Annual Report
University of Idaho
Architecture Program
College of Art and Architecture
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Nov. 30, 2011

Part II. Narrative

i. Response to 2010 VTR

We are taking a multi-faceted approach to improve and refine our program and expect progress to be evident leading up to our focus visit in 2012 and the next full visit in 2016. Our studio assessments include learning outcomes based on the VTR’s “Conditions Not Met” along with our own program aspirations and concerns. We are continuing with our methodical approach to addressing problems and opportunities within the context of a new college reorganization and the university five-year strategic plan.

Conditions Not Met

3. Public Information

VTR July 2010. Exact NAAB language per NAAB conditions for Accreditation (2004) was not found in the Department’s catalog and promotional material.

Idaho Response Fall 2011. The exact language from the NAAB 2009 Conditions for Accreditation is now shown in the 2011-12 catalog. The same language is also shown on the college website.

10. Financial Resources

VTR July 2010. The University of Idaho has been subject to economic conditions facing most institutions of higher learning throughout the nation. Since 2008, the university has taken cuts of 6%; an additional 11/30/10 budget cut is anticipated in late 2010. The provost believes the magnitude of 2010 reductions will be lower than previous cuts. Thirty-five out of two hundred programs across the university were closed as a result of the downturn. Additionally the provost was forced to sweep lines from units across the university. The Department of Architecture and Interior Design lost two faculty lines. University wide furloughs will impact faculty and staff salaries.

Faculty members are becoming aware of the need to pursue grant opportunities and engage in fund-raising. One faculty member is having considerable success in grant writing: as a result, supports a research center providing services to regional firms in day lighting and energy studies.

A new development officer was hired at the college level to develop private sector interests. While not widely visible to faculty, his focus is on long-term relationships to boost donations and to support endowments.
When the Idaho State Board of Education reconstituted the College of Art and Architecture in October 2005, no provisions were made for funding the unit’s administration. A professional fee was instituted as a stopgap to fund the dean’s office and other departments. The professional fee is assessed to all units in the college except art. This scheme for funding college administration is highly irregular and has created considerable frustration among faculty and students (parents) paying the fee. While this arrangement may well continue in the short term, in the long-term amore stable, equitable and conventional methods of funding may be necessary.

The dean’s office plans to add an associate dean to complement the college’s administrative team. While the NAAB feels an associate dean will indeed be helpful to assist in the operations of the college, funding this position through the professional fee will further stress an already unpopular financial model.

The department chair and others interviewed by the team expressed frustration(s) in obtaining accurate financial information about the college and department. There appears to have been significant turnover in finance administrative staff at the college. Lack of budgetary transparency and accessibility makes it difficult for the chair to plan effectively and for faculty to move forward with initiatives, particularly in times of significant financial distress. This issue contributed to the assessment of this Condition as “not met”.

Idaho Response Fall 2011

In 2010, we summarized the key issues related to financial resources as follows.

> The architecture program, college and university all recognize that there are significant financial challenges that are creating serious short term stresses and require a new set of solutions to ensure long term stability. To summarize, there were several key inter-related issues raised by the team in the VTR: overall reductions in state allocations to the University; the loss of faculty lines; the distribution of the professional fee, especially to cover administrative costs; how proposed changes in the college organizational structure might further stress financial resources; and the availability of clear and accurate budgeting information.

Since the last report, the program has made progress in the following ways:

* Effective this year financial aid programs that subsidize student fees have been reconfigured, increasing the total revenue from tuition. The University of Idaho now levys tuition, and the State Board approved an increase of a little over 8 percent for FY 11. Total university enrollment has increased slightly, and the College in now engaging in a recruitment effort.
* No additional faculty lines have been lost in the architecture program, and funding has been made available to meet the full teaching needs for 2011-12. College and University administrators are aware that no more permanent positions can be taken from the architecture program without threatening accreditation. In addition, the Interior Design position has been restored.
* The student professional fee provides nearly 12% of the College Budget. As reported last year, Art and Design majors are now paying the professional fee and full equity among all student contributions to professional fees will be achieved in 2014, and Architecture students and other design students will no longer shoulder an unfair financial burden. As a point of clarification made in our response to the draft 2009 VTR, the use of the professional fee to pay for the
administration of the college was not considered to be a stopgap measure by the State Board of Education. Rather, they approved the fee because of the comparatively higher cost of art and design education. It was expected that the professional fee would pay for administrative costs when the college was reconstituted.

