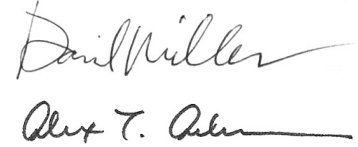


UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF BUILT ENVIRONMENTS DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

April 23, 2012

To: Gerald Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
James Soto Antony, Associate Vice Provost and Dean for Academic Affairs

From: David Miller, Chair, Department of Architecture
Alex Anderson, Associate Chair, Department of Architecture



Re: Response to the Report of the Architecture Review Committee

On behalf of the Department of Architecture faculty, staff, and students we want to thank the review committee for its detailed and insightful review of our programs. We are pleased with the strongly favorable outcome of the report and acknowledge the many constructive observations and helpful recommendations it provides. Our response below seeks to articulate some of our plans with regard to the committee's concerns, and in a few cases to clarify points raised in the report.

The report structures its findings in six areas, noting both strengths and challenges under each category. This response follows a similar structure, with particular emphasis on the challenges noted. The department's response results from feedback generated in several forums: from faculty, staff, and student comments solicited via email, and in faculty and department executive committee meetings.

1. Finances

The committee rightly notes that, as with other departments throughout the university, recent budget cuts have been a significant challenge for the Department of Architecture. While the state budget approved in early April 2012 gives us reason for optimism that the worst of the cuts is past, recent reductions will continue to impact operations and salaries for at least the next several years.

On the issue of salary inequities, we would like to add a couple of points that might help to clarify some of challenges noted in the report. The department's one full-time and two senior lecturers are compensated at rates roughly equivalent to, and in some cases exceeding, the salaries of ladder-ranked faculty with similar seniority. These lecturers are also included as full participants in the department's annual merit review process. We see low salaries as an issue that affects all permanent faculty in the department, not just lecturers. Like most other permanent faculty in the department, full-time lecturers have relatively low base salaries and have not received regular raises for the past three years. We hope that recent changes in state budgets and institution of the university's activity-based accounting system will allow us to offer raises and to address compression issues among all department faculty in coming years. (We would also like to note that, since the review committee's visit in late February, the chair of the department has been able to convert one senior lecturer position to a tenure-track assistant professor line, preventing the loss of a critical faculty member who was being recruited by other institutions.)

While we acknowledge that salary levels for part-time lecturers are quite low, and therefore an issue of serious concern, many of these appointments go to individuals already employed by local architecture firms. In some cases, these positions are, in effect, underwritten by the firms and seen by firm leadership as one important way to stay connected with and serve the department. In other cases we

have been able to work creatively with part-time faculty to adjust inequities, sometimes by converting appointments to affiliate status (which includes a modest salary increase, but also serves to acknowledge the value of these faculty to the department) or by finding ways to extend appointments to 50% FTE or more, thereby assuring inclusion of health and other benefits. While budgets have not allowed us to resolve all part-time lecturer salary issues, and in fact have severely limited the part-time positions available, we have tried to be sensitive to these crucial faculty members and will continue to seek creative ways to address their concerns.

We share the committee's concern that graduate student funding is extremely low; this is a long-standing problem that has gotten worse in the last two budget cycles. Historically, university funding for professional students has been much lower than in other types of degree programs—perhaps on the presumption that employment opportunities are greater for professional students than for students in more academic fields. However, with the recent cuts, and the loss of the Non-Resident Differential waiver for continuing graduate and professional students, we fear that this problem will become more acute. We acknowledge the urgent need to address this concern. During the 2012-13 academic year, the chair plans to work with the CBE Advancement Office to engage in a fund raising campaign for student scholarships.

