

FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN UNIT REVIEW

Summary Report

The Site Visit of the Unit Review Team for the Faculty of Environmental Design took place from March 19-20th, 2018. The Unit Review Team consisted of:

Professor Joe Blalock, Chair, Landscape Architecture, Ball State University

Professor Patrick Condon, School of Architecture + Landscape Architecture, University of British Columbia¹

Dr. David Witty, Provost and Vice-President Academic, Vancouver Island University

Dr. Jocelyn Hayley, Senior Associate Dean, Schulich School of Engineering, University of Calgary

Following the Site Visit, the Unit Review Team prepared a written report containing comments and recommendations. The Faculty of Environmental Design subsequently provided responses to the recommendations. General comments and the recommendations and responses follow.

General Comments of the Unit Review Team

The Unit Review Team recognizes the strengths of the EVDS programs and lauds the Faculty for its implementation of the 2013 Unit Review Team's recommendation to create a Master of Landscape Architecture. The Unit Review Team believes that the time is right to promote design thinking and integration of discipline response by building on the current strengths of the Faculty to create one of the top design schools in Canada. In particular, the Unit Review Team applauds the leadership of the school in fabrication and digital applications.

It is evident to the Unit Review Team that students are very satisfied with the programs, that there exists strong professional support for the ambitions of the school and that a number of external initiatives, such as Design Matters, provide a solid connection to community. The Unit Review Team believes linking sessional instructors to the school provides an important connection between practice and theory that benefits students and faculty members. Further, the Unit Review Team believes that the Faculty has a key role to play in how the University approaches the complexities facing society, cities and the natural environment. As the city, region, province and nation face "wicked" problems related to the built environment, the Unit Review Team is of the view that the Faculty is well placed to provide leadership at the University on matters related to applied research that addresses innovative solutions for those wicked problems.

¹ Chaired the 2013 Unit Review Team

Reviewer Recommendations and Unit Response Follow-up

PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE

Recommendation 1: *URT recommends that the MEDes be rationalized in relation to the three graduate programs by acting as an added graduate studies year to explore topics of specialization and/or research following graduation from one of the masters programs, creating the potential for a double masters after three years of study. With that modification, the number of students would likely be in the range of 3 to 5 for the MEDes. Such a change should afford faculty members the opportunity to partner with like-interest students to explore research topics in detail. As well, a strategic and focused research masters would well-place EVDS in the Canadian design school landscape.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with the principle underlying this recommendation while leaving the future size of the MEDes cohort still to be determined. Over the past year the Architecture Program has been developing a 16-month advanced program of study for MArch graduates that uses the structure of the MEDes Degree. Four students have been admitted into this pilot test for fall 2018. Following the completion of the pilot, the Faculty will decide if the short program of study option will entirely replace the existing framework for the MEDes degree or if the Faculty will continue to offer both options. A working group of faculty members was formed in June 2018 to develop recommendations for a faculty-wide implementation of a shorter, more focused framework for the MEDes degree. In light of the new DDes and the anticipated reduction in PhD enrolment, the Faculty is developing a new enrolment strategy that right-sizes the cohorts of all degree programs, including MEDes, while maintaining the current overall student enrolment number for the Faculty.

Recommendation 2: *URT recommends that the Faculty build the DDes as the key doctoral program and reduce the number of PhD students while increasing the number of DDes students.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. The new practice-oriented DDes degree more closely aligns with the educational objectives in our three professional disciplines. The PhD cohort will be reduced to better reflect the smaller number of students looking to build academic careers. As the DDes comes on stream, the number of students admitted into the PhD will be reduced. This may result in a net reduction of students enrolled in these two programs. The new enrolment strategy currently under development will balance this reduction with increased admissions in the MEDes, MArch, MPlan, and MLA degrees in order to maintain overall student numbers in the Faculty.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Recommendation 3: *To avoid program isolation and potential disharmony, URT recommends that the Deans Office continues to monitor the collaboration and discourse between the three programs to ensure that respectful inter-program conversation, programming and considerations are promoted.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with the principle of collaboration and equity underlying this recommendation. However, as the Unit Review Team acknowledges, the current administrative structure is appropriate and the supports offered by the Office of the Dean is right sized for the Faculty. The Faculty Leadership has always been mindful of the differences, some long-standing, between the professional degree programs and works hard to maintain equity. As the MLA degree program expands in size over the coming years it may be necessary to re-examine the sufficiency of having both Landscape Architecture + Planning Programs under the direction of a single Associate Dean.

