

Type of Course: ARCH 51000 Advanced Studio

Class Meetings: M/TH 2:00-5:20pm

Office Hours: 1:00–2:00pm Mondays and Thursdays, and by appointment

Instructor: Professor Curry J. Hackett

Location: SSA STUDIO 318

Semester/Year Fall 2024

YARDS & YARDS: Toward a New Ecology on Saint Nicholas Avenue



"Ugly Beauties" installation in Downtown Brooklyn; Curry J. Hackett, 2024

OVERVIEW

The yard—of the Old English "geard", meaning 'building, home, region'—bears a multiplicity of meanings in the American imagination (hence the repetitive course title). Typically depicted as an emerald monocultural mat of (often non-native) grass in front of a single-family home, the American yard holds an outsized impact on the politics of property, land, and vegetation. The lawncare industry, for example—a \$150 billion enterprise—is predicated on an array of products and gadgets intended to alter and constrain the behavior of plants such that the sanctity of this artificial landscape is maintained. We can trace this attitude to the British lawns of the 17th and 18th centuries, where

lawns were touted as symbols of status, due to the labor required to keep the grass cut and manicured. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello estate is cited as one of the first British-style lawns in the United States, setting the stage for expansive lawns of the American plantation and the white-fenced yards of many predominantly white 20th century suburbs. This studio will radically frustrate these problematic formulations of the yard, however. Instead, we will encounter the Yard (note the capitalization) as both an idea and an array of typologies which operate at different scales, support different ecologies, and tell different stories.

Throughout the semester we will look to how the Yard shows in Harlem, the American South, and elsewhere throughout the Black Atlantic, such as: the role of gardens, yards, and foraging in Black American cuisine, along with the culinary, spiritual, and medicinal usage of plants imported from the African continent during the slave trade; Harlem's rich history of community gardens (note that "garden" is an etymological cousin of "yard"); the swept yards of the American South, in which residents use handmade brooms to sweep the ground free of debris and (incidentally) grass; the vibrant quads of many Historically Black Colleges (often called simply "the Yard"), portrayed in films like "School Daze" and "Stomp the Yard"; the "yard" to mean "home" in Jamaican Patois; and, the emergence of the community land trust in rural Georgia as a form of collective ownership during Jim Crow. All these traditions will serve as precedents for how "yardness" can serve as a viable framework for shaping emergent cultures, architectures, programs, media, and governance structures.

The studio will examine a 13-block strip of West Harlem, using the Yard as an investigative strategy for uplifting current social uses of land while inventing new architectural typologies, forms of media and archiving, and public engagement strategies. The goal of the studio, ultimately, is to discover and promote forms of communal gathering, endorse and engender relationships with nature and land, and invite students and community members alike to see the land itself along Saint Nicholas Park as a repository of Black and more-than-human subjectivities.

A NOTE ON THE PLACE, MEMORY, & CULTURE INCUBATOR (PMCI)

This studio is part of the **Place, Memory, and Culture Incubator (PMCI),** now in its second year. The initiative "aims to interact with Harlem communities to transform the ways in which students engage and connect with their deep-seated histories. Design studios will record, visualize, and preserve heritage while projecting innovative, resilient cultural and spatial futures."

To this end, this studio will identify, and then (to the extent that we are invited) be deeply embedded in, a Harlem community throughout our study area, with a focus on Saint Nicholas Avenue.

RESEARCH

The studio will borrow approaches from landscape urbanism, Black studies, digital humanities, and plant humanities to develop a "thick" description of the study area. Research methods at the beginning of the semester will involve personal and/or intuitive observations of the streetscape of the study area (via site walks and mapping exercises), and gradually increase in scale and scope, incorporating archival research, surveys, and oral interviews to understand community preferences and needs. Other resources in the public domain, such as the zoning codes and municipal policies that govern life in Harlem will be emphasized as an area of importance for interrogating the role of property and power in shaping "yardness".

