotion have been better articulated and updated in new School bylaws. These bylaws have been reviewed by the faculty and will be voted upon by the faculty on December 10, 2015. The bylaws then need to be approved by the Dean of the College of Arts, Media and Design, and then the Provost of the University. By virtue of the bylaws review process, these processes are now more familiar to the faculty. But the broad parameters of tenure and promotion have always been made clear to the whole faculty by the Director, Dean, Provost and the University Faculty Handbook. Additionally, the Provost's office has been sponsoring workshops for assistant and associate professors on tenure mentorship, interim tenure-track review, tenure and promotion. These are well attended by the faculty members in the School of Architecture.

The \$2000 of Faculty Development Funds available to each tenured and tenure-track faculty member are now clearly available to those faculty. There is no ambiguity about whether that money is available or not. Since the 2012 accreditation visit, most faculty have been taking full advantage of their \$2000 Faculty Development Funds each year.

Since the 2012 accreditation visit, the University has created a very active teaching support office called the *Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning Through Research* (CATLR): <http://www.northeastern.edu/learningresearch/>. Faculty attendance at CATLR workshops has been very high, and these resources have transformed the way we teach our courses. For example, many of our faculty members have taken a workshop on "Think, Pair Share." This is where students are encouraged to consider issues in the classroom, pair up with another student to discuss their ideas about the issue, and then present their ideas to the rest of the classroom. We have also had CATLR representatives provide workshops to our faculty to discuss other "active learning" strategies such as the "flipped classroom" and using new teaching and video technology to record lectures and presentations. There is now a substantive interaction between our faculty and CATLR.

Our Architecture design studios have been capped at 12 students maximum. Additionally, for many of our lecture courses we have instituted recitation sections where student meet in groups of 15 students maximum. The recitations are in addition to the classroom time, and it gives the students a seminar-like context within which to have a more open discussion about the lecture and reading material.

As stated above, the School of Architecture now has 17 full time faculty members, 14 of whom are tenured or tenure-track faculty, and 4 of whom are full-time non-tenure-track. We currently have 398 undergraduate plus

graduate students, so the student-to-full-time-professor ratio is now 23:1. Three of these faculty members have interdisciplinary positions with the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, The Department of Art + Design, and the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs.

The School of Architecture has been busy in developing new curricular and course options for our students on an ongoing basis to respond to the ever-changing context of the discipline. Expectations for research also remain high, and we have had significant increases in our faculty productivity. In spite of these high expectations, the faculty and staff remain extremely dedicated to the mission of the School and the spirit of a dynamic and demanding intellectual environment.

We have added a new staff position to help distribute the administrative responsibilities, and that has been a great benefit to the School. This has allowed us to have a much more reasonable scope of responsibilities for each staff person, and therefore, a better functioning School. The rough breakdown of responsibilities is as follows:

Mary Hughes: Budget management; Supervise Admin Asst. and student staff; Special Events and Projects; Marketing + Communication; Graduate Programs Coordinator

Kate Zephir: Office administration; Personnel/Hiring; Scheduling/Calendar; Communications; Facilities Management; Registrar management; Undergraduate programs liaison

Condition I.2.2 Administrative Structure

- **Administrative Structure:** An accredited degree program must demonstrate it has a measure of administrative autonomy that is sufficient to affirm the program's ability to conform to the conditions for accreditation. Accredited programs are required to maintain an organizational chart describing the administrative structure of the program and position descriptions describing the responsibilities of the administrative staff.

2012 Team Assessment: The team found sufficient evidence that this criterion has been met, through meetings with faculty, various administrators and staff, along with an organizational chart presented during the visit. The School of Architecture now sits within the new College of Arts, Media, and Design, with the director reporting to the new dean, Xavier Costa. As explained in the APR and confirmed in our meetings with the provost, the dean, and CAMD administrative team, a new "hybrid" budget model was implemented in FY 2012, which identifies the colleges as revenue centers, with authority over their budgets. This provides more autonomy for colleges, which now have more direct relationships with departments/schools. These changes appear to benefit the school, which still maintains at least as much autonomy as before (though may be more "visible" now). New responsibilities come with this autonomy. These new roles and their implications are not yet resolved nor completely understood by the school (faculty, director), and could impact the future direction of the School.

[2015 Program Response]:

We have now been within the newly created College of Arts, Media and Design for 5 ½ years. The College has been an asset to the School of Architecture in a number of ways. For example, the College has a Marketing and Communication team, a Development team, a Center for the Arts, and an Enrollment and Retention team whose services are all available to the schools and departments.

A great benefit of the College is our highly effective Associate Dean for Research who has been very supportive in identifying external funding opportunities and assisting in the processes needed to seek and secure those funds. The College established seed funding grants for faculty members in the College, and many members of the School of Architecture have benefitted from receiving these funds.