The committee further notes that our students expressed uncertainty about how we allocate our TA and GSA positions. This is something the department will need to communicate more effectively, because we do have a fairly rigorous system to allocate these positions. We have used very limited Top Scholar funding from the Graduate School and a small number of TA positions (with tuition and stipend) in architectural history courses almost exclusively to recruit and support students in our still-developing Master of Science programs. We have also committed three quarters of architectural history TA positions each year to the college's interdisciplinary PhD in the Built Environment. When structures and environmental controls teaching positions become available, we try to offer these also to advanced degree students (MS and PhD) whose background and career trajectories make them well-suited to these positions. Hourly GSA positions, by contrast, go first to qualified students who are eligible for federal or state work-study funding, then to students whose skills make them good candidates to fill the positions, regardless of funding. Because we have made some effort to find equitable means to distribute our TA and GSA positions, we acknowledge the committee's concern that we communicate our policies on this more clearly, and will make this an immediate priority.

2. Curriculum

While we appreciate the committee's strong commendation of our curriculum and teaching efforts, we also agree that the educational mission of the department must continue to evolve both in response to structural weaknesses and external pressures. The Department of Architecture and College of Built Environments are currently engaged in strategic planning efforts, which will be greatly assisted by the timely insights of the committee. We would like to address some of the specific recommendations here.

The perception that there is some inconsistency in the delivery of required course material is of particular concern, as we are due for our 6-year accreditation in 2014. We have sought creative ways to offer some required course material through the synthetic method of the design studio, rather than in courses specifically oriented to the material. While the National Architectural Accrediting Board acknowledged the value of this approach in our last accreditation visit, they expressed concern about how it can be consistently demonstrated. The 10-year review committee's recommendation that a group of curriculum coordinators should be charged with assuring consistent delivery of required course material may be an effective way of fortifying our curriculum in these areas, and we plan to implement this recommendation by the end of this quarter. Whether this group will be organized by curriculum area or by academic year will be a subject of our strategic planning discussions on May 29, 2012.

The Department of Architecture considers the Master of Architecture thesis to be a crucial, culminating experience both for students and faculty. The nature of the thesis process and its timing in the curriculum has long been an issue of great concern to the department, and has been the subject of nearly constant review and adjustment since the last 10-year review. Seeking to balance academic rigor, student choice, faculty resources, and facility requirements makes the thesis the most complex part of

the department's educational mission. While we acknowledge the committee's concern that the thesis structure must facilitate on-time graduation for students, we feel it is important to note that the current structure offers students both the structure to complete their degrees on time, and the flexibility to extend their degrees if they choose. About 95% of students who chose to participate in our fully structured Thesis Studio Option do complete their degrees on schedule. The current Independent Thesis Option, by contrast, gives students great flexibility to accept grants for travel, to pursue professional internships, to participate in international exchanges, to undertake concurrent degrees, and so on while still working rigorously and consistently toward completion of their MArch degrees. Students who choose the more flexible Independent Thesis Option generally understand that it entails additional administrative work on their part, as well as the opportunity to extend their time to degree if they choose. We acknowledge that this can cause some frustration, which we would like to mitigate wherever possible. We believe that, rather than re-thinking the current thesis model as the committee recommends, the department needs to work harder to articulate more clearly to students the options that are available to them, and to establish better mechanisms for students to establish and work with faculty committees in the Independent Thesis Option. We expect to make thesis the subject of a faculty meeting later this quarter.

In response to the committee's recommendation that we establish a common ground for all MS students, we have begun discussing the possibility of using space in Architecture Hall currently occupied by MS in Design Computing students and the Design Machine Group.

The department's new internship program is in its second year of a two-year pilot effort. The committee's recommendations will be very helpful as we review the pilot in fall 2012 and re-envision the program as a permanent addition to the department's educational mission.

3. Facilities and Space

As the committee notes, the Department of Architecture benefits from excellent spaces and facilities, but we occupy them at virtually full capacity and for very long hours. This quarter we have just been able to provide desks to all students in studios, as well as all students in thesis and thesis preparation who have requested space. However, any increased enrollment in our degree programs will necessitate additional desk space. The dean's office has set aside funds for summer 2012 to repair and modify furniture in our Architecture Hall studios; this will give us the flexibility to increase our capacity modestly—up to about 120% of current studio enrollment.