Recommendation 4: URT recommends that the Faculty explore additional opportunities to formalize and expand student input, including within Faculty Council.

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with the principle of student input on governance matters. Student representatives from the degree programs are open to attend Faculty Forum meetings and the Student Association President is a member of Faculty Council. Semi-annual town hall meetings with the Associate Deans at the program level and the Dean at the faculty level also ensure that student concerns are being heard and addressed. In the fall term, the Dean will discuss with the incoming Leadership of the Environment Design Student Association the potential for additional opportunities for student input. This will be monitored annually to ensure that students continue to have proper input into Faculty discussions.

DIVERSITY

Recommendation 5: URT recommends that EVDS implement proactive advocacy for enhancement of a diverse faculty and staff complement to promote an increase in female faculty and Indigenous faculty and students. To that end, EVDS needs to do more by being much more proactive in adopting specific, clear processes that will ensure diversity in the workforce.

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. In terms of gender diversity, the imbalance is being managed in the medium term by ensuring more balanced gender and minority representation through sessional hires and guest lecturers. The Office of the Dean has reached out to other units in the University for best-practice advice on encouraging high-quality female candidates to apply. The search committee currently working on the hire of an Associate Professor position in Landscape Architecture has been directed to follow these strategies and the Dean has committed funding for the Associate Dean to attend relevant conferences and use personal networks to identify candidates who might not otherwise have considered applying to the Faculty of Environmental Design.

In terms of Indigenous faculty members, the current teaching cohort is currently too small, and the curricular demands for accredited professional education are too specific, to justify a position solely devoted to Indigenous design thinking, which we define as ways of thinking about landscape and material culture (i.e. the making of objects, buildings, and communities) that is informed by traditional knowledge. Instead, the Faculty is exploring strategies for Indigenous design professionals to become involved in the Faculty as visiting lecturers and guest critics. The Faculty has recently submitted an expression of interest

to the Asper Foundation for a Chair in Indigenous Design Thinking that would be shared with the University of New Mexico.

In the student population, there has been gender balance and good diversity representation for many years. There is currently one self-reporting Indigenous student in the Faculty. One of the goals of the Faculty's new Indigenous Design Thinking initiative is creating pathways to the design professions for Indigenous youths. We anticipate that the outreach to First Nation High Schools that is part of this focus will result in increased numbers of Indigenous students.

BUDGET

Recommendation 6: *URT recommends that, recognizing the continued decrease in post-secondary government financial supports, EVDS set clear and significant goals to raise monies that promote the work of the Faculty, including additional bursaries and scholarships that attract Indigenous students, research support, equipment and space investment and academic and research chairs.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. The Office of the Dean and the Director of Development have set ambitious targets for fundraising that will support students, enhance the quality of the learning environment, and promote industry-based research.

SPACE

Recommendation 7: *The URT recommends that the Faculty undertake a 'deep rethink' about what the modern studio should look like and how it functions and then redesign the existing space to accommodate those new trends and needs that are pedagogically driven.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. The Faculty recently received CAR funding to convert two existing spaces into a larger new design studio for the Landscape Architecture Program. This has been used as an opportunity to begin the 'deep rethink' process and better align our studio spaces with the realities of digital workflow, the changing expectations of contemporary professional practice, the increasing requirement for adaptability and flexibility of our facility usage, as well as ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of our students. The new studio layout includes enhanced technical capability for review of work, and provides more flexibility for individual and group work and review, reflecting contemporary work and study patterns. It also features a standing workstation area to address OHS concerns with the current studio furniture. The Faculty is also installing two additional collaborative standing desk areas in other parts of the Faculty. Over the coming year the Faculty will evaluate the effectiveness of the new workspace configurations ahead of a broader updating of all studio workspaces as funds become available in the coming years.