- The College is undertaking a major effort to increase revenues (See Director of Strategic Initiatives in Condition 10, Causes for Concern). The Associate Dean position mentioned in the 2010 VTR, has been put on hold.
- Stability in the College financial office continues to be a problem. Unfortunately, the financial technician resigned her position effective early September 2011. A number of budget issues were left unresolved, and the College staff has been struggling to cover her responsibilities. A new Director of Strategic Initiatives who will also be responsible for the College budgeting process and staff supervision was hired November 7, 2011, and a new financial analyst/technician should be hired by the end of the year. This will provide a higher level of budget planning and oversight than has been possible in the past and should help stabilize the current situation and facilitate long term budget planning and income generation.
- The director of development had his best year ever, and contributions to the College increased by 381% percent. He has established good relationships with potential donors and expects we will be rewarded as the economy improves.

13. Student Performance Criteria

Our curriculum review continues to be refined and coordinated with the College of Art and Architecture integrated classes and NAAB performance criterion.

13.12 Human Behavior

**VTR July 2010.** An understanding of human behavior is gained in courses Arch 151 Intro to the Built Environment [Envt.] and Arch 450, Architectural Programming; however it appears these behavior theories are not emphasized in studio problems or reflected in student work.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** In the spring of 2011, the faculty discussed the difficulty in assessing Human Behavior issues in the Comprehensive Design Studio because of the quantity of NAAB criteria and complexity of the studio problem. It was decided that Human Behavior could be better evaluated in the third year of the program, so a project was revised and content was added to increase the focus on human behavior issues. In preparation for the problem, students took a field trip to Portland and observed how urban squares and courtyard housing projects were utilized, and students were introduced to the human behavior research of William Whyte, Jane Jacobs and Christopher Alexander. In addition, these issues are now addressed in the revised required Site Planning class that is a co-requisite with the studio. Internal assessment of this issue will begin in December 2011, and the results will inform future curricular decisions.

13.14 Accessibility

**VTR July 2010.** Consistent application of this ability was not found in upper level student design work; concepts are not being reinforced by the faculty.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** Spring 2011 assessment results yielded a low score of 2.8 out of 5 for accessibility. Discussion ensued for how to better incorporate accessibility issues in projects and the faculty agreed to demonstrate ADA and other universal design issues more explicitly in the
presentations (drawings & digital) in the form of vignettes, text, etc. An assessment score of 4 out of 5 is our goal.

13.16 Program Preparation: Note: Now named Pre-Design

VTR July 2010. Consistent evidence was not found for this criterion in course ARCH 450 Architectural Programming (Also ARCH 453 Architectural Design V). Client/user needs and space inventory/equipment requirements appear to be frequently provided to the students by the instructor, or based on precedent. Hands-on programming, integral to a comprehensive design experience was not found.

Idaho Response Fall 2011. Arch 450, Architectural Programming has been carefully evaluated and changes have been made in class content and delivery. Several of the changes are summarized below:

1. Each student puts together a program document. As part of that Program Document students assess client / user needs and space / equipment requirements. This is a semester-long project and is a significant part of the student’s grade.
2. Students discuss client / user needs in greater detail during the class.
3. The instructor assigns a project in the class titled “Program Tracing” wherein the students survey a single program type as it has evolved historically. For instance, “Central Library” as a type is examined such that multiple library spatial organization strategies are compared. This gives the students insight into the essential needs / qualities of the program types discussed.
4. Impromptu quizzes are given that address questions about client / user needs.

We are also currently exploring how to incorporate programming methodologies more systematically into studio problems across all studio levels.

