

Undergraduate Architecture Meeting- Minutes

November 13, 2003 25 People with Pizza and Soda

1. Jan introduced himself and gave some history to the department of architecture at mit.

2. This is a critical time to have the undergrads come together for three reasons:

- First being the implementation of the new dean of architecture is next semester and she is interested in the undergrad department.
- Second being that the GIRs are in the process of reevaluation (thinking about making more hands on classes and possibly more in major classes)
- Third being that the design faculty is going to redo the undergrad curriculum.

3. There are 5 critical issues that jan raised:

- Admissions: Jan reads every course four application and also reviews any portfolio work that is submitted. He thinks we should publish a small booklet and poster that represents the work of the department to send out to applicants and put all over campus. He also introduced the idea to travel to high schools and promote the department in January.
- Space: we are essentially an outpost at MIT. Although we have more space, we are isolated from the rest of the department. The new dean does agree that it would be ideal to join the grads and undergrads, but this is a bad time financially. Jan has had thoughts of building on top of the roof or expanding into building 9.
- Studios: should we have more or less? Should they be more intensive or less? How do the students feel about the senior thesis? Should the intro levels be worth more units?
- Curriculum: skilled courses? International workshops?
- Other: have a studio in the spring that is essentially a design build and would possibly make the tent for graduation or put up an exhibition on campus. Supplies? Safety? How to make N-51 better (heat, lights, 3rd floor corridor being an exhibition space)

4. Conversation started amongst the group

CREDITS- CURRICULUM

- Because the people take 101 as a HASS, we shouldn't increase the units.
- We could introduce another introduction to spatial thinking and basic design so that people exploring majors can take that and not be in a studio.
- As an undergrad the main concern is getting into graduate school, but we have far less studio than other schools such as Berkeley.

- People are concerned that level II ends at 6 and therefore runs into other campus undergraduate activities.
- Talked about the NAAB accrediting rules: how a 4 year program is never accredited.
- Idea to build something- build our own space, improving N-51 on our own. The department should be receptive to that because we are the ones doing it.

WORKSHOPS

- Create January sub-courses for building/ constructing/ drawing/ material search.
- Tons of comments about the frustration of not knowing how to represent things and wasting money.
- A 2 week IAP structures class would be beneficial. Also, the real structures class would be much more educational if it was actually hands on (like the course at Berkeley) and it would last longer.
- We should bridge the gap between construction workers and architects (really speaking about the gap between different facets of the building industry).
- Materials exposure through texture and joining techniques
- Using graduate students as a resource for modeling and drafting technique
- Introduce materials in 101?
- Quick introduction to design class where people design “things” and use a variety of materials to represent.
- Jan says we’re better at drafting and modeling than 5 years ago.
- Have the workshops during the semester and that way attracting people that aren’t architecture majors.
- Steve: it is not morally justifiable to justify Simmons to the rest of MIT (meaning that it is important to have another function in the greater MIT community)
- The workshops are going to be successful because it is inherent in the MIT personality to be interested in construction
- We should also be aware of /search other departments for workshops that have similar subject matter (like 2, 3, 1) and see if we can join forces.
- An introduction to eastern architecture was suggested as a workshop topic
- General feeling that we want more history and in-depth case/precedent studies so that we have a broad reference spectrum
- Jan noted that architecture has the least knowledge base out of any profession and that its actually avoided.
- Workshops could also consist of visiting architects to talk about what they do, their office culture, and provide different options for things to do with the degree.
- Option to go every Thursday, alternating between physical working workshops and lecture/ educational workshops

OFFICE VISITS- INTERNSHIP

- Important to set up office crawls where we can go to the offices.
- Architect mentoring
- Change IAP internship requirements to allow for less studio experience. Challenge the notion that we need properly represent MIT by getting our resumes reviewed and having a specific level of experience.
- Discussed the importance of having a good resume but noting that you can work/ be exposed to the architecture office culture without having any experience.
- Intern program is good in that its a way to get a summer job.

EXTRAS

- There should be a publication to target MIT to get the word out there that architecture is a justifiable major here.
- Everyone should bring in some project during one of the meetings and we can spend that time organizing the poster and brochure.
- Put flyers on all desks to advertise meetings too hopefully get more freshmen and help bridge that gap
- Create an architecture pre-orientation program to grab architecture students, introduce materials, basic design, and basically hook people who have a general interest.
- Host an undergrad t-shirt competition and finally have a presence on campus.
- There is a great interest in meeting regularly on Thursdays (maybe every third)
- The AIAS wants to be responsible for heading a lot of the activities that might require planning and direction

5. General Consensus:

- We need to evaluate the curriculum for ourselves and present suggestions to the administration about GIRs and course intensity
- Skilled workshops covering a variety of things from materials, to history, to basic design principles, to hosting visiting architects during either IAP or throughout the term. Would there be credit involved?
- Find ways to interest the MIT community in architecture though advertising (brochures), built exhibits, t-shirts, etc.
- Reach the freshmen before they are freshmen (brochure in the application), before they arrive (hosted, timed campus visits), right when they do (pre-orientation programs), and once here (mentoring and so on).