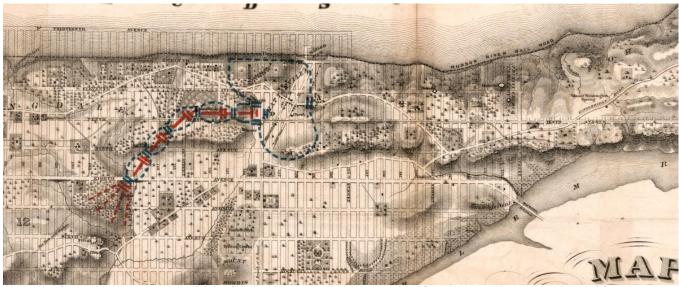
The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture will be foregrounded as a resource for understanding the environmental, architectural, and sociocultural history of Harlem generally, and our study area in particular. Lastly, through a "making-as-learning" approach, students will be encouraged to speculate on their own forms of drawing, indexing, and documenting findings from the studio.

PROGRAM & APPROACH

The studio is predicated on the idea that the Yard is a pervasive socioecological condition—a typology that can arguably occur on any block of the study area. Churchyards, schoolyards, graveyards, community gardens, and the yards of HBCUs will serve as direct references for how studios might shape public/open/green spaces. However, architectural programs that promote spiritual and physical relationships with nature—and plants and food—will also be studied, speculated upon, and invented. These could include: ghost kitchens, vertical gardens, seed banks, greenhouses, urban forests/arboreta, farmer's markets, food trucks, grocery stores, apothecaries, playscapes, and environmental film festivals. Additionally, the architectures and visual cultures of current-day Harlem can be

speculated upon: salons and barbershops, libraries, storefront churches, bathhouses, block parties, speakeasies, etc.

Students will creolize these typologies to develop contiguous sites throughout the study area, with an overall aim of promoting the sociecological potential of Saint Nicholas Avenue, troubling the role of the property line and zoning code in Harlem's streetscape, and amplify existing cultural mores. Students will ultimately distill and stage these speculations via several forms of media, which should be shared with relevant stakeholders and be designed to outlast the studio semester. Ideally, this set of media would comprise a toolkit of such ephemera as a cookbook, deck of playing cards, church fans, "family reunion"-style t-shirts, temporary wayfinding, etc.



1868 map of upper Manhattan, showing Battle of Harlem Heights, and topography along Saint Nicholas Avenue. Via Library of Congress.

SITE

We will study a 13-block long north—south strip of Saint Nicholas Avenue in Central Harlem—in City College of New York's backyard—spanning from 128th Street to the south, 141st Street to the north, Edgecombe Avenue to the east (and possible studies extending to Frederick Douglass Avenue), and the dramatic Fordham Cliffs to the west. This area largely consists of Saint Nicholas Park to the west, and mostly public housing to the east. The Mount Calvary United Methodist Church (formerly Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Atonement) anchors the split of Edgecombe Avenue from Saint Nicholas, and is fronted by a pocket park. Lastly, halfway through the north—south axis of Saint Nicholas Park, James Baldwin Lawn—named for the Harlem-raised writer—serves as the primary open space.

The westernmost arterial street of Central Harlem, Saint Nicholas Avenue traces the bottom of the Fordham Cliffs, slicing obliquely through the Manhattan street grid. The north–south corridor was also an important thoroughfare for the indigenous Weekquaeskeek, and connected current-day lower Manhattan to Albany. This path traversed several waterways, including creeks and marshes. The trail was supplanted by a major postal route before Harlem's housing boom following the American Civil War, when it first became a vehicular avenue. Today, the wide street and relative lack of cultural spaces and retail frontage along the western edge of Saint Nicholas Avenue renders both the adjacent park and the streetscape largely underutilized—especially compared to Morningside Park and Frederick Douglass Avenue, respectively.

Students will pick their own sites within this study area, and gradually form teams to study a contiguous site area along no more than one or two city blocks. Towards the end of the semester, the entire class, along with any relevant community partners, will collectively discover overlaps in each other's work to string together a larger strategy that engages the overall 13-block long study area.

This studio will consider the sidewalks, courtyards, and other open spaces along Saint Nicholas Avenue as an aggregate of "commonses" that can be maintained, amplified, and revealed through a set of interventions and programming. We will also consider the site as a "thick", multiscalar condition: the root systems of the flora that hold

the soil together, the features of the streetscape that support public activity, and the multigenerational stories that make up the Saint Nicholas Avenue imaginary will all be studied.

