Letters from the Chair

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner
February 10, 1997
Dear Friends of the Department of Architecture:

International Programs

As I write this, 33 students from the College of Architecture & Urban Planning are participating in the annual Design/Build.Mexico program in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Over two thirds of these are students from the Department of Architecture. This program, directed by Professor Sergio Palleroni and Lecturer Steve Badanes, is in its third year. As in past years, students and faculty spend Winter Quarter on-site in Mexico. Their efforts, supported by grants from the Kellogg Foundation, the Graham Foundation, the Canadian Government Environmental Agency and the Howard S. Wright Fund, are directed at the design and construction of new institutional facilities to serve San Lucas, a rapidly developing informal settlement. In Winter 1996, UW students designed and built the first wing of a new elementary school; students in Mexico this year are working on the second wing of the school even as 165 pupils attend classes in the facilities completed last winter. The UW Mexico program has begun to attract the attention of other schools of architecture; several of their faculty have visited the site to see the work now under way. The program was one of four case studies selected for presentation at the United Nations Habitat II conference in Istanbul, Turkey; it also may be featured in a PBS television program in November 1997.

Design/Build.Mexico complements the College of Architecture & Urban Planning's long-running Rome Program, now in its 27th year. In Fall 1996, 20 students, almost all from the Department of Architecture, enrolled in the Rome Program; participating faculty included Professors Tom Bosworth, Dave Miller, Trina Deines and Galen Minah. In March 1997, the new expansion of the UW Rome Center in the Palazzo Pio should be complete and this will allow for an even wider array of programs from across the University.

Well over half of the students in our professional Master of Architecture degree and a substantial number of the undergraduates in our pre-professional B.A. program participate in international experience as part of their UW design education. Besides Rome and Mexico, there are international opportunities in Liverpool, exchanges with universities in Aachen (Germany), Kobe (Japan), Bogota (Colombia), and Hong Kong, and the Department's continuing participation in the Valle Scandinavian Scholarship and Exchange Program. As the globalization of professional architectural practice continues, we regard these international opportunities as a key element in preparing our students for the new realities they will face after graduation.

Program Ratings

These international programs are very likely one of the factors that have contributed to the improving rankings of our Department in several national surveys. According to *U.S. News and World Report* magazine in early 1996, our professional program ranked 17th among Master of Architecture programs in North America. If private schools are omitted from the list, our program would be ranked eighth. More recently, our programs were listed in a national ranking of all architecture degree programs by the "Gourman Report," which does evaluations of higher education. According to their survey, our Master of Architecture program ranked 15th nationally (seventh among public universities) and our undergraduate pre-professional B.A. ranked 20th (12th among public universities).

Such rankings are, of course, taken with a grain of salt by leaders in higher education. These rankings are thought to lag several years behind the actual state of a program, as information about program changes spreads slowly. Reputation is often based upon the success of graduates and it can take several years (and several classes of graduates) before improvements in any program are recognized broadly within the profession. In any case, it is not an unreasonable goal for us to aim for a top 10 ranking for the UW professional Master of Architecture among all such programs and a top 5 ranking among those in public universities; we would also like to see our undergraduate program move into the top 15 programs nationally.

Nonetheless, what matters most is not these types of abstract rankings, but how our graduates are regarded by the outside world. We believe we do well in such a context. In the most recent survey of graduates from our professional Master of Architecture program (those graduating in 1995, with over half the members of the graduating class responding), over 80% indicated that they were working in professional careers in architecture or allied disciplines. We regard this as a measure of success--even in good times architecture has always been a competitive profession, especially for entry level positions. Further, we have heard informally that some programs which have rankings higher than ours have not seen their graduates entering the profession at a similar rate.

Faculty and Students

Reputation is also built by the strength and quality of faculty, including both the core faculty and the part-time faculty (typically members of the local professional community who teach some of our courses). Here we have seen a remarkable level of achievement in recent years, both as measured by professional success, and as represented by more academically oriented publications. For example, in the last year Professor Michael Pyatok won two HUD "Building Innovation in Home Ownership" Awards, one for the Grail Homes in East San Jose, California, and another for the Jingletown Homes in East Oakland, California. He also won design awards for the Villa Del Norte housing in Rancho Cucamonga, California and for the Sunset Creek Apartments in Fairfield, California. Professor Dave Miller's firm Miller/Hull received two design awards from the AIA Seattle last October, a "Commendation" for the Camarda Residence, Vashon Island, and a "Conceptual Citation" for the Point Roberts Border Station. And Professor Susan Jones received a

national AIA Award for Religious Art and Architecture for her design of the Marian Chapel at St. James Cathedral in Seattle.

Several UW Architecture faculty published new books in 1996: Professor Frank Ching completed the third revised edition of *Architectural Graphics*, published by Van Nostrand Reinhold; Professor Michael Pyatok co-authored *Good Neighbors: Affordable Housing*, distributed by McGraw Hill; and Professor Marietta Millet authored *Light Revealing Architecture* published by Van Nostrand Reinhold. Other faculty have new books close to publication, including: Professor Doug Kelbaugh, whose *Common Place: Neighborhood and Regional Design in Seattle* is due in mid-1997; and Professor Emeritus Philip Thiel, whose book *People, Paths and Purposes: Notations for a Participatory Envirotecture* is due from the University of Washington Press in 1997 or 1998.

