2011-2012 ANNUAL REPORT

To the National Architectural Accrediting Board   (NAAB)
November 30, 2012

The Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture
At the City College of the City University of New York
George Ranalli, Dean

B. Arch Program (160 undergraduate credit hours)
M. Arch Program (U.G. Degree + 108 graduate credit hours)
Last Team Visit: October, 2011

Summary

Because the last team visit took place in late October, 2011, there was a somewhat truncated period in which we could begin to act on the team's suggestions, to their concerns, and to the "unmet" criteria/conditions. A great deal of discussion, initial planning, and several significant steps have been taken to address "self-assessment", the major unmet condition. The remaining 'unmet' items have been fully addressed, though one lingers outside the school's control as it is dependent on college action to re-publish the graduate course bulletin.

Of the four concerns expressed by the team, two have been fully met, one is being actively but progressively dealt-with over the next several years as endowment funds become more available, and resolution of the fourth is dependent on pending decisions by the college administration and a third-party.

Changes to Program Since the Last Site Visit

Other than those noted below, in response to unmet criteria and team concerns, there have been no significant changes in the programs since the last NAAB visit. Due to increasing enrollment in the masters' program and somewhat tighter college budgets, the measure, "expenditure per student" has decreased somewhat. However, some class sizes in the masters program rose from very low in the previous year to a reasonable number in the reporting year, and some highly discretionary spending, without direct impact on programs, was deferred. Despite the prospect of continuing budget stringencies, the school anticipates no direct impact on students or faculty, nor on the short- or long-term prospects for the accredited programs or the school.

Notes Regarding Statistical Reports

Section F.6 Financial Resources
Most resources received are credited to the school in aggregate and not earmarked for any particular program. Also, most expenditures cut across program lines. Therefore the amounts reported in Part II for the B.Arch and M.Arch degree programs are pro-rated from the aggregate in proportion to student enrollment in each of the programs thus maintaining the integrity of the 'per student expenditure' measure.

1.4 Conditions Not Met

I.1.5 Self-Assessment Procedures (second time)
2011 Team Assessment: For the past several years the architecture program has been going through an exciting time of rapid and significant change including the creation of a graduate program, the receipt of a large endowment that has prompted many new initiatives, the move into a new building, and the hiring of 10 new full-time faculty members. The Team appreciates the challenge of negotiating change on so many fronts and is impressed with the ability of the administration, faculty, staff and students to create/retain positive equilibrium and coherence as they have moved through this time. The administration and faculty have worked hard and made smart choices that have enabled the program to make significant advances and take full advantage of its many new and ongoing opportunities.
In this state of flux, self-assessment has taken place in informal and largely anecdotal venues such as reviews of student work and discussions at faculty meetings but has not yet been developed into a set of formal methods and metrics. A fuller, more formalized, and much more directed self-assessment, however, is critical as the SSA moves forward. Decisions about what and how to make meaningful self-assessments must be made relative to the goals of the SSA as set forth in a finalized Strategic Plan or similar document. As noted in section I.1.4 a long-range plan including target dates, implementation strategies, and the criteria by which the success of each aspect of the plan will be measured is critical to the process of assessment.

2012 School Report:
Efforts are continuing this year to expand and improve the method and procedures for self-assessment.   As background to these efforts research has been carried-out using materials from a variety of sources including the Association of American Colleges, the Council on Higher Learning, ACSA, and others.

The Curriculum Committee, a statutory committee of elected and appointed faculty, chaired by the Department chairperson, has taken the lead role. This committee includes a representative from each curricular area – history/theory, building systems technology, the four degree programs, and the five design studio coordinators. Meetings are open to all faculty and various individuals are invited to attend when topics of interest to them are slated for discussion. This committee at its monthly meetings throughout the year has devoted considerable time to the task of expanding self-assessment.