SCHEME

Part 1: Individual survey/documentation of the study area

- Object
- Mapping
- Writing

Part 2: Paired exploration of policy/governance/ownership models, and environmental/socioecological study

- Mapping
- Drawing
- Proposal

Part 3: Grouped (optional) proposals of spatial strategies

- Model and/or object
- Mapping
- Drawing

Weekly reflection journal to be completed throughout the semester, and will count towards participation/attendance portion of overall grade.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS

Manhattan Community Board 10 (Hon. Marquis A. Harrison, Chair). Relevant committees could include: Arts & Culture, Land Use, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation, Historic Preservation & Landmarks.

Manhattan Community Board 9 (Hon. Victor Edwards, Chair). Relevant committees could include: Arts & Culture, Cannabis Task Force, and Health and Environment

125th Street Business Improvement District (BID), a self-taxing entity, and precedent for hyperlocal governance

Friends of Saint Nicholas Park

Otto Neals, artist and sculptor of 135th Street's Harlem Walk of Fame

Harlem Grown, manager of community gardens and innovator of gardening technology in Harlem

Schomberg Center for Research in Black Culture (NYPL), [more of a resource than a partner] vast archival collection of Black ephemera, maps, and documentation of Harlem History

READINGS

Skinner, Julie. "Wayfinding Through the History of the Cookbook". *MOLD.* August 15, 2024. https://thisismold.com/process/cook/history-of-the-cookbook

Pau, Barney. "Between the Cracks: Weeding out Aesthetics". *MOLD.* June 27, 2024. https://thisismold.com/series/queering-theory/between-the-cracks

Cervenak, Sarah Jane. *Black Gathering: Art, Ecology, Ungiven Life* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2021).

Boone, Kofi. "Notes Toward a History of Black Landscape Architecture". *Places Journal*. October 2020. https://placesjournal.org/article/notes-toward-a-history-of-black-landscape-architecture/

Mutiti, Nontsikelelo. "Tracing the Diasporic Experience through the African Hair Braiding Salon". Ways of Knowing Cities (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019)

Odell, Jenny. "Reading the Rocks". *Emergence Magazine*. March 21, 2024. https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/reading-the-rocks/



Screenshot of media from "Yards & Yards & Yards & Yards" are.na channel. Curry J. Hackett.

ADDITIONAL READINGS (running list)

Plants and Ethnobotany:

Kimmerer, Robin Wall. Braiding Sweetgrass (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013)

Twitty, Michael. *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South* (New York, Amistad, 2017)

Del Tredici, Peter. "Flora of the Future". Places. April 2014. https://placesjournal.org/article/the-flora-of-the-future/

Mullins, Paul. "Gardens in the Black City: Landscaping 20th-Century African America". July 2019. https://paulmullins.wordpress.com/2015/07/19/gardens-in-the-black-city-landscaping-20th-century-african-america/

Policy/Governance:

Williams, Olivia R. "The Problem with Community Land Trusts". *Jacobin.* July 2019. https://jacobin.com/2019/07/community-land-trusts-clts-problems

Hong, Grace Kyungwon. "Property". *Keywords for American Cultural Studies* (New York: NYU Press). https://keywords.nyupress.org/american-cultural-studies/essay/property/

Urban Landscapes:

Roberts, Bryony. "Performative Rebellions". *Harvard Design Magazine*. Fall/Winter 2017. https://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/articles/performative-rebellions/

Mattern, Shannon. "Fugitive Libraries". *Places Journal*. October 2019. https://placesjournal.org/article/fugitive-libraries. October 2019. https://placesjournal.org/article/fugitive-libraries/.

