

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS PROGRAM IN INTERIOR DESIGN
ACCREDITATION REPORT AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Action Requested: Receive the accreditation report for the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Interior Design in the College of Design at Iowa State University.

Executive Summary: The Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Interior Design (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards and criteria defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The program was accredited for six years out of the maximum possible of eight years. This accreditation report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide “educational excellence and impact.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of Program.** The Interior Design Program offers the professional Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design degree. This four-year program consists of one year in the College of Design's pre-professional Core Design Program, followed by three years in the professional degree program. The program provides the foundation for becoming a registered interior designer. Students develop competency in such areas as creative problem solving, ergonomics, lighting, history, structure, color, materials, building and fire codes, as well as an understanding of people and how the environment affects behavior.
- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met state and national standards for its development and evaluation.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the Council for Interior Design Accreditation.
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-study prepared by the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Interior Design contained the responses to the standards required by the accrediting body – curriculum structure; professional values; design fundamentals; interior design; communication; building systems and interior materials; regulations; business and professional practice; faculty; facilities; administration; and assessment.
- ◇ **On-Site Team Report.** In April 2009, the visiting team determined that the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Interior Design met the requirements for accredited status although only four standards out of 12 standards were in compliance; eight standards were in partial compliance. There were no standards that were in non-compliance. “While weaknesses exist in some areas, the work exhibited onsite generally was an appropriate reflection of the program’s philosophy and mission of ‘learning to enhance human experience through thoughtful interior design’ and cultivating informed judgment based on a commitment to life-long learning. The philosophy and mission are supported by current technology and a variety of effective learning experiences.”
- ◇ **Sample Strengths Identified by the Visiting Team.** The Visiting Team identified the following strengths:
 - ⇒ “The interior design program adheres to the belief that all design is purposeful problem-solving.

- ⇒ Faculty members engage in research activities and are active contributors to the technical, theoretical, and philosophical underpinnings of the field.
 - ⇒ There are a number of opportunities for students to interact with interior design practitioners and professionals from related disciplines in their coursework and through informal networking.
 - ⇒ Student work demonstrated understanding of various design fundamentals, including color principles and theories of design and design composition.
 - ⇒ Students' programming skills were evident throughout the curriculum. Studio work evidenced students' ability to apply color in paint, fabric selections, and finishes on color boards.
 - ⇒ The program has been diligent in monitoring the professional placement of alumni.”
- ◆ Sample Weaknesses Identified by the Visiting Team. The Visiting Team identified the following weaknesses. (Program responses are in italics.)
- ⇒ “Courses are not appropriately sequenced, course content does not increase in difficulty, and significant concepts are not interrelated and reinforced in the curriculum. Construction documents lacked detail and were incomplete, and students did not incorporate wayfinding methods in their work. Studio projects demonstrate variety in type but are limited in size and scope.”
- The existing concept of ‘sequential development’ has been, over the period of three post-Core years each student is required to complete, to increase the focus of each of the primary studio problems, from the simplest of ideation exercises in the incoming sophomore class through space conception, to individual residential design, to office and retail design, to multiple unit dwelling and institutional design, and finally very large scale hospitality design. The sequencing deals with scale of the problems rather than the specific depth of their solutions. The Council criticism dealt precisely with this depth of complexity and not the breadth or scale of it. To that end, the program is implementing a greater degree of documentation and accuracy in order to better demonstrate the skill level being exhibited in the deliverables required from each project and class level.*
- The sophomore class residential project, which in Spring 2010 will involve the renovation and expansion of an existing residence in a high-rise in Manhattan, will be required to provide more complete documentation than in the past, and will begin the process of learning to design within a budget, regardless of how lavish or restricted. Next year, and every year thereafter, the sophomore residential design studio will take a field trip to the showrooms in Chicago, to better understand how the residential field is accommodated within the industry, and to better assure that the students are, in fact, designing for the real world.*
- The junior students, likewise, will have their spring design studio realigned. The institutional project on which this semester pivots is now a full semester long, allowing greater depth of both understanding as well as documentation. In the works is a modification to this project, in collaboration with either a new senior retirement community in Panama City, Panama, or a similar facility in Shanghai, China. That version of the problem is expected to be in place by Spring 2011.*

The ArtID Senior class problems, a fall retail design and a spring hospitality design, are both being deepened to include a greater opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills at both problem solving as well as professional documentation. In both cases, budgeting will be required, and specifications will require eco-sensitivity and knowledge of Green building systems and design.

Rather than increase the documentation itself from one year to the next as a demonstration of the learning sequence, the program will acquaint students from the beginning with how to more completely document their designs, and then increase in difficulty the complexity of each problem the students encounter as they progress through the curriculum.

This also answers the Council criticism that the projects required in the past spent too much time on the conceptual, and not enough on the practical aspects of design development. In particular, the Council was concerned that upper level work did not show consistent use and application of the complete design process. By placing a greater emphasis on the actual development and documentation phase, and requiring students to make sound design conceptual decisions with greater efficiency and concision, they will meet this standard and be better equipped to enter the emerging design job market with a stronger skill set.

This shift in emphasis will also answer the critique of students' lack of proficiency in construction documents, construction details, wayfinding, and budget management. Although these have been covered in the courses for some time, the class deliverables have not been ideal in allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge. These modifications will do just that.

- ⇒ “Learning experiences do not address a global perspective and approach to thinking and problem solving. The number of faculty members and instructional personnel is not sufficient to implement current program objectives and only one of the six faculty members responsible for studio supervision has passed the complete NCIDQ¹ exam.”

The focus that the Council found problematic was the apparent lack of preparation for the student to be employed in a globally-connected world, making decisions that had not only local impact but also global ramifications. To that end, several shifts have been implemented, beginning with the sophomore level documentation classes now working in both U.S. and metric measurements.

This allows the program to continue on a more pragmatic basis in the next year's ArtID 367 Junior Class problem placing an assisted living facility in a foreign country, and thus working completely in metric as well as dealing with project input in a foreign language. Initial steps have been taken to engage simultaneous translation students in the Department of World Languages and Cultures to assist in this process. The possibilities are indeed very exciting and both the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the College of Design expect the class to be a dramatic enhancement to the present curriculum.

¹ National Council for Interior Design Qualification.

At the senior level, the Design 446/546 Option Studio between Architecture and Interior Design is this year focused on a hospitality design problem in Miami, Florida, which deals with the Cuban-American culture there. Additionally, the Senior Professional Practices class now has a segment centered on International Design Practice and greater emphasis on Certification, Licensing, and Registration. Two faculty members have now been certified by NCIDQ and one is a licensed practitioner in five states including Iowa. This answers yet another of the Council's concerns.

- ⇒ “Student work did not demonstrate understanding of the history of art, architecture, interiors, and furnishings.”

This is understandable since the History of Interior Design course had not been taught during the year the Council came and had been somewhat neglected in the years past due to the unexpected departure of the instructor with whom it had been entrusted. The two semester course is being taught once again and with greater emphasis on specifically how this curriculum anchors the modern practice of Interior Design in the matrix of civilization, both pragmatically as well as theoretically. The program is also stressing the importance of this aspect in the junior and senior level problem solving as well.

- ◇ Accreditation Status. In August 2009, the Council for Interior Design Accreditation awarded accreditation to the Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in Interior Design for six years out of a maximum possible of eight years. “Because weaknesses in student learning were identified in a number of Educational Program Standards, an interim visit is required in three years in Fall 2012 to monitor progress toward improvement in these areas.”