

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

School of Architecture

Director's Office  
611 E Lorado Taft Drive  
117 Temple Hoyne Buell Hall  
Champaign, IL 61820-6921



**Response to the NAAB Visiting Team Report**  
**School of Architecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**  
**May 28, 2015**

Peter Mortensen, Director  
Lynne Dearborn, Associate Professor and Faculty Accreditation Liaison

The School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is deeply invested in the accreditation process provided by the National Architecture Accreditation Board (NAAB). The process ensures that our resources, curriculum, and pedagogy are aligned to prepare students for success in their chosen profession. Maintaining this alignment is an ongoing challenge, and the School has historically incorporated findings from NAAB accreditation evaluations into its continuous efforts to sustain excellence in all phases of its operation.

Indeed, findings laid out in the 2009 NAAB Visiting Team Report (VTR) motivated the School's leadership and faculty to undertake two complementary initiatives that are responsive to the interests of all collateral stakeholders in architectural education:

- The School restructured its faculty into Program Areas, each sufficiently stable to exercise responsibility for segments of the undergraduate and graduate curricula, yet flexible enough encourage instructional and research collaborations across program boundaries.
- Within this new structure, it has been possible to undertake curricular revision, the aim of which is to migrate satisfaction of certain NAAB Student Performance Criteria (SPC) from the four-year Bachelor of Science in Architectural Studies (BSAS) degree program into the two-year Master of Architecture (M.Arch) degree program.

The multi-year process of creating Program Areas was completed in Spring 2013 with adoption of new School bylaws. The adoption of new bylaws set the curriculum revision process in motion, which reached a major milestone in Spring 2014 with the adoption of frameworks for revised undergraduate and graduate curricula. The 2014-2015 academic year saw the Curriculum Committee make excellent progress toward new course development within the approved degree frameworks. It is anticipated that complete curriculum proposals will be advanced through college, campus, university, and state approval processes beginning next fall.

At Illinois, as at many public research universities, revising bylaws and curricula is a deliberate process, deliberate in the sense that much deliberation is expected at multiple levels of institutional governance. While such deliberation may at times appear inefficient, it typically delivers results that can be implemented with fidelity to a clear standard of excellence. This has been the experience in the Illinois School of Architecture. And reflecting on this experience, it is

certainly fair to attribute a measure of our organizational and curricular progress to the fair and rigorous reaccreditation review delivered by our NAAB Visiting Team six years ago.

The report of the 2015 Visiting Team provides direction for continued improvement of our curricula, and we are grateful to the team chair and team members for their keenest insights. However, as we noted in our response to the draft VTR, we are hard pressed to link some of these insights to facts or context put in evidence in our Architecture Program Review (APR), in the team room and associated exhibitions, and in conversations during the team's site visit. Rather than repeat assertions made in our response to the draft VTR, we are accepting NAAB Director of Accreditation Cassandra Pair's invitation to make this earlier response available to the NAAB Board of Directors. Attached are:

- Ms. Pair's invitation (May 19, 2015)
- Illinois School of Architecture Director's cover letter to response to the draft VTR (April 27, 2015)
- Illinois School of Architecture's response to the draft VTR (April 27, 2015)

In appending our draft VTR response, we call particular attention to our request, unmet in the final VTR, that listed Causes of Concern be backed by evidence, per NAAB's *Procedures for Accreditation* (2012 edition).

We are moved to thank the NAAB board member (Tyler Ashworth, Assoc. AIA) and staff member (Janet Rumbarger, Director, Research and Assessment) who reached out to us on April 16, 2015, for a detailed conversation about our experience as part of this spring's piloting of abbreviated site visits and smaller visiting teams. We trust that they can share with the full board the School's perspective on having been included in the pilot without our full consent. We expect, as well, that they can pass along our sense that constraints imposed by the pilot prevented Visiting Team members from

- fully engaging with our APR and associated documents prior to the site visit;
- observing class and studio meetings in manner that would have illustrated how the ideals expressed in our School Culture Policy are enacted in regular practice; and
- consulting with established faculty groups—such as the School's elected Executive Committee, its appointed Curriculum Committee, and its elected Program Area Chairs—in order to elicit critical perspectives on School operations.