Hayden, Dolores. "The Potential of Ethnic Places for Urban Landscape: Using Ethnic History to Understand Urban Landscapes [Vision, Culture and Landscape]". *Places Journal.* Volume 7, Issue 1. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1592744m

Allen, Diane Jones. "Living Freedom Through the Maroon Landscape". *Places Journal*. September 2022. https://placesjournal.org/article/the-maroon-communities-and-landscapes-of-louisiana/

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- Niya Bates' work on the Getting Word African-American Oral History Project at Monticello
- Maroon towns in Jamaica, quilombos in Brazil, and similar configurations throughout the American South
- HBCU college campus (as seen in films such as "Stomp the Yard" and "School Daze")
- "Black Land Pedagogy Lab", "Ugly Beauties", and "YARDS & YARDS" channels on Are.na
- Gordon Parks' chronicling of both Harlem street life and Southern Black life in the 20th century
- Harlem Grown community gardens
- Oral histories from "Drylongso: An Ode to the Black Southern Landscape", Curry J. Hackett, 2021
- "So That You All Won't Forget" exhibition at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum
- Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn
- Studio Zewde landscape/planting strategy at Studio Museum Harlem
- High on the Hog series on Netflix, and Jessica B. Harris' book by the same name
- "Ugly Beauties" installation in downtown Brooklyn, Curry J. Hackett, 2024

WEEKLY SCHEDULE, M/TH 2:00-5:20pm

Note: schedule below is subject to revision through the duration of the semester.

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Convocation @ 2:00pm, rm. 107

Advanced Studio Lottery @ 3:00pm, Aaron Davis Hall

Followed by first studio meeting

Mon 09.02

08.29

College Closed (Labor Day), no classes

Th 09.05 Hour SSA/JEDI Climate Survey (in studio) 2-3pm

Sciame Lecture: Maria Carrizosa

W3

Mon 09.09 Studio

Th 09.12 CJH at "Black Home as Public Art" conference; no class (virtual office hours TBC)

Sciame Lecture: Lawrence Vale

W4

Mon 09.16 Studio Th 09.19 Studio:

Rudin Lecture: Alan Hantman

W5

Mon 09.23 Studio

Th 09.26 Studio: Part 1 Due

W6

Mon 09.30 Studio
Th 10.03 No Classes

W7

Mon 10.07 Studio Th 10.10 Studio

Sciame Lecture: Jon Michael Schwarting & Frances Campani

W8

Mon 10.14 College Closed (Columbus/Indigenous Peoples' Day), no classes Tu 10.15 Studio (Classes for a Monday schedule)

Tu 10.15 Studio (Classes for a Morida

Th 10.17 Studio

Sciame Lecture: Anna Pashynska & Tania Pashynska

W9

Mon 10.21 Studio

Th 10.24 Studio - Midterm Reviews (Part 2 Due)

Sciame Lecture: Nora Akawi

W10

Mon 10.28 Studio

Th 10.31 Mid-semester assessments, Hour SSA Session

W11

Mon 11.04 Studio Th 11.07 Studio

Sciame Lecture: Sabine Malebranche

W12

Mon 11.11 Studio
Th 11.14 Studio

Sciame Lecture: TBD

W13

Mon 11.18 Studio

Th 11.21 Studio: Part 3 Due

W14

Mon 11.25 Studio

Th 11.28 College Closed (Thanksgiving), no classes

W15

Mon 12.02 Studio Th 12.05 Studio

FINAL REVIEWS, Dec 9-13 (Part 4 Due)

Mon 9 Dec	Tues 10 Dec	Wed 11 Dec	Th 12 Dec	Fri 13 Dec
Advanced	Core Studio 1	Advanced	Core Studio 3	Core Studio 5
Stigsgaard, Brahmbhatt, Hackett Keramati	Horn (coord)	Edmiston, Bolhassani, Gebert	Wainer (coord)	Volkmann (coord)

Mon 12.16 Clean-up Day (all materials, projects, and any other items must be removed from studio)

Tu 12.17 End of Semester Assessment (faculty only)

FINALS

Tu 12.17 Student Portfolios due for: SSA/CCNY Archive, etc. as directed by instructor

Fr 12.27 Final Grade Submission Deadline

GRADING/ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND STUDIO CULTURE

Course Expectations:

- That students will develop a high level of independent thought and rigor and a willingness to go beyond both basic project requirements and their own perceived limits and abilities.
- That students will successfully complete all project requirements. No make-up or postponed project submissions will be accepted except in the case of documented medical emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances. Excused absences and project delays must be officially cleared by the professor in advance to be considered valid.

