2017 National Conference on the Beginning Design Student – Revised Conference Proposal (2/19/16)

Begin with Why: Ethics and Values in the Beginning of Design

Host University:
University of Utah College of Architecture + Planning
Salt Lake City, Utah

Tentative Dates:
Feb 16-18, 2017
Feb 23-25, 2017
Mar 2-4, 2017

Co-Chairs:
Erin Carraher, Assistant Professor – School of Architecture
Elpitha Tsoutsounakis, Assistant Professor, Clinical – Multi-Disciplinary Design Program
Jim Agutter, Founding Director – Multi-Disciplinary Design Program
Stephen Goldsmith, Director – Urban Ecology Program / Director – University Capstone Initiative Program
Mimi Locher, Director – School of Architecture
Keith Diaz Moore, Dean – College of Architecture + Planning
Martha Bradley – Senior Vice President – Undergraduate Affairs / Professor – School of Architecture

Conference Theme:
The simple fact of the matter is that we are educating the next generation of designers that will enter a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. Many of the global challenges we confront have been shaped by the prevailing paradigm of the past century, which also underlies certain pedagogical assumptions. It may well be that rather than focusing on specialization, disciplinary adherence, and skill building, we need to prepare students to be systemic, integrative, and agile thinkers. In the Atelier or Bauhaus models of design education where the why and what of the discipline is known, it made great sense to begin with the how of skill building as those skills were known to inform such outcomes. But where the outcome is ambiguous and the world into which our students will practice is unknown, developing habits of mind that scaffold resilience are more critical – especially if we believe that design has a fundamental role to play in quality of life. We may well need to begin with why through the discussion of ethics and values.

At the College of Architecture + Planning, we believe there are four central commitments that are fundamental to beginning any act of design:
1. Responsibility to past, present and future generations for the reallocation of resources
2. Resilience of the ecology, community, and adaptive capacity of individuals
3. Respect for the health and culture of all people and places
4. Response that design has a central role in addressing the global challenges of our day

Several thought leaders on the topic of the future of education such as Daniel Pink (A Whole New Mind) and Howard Gardner (Five Minds for the Future) posit their own frameworks for the types of ‘minds’ that will be best able to navigate in the unknowable world of the near future. As such, rather than a series of predetermined tracks, we propose to have authors ‘tag’ their papers with suggested key words. This will both form a conceptual framework of ethics and values particular to the Beginning Design community and will allow for conference organizers to identify complimentary (and maybe contradictory) papers to cluster in sessions. Sample key words include: complexity, empathy, urgency, responsibility, authenticity, respect, resilience, integrity, congruency, engagement, collaboration, vulnerability, humility, trust, risk, iteration, commitment, context, systems thinking, reflection, gestalt, ethics.

Our intent is to create an environment conducive to truly multi-disciplinary dialog surrounding the topic of Beginning Design. To achieve this, we will reach out to industrial design, graphic design, landscape architecture, interior architecture, fine arts, urban planning, ecological design, and other related fields to take part in the discussion. Additionally, the conference organizers are specifically interested in focusing on the research behind beginning design education in addition to presentations on projects.

Location:
The conference will be held on the University of Utah campus, with the primary activities taking place at the brand
new Lassonde Entrepreneur Center (http://lassonde.utah.edu/) and the Sill Center, which houses the Office for Undergraduate Studies. Additional venues such as the historic downtown Alta Club, the new Law School roof terrace, the Natural History Museum of Utah, and others will be identified as the conference details are finalized.

Keynote Speaker:
A keynote speaker will be selected in collaboration with the College of Architecture + Planning lecture series and the University’s Office for Undergraduate Affairs. Martha Bradley has pledged support to help bring in a high-caliber speaker to address broader questions related to the future of undergraduate and design education. Thought leaders in this field that have been discussed include Daniel Pink, Jeremy Rifkin, Tim Vanderhook, Mihaly Cziksentmihaly, Roy Leighton, and Howard Gardner.

