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May 29, 2009 (revised June 10, 2009)

To: Phyllis Wise, Provost
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

From: Gerald Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean
James S. Antony, Associate Dean and Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the PhD in the Built Environment

This memo outlines the Graduate School's recommendations on the five-year review of the Built Environment PhD program housed in the College of Built Environments. More detailed comments on the program can be found in the documents referred to below. The review included the following milestones and documentation:

- Built Environment PhD self-study (June, 2008)
- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (October 8, 2008)
- Site visit (November 13-14, 2008)
- Review committee report (November 26, 2008)
- Graduate & Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Report (December 31, 2008)
- Built Environment PhD response to the report (January 20, 2009)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 7, 2009)

The review committee consisted of:

Steven L. Tanimoto, Professor, UW Computer Science & Engineering (Committee Chair)
Kim England, Professor, UW Geography
Thomas M. Hinckley, Professor, UW Forest Resources
Charles M. Eastman, Professor, College of Architecture, Georgia Institute of Technology
Jacques Giard, Professor, College of Design, Arizona State University

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting May 7, 2009. Council found that the program has initiated and shows continued promise for moving the College towards a stronger culture of scholarly research,

including significant internal as well as external thrusts toward collaboration and an interdisciplinary approach to both research and teaching. Students in the program are high quality, enthusiastic and satisfied, albeit with a desire for more funding opportunities.

The Council recommended that the program be reviewed again in five-years (2013-2014), and that this review be focused on the matters that were raised by the review committee. Interim reports in 2009 and 2011 were not requested by the Council, although the College may gather such information at the local level. Specific comments regarding the Ph.D. program include the following.

Program Strengths

The Built Environment PhD program is comprised of disciplinarily diverse faculty and students who have established effective connections to other programs in the College and across the University. The resulting instructional and research collaborations have allowed students to engage in and understand the challenges of research across disciplinary boundaries. Students report being extremely satisfied with the intellectual strengths of the program, including its content, flexibility, and the culture of communication it has enabled. The Dean is highly committed to the program as a vital part of the future of the College.

Challenges and Risks

While the presence of high quality, motivated students in the program increases faculty morale and involvement in research, few of these students receive consistent funding. Fostering a stronger culture of research (for which faculty appear eager) would lead to more student support and raise the profile of the program more generally. In a parallel vein, students need greater access to instructional development opportunities, such as teaching assistantships, in order to develop competitive portfolios. One related challenge is the need for a strategy to integrate into the core program faculty members who might not have PhDs but have developed solid research programs. There is also need for more consistent communication across leaders within the college (between the program director, department chairs, and the Dean's Office) as well as for greater clarity in protocols and criteria within the program (e.g., explicit written guidelines for students).

Council Recommendations

The Graduate School Council recommends the following to augment to the review committee's recommendations and comments on pages 5-7 of the review committee report.

- The Council recommended that the program be reviewed in five years (2013-2014), but that this review be limited to elements identified in the current review committee report. The Council does not request interim reports in 2009 or 2011, but would support the Dean of the College in requesting these reports from the program if they would be useful at the local level.
- Explore the possibilities for incorporating research-active, non-PhD faculty into the core of the program.

- The program should focus efforts on raising funds for doctoral students, most likely related to securing research funds. Written student guidelines should be developed.
- The program should develop and formulate a strategic plan that articulates future directions and research priorities.
- In coordination with the faculty's pursuit of research funds, the College might consider small grants or other support to facilitate this activity.
- It appears that this is not the appropriate time to explore merging this program with the Interdisciplinary Urban Design and Planning PhD.

We concur with the Council's comments and recommendations.

cc: Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost, Office of the Provost
Daniel S. Friedman, Dean, College of Architecture and Urban Planning
Bob Mugerauer, Director, Built Environment PhD Program
Built Environment PhD Review Committee
Graduate School Council
David Canfield-Budde, Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School
Jake Faleschini, President, GPSS