Community Agreement:

- During the first full studio meeting, the professor will make time for an Hour SSA session for the JEDI Climate Survey.
- Studio members will work *together* to create a community agreement for interacting together over the semester. Definition: "A consensus on what every person in our group needs from each other and commits to each other in order to feel safe, supported, open, productive and trusting... so that we can do our best work." https://www.nationalequityproject.org/tools/developing-community-agreements

Methods of Assessment:

- Attendance and participation in class discussions and other activities: 10%
- Project development in response to semester schedule: 60%
- Project presentation, level of completion and resolution: 30%

Grading Assessment & Learning Outcomes:

- Students demonstrate the ability to respond to studio discourse and feedback in a consistent and clear manner throughout the semester as demonstrated in the evolution and development of design work.
- Students demonstrate the ability to utilize both digital and manual drawing and model-making techniques to

- precisely and creatively represent architectural ideas.
- Students demonstrate an understanding of the theoretical and applied research methodologies and practices used during the design process, and test and evaluate recent innovations in the field of architecture.
- Students demonstrate the ability to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project that
 includes such tasks as: an assessment of client and user needs; an inventory of spaces and their
 requirements; an analysis of site conditions (including existing buildings); a review of the relevant building
 codes and standards, including relevant sustainability requirements, and an assessment of their
 implications for the project; and a definition of site selection and design assessment criteria.
- Students demonstrate the skills associated with making integrated decisions across multiple systems and variables in the completion of a design project, in different settings and scales of development, from buildings to cities. This demonstration includes problem identification, setting evaluative criteria, analyzing solutions, and predicting the effectiveness of implementation.
- Attendance: Consistent level of preparation and on-time presence for each studio class and scheduled evening lectures.
- Portfolio: Completion of final portfolio or collection of studio work as directed by instructor and/or coordinator and attendance at all scheduled portfolio related events.

Grading Criteria:

- A (+/-) Work meets all requirements and exceeds them. Presentations are virtually flawless, complete, and finely detailed. Work exhibits professional, "museum quality" level of craft. Student has developed an individual design process that shows a high level of independent thought and rigor. Work shows evidence of intense ambition and effort to go beyond expectations, and beyond the student's own perceived limits of their abilities.
- **B** (+/-) Work meets all requirements. Presentations are complete and finely detailed. Work exhibits professional level of craft. Student has developed an individual design process that shows a high level of independent thought and rigor.
- **C** (+/-) Work meets minimum requirements. Deadlines are missed. While presentations may be somewhat complete, student has struggled to develop an individual design process and/or is lacking in craft or design resolution.
- **D** Work is below minimum requirements. Presentations are incomplete, student has struggled to develop an individual design process and/or is lacking in craft or design resolution.
- **F** Work is well below minimum requirements. Student does not develop adequate design process, and/or does not finish work.
- INC Grades of "incomplete" are not given under any circumstances unless there is evidence of a medical or personal emergency. In such cases, instructor and student develop a contract to complete work by a specified date, as per CCNY policy. Classes and/or work missed due to illness must be explained with a physician's note.

Notes:

D is the lowest passing grade for B. Arch students. Working in teams does not guarantee the same grade for each team member; grades are based on a range of criteria for each individual student.

For more information on grading guidelines and other CCNY policies and procedures, consult the current CCNY academic bulletins: https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/registrar/bulletins

Office Hours:

Each studio faculty member schedules 30 regular office hours over the semester, as posted at the top of the syllabus. If a student needs to speak in private with a studio critic, they should ask or email in advance to request a specific meeting time. Students may seek office hour appointments to discuss any matters of concern including personal, private matters and general inquiries about course related work, grading, assessment and content.

Probation & Dismissal: for program specific information related to grades, academic standing, probation and dismissal, please see your program academic advisors:

Undergrad: Amy Daniel adaniel@ccny.cuny.edu

Tony Bowles abowles@ccny.cuny.edu

Studio Culture:

Working collaboratively and respectfully on studio assignments, with and alongside others, is an expectation in studio. Studio culture is an important part of an architectural education, and it extends to expectations for Faculty and the School's Administration as well. Please see the Spitzer School of Architecture Studio Culture Policy, which can be accessed on the SSA website here: https://ssa.ccny.cuny.edu/about/policies/.