Additionally, the schools and departments have created ways for students in the College to take courses and have minors across the College disciplines, which include Art + Design, Communication Studies, Journalism, Music and Theater. There has also been one tenure-track hire between the School of Architecture and the Department of Art + Design in the area of Urban Informatics and Information Design & Visualization.

The roles of the school and departments, and their respective leaders, directors and chairs, are well understood at this time. The directors and chairs are considered integral to the leadership team of the College, and they are the liaison between the faculty and the upper University leadership, including the Dean.

2012 Team Assessment: Discussions with faculty confirm that full-time faculty is very involved in developing curricula and programs, along with participation on college and university committees. However, we found insufficient evidence (either written or verbal) to determine student involvement in school governance. The school has grown substantially, from small program and faculty with a single manager (the director) to a larger, more complex unit that demands an expanded (and shared) leadership model. The success of the school's plans for further growth will depend on its ability to address these new challenges and demands for governance and management, but the team found little evidence of a strategy to do so.

[2015 Program Response]:

The governance of the School has evolved considerably since the 2012 accreditation visit. We have established a strong Curriculum Committee, and we have devised processes that involve the full faculty for any curricular transformations. This has been a very good tool to ensure that no single ideological position can be exerted at the expense of other critical pedagogical agendas in the curriculum. A broad outline of these processes is as follows:

- Any full-time faculty member for any sub-disciplinary area of the School curriculum can raise a curricular issue.
- The issue is then considered by the sub-disciplinary area experts, such as design studio faculty, building technology faculty, history/theory faculty, and professional practice faculty. Naturally, many faculty members are experts in more than one category.
- The sub-disciplinary area experts in turn report their findings and/or proposals to the Curriculum Committee.
- The Curriculum Committee then reviews the proposals in the context of the whole curriculum.
- If any issues arise in the Curriculum Committee, a proposal is sent back to the sub-disciplinary area experts, then back to the Curriculum Committee with revisions.
- Only then can the Curriculum Committee place the final version of a proposal on the Faculty Meeting agenda for the full faculty to discuss and vote.

Students have become actively involved in the governance of the School of Architecture. The School holds regular "Town Hall" meetings with the students to discuss the mission, governance and curriculum of the School. We have also established a series of student groups that have been very effective in connecting with the faculty, staff and director. These include a Student Advisory Council where a representative group of students meets regularly with the faculty and the Director to discuss a full range of issues, similar to the list of items discussed at the Town Hall meetings. The faculty takes very seriously the feedback we receive from the students, and this feedback has generated curricular changes and other initiatives in the School. There is also a very active AIAS chapter here in the School of Architecture that is welcome to, and often does, communicate with the faculty and Director on this range of issues.

Condition I.2.4 Financial Resources

An accredited degree program must demonstrate that it has access to appropriate institutional and financial resources to support student learning and achievement.

2012 Team Assessment: Since 2006 the organization of the university structure has changed significantly, as indicated in the APR. The School of Architecture is one of ten

units in the new College of Arts, Media, and Design (CAMD). Included in the new structure is the implementation of a new budget model for the university. The budgets are currently being developed for 2012-2013, which will reflect the new model. There is some uncertainty about the distribution method of the finances, but the team found strong support for the School of Architecture from Dean Costa and Provost Director. A subsequent meeting with the associate dean of administration and finance provided additional explanation of the financial model in place, and the team was satisfied that CAMD and the School of Architecture had sufficient financial resources to support the program.

Since they are currently developing strategies for the new budget model, the outcome of the decisions have not been tested or confirmed. As such, the team found little concrete evidence of a financial strategy to support the growth plans presented in the APR.

[2015 Program Response]:

The financial model for the School of Architecture within the College of Arts, Media and Design is well defined at this point. All of the tuition revenues generated by the School of Architecture, and all of the other schools and departments in the College, are collected by the College. From the collected revenues, the College pays a tax to the University for space, facilities, capital expenses and all of the other operational expenses for overhead.

The College also pays for the faculty and staff salaries. Full-time faculty lines are controlled by the Dean and need the approval of the Dean and the Provost. Part time faculty hiring is controlled at the school or department level depending on the need and demand for the course, and these salaries are also paid by the College.

The Dean of the College distributes the financial resources to the schools and departments according to strategic priorities and according to the research achievements, teaching effectiveness and tuition-generating performance. The School of Architecture and all of the other schools and departments receive a discretionary budget approximately based on this combination of factors. It is within the discretionary budget that the School can set its financial priorities. Since facilities and salaries are paid for by the College, the discretionary budget becomes the tool with which the School can define its mission and priorities by allocating resources to educational programming, student field trips, lecture and symposia series, funded workshops and tutorials, student events and awards, recruitment events and marketing, alumni events, office supplies, equipment maintenance, academic association fees and dues, and of course, accreditation expenses.