Let us close by stressing one consequence of the Visiting Team's lack of time to consult with established faculty groups. The path forward toward continued curricular development, implementation of new curricula, and evaluation of their effectiveness is well described in the governing documents of the School, as well as those of the College, the Academic Senate, and the University. Moreover, the School's annual evaluation of curricular effectiveness—mandated by our bylaws and undertaken by elected Program Area Chairs in consultation with Program Area faculty—will produce results that will inform the periodic Academic Program Review (<http://provost.illinois.edu/programreview/>) that is supported by our campus administration. The School of Architecture is scheduled for its program review, complete with a self-study and



external evaluators, in Spring 2018. Meantime, the Program Areas' annual evaluation of curricular effectiveness remains the mechanism by which we affirm that NAAB SPC are met as stated in the SPC matrix included in our APR. Thus, we are confident that BSAS graduates who matriculate to our M.Arch program carry with them competence in SPC areas satisfied during their undergraduate years with us.

On behalf of the students and faculty of the Illinois School of Architecture, and the thousands of alumni in practice who maintain an active interest in the School's success, we thank NAAB, its Board of Directors, and its staff for partnering with us in our effort to realize the School's vision: "Learn from the past. Question the present. Shape the future."

## Mortensen, Peter Leslie


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**From:** Cassandra Pair <cpair@naab.org>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 19, 2015 2:05 PM  
**To:** Mortensen, Peter Leslie  
**Subject:** VTR-Final Draft  
**Attachments:** Ltr. to Mortensen [FINAL DRAFT].pdf; UofIL Urbana-Champaign VTR\_[FINAL DRAFT].pdf  
**Importance:** High

Hello Peter,

Thank you for forwarding what is in fact, a final response to the VTR. Thus, if you would like to attach the said (COF) response to the school's letterhead, please do so. It will then get appended to the final report for the Board to review, at its July meeting.

Cassandra

*Cassandra Pair*  
Director, Accreditation  
  
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 410  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202)783-2007 o  
(202)731-2016 m  
(202)783-2822 f  
[@NAABNews](#)

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

School of Architecture

117 Temple Hoyne Buell Hall, MC-621  
611 Taft Drive  
Champaign, IL 61820-6921 USA



April 27, 2015

Cassandra Pair  
Director of Accreditation  
National Architectural Accrediting Board, Inc.  
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Suite 410  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Ms. Pair,

Thank you for the opportunity to review a draft of the NAAB Visiting Team Report authored by RK Stewart, Ute Poerschke, and Meghan Leahy following their campus visit in late March. We sincerely appreciate their effort.

Per your instructions and guidelines found in NAAB's *Procedures for Accreditation* (2012, Amended), I am submitting requests for the correction of factual errors found in the draft VTR. These requests were formulated after consultation with the School of Architecture's Executive Committee, its four Program Area chairs, and the team that prepared for the accreditation site visit, led by Professor Lynne Dearborn.

Please let me know if you have any questions ([pmortens@illinois.edu](mailto:pmortens@illinois.edu), 217-333-1330).

Sincerely,

Peter Mortensen  
Director

Attachment

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
School of Architecture

Factual Review of NAAB Visiting Team Report  
April 27, 2015

**I. Summary**

This document requests the correction of factual errors in the draft Visiting Team Report.

**II. Section 1.2, Conditions Not Met**

A.9 Historical Traditions and Global Cultures

There is evidence highlighted in the attached ARCH 210 and ARCH 577 syllabi that traditions and cultures of the Eastern and Southern hemispheres are addressed. ARCH 210 is taken by all M.Arch students who complete the BSAS with us. ARCH 577 is completed by all graduate students in the M.Arch program whether they have completed their BSAS with us or at another institution. Thus, all students earning the accredited M.Arch meet condition A.9.