Other faculty have recently won notable research grants. Professor Sergio Palleroni has received grants from the Getty Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and Graham Foundation, either alone or in collaboration with others, for publication on aspects of architecture and city design in Spain and Latin America, as well as support for a publication on the Design/Build. Mexico program. Professor Meredith Clausen has won a Graham Foundation grant for her research on the Pan Am Building in New York. Professor Dean Heerwagen received a UW Royalty Research Fund grant of $35,000 to study speech intelligibility in K-12 classrooms--this was the first grant of this type awarded to our College. And Professors Galen Minah and Elaine LaTourelle won awards for their research (on color and on library facilities respectively) in a College-wide competition through the Dean's Office.

We have also been able to recruit younger faculty who bring new dimensions to the Department. In Fall 1996, we were fortunate to add two new assistant professors, who came to us as a result of a successful search conducted last year. Professor Vikramaditya Prakash joined our faculty after teaching for two years at Arizona State University. Professor Prakash is teaching design studio courses as well as lecture and seminar courses that address non-Western architecture and cultural issues in architectural history and theory. He is currently working on a book on LeCorbusier and Chandigarh. Professor Susan Jones, who had taught for several years in the Department as a lecturer, joined the faculty as an assistant professor in the Fall. Professor Jones is teaching design studios and continuing her involvement in professional practice with NBBJ. In 1994 she pursued research in Germany with the support of a Fulbright grant.

One reflection of the present strength of our Department is the breadth and depth of students applying to our programs. This year, as in most recent years, our professional degree programs have drawn over 500 applicants for about 50 total places. Similarly, application to the Department's pre-professional undergraduate B.A. program, which was restructured in 1992-93, is also competitive. As this program is now organized, interested students enroll in a series of drawing and other introductory architectural courses at the sophomore year (200 level) and then apply for admission to the B.A. program, which begins in Fall Quarter of the junior year

(300 level). Each year 160 to 170 students will take the 200 level courses and then compete for just 50 places in the 300 level studios.

Professionals, Council and Practicum

We are also working to enhance our connections to the professional community. Most notably, the Department is now supported by an active Professionals Advisory Council. This group is composed of leaders from a range of Seattle's architectural practices, architects in non-traditional roles, and others from allied fields such as construction. This group provides the Department with a direct link to current developments in professional practice. Among other activities they have been participating in our efforts to revitalize the Practicum Program--a program that places students in firms to observe current directions in management and related areas. It is now expected that the revitalized Practicum will be initiated in Spring Quarter 1997 on a limited basis, with full implementation planned for the Fall.

Future Challenges

Even with these achievements, we can not afford to be complacent. The Department faces both immediate and long-range challenges from within and outside the University. Within the University, the primary challenge is fiscal. Since 1990, the University has taken several budget cuts. These have meant a loss of resources and faculty positions in the Department of Architecture. Further, due to initiative #601's limit on state spending, there is fierce competition for state funds and the potential exists for additional cuts in the future.

While the challenge to improve our programs given current budget limitations is formidable, the Department of Architecture must also address issues arising outside the University. The most evident of these is the rapid computerization of professional architectural practice. How the Department will integrate computing into the design curriculum and where the Department will find funding to provide the technological support needed for up-to-date architectural education are unanswered questions that we are struggling to address. Other external developments that the Department will need to confront the future include: demographics--the aging of the general population and its implications for practice; environmental issues--the question of sustainable design as it affects everything from building materials to city form; and new systems of project delivery--the increasing integration of design and construction. All these issues present opportunities where the Department might contribute to the knowledge base of the profession. In the next year we expect to engage in a strategic planning effort both to enhance our current strengths and to begin to respond to these emerging challenges and opportunities.

Even as we begin to plan for the future, I believe we can look back on a record of achievement and growth over the past decade. I have served as Chair of the Department just over four months, so the success our programs are now enjoying must be credited to the leadership of Doug Kelbaugh and Doug Zuberbuhler who preceded me in this position. It is largely as a result of the energy and direction they

provided that the national and local reputation of the Department is now on the upswing. In my first months as Chair, I have directed my efforts at continuing the work already begun and building on the many existing strengths of the Department. In this role I have been fortunate to have the support and advice of many individuals; I wish especially to recognize the administrative support I have received from Doug Zuberbuhler, Elaine LaTourelle, Barry Onouye, and Trina Deines.

Accreditation Visit February 22-26, 1997

At present the whole Department is busy preparing for a visit by representatives of the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), February 22-26, 1997. The last accreditation visit in 1992 resulted in the re-accreditation of our Master of Architecture for a full five-year term. We are working hard to prepare for this year's visit and hope it will be as successful as the one that took place five years ago. On February 24, 1997, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m., there will be a reception at Peter Miller Books in downtown Seattle where the NAAB Visit Team will meet with local alumni and professionals. This reception is open to any graduate of our programs. We hope many of you will be able to attend.

Wagner Endowment Campaign

Finally, let me remind you of the College of Architecture & Urban Planning's current campaign to create the Betty Wagner Library Endowment Fund. This endowment will honor Betty Wagner's over 45 years of service as CAUP Librarian. It will also provide funding to support new library acquisitions including periodicals, books, and new publications which are appearing in digital form. This endowment will help make up for some of the the library budget cuts of recent years and will allow the library to continue to serve as a key component of our educational program. Anyone wishing to donate to the Betty Wagner Fund should contact the Dean's Office of the College.

It is my hope that this letter is the first of a series of similar letters that will report on activities of the Department of Architecture. In closing, on behalf of all members of the Department, I wish you a happy and prosperous 1997.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner FAIA, Chair