Absence & Lateness:

Arriving more than ten minutes late to class will constitute an absence. Two unexcused absences will result in a whole letter grade deduction from a final grade; more than four will result in a failing grade. It is expected that all students will participate in all scheduled working, midterm and final reviews and contribute constructively to the discussions.

Absences due to Religious Observances:

Students who will miss any class sessions, exams, presentations, trips, or the like due to a religious observance should notify the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate adjustments for observance needs can be implemented. This could include an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirement that is missed because of an absence due to a religious observance on any particular day or days.

Readings & Journals:

Students are expected to keep a journal or sketchbook throughout the duration of studio to document their thought process & take notes of any texts, books, terms or references that are mentioned by either the studio critic or fellow classmates and to selectively follow up on these and any other assigned readings before the next class.

Academic Integrity:

As a student you are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that reflects the ethical ideas of the profession of architecture. Any act of academic dishonesty not only raises questions about an individual's fitness to practice architecture, but also demeans the academic environment in which it occurred. Giving or receiving aid in examinations, and plagiarism are a violation of an assumed trust between the school and the student.

Plagiarism, i.e. the presentation as one's own work of words, drawings, ideas and opinions of someone else, is as serious an instance of academic dishonesty in this context as cheating on examinations. The submission of any piece of work (written, drawn, built, or photocopied) is assumed by the school to guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are literally the student's own, executed by the student. All assignments must be the student's original work. Any copying, even short excerpts, from another book, article, or Internet source, published or unpublished, without proper attribution will result in automatic failure of the entire course.

The CCNY Academic Integrity Policy: https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/about/integrity

For citations, the Chicago Manual of Style is recommended: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools citationguide.html

AccessAbility Center (Student Disability Services):

The AccessAbility center (AAC) facilitates equal access and coordinates reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and support services for City College students with disabilities while preserving the integrity of academic standards. Students who have self-identified with AAC to receive accommodations should inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester. (North Academic Center 1/218; 212-650-5913 or 212-650-6910 for TTY/TTD). For further information, go to http://www.ccny.cuny.edu/accessability/ or email disabilityservices@ccny.cuny.edu

Health And Wellness Support:

City College's Office of Health and Wellness Services offers free and confidential counseling. Contact: Health and Wellness Services, Marshak Science Building, room J-15: counseling@ccny.cuny.edu.

Gender Based Violence Resources

City College has resources to support you if you have experienced sexual violence, intimate partner/domestic violence, gender-based discrimination, harassment or stalking. For confidential support, you can contact the Student Psychological Counselor: Confidential Advocate at (212) 650-8905 or the Gender Resources Program at (212) 650-8222. If you would like to report sexual misconduct, you can contact the Chief Diversity Officer and Title IX Coordinator, Sheryl Konigsberg, Esq., at (212) 650-6310 or skonigsberg@ccny.cuny.edu. If there is an emergency on campus, you can call Public Safety at 212-650-777 and off campus call 911. For more information, see: https://www.ccny.cuny.edu/affirmativeaction

Library:

The school's library is a shared resource that is necessary supplement to all research and design work. Please direct questions to the library staff or the Architecture Librarian Nilda Sanchez-Rodriguez: nsanchez@ccny.cuny.edu

NAAB (National Architectural Accrediting Board):

The following criteria from the 2020 NAAB Conditions are addressed in this course:

<u>Program Criteria (PC)</u> These criteria seek to evaluate the outcomes of architecture programs and student work within their unique institutional, regional, national, international, and professional contexts, while encouraging innovative approaches to architecture education and professional preparation.

PC.2 Design: How the program instills in students the role of the design process in shaping the built environment and conveys the methods by which design processes integrate multiple factors, in different settings and scales of development, from buildings to cities.

PC.5 Research and Innovation—How the program prepares students to engage and participate in architectural research to test and evaluate innovations in the field.

Students should consult the NAAB website <u>www.naab.org</u> for additional information regarding student performance criteria and all other conditions for accreditation.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Cell (emergencies only): 202 302 2917