Recommendation 8: *URT recommends that the Faculty work with the University to explore a phased/incremental transition of space by exploring downtown studio and space in the University Research Park.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. We have been exploring the potential for moving all or a portion of the Faculty to a community-based location. The Faculty has recently submitted a grant proposal to the Calgary Foundation to conduct an impact assessment into the social, cultural, and economic benefits that would accrue to a host community, and the city as a whole, from embedding the Province's school of architecture, planning, and landscape architecture directly into a community. Locating all or a portion of its facilities in an underdeveloped or underserved part of the city could be a way for the Faculty to 'walk the talk' of urban revitalization in deep collaboration with community partners. As a highly visible and vibrant anchor tenant, the Faculty could kick-start a cultural and economic rejuvenation in the host community, adding 24/7 activity and encouraging the development of a creative economy district. The neighborhood could also become a living lab for community engagement through student projects and faculty research. The potential benefit that could accrue from this grass-roots city design process could be applied across Calgary. While the Faculty is open to exploring potential relocation options, it is with the understanding that any decision must factor in the value of maintaining close relationships with other Faculties and ensure that the quality of the overall student learning experience is maximized.

Recommendation 9: *The URT recommends that, in concert with the University, the Faculty continue to enhance and promote design in the region in a public, accessible way. In particular, space dedicated to community design would provide an important contribution to community engaged applied scholarship.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. Environmental Design has a long history of community engaged applied scholarship beginning in the early 1970's when faculty members helped advocate for the creation of Nose Hill Park. Our students regularly collaborate with community associations and public groups on academic projects. Our researchers work with local and regional communities, the City of Calgary, and local industry to explore the real-world implications of their work. In particular, the Urban Lab has for a number of years undertaken research projects with community associations and non-profit groups looking for various types of design-based physical planning work. Additionally, for the past 6 years, the Faculty has collaborated with the Faculties of Medicine and Social Work and the Institute for Public Health on the makeCalgary initiative which has delivered annual symposia, workshops, and applied scholarship from a community facing standpoint, and for the last 4 years, the Master of Planning Program has collaborated with the Federation of Calgary Communities to identify neighbourhoods with planning needs that coincide with the pedagogical aims of the senior studio, and this work has produced several meaningful planning documents that have been helpful to the communities.

The Faculty is currently exploring the feasibility of creating a faculty-wide platform for community scholarship that would consolidate the administration and operationalization of our various community-based research initiatives. The goal is to increase legibility and community impact while reducing the transactional friction associated with community work. Space, in the form of a community engaged scholarship lab could potentially be incorporated into a future off-campus location. A working group has

been struck to develop a strategy for the Faculty's community engaged scholarship and explore the potential for it to also become an integrated internship opportunity for students.

FACULTY RESEARCH

Recommendation 10: *URT recommends that EVDS devote more time and attention to the development of a stronger and more public scholarship agenda, including the increased promotion of existing work and the retention of a grant facilitator to assist in the preparation of research grant proposals.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. There is a broad range and depth of research, scholarship, and creative activity being completed across the Faculty's three program areas. It is difficult, and inappropriate, for administration to try and influence the direction of individual areas of research. However, there is potential to frame an effective public narrative that articulates how these important areas of research reinforce each other and fall within a series of specific themes. The development of a more legible public scholarship agenda has been underway for the past six months and is anticipated to continue over the next year. It will factor into the concurrent discussions about potential off-campus locations, the community engaged scholarship lab mentioned in the previous response, as well as a future large-scale maker space. A grant facilitation service for researchers has been discussed as a valuable resource for researchers. In addition to assisting researchers with tri-council applications, there is potential for it to also provide assistance in the area of community engaged scholarship. The introduction of such a service will be dependent on the Faculty finding external funding.

Recommendation 11: *URT recommends that, as part of its exploration of a 'scholarship niche', EVDS identify a clear and vibrant research engagement strategy that builds significant recognition and capacity in the Faculty while supporting the University's research vision.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. A key mission of the Faculty's public scholarship initiative is to expand our engagement with our professions, associated industries, government, and the public. This builds on our current level of engagement through student-based projects and individual research agendas. It will be further facilitated by the expanded research capacity that will accrue from the proposed community engaged scholarship lab and large-scale maker space. The Faculty is also exploring creating a folio publication series that records the various community engaged scholarship projects and makes them available for broader dissemination.

DESIGN THINKING KNOWLEDGE NETWORK AND UNDERGRADUATE OFFERINGS

Recommendation 12: *The URT recommends that the Faculty partner with the University to build on Eyes High Strategy by establishing an undergraduate program that provides courses across the University that could serve as electives or, when combined, as a minor degree to trans-university students or as a major degree to potential EVDS graduate students. The minor or major should address complexity, systems, design thinking and wicked problem content in one of three potential program types: (1) combine courses*

currently offered by EVDS and other Faculties into an undergraduate interdisciplinary degree; or (2) complete (1) above while also identifying new courses that complement the preceding into a new undergraduate EVDS degree; or (3) build a new undergraduate degree wholly delivered and offered by EVDS while being made available in large sections to all university students and potential EVDS graduate students.