3.17 Site Conditions

VTR July 2010. Students take Larch 383 Architectural Site Design in the third year. It is the team’s belief, based on touring studios and discussions with instructors, that site analysis is structured to be part of later-year design studio work. Although the program’s APR matrix indicated this criteria is evident in the work of design studios (Arch 353-354 Architectural Design II-IV, Arch 453-454 Architectural design V-VI and Arch 556 Architectural Design IX), it is not clearly exhibited in final projects. Upper-year design projects are on simple, flat sites, not reflective of the real world (or this region). Students were observed in studios using site analysis tools to aid in the design of their completed projects; however little of this process is evident the final design or presentation. There is concern that the later design studio assignments avoid challenging sites and therefore limit opportunities to develop this ability. Consequently, it is difficult to determine if the students have demonstrated “ability” in this criterion. It is not met.

Idaho Response Fall 2011. Studio projects are engaging a greater range of sloped sites. These include challenging steep and complex urban sites, and sites in proximity to wetlands, river and lake edges which are typical of the many small communities in this geographic region. In addition, site analysis strategies go beyond addressing the physical and include social/cultural and temporal constraints which are often the focus of studio critique sessions. An assessment score of 4 out of 5 is our goal.

13.20 Life Safety

VTR July 2010. Although the program’s APR matrix suggests this criterion is best demonstrated by the work of later-year design studios (553, 556, and Professional Practice 575) – it was not clear these
projects reflect life safety issues. None of the projects observed included building code information. Several low and high pass design examples from these upper level studios lack acceptable egress routes and exit separation. Consequently, it was difficult to determine if an “understanding” is achieved in this criterion.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** In order to address this concern more specifically, final presentations in upper level studios will include building code information and design responses more explicitly than in the past. Methods of representation may include specified drawings or diagrams that highlight life safety concerns. An assessment score of 4 out of 5 is our goal.

**13.25 Construction Cost Control**

**VTR July 2010.** This topic is offered in Arch 575, Professional Practice. The reviewer did not find evidence of it in the course syllabus. Evidence of this subject is found in Arch 504, Situational Prototyping, Architecture and the Law, however it is not a required class.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** Construction cost control continues to be covered in Arch 575 Professional Practice and is now more explicit in exam questions. Cost control is also covered more in depth in the programming course, Arch 450. Finally, Arch 483 Environmental Control Systems continues to include energy cost comparisons of building performance between minimum code designs and sustainable design solutions, and exercises using the HEED software program have been introduced.

**Causes of Concern**

**6. Human Resources**

**VTR July 2010.** The team felt the following faculty and staffing issues were causes for concern: the faculty-student ratio of 1:25 for pre-professional design studios was viewed as high, and they recommended that adjuncts and non-tenured faculty not be hired to cover courses as it can affect quality of curriculum delivery.

**Idaho Response, Fall 2011.** The faculty student ratio in the pre-professional design studios continues at a ratio of 1:25 and the ratio for the professional program (years 3 – 6) is approximately 1:15. A higher ratio for the first two years is common in many programs nationally and provides students an opportunity to “test the waters” to see if this is the discipline is a good fit for them. In the 2010 report we requested clarification on the APR recommendation not to use adjunct and non-tenured faculty to teach our classes, but no response has been provided. We view the inclusion of adjunct and clinical faculty as a valuable part of student education, and find it to provide a critical role in our program.

**Student Advising—** The APR noted the need for additional advising staff. In the current economic climate, advising is crucial. The Team felt this shortage should be addressed.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** The advising loads remain high in all programs in the College of Art and Architecture. Last year we reported that the Dean is currently seeking approval from the provost to hire a College Advisor, and funding had been identified for that purpose. Although the proposed position was approved by the Provost, and advertised, the Dean decided to pull the position due to restructuring plans in the College. Unfortunately, the new plan does not include the immediate hire of a person.
charged with advising, but it is expected that an existing staff position will continue to provide and possibly expand support for academic petitions, graduation requirements and commencement.

**Faculty Release Time.** Advising, service activities, outreach, and administrative duties dilute the faculty’s time for scholarly, creative, and professional work. The Team felt a lack of time for faculty to invest in personal development is not a sound long-range strategy and should be addressed.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** Faculty teaching, advising, outreach and service responsibilities remain high, but we continue to seek creative solutions to offer release time. In spite of this, there is support for faculty development through sabbatical leaves and reassignment of teaching loads under certain conditions. For Fall Semester, 2011, a faculty member had a portion of his teaching load reassigned to work on a manuscript for a new book. No overloads have been assigned to faculty who are approaching their promotion and tenure year. One faculty member is currently on sabbatical, and the Dean has indicated that he will support strong proposals that include a benefit to program improvement.