Additional Offerings:

- Continuing in the tradition of past conferences hosted by the College of Architecture + Planning, the conference organizers will develop a series of pre-conference and post-conference offerings such as a ski outing in Utah’s spectacular mountains.

- Tours of significant buildings in downtown Salt Lake City as well as local design offices that demonstrate hybrid or integrated practice will be organized and include:
  - Infinite Scale – www.infinitescale.com
  - We Like Small – www.welikesmall.com
  - Spy Hop – www.spyhop.org
  - The Leonardo – www.theleonardo.org
  - The LDS Temple - www.ldschurchtemples.com/saltlake/
  - LDS Tabernacle Dome -
  - LDS Conference Center -
  - City and County Building -
  - FFKR Architects Office -
  - SLC Public Library -

- Prospects for a related exhibit such as the Cooper Hewitt’s Design with the Other 90% are being explored in collaboration with the Utah Museum of Fine Arts and the Utah Museum of Contemporary Art.

- A pre-conference skiing outing and a series of planned social opportunities will be organized to help connect attendees. Informal topic dinners, receptions at local design firms, and a tie-in with SLC gallery stroll will allow for conference-goers to continue the conversation beyond the structured activities.

- Lastly, free workshops on teaching and research topics hosted by the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence, and the Integrated Technology in Architecture Center will be offered.

Housing Options:
Blocks of rooms will be reserved at a number of downtown hotels to provide a range of options and price points. Conference attendees will receive an unlimited public transportation pass to the Salt Lake light rail system (TRAX) that connects to the airport, university, and is proximate to all suggested downtown hotels.

Proceedings:
Following the example of past conferences, we will prepare conference proceedings in advance of the conference so as to have printed copies available to all attendees on site.

Support:
The University of Utah is situated in downtown Salt Lake City amidst a vibrant architecture and design community. There are very strong ties between the university and practicing design communities, the AIA, AIGA, AICP, and other professional organizations, which would all provide support and promotion for the conference. Various co-chairs for the conference hold leadership positions in these organizations, including the AIA, Young Architects Forum, and AIGA. Within the college, the Director of the School of Architecture and the Dean of the College of Architecture + Planning are strongly in support of bringing the conference to Utah.
Graphic Identity & Social Media:
Design thinking and technological integration will be modeled throughout the conference. A strong graphic identity will be developed and a social media strategy will be employed to connect attendees beyond the paper presentations and plenary sessions as a way to enrich the conference experience. Additionally, all materials – posters, proceedings, and accouterments – will be designed objects that serve as artifacts for the conference.

The College of Architecture + Planning:
Within the college, the School of Architecture (SoA), the Department of City & Metropolitan Planning (C&MP), and the Multi-Disciplinary Design (MDD) programs espouse practices of integrated design education. Though based in the college, MDD by its very nature is an integrated program that is housed in six colleges within the university. Both programs have a common Beginning Design sequence with students participating in common courses.

The University of Utah:
The University of Utah is a Research I university and a member of the Pac-12. It is ideally located within walking distance of downtown Salt Lake City along the foothills of the greater Rocky Mountains, offering world-class skiing and hiking. Salt Lake City is home to an impressively cosmopolitan and diverse population and is consistently ranked among the nation’s most livable cities and best college towns.

Salt Lake City, UT:
Salt Lake City is the capital of Utah and the most populous city in the state. It is located in foothills of the Rocky Mountains and is within 20 minutes of several world-class ski resorts. Salt Lake City is the home of the LDS church, which has its central religious buildings located prominently in downtown. A major international airport is a ten-minute drive from downtown and is also easily accessible by public transportation. Several downtown hotels are located adjacent to public transportation stops, which connect directly to the university campus.

Websites:
College of Architecture + Planning - www.cap.utah.edu
School of Architecture – www.soa.utah.edu
Multi-Disciplinary Design Department - www.design.utah.edu
Department of City & Metropolitan Planning - www.plan.utah.edu
University of Utah – www.utah.edu
Salt Lake City Visitor’s Bureau - www.visitsaltlake.com
Salt Lake City Downtown Alliance - www.downtownslc.org

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