**III. Section 1.3, Causes of Concern**

General Observation

In NAAB's *Procedures for Accreditation* (2012, amended), the "Causes of Concern" section of the VTR is described as follows (in Section 5, 4.c.i.3, p. 49):

This is a narrative that describes specific concerns of the team relative to unmet conditions or to conditions that may have been met within the strict definition of the condition/criterion, but for which the team has concerns or questions. This is a numbered list. Each item should have a brief title. It is not necessary for an unmet condition to generate a cause for concern; likewise conditions/criteria that are determined to be met may have also generated concerns within the team.

It is unclear upon what factual basis some causes of concern rest. Following the *Procedures*, a factual basis for these concerns could be established with reference to specific unmet or met conditions, along with the citation of relevant evidence from the School's APR, its Team Room, and Student Exhibit. (For the most part, citation of evidence appears to be absent from the VTR.) Alternatively, causes of concern not linked to specific conditions addressed in the APR could be deleted from the final draft of the VTR.

Subsection A

Please see Appendix A for a detailed response to the causes of concern set forth in Subsection A of the draft VTR. Appendix A was composed by the School's Program Area chairs: Associate

Professor Lynne Dearborn (Health and Wellbeing), Associate Professor Kevin Hinders (Urbanism), Associate Professor Scott Murray (Performance), and Professor Jeffrey Poss (detail + FABRICATION).

#### Subsection B

Peter Mortensen was appointed Director of the School of Architecture, an administrative role, by the Board of Trustees upon recommendation of the Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts and the Chancellor/Vice President of the Urbana campus of the University of Illinois. The appointment conforms to the *University of Illinois Statutes* (<http://www.bot.uillinois.edu/statutes>). Mortensen was not appointed to the School of Architecture faculty, as asserted in the draft VTR, for precisely the reason cited: his “academic expertise is not within the body of knowledge, skills, or traditions of architecture or its professional practice.”

#### Subsection C

The cause of concern detailed in this subsection misunderstands policies and processes described in the School’s APR, Part II, Sections 1, 2, and 3. Each student who successfully completes the program’s non-accredited BSAS degree and graduates with that degree has by virtue of successful completion of the curriculum met the SPCs satisfied through the BSAS curriculum, as noted in Student Performance Criteria Matrix on p. 106 of the APR. Each student who graduates from the School’s BSAS degree program and matriculates into the School’s M.Arch program understands what requirements they have met in their undergraduate degree and which courses are required and which are elective in their M.Arch curriculum. This is made clear to them during student orientation of their entering fall semester. They then receive advising from either the Associate Director for Graduate Programs and Study or from one of the Program Chairs throughout their time in the M.Arch program. The School’s Graduate Office maintains the records of requirements completed for each M.Arch student and students are required to review these at regular intervals throughout their M.Arch program.

#### **IV. Additional Corrections**

p. 4 Observation: “Studio Culture Policy” should read “School Culture Policy”

p. 9 Observation: “Studio Culture Policy” should read “School Culture Policy”

p. 10 Architectural Education and the Regulatory Environment

Observation: The program’s IDP Coordinator is NOT a member of the faculty. Also, what are Guest Coordinators in Arch 501. Do they mean the IDP Coordinator and the Student IDP Coordinator. Also, as of Summer 2014, the proper term is “Architect Licensing Advisor,” not IDP Coordinator (see <http://www.ncarb.org/Experience-Through-Internships/IDP-Coordinators.aspx#sthash.LDA2fqkN.dpuf>).

p. 13 I.2.1 Human Resources

Statement: “The program’s IDP Education Coordinator, Instructor Lee Waldrep is widely known among faculty and students, and gives presentations in Arch 501 as well as in undergraduate courses.”