Among the measures which were implemented in the seven months of AY 2011/2012 remaining after the October team visit:

1. The several committees whose role is key to a rigorous assessment procedure were apprised of the newly understood need for expanded self-assessment and their respective roles discussed. Assessment has been put on the agenda of every meeting of each of these committees: Curriculum, Dean's Council (alumni and practioners), Personnel and Budget committee, and the Student Advisory committee.
2. Record keeping of committee proceedings and distribution of minutes and materials was strengthened and more resources are being expended on organizing and making the information widely available.
3. Course and Teaching surveys were strengthened and measures were taken to provide more support and encouragement to students and faculty to carry-out the surveys. Response rates improved dramatically.
4. End-of-semester design review schedules were adjusted to avoid conflicts thus allowing broader participation by persons and groups key to assessment.
5. The long-range plan, referred-to in the VTR, has been reviewed, amended, and reformatted (per the team's comments) for distribution and use in assessment.

In committee discussion the following guidelines have emerged and are guiding the discussion and planning:

1. Assessment must become an integral part of faculty course planning and design and a significant resource, not just a metric, in strengthening learning and the program. Assessment must become part of the 'culture' of the school.
2. Multiple means of assessment should be employed, fitting the means naturally to the specific curricular area and course design, and to the persons responsible. Assessment tools for design studio might be quite different from those utilized in building technology or history/theory, for example.
3. Regular procedures should be put in place for sharing with internal and external constituencies the evidence gained from assessment and the conclusions which result.
4. Internal reporting should include publication of proceedings (minutes) of all meetings - regularly scheduled and special. Particular care should be taken to preserve and transmit materials, such as proposals and discussion papers, distributed at meetings.
5. External constituencies should be kept informed of progress via several channels including the school's website. Evidence of learning as well as additional descriptive information and indicators of institutional performance (e.g., retention rates, time to degree) should be accessible in formats appropriate to the various constituencies.

Several aspects are slated for future adoption, possibly in the 2012/2013 academic year:

1. Design and development of a format or formats for gathering assessment information. This set of tools will initially be aimed specifically for the end-of-semester public design reviews. For ease of adoption and use, it will be paper-based but designed for easy input to a database which will allow analyses and reporting.
2. Additional means of gathering assessment information in other learning realms (history/theory, building technology, etc.) will be developed.
3. The updated Long Range Plan will be distributed and discussed. One or more rounds of revision and re-review by the several constituencies will take place at the end of which the faculty will formally adopt.
4. A formalized procedure with supporting policies will be developed to compare the various evidence-based outcomes with accreditation requirements, the long-range plan, and institutional planning.

II.4.1 Statement on NAAB-Accredited Degrees
In order to promote an understanding of the accredited professional degree by prospective students, parents, and the public, all schools offering an accredited degree program or any candidacy program must include in catalogs and promotional media the exact language found in the 2009 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation, *Appendix 5.*

2011 Team Assessment: The exact language found in the 2009 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation, Appendix 5, is found on the SSA web site for both the graduate and undergraduate programs. In the City College of New York Bulletin found on the CCNY web site, the exact language found in the 2009 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation, Appendix 5, is found in the Undergraduate Bulletin* but not in the Graduate Bulletin.**

*Undergraduate Bulletin: http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/CCNYBulletin/upload/CCNY09-11UG-REV.pdf
**Graduate Bulletin: http://www1.ccny.cuny.edu/CCNYBulletin/upload/CCNY-Graduate-Bulletin-2008-10-2.pdf

2012 School Report:
On closer inspection recently, it was found that the required language DOES, in fact, exist in the Graduate Bulletin. Unfortunately, however, a print formatting error apparently caused the heading "Accreditation" to be located after all but the last paragraph of the required text. This caused both the team, and until recently, the school administration, to believe that text had been omitted when, actually, it appears above the misplaced heading. We are working with the college administration who maintain this on-line document to update it.

II.4.4 Public Access to APRs and VTRs
2011 Team Assessment: *In order to promote transparency in the process of accreditation in architecture education, the program is required to make the following documents available to the public:*
All Annual Reports, including the narrative
All NAAB responses to the Annual Report
The final decision letter from the NAAB
The most recent APR
The final edition of the most recent Visiting Team Report, including attachments and addenda
These documents must be housed together and accessible to all. Programs are encouraged to make these documents available electronically from their websites.

2012 School Report:

This collection of documents was delivered to the School library, located in the building, during the visit and continue to be accessible. The VTR and final decision letter have been added as have annual reports. Most of these documents are available on the current school web site.