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with the idea of expanded undergraduate offerings in order to recruit students into our graduate offerings. Broadening Environmental Design's presence on the undergraduate stage has been identified as both an effective way to promote our professional degree programs and increase awareness about the importance of design. A working group has been created to develop a staged undergraduate strategy that builds on our existing Minor in Architectural Studies and the four undergraduate courses we currently teach. We anticipate that the first stage (2019-2020) will be an expanded number of design thinking courses that will have broad appeal across the academy. A second stage will be to evaluate the potential of creating additional minor programs such as a Minor in Landscape Architectural Studies or Planning that mirrors the current architectural studies minor as pathways into our graduate professional degrees.

Recommendation 13: *The URT recommends that the Faculty partner with the University to build on Eyes High Strategy by creating a space and place, a Design Thinking Knowledge Network, where faculty, researchers and students from across the University are able to collaborate to explore the emerging wicked problems that have an interdisciplinary focus, require innovative system and design thinking applications, and a built environment/environmental focus.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. The proposed community engaged scholarship lab and the large-scale maker space are conceptualized as places of interdisciplinary collaboration on real world projects. This builds on the long-standing success of project-based collaboration through MakeCalgary and decades of faculty research and studio projects. The Faculty of Social Work and the Schulich School of Engineering have both expressed an interest to participate in the research that will be undertaken in these spaces.

Recommendation 14: *The URT recommends EVDS offer "micro-credentials" such as sustainability and design thinking that could be delivered as part of the evolution toward an undergraduate degree.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with the sentiments of this recommendation as a potential strategy for expanding its undergraduate program offerings. See response to recommendation 12.

Recommendation 15: *The URT recommends investigating pathway programs with polytechnics like SAIT and NAIT.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. Conversations are already underway with the Interior Design Program at Mount Royal University, the Alberta College of Art and Design, and Olds College about articulating and promoting the pathways that students in these programs can best follow to apply into

one of the Faculty's three professional programs. In the fall, similar discussions will commence with SAIT, NAIT, and University of Lethbridge. Other programs in other institutions will be approached as a second stage, following the successful completion of work with MRU, ACAD, SAIT, NAIT, and Olds College. These pathways will be cross-promoted by both institutions.

STACKED DIPLOMAS

Recommendation 16: Based upon the URT review, the URT recommends that EVDS make use of an integrative approach by first testing the market for a variety of courses, secondly identifying successful courses and then using them to form the basis for future "stacked" diplomas.

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. A working group has been formed to explore the potential of using the non-credit continuing education framework as a test-bed for new courses specifically targeted at practicing professionals in architecture, landscape architecture, and planning. Each profession has a required minimum number of hours of continuous professional learning (CPL) that needs to be completed annually (e.g. 35 hours in architecture). Preliminary conversations conducted over the past year with practitioners, the provincial regulators of the professions, and representatives from large firms indicate a potential market for substantive courses, 25-35 hours in duration, where students can pursue topics in much more depth than through the 1-3 hour courses that are typically offered. The Faculty has struck a working group to examine this opportunity in more depth. CPL offerings will be piloted to confirm interest and delivery format in order to ensure that there is a strong market demand. It is possible for non-credit courses to be stacked into a non-credit diploma. If there is significant demonstrated interest in a particular course, the Faculty will explore the option of translating the content delivery into a credit-based program.

INDIGENOUS CONTENT/ PROGRAMMING

Recommendation 17: *The URT urges the Faculty to develop clear, transparent and community engaged dialogue related to the implications of the Truth and Reconciliation of Canada Calls to Action upon Faculty structure, program delivery and outcomes.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. The first step in this process has already been taken through the development of the University's Indigenous Strategy framework. The Faculty is leveraging this framework by collaborating with the Native Centre to identify a group of traditional knowledge keepers who will help us establish the EVDS Indigenous Advisory Group. This group will set the foundation for future development of the Faculty's Indigenous teaching, research, and student recruitment process.

