College of Architecture + Planning
University of Utah

Studio Culture Policy and Procedures for Implementation

Values

Place of Synthesis: In the College of Architecture + Planning, we believe in the importance of the design studio as an essential point of engagement, convergence, and integration for the educational and personal experiences of our students. In the design studio, students synthesize experiences from coursework, research, and observations into their work through processes of critical thinking, engaged action, and understanding. The studio model is critical and central to the educational mission of the College, for it is intended to foster the exchange of ideas, the cultivation of critical thought, and the development of a variety of skills needed to prepare the next generation of design professionals for changing professional roles and responsibilities within the context of increasing cultural diversity and an expanding knowledge base.

The Iterative Nature of Design: Architectural design is an art-full and intellectual process, simultaneously intuitive and reasoned, aesthetic and utilitarian, as well as being experimental and inherently inefficient. While personal, design ideas are subject to formal, functional, physical, historical, and cultural principles and knowledge. Design, an open-ended and evolving process, demands that ideas are continually assessed and reassessed through an intensive thinking and making progression. Critical inquiry and self-examination are fundamental for personal growth and development for students and faculty. Design is therefore, iterative and requires a simultaneous objective and subjective learning and evaluation process within the studio.

Social Art: Architectural design is ultimately an activity intended for the improvement of the environment and the societies and individuals which occupy it. Design is an activity enhanced by the opportunity for dialogue, reflection, and experimentation, and this should occur freely. The design process is accentuated by collaboration between students, faculty, and guests, and is supported by working resources (fabrication shop, computer labs, library, review space, etc.). The studio environment, as a physical, psychological, and intellectual environment, should result in the productive generation and investigation of ideas.

Public Space: The studio is a public academic space, and discussion among students, faculty, and guests is an integral part of the experience. The strength of this process is dependent upon the level of engagement of each participant to contribute to a positive learning atmosphere that fosters healthy competition and collaboration. The studio environment should be centered on sharing, engagement, innovation, collaboration and respect among all participants.

Conduct

The design studio is driven by the energy, intensity, commitment, and experimentation students bring to their work. Student engagement is fueled by personal ideas and experiences, as well as individual interests and interpretations which add richness to the studio process as well as stimulate experimentation. Through their pedagogy and engagement, faculty encourage and sustain intensity and commitment while fostering inquiry and experimentation that respond to a diversity of views and positions.

Faculty have the right to expect that students will:
- Come to the studio with the desire to learn from others, assist others with their learning needs, and work toward a robust shared experience where thoughts, ideas, and concerns are advanced.
- Be willing to take risks in the design process in seeking ideas that are new and unique.
- Value and benefit from the diversity of each individual in the class, and respect each person's cultural history, educational background, ideas, beliefs, and experiences.
- Promote a sense of optimism, and value the efforts and contributions of colleagues.
- During studio hours, be fully engaged in the tasks at hand, and be prepared for studio activities (pin-ups, desk crits, reviews, field trips, etc.).
- Endeavor to meet the course expectations and specific assignments in a timely and efficient manner.

Students have the right to expect that the faculty will:
- Regard each student as a unique individual deserving of concern and attention, and value each student's contributions to the studio.
- Come with the best interests of each student, and treat each student fairly and in a respectful, consistent and supportive manner.

- Share his/her knowledge, and assist students to find other resources (faculty, professionals, literature, examples etc.) that will aid student understanding and enrichment.
- Provide timely and detailed feedback of their work to support their growth and development.
- Value the time of students by establishing and adhering to fair and reasonable schedules for class time activities and by assignments that are directed toward learning and knowledge acquisition as well as product.
- Coordinate whenever possible due dates in all required courses in the undergraduate major.

Students have the right to expect that other students will:
- Come to the studio with the desire to learn from others, assist others with their learning needs, and work toward a robust shared experience where thoughts, ideas, and concerns are advanced.
- Regard each other as unique individuals deserving of concern and attention, and value each student's contributions to the studio.
- Value and benefit from the diversity of each individual in the class, and respect each person's cultural history, educational background, ideas, beliefs, and experiences.
- Promote a sense of optimism, and value the efforts and contributions of other classmates.
- Respect the personal work space of their peers, and the public space of the studio.

The design studio employs a variety of means and formats to review the ideas and work of students and is an essential element of the culture of the studio. Reviews are simultaneously an opportunity to facilitate discussion of greater issues and relationships such as those between theory and practice, idea and realization, and ethics and responsibilities, as well as the occasion to consider differing view points and possibilities.

For formal reviews, students and faculty are expected to arrive on time and stay engaged as active participants throughout the review process. In advance of the reviews, faculty are responsible for informing invited guests and reviewers about the project intentions and background, as well the expectation that the review will reflect the College's commitment to a culture of respect, engagement, and professionalism. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss their work, as well as to participate in the discussions of their peers work.

Rules

The studio is a public, academic space, and in order to advance a culture of respect, care should be given so that the work of others is not disrupted. Activities that challenge this environment – such as excessive noise (personal entertainment devices must be listened to with headphones only), computer gaming, and the like – could undermine the academic mission of the College and the quality of life of its students. Unacceptable behaviors include the display of pornographic or offensive images and the use of drugs and alcohol.

Implementation

Ultimately, the goal of a highly positive studio culture can be achieved only through all stake holders appreciation of the benefits of this shared interest, as well as a long-term commitment to its attainment. With that in mind, the Dean shall annually organize a Studio Culture Committee, comprised of faculty and elected student representatives, whose responsibilities are fivefold:

1. To periodically review the studio culture policy and its successes and issues, and make recommendations for changes to the College Council as appropriate.

2. To hold a town hall meeting at the beginning of each academic year to review the Studio Culture policy and its implementation. All students and regular faculty, as well as auxiliary faculty teaching design studio will attend this meeting.

3. To ensure that all students, regular faculty, and auxiliary faculty teaching design studio, receive and review the policy. The committee will hold any necessary discussions with regular and auxiliary faculty to clarify the policy.

4. To advise students or faculty who believe that the policy may have been violated, and to refer any complaints or questions to the appropriate administrator, in accordance with University of Utah policies.

5. To organize and schedule time management workshops at the beginning of each academic year (for both students and faculty).

The College will have a Studio Culture link on its web site that will house the policy and include links to other sites and information as appropriate.