I.5 Causes of Concern

A. University communications infrastructure:

2011 Team Assessment: The program's ability to communicate with students and the public is impaired by institutional information infrastructure limitations, including an email system that students are apparently reluctant to use, the lack of a database of active email addresses for the architecture student body, insufficient wireless bandwidth, and a school web site whose development, evolution, and maintenance was slowed by an ineffective hosting arrangement and cumbersome, time-consuming update and maintenance procedures.

2012 School Report:
Under the guidance of a new college IT director, institution-wide information infrastructure is beginning to show improvement and planning efforts currently underway should result significant positive results in the coming year. For example, the e-mail system has already been improved and wireless bandwidth in the school has been expanded.

The School's website is now hosted on a completely re-designed college server featuring greatly-improved direct and immediate access with excellent security and high reliability This new systems has greatly facilitated on-going web development, evolution and maintenance and proved to be more than adequate for the roll-out of an all-new school web site in September, 2012. The new site, based on the latest web technologies, features a more open and accessible navigation system, greatly improved maintenance procedures, and extensive multi-dimensional expansion potential.

A database of active architecture student e-mail addresses has been built in-house; maintenance procedures to insure on-going currency have been instituted. The system allows a range of communication actions including individual e-mails, group e-mails based on a number of grouping criteria (design years, program, course, etc.), and school-wide general communications. While students still seem reluctant to use the college's e-mail addresses, the database includes the e-mail address each student claims to watch most carefully whether it be gmail, yahoo, or any other including the college's.

Future plans include more extensive use of social media .An investigation this year will be made to determine how systems and procedures might be extended to continue to track students after graduation so that alumni communications can be improved.

B. Building refinement:

2011 Team Assessment: Faculty and students want a café in their new facility. Since this is a 24/7 facility, it would be safer to have such a facility within the Spitzer School of Architecture. This building refinement would also provide a place for interaction between and among faculty and students.

School Report – 2012:
A three-year effort by the school administration to establish a café in the school is continuing. The college administration clearly understands the school's rationale and stated benefits on which our repeated requests and entreaties have been based. However, an existing contract with a college-wide food vendor prevents competing on-campus operations. The vendor will not waive the provision and has so-far refused to establish a "satellite" in our building, despite the existence of a well-served pleasant space ready for use as a café. However, a faculty member has recently put forth a strategy which, in its simplicity and the benefits it provides all parties, might be acceptable. We expect to refine and put this plan forward in the next few months, and are hopeful of the outcome.

C. Level of need-based scholarship funding:

2011 Team Assessment: Although the tuition is very reasonable at the Spitzer School of Architecture, the ability to provide some level of need-based scholarship funding would both meet the mission of the CCNY and allow the school to attract students who are offered funding at competing institutions.

School Report – 2012:
The amount of support offered to students based on need increased modestly in AY 2012. Six scholarships covering all or most of tuition and fees were provided. In addition, an emergency need based tuition scholarship was extended to a student experiencing difficulties which threatened his continuing studies.

Four students traveling in a Summer 2012 study abroad program were each given a nominal sum to help with finances making it possible for them to join the Barcelona summer program. Two design scholarships are given every year. One was awarded to a 4th year B.arch student that pays tuition allowing them to enter the final year of undergraduate study. The other design scholarship was given to a 1st year graduate student enabling them to continue to the second year of graduate study.

However, all of the above being enumerated, if a student with a true, need-based emergency is brought to our (SSA Administration's) attention, an attempt is always made to supply aid (books, studio supplies, etc.,).

As the Spitzer Fund endowment grows and produces more yearly income, we plan to continue to increase the amount of need-based student support.

D. Staff support for new programs:

2011 Team Assessment: Three new programs—Master of Architecture, Master of Landscape Architecture, and Master of Urban Design—have been added to the responsibilities of the current staff. Additional staff support would greatly improve the service to these programs.

School Report - 2012
A fully-funded and permanent Higher Education Officer employee line was given the school in the early spring of 2012. That position was dedicated to a "director of operations" and after a successful search has been filled with a person who has proven to be extremely effective. This, along with some minor reorganization of job responsibilities and some spatial changes to the administrative areas have significantly improved and increased administrative and logistical support of all programs including the three newer programs. Several clerical positions have been re-organized which further improves the support of programs and faculty.

Respectfully Submitted,

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