Recommendation 18: *The URT recommends that the Faculty explore ways and means of increasing Indigenous outreach and collaboration to ensure that students and faculty are exposed to Indigenous content, ways of knowing and planning and design issues and sensitivities.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty agrees with this recommendation. Work in this area began in 2017, with a very successful Indigenous Design Thinking Symposium held in February 2018. The half day event focused on improving pathways to design education and professions as well as Indigenous ways of design and attracted a cross-disciplinary audience of over 300 attendees. The Faculty also organized a public lecture by an up and coming Indigenous architect based in Vancouver in April 2018. A second symposium is planned for 2018-2019 and Indigenous centered electives are being explored for 2019-2020. The Faculty provided funding to enable a First Nation's Master of Architecture student to help a group of Indigenous architects mount the Canadian entry to the Venice Biennale exhibit entitled "Unceded: Voice of the Land."

STUDENT OBSERVATIONS

In addition to the 18 formal recommendations, the Unit Review Team presented the following observations based on their meetings with students across the three professional programs and the two research degrees.

Observation A - Understanding the program: *Students need to have a good understanding of the programs, pathways and course options.*

Faculty Response:

This issue has been previously identified by the Leadership Team. Strategies are being developed to improve legibility of the degree programs that will be implemented in the new Faculty website which will be launched in 2019.

Observation B - Study abroad: *There needs to be equitable opportunities for all students to participate.*

Faculty Response:

This issue was identified by the Leadership Team in 2017 as a priority area. The architecture program has well established study abroad offerings in Tokyo and Barcelona. In Winter 2018, the Landscape Architecture Program launched a specialized study abroad offering in Tromsø Norway and in 2019-2020, the Planning Program will be launching a program in Zurich, Switzerland. Both of these new offerings have been developed to better meet the specific educational needs of students in landscape architecture and planning.

Observation C - Studio culture/Studio time: *The Faculty will need to continue to support shared studio culture and shared studio classes as a linkage between the three programs. The Faculty should reconsider the current allocation of required studio attendance for students to a level that is consistent with other design programs.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty is committed to a studio-based learning environment. The interdisciplinary senior Urban Design studio brings students from all programs together for a term long city-based studio. Additional

linkages between the programs are currently being explored through an enhanced suite of elective courses. The Faculty disagrees with the comment about required studio time. The contact time with design faculty is equivalent to that required in other design programs across the country.

Observation D - Internship opportunities: *The faculty should facilitate some form of connection with the members of the discipline/profession. In particular the planners felt disconnected with the profession.*

Faculty Response:

The Faculty values a strong connection with its various professions, and related professional organizations. This is currently done through a variety of means including activating practitioners as sessional instructors and guest critics/ lecturers; hosting industry nights where students network and present their work to representatives of various firms; receptions and information workshops in which students meet with the leadership of the three professional associations. The Faculty intends to reinforce these initiatives through more specific duties for the new Practitioner in Residence positions in Planning and Landscape Architecture.

Observation E - Communication: *The Faculty should explain and enhance communication opportunities between students, faculty members and administration.*

A student experience survey was conducted at the end of the Winter 2018 term which identified specific areas in which communication between students, faculty members, and Faculty administration could be enhanced.

Faculty Response:

The findings will be actioned over the coming academic year, in particular making clear on the website and other faculty material, how students should best communicate with administration and staff. The Leadership Team will work with the EVDS Student Association to further improve communication opportunities

Observation F - Electives: *Electives that are offered to all disciplines, and required in all disciplines, should be tailored for all disciplines.*

Faculty Response:

All three programs require completion of elective courses, and it is explicit that the electives may be from EVDS or elsewhere in the University. The Faculty has already begun to reconsider the elective program in the Faculty. A working group is developing a new block course program that will significantly increase the number of electives available to students across all the degree programs. A number of these will be cross-disciplinary.

Conclusion

The Unit Review Team believes that the Faculty of Environmental Design is a well-structured and appropriately resourced design school that offers leading edge graduate programs. Further, it is well placed and structured to provide significant leadership in addressing the University's long-term vision, *Eyes High*

Strategy. To reach its full potential, however, the Unit Review Team believes some key actions identified in the 19 Recommendations and the Student Observations are required.

With a concerted effort to advance the Faculty and work closely with the University and external partners, the Faculty of Environmental Design could become a model for other design schools in Canada.

Follow-up

The Review Team recommendations will be revisited mid-way through the cycle. At that point, the Faculty of Environmental Design will be required to report on its status in acting on the recommendations, providing explanations and timelines for those which have not been met. This interim report should be submitted to the Provost in September 2020, with the next full review scheduled in 2022-2023.