School of Architecture Studio Culture Policy - Revised August 21, 2012

Goals
1. Evaluate conventional studio culture and address areas of success and failure. Suggest ways to improve efficiency and student behavior in the studio environment.
2. Define the academic relationship between students and instructors to ensure a fair, efficient and creative environment.
3. Suggest practices for instructors regarding the curriculum and grading to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding between instructors and students.
4. Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and student/instructor cooperation within and outside of the studio environment.
5. Define the responsibility of the School of Architecture in supporting the Studio Culture Policy to ensure a rich and dynamic design environment.

1. Criticism of Conventional Studio Culture
Students must learn to balance their time in order to ensure their best performance and maintain their health and well-being.

> a. "All-nighters" are counter-productive and should not be encouraged. Instead, the studio culture should promote good time management skills.
> b. Columbia specifies the hours in which students are allowed to be in studio; students cannot be in studio outside the specified time period. This model levels the playing field for all students: those who are on full rides and therefore do not have to work and those who must work to support themselves and, in some cases, their families.
> c. While studio requires more dedication and time than other classes with fewer credit hours, the professor should recognize the importance of other classes in reaching the overall goal of achieving a well-rounded and complete post-secondary education.
> d. Students should maintain rigorous yet manageable workloads in order to have a successful college experience.

2. Students and Instructors
Effective communication, cooperation and mutual respect are all crucial components of the Student-Instructor dynamic. Both parties should be held accountable for their respective involvement in the studio process and the final product.

> a. Professors should emphasize the studio experience as a process towards a final goal rather than placing emphasis on a single product.
> b. Students and professors must recognize that design is a subjective discipline. There is no right answer within the studio culture. While students should listen to and respect a professor's opinions, professors should also understand that studio is a place for students not only to develop technical skills but also to figure out who they are as designers. There should exist a careful balance to ensure that the student is producing individualized and unique work.
> - This is especially true for graduate level studios, where students have a stronger sense of who they are as a designer.
> c. Students are not subordinates. Professors should recognize the distinction between design work and grunt work
> d. Instructors should stress the critical importance of cataloguing work and preparing studio work for the student's portfolio. In addition, instructors should make themselves available to provide advice concerning careers and further education.

3. Curriculum and Evaluation

Professors should be held responsible for clearly communicating expectations for a studio, especially those concerning the incremental process that takes place throughout the semester and concerning the end goal. They should also provide students with clear criteria regarding grading. This is to prevent misunderstanding and conflicts if a student feels that he/she has received a grade that does not reflect performance.

  a. Professors should provide direct and well thought out plans for their studios to ensure good time management on the part of the students. Without these plans, the students cannot possibly manage their time in a successful way.
  - Dates for reviews and major deliverables should be clearly outlined in the professor's syllabus distributed at the beginning of the semester.
  b. Professors should emphasize the importance of writing and encourage the use of appropriate language in communicating ideas.
  - Design students excel at graphic representation of projects, but their writing abilities are often not as strong. A sharper focus on the ability to describe projects clearly and effectively in writing would be a great benefit to students once they set out into the professional world.
  c. Professors should consider a student's performance over an entire semester in determining the student's final grade. Explanations, with clear and distinct reasoning, are necessary to explain the professor's evaluation of the student's performance.
  d. Midterm grades should be given in the same manner as final grades. "Blanket grades" or placeholders are not helpful to student's progress or final product. According to university policy, midterm grades are not required for graduate students but must be given to undergraduate students. In the past these policies have not been enforced by our School of Architecture.
  e. Professors should push students to reach their greatest potential. This includes the issue of leniency. If it is impossible to fail, students will not be properly prepared for the professional world. Professors should hold students accountable for their work.

4. Collaboration and Competition

Collaboration should be highly encouraged at all levels in the School of Architecture and outside: between individual students, studio years, and with other universities.

  a. The studio environment is both cooperative and competitive. Students learn immeasurably from their peers through mutual support and healthy competition. Professors should promote a studio environment that includes both.
  b. Students should be encouraged to sit on reviews of their peers. Interaction to bridge the gap between undergraduate and graduate programs should be promoted.
  c. Collaboration between studio years should be encouraged at all times. Upper-level students have as much to contribute to lower years as their respective professors.
  d. The School of Architecture should encourage the inclusion of interdisciplinary faculty, and/or partnerships with other disciplines such as engineering, business, product design, art and landscape architecture.
  e. Students are encouraged to take on competitions and responsibilities in extracurricular activities whenever possible.

5. The College and Studio Culture

The College should seek to maintain a fresh and contemporary approach towards design education and provide opportunities for involvement outside the university.

a. New faculty should be added regularly to the College and existing faculty should be encouraged to remain informed about current issues pertaining to design and be proactive in their research.

b. The College should seek to provide a multitude of study abroad opportunities that accommodate students' different circumstances.

c. Other opportunities such as the Practice Preview should be made available to expose students to the professional world.

d. The College should also encourage student involvement in the community to influence design and its effect on the community at large.

e. The University should be a laboratory for experimentation but should not be oblivious to design's role in the community.

f. Faculty and students should invest significant time in drafting, communicating, and evaluating policy effectiveness so that this can further inform the development and implementation of studio culture policies as a tool.

g. All students and instructors should be aware of the Studio Culture Policy and seek to uphold it. Conflict or violation of the policy should be addressed directly by the Dean and other concerned parties.

- To achieve this, all students and faculty should be given a digital copy of the Studio Culture Policy at the beginning of the academic year.