The department already levies some course-specific fees to help offset the costs of digital, audio-visual, and shop overhead. These apply only to required courses (including studios and most shop-based courses). Because these fees cover a broad range of resources, the department is working with the college administration to develop an equitable fee specifically for student use of the shops. These funds will support staff, acquisitions, and maintenance. We expect the fee to be put in effect during the 2012-13 academic year.

The department considers physical expansion of the shop to be a high priority, when funds become available. Although such funds are likely to come from the university capital budgets or a college-wide capital campaign, we expect that the committee's report will help us demonstrate the high value of this relatively low-cost facility expansion.

4. Human Resources

As the committee notes, the recent decline in funding for guest faculty is of particularly grave concern. We have sought to offset these losses with funds from discretionary accounts, particularly earnings from fee-based courses run through the department, college, and university extension. However, the losses have had significant impact on the curriculum, and we place the recapture of funds for these faculty positions among the department's highest priorities.

The impression of salary inequities between full-time lecturers and tenure-track faculty mentioned in the report is addressed above. We emphasize again, however, that salaries among faculty in these groups are nearly equivalent, and, while lecturers have the heavier teaching load, tenure-track

faculty are expected to produce tenurable scholarship on a short timeframe. They are generally released from just one course per year (two in their first year) to fulfill this expectation. Service commitments are very similar among faculty in these groups.

We have been working diligently to address gender inequities among tenured faculty. Two of the four promotions to Associate Professor with tenure in the past two years have been women, and seven of eight department faculty currently on tenure-track are women. Peer evaluation and mentorship of these faculty will be of utmost importance as the university's expectation for tenure continue to rise. The department administration acknowledges the committee's constructive recommendations for improving this process.

Although we have been able to supplement staff positions with discretionary funds, in part from the department's Professionals Advisory Council, staff resources are not sufficient to meet the department's needs, particularly in the shop, as the committee notes. Shop fees, mentioned above, will help somewhat. It remains to be seen whether the university's new ABB accounting model will help the department offset other staff losses. With regard to staff involvement in departmental strategic planning and decision making, the administration acknowledges the crucial role that staff play in the long term interests of the department. As a first step in reinforcing this role, the chair of the department has invited the staff to participate fully in the department's strategic planning meeting at the end of May.

Last quarter the faculty initiated a new system of faculty-student mentorship to help supplement the work done by staff advisors. We expect that this will help to alleviate some staff responsibilities, while also building our capacity to direct students into the profession of architecture.

5. Integrated Design Lab (IDL)

While the Integrated Design Lab is currently running well, the committee's concerns for its future health and funding are understood. The dean of the College of Built Environments has indicated strong support for the ongoing mission of the IDL, and has also articulated the urgent need for a college-wide grants administrator. However, funds have not been available for such a position. The committee's report serves to emphasize the urgency of this need.

The IDL faculty and staff work regularly to secure stable funding for the lab; we agree that seed funding from the university would be a great help in this effort.

The IDL is currently engaged in an internal transition to new leadership. This is proceeding smoothly, and we are confident that the process will result in stable leadership over the long term.

6. Other

We would like to echo the committee's enthusiasm for the department's Professionals Advisory Council. This group has been extraordinarily supportive of the department and its students. It has built a number of strong, stable programs that promise to sustain this relationship over the long term.

The College of Built Environments is currently engaged in a year-long strategic planning effort that is focusing in part on the integration of teaching across the college. One principal theme of this endeavor has been described as "strong cores, fuzzy boundaries." The faculty discussed a preliminary draft of the strategic plan in March 2012 and will meet again for a half day retreat in early May to finalize the plan. Although this effort follows a recognition that the departments will stand to gain from better integration across the college, there has already been much progress in this area in recent years. For example, in any particular quarter, approximately 20% of students in the department are engaged in formal interdisciplinary efforts, including dual and concurrent degrees and interdisciplinary certificates, as well as collaborative design studios.

Again, we wish to thank the committee for its efforts and superb insights into the department. We are especially pleased with the committee's endorsement of our department as a model for the University of Washington's 2Y2D strategic planning effort, and we welcome any assistance the university can offer to help sustain the Department of Architecture's efforts in support of our shared mission.