Correction: The program’s Architect Licensing Advisor, Lee Waldrep is widely known among faculty and students, and gives presentations in ARCH 501 and ARCH 231.

p. 14 2015 Team Assessment

Statement: “The Graduate Officer and his staff of two people provide primary advising....”

Correction: The Associate Director for Graduate Studies (currently Clinical Associate Professor William Worn) provides primary advising for Track II M.Arch students. Carl Lewis, an Academic Professional, provides primary advising for Track III M.Arch students. Two staff members in the Graduate Office support Professor Worn and Mr. Lewis, but do not provide advising.



## Appendix A

The elected Program Area Chairs recommend correction of details in section 1.3.A as follows:

### Causes of Concern, Subsection A

1. Statement: “The program is undergoing a great many changes....”

A more contextualized statement would be: The program exists in a time of professional and political change and has experienced decreasing student enrollment, coupled with an increased internationalization of the student body at a time when there are anticipated financial pressures resulting from reductions in state funds supporting the university system.

2. Statement: “The recent adoption of new by-laws governing the program, which supersede its previous 40-year-old by-laws.”

The School’s recent bylaws revision aligns with the College of Fine and Applied Arts “College Strategy 2014-17,” in which the review and revision of each department’s bylaws is encouraged as a means to bring greater clarity and integrity to administrative processes and faculty governance. The adoption of new bylaws is a direct reflection of the School’s work to improve itself, and adjust to the changing context of Architecture and the world. This is viewed as a positive step at the university, not a cause for concern.

3. Statement: “The recent adoption of a revised curriculum framework intending to relocate a majority of the NAAB Student Performance Criteria from the undergraduate program to the graduate program.”

Per NAAB’s *Procedures*, it was understood that the visit was to focus on evidence of program operations through the time the APR was submitted in September 2014. That said, for testimony regarding curriculum development ongoing this academic year, the Visiting Team could have consulted individuals—such as the Curriculum Committee chair or all members of the Curriculum Committee—for their authoritative characterization of development of new BSAS and M.Arch curricula. Alternatively, minutes of Curriculum Committee meetings could have been supplied upon request.

The effectiveness of curricula, currently and in the future, is subject to two levels of review. The School’s *Bylaws* require each Program Area to “create an Annual Report for the Director and Executive Committee on the curriculum, teaching assignments, and delivery of courses and programs” (V.A.4.b.v). The Director and Executive Committee are responsible for evaluating these reports and seeing that needed curricular improvements are implemented.

Beyond annual review within the School, academic curricula are subject to periodic assessment as part of the comprehensive Academic Program Review process conducted by the Office of the Provost (<http://provost.illinois.edu/programreview/>). Architecture’s next

program review, which includes a visit by external evaluators, is scheduled for the 2017-2018 academic year.

4. Statement: “A revised graduate admissions documentation process....”

The current graduate admissions process results directly from NAAB requirements to document SPCs that are expected to be met through pre-professional education. The admissions process has been in place since the spring of 2011 and serves the need to document SPC requirements arising from NAAB. See additional comments under Subsection C, below.

5. Statement: “The recent transfer of the program’s premier study abroad program from its long-standing base in Versailles to Barcelona.”

The long-standing director of the School’s Versailles Program made a seamless transition to the directorship of the Barcelona Program. The coursework in Barcelona remains under the direction of the School, as does the hiring of faculty and their delivery of course content. The director of the Barcelona Program traveled to Champaign-Urbana during the NAAB team visit and was available for consultation throughout the time the Visiting Team was on campus. The Visiting Team chair initially asked for a meeting with the Barcelona Program director, but later opted not to have the meeting.

6. Statement: “The addition of several new faculty members....”

The number of new faculty hired since NAAB’s last site visit is many fewer than in the preceding term of accreditation. Hiring new faculty is a natural part of the evolution of any academic program. Faculty retire or move to other institutions and this has not happened at an unusual rate in comparison to the prior decade. If anything, this is a healthy sign that even in difficult economic times, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has felt it important to grant hires to the School based on the strength of our student population.