Although the Architecture Program has not been granted a new position, there have been two replacement faculty hires in the College in the Art and Design Program and another replacement search has been approved for the Virtual Technology Program in Fall 2012. The decision has been made that all new hires must have a percentage of their time assigned to interdisciplinary teaching. This is an idea with the potential to result in shared resources among all programs in the College.

**11. Administrative Structure**

**VTR July 2010.** The College of [Art and] Architecture is being reorganized from a departmental to a non-departmental unit with the understanding that architecture faculty will continue to determine their curriculum: a discipline head will ensure proper staffing.

An administrative assistant to the dean represents the College of Art[s] and Architecture at the campus-wide associate dean’s council. An associate dean hire is being considered to handle these duties which further stresses the college’s administrative budget. The team felt the changes contemplated to department leadership, administration and financial implications were significant and should be monitored. It is a cause for concern.

**Idaho Response Fall 2011.** As noted in past reports, the idea for the dissolution of departments would help gain State Board approval for a college-wide professional fee, streamline the administrative structure, and encourage integrated teaching strategies. With the phase-in of the college-wide professional fee, student-generated income is increasing. The changes to structure have taken a bit longer to implement. In late 2010 and 2011 the Dean and former department “Chairs” worked with an outside consultant with faculty input to outline the principles that would guide development of a flattened administrative structure. Based on the results of many leadership work sessions and faculty workshops, the dean presented his plan to the faculty in mid-August, and began implementation in September 2011. The College By Laws committee was tasked with revising that document to reflect the changes and to bring it to the faculty for a vote as soon as possible. We expect it will be vetted at the program level and come to a vote in early 2012.

In the new structure, where there were once 3 departments (with Chairs) and a college-level program coordinator, there are now five programs, each led by a program coordinator. The five program coordinators now have the same responsibilities as that of a unit chair or program head as outlined in the Faculty Staff Handbook and the nomenclature (chair, head, coordinator) will be finalized in college
by-laws. In this new model, program coordinators are responsible for faculty position descriptions and evaluations, teaching assignments, developing an annual budget and representing the program at the college and university levels, and the faculty maintains responsibility for the design, implementation and assessment of the curriculum. This should ensure that NAAB criteria related to program autonomy are effectively addressed. Another part of the proposal included a 3 person leadership team (selected from members of the academic council) that would take on additional responsibilities that have in the past been associated with those of an associate dean. This idea has not yet been implemented and is currently under discussion by the By Laws committee.

These changes impact the Architecture and Interior Design programs to a greater extent than originally anticipated because it essentially splits a highly intertwined Department into two programs. We are now working together and as separate programs to fully understand the implications of the change, and find ways to efficiently coordinate our many shared courses and responsibilities while redesigning our internal administrative structure. We will continue to work on program structural issues during Spring Semester, and will have new information to report when our Focus Visit Report is submitted in May 2012.

The impact of the new structure on College efficiencies has not yet been documented, but should be evident in the 2013 budget.

13. Student Performance Criteria

13.18 Comprehensive Design

VTR July 2010. The team felt comprehensive design ability was not evident throughout the student’s skill-set development at each year-level. The fact that it was noted as a concern by the previous team led us to re-express it as a cause for concern.

Idaho Response Fall 2011. Since the team visit, we have worked to more explicitly address and document the comprehensive design process in Arch 553. In the spring of 2011, the faculty discussed the value of creating additional comprehensive design experiences during the studio sequence. The concern is that many of our graduates pursue a broad range of non-licensed, design-related career paths, and that by focusing too narrowly on specific building solutions we could compromise our ability to deliver interdisciplinary and multi-scalar design problems that while architectural, more easily translate to other fields. The faculty continues to discuss this issue.

ii. Additional Information Requested (none requested)

iii. Program Changes

The only program changes are structural, and in progress since the last report. They are discussed in the section “Causes for Concern: 11. Administrative Structure.”