7. Statement: “The recent appointment of a new director....”

The new director was appointed when the previous director concluded a second five-year term. The previous director’s ten years as the School’s executive officer is consistent with the two terms that many executive officers on campus can be expected to serve. See Subsection B, below, for additional response.

8. Statement: “In light of the number and magnitude of changes being undertaken....”

See following editing and commentary:

~~In light of the number and magnitude of the changes being undertaken, the visiting team has several concerns regarding the program’s future. The aspirational nature of the(se) changes~~ **within the Illinois School of Architecture** is indicative of the program’s clear intention to maintain its legacy and the high standards it has historically achieved. ~~Without~~

a clearly documented plan that includes milestones to guide the implementation of so many simultaneous changes, neither faculty nor students are certain of their path forward. ***(This statement should be struck, as the indicated plan was not requested in advance of the visit. Moreover, as indicated above, it would have been possible to present the Curriculum Committee's curriculum development plan had the committee been consulted. Finally, as indicated above, measures to evaluate the effectiveness of curricula are already in place at two levels—the School and the campus.)*** The program clearly recognizes that these changes are far from complete. Some changes, for example, full implementation of the new curriculum, are not anticipated earlier than the 2016–2017 academic year. The visiting team has reviewed a limited number of examples of student work that may not be relevant, given curriculum changes immediately on the program's horizon. Other changes have undergone continual adjustment in recent years, such as the Studio Culture Policy and the by-laws, which raises a degree of uncertainty in the academic community. ***(See notes above: there is no evidence presented by the team that there is uncertainty in the academic community nor was this the topic of any public or scheduled meeting with between the team and those in faculty leadership positions.)*** Other changes have just begun to be implemented, such as the relocated study abroad program and the graduate admissions process, with the result being that their effectiveness is unknown. ***(See comments above.)*** Therefore, To successfully complete the implementation of this process of change, the following will be required: transparency in decision-making, communication of the progress along the path of change, and the mutual trust and respect that need to be extended to every member of the student body, staff, and faculty.

#### Causes of Concern, Subsection B

1. Statement: "The program's director joined the faculty for a 3-year term less than 1 year ago in this time of great change. The visiting team shares the concern—expressed by members of the academic community—that the director's academic expertise is not within the body of knowledge, skills, or traditions of architecture or its professional practice."

The above statement does not reflect a concern of the academic community as a whole. This issue was not raised by the Visiting Team or the faculty at the only scheduled meeting between the School's faculty at large and the team (Sunday evening). At no other time was the faculty as a whole or their elected leadership given an opportunity to discuss the Director's role, competence, or performance. This concern should not listed as a part of the VTR as no evidence was requested or collected in a manner consistent with the collection of other evidence as part of this NAAB team visit. The NAAB Visiting Team agenda was created by the NAAB team chair and did not include meetings with the two groups of faculty leaders who represent the faculty and who are identified through a democratic election process, the Executive Committee and the Program Chairs.

Director Mortensen was appointed to a three-year position by the Board of Trustees, upon recommendation of the Dean of the College of Fine and Applied Arts, for the following specific purposes (along with the general leadership and governance of the School):

- Assist and provide leadership in the 2015 NAAB Accreditation.
- Set the School up for a successful external search for Director who is an area-expert and who has requisite leadership skills.
- Assist in the transition and changes associated with the new by-laws and policies and procedures and guide the School in its endeavors to continue to transform these documents to ensure positive outputs within the School and compliance within the University structure.
- He has, to date, performed admirably and remained on task. He represents the School well and consults regularly with the faculty leadership of the school who have area expertise. There is no reason to believe he will not continue to lead and represent the School in a credible manner. There is no evidence that, by his pedigree or other, there exists Cause for Concern.