University of New Mexico
School of Architecture + Planning
Studio Culture Policy

Mission

The University of New Mexico School of Architecture and Planning / Architecture Program seeks to create a collaborative studio culture environment that is documented and developed in collaboration with the faculty, staff and students representative of the multiple departments contained in our unique learning environment. To that end, the document should be regularly revisited and treated as a living document that is addressing the needs and culture of the current faculty, staff and students. This policy endeavors to move toward the establishment of inspirational and conceptual ideas that speak to the spirit of how we want interaction to occur in our learning environment. The guiding principles for the creation of this iteration will be Optimism, Respect, Sharing, Engagement, and Innovation.

Optimism

As architects we are in the business of creation. We create solutions, processes and experiences. We are professionals that solve the unsolvable and build the unbuildable. Therefore, it is our duty to instill a culture of optimism at the earliest stages of our architectural journey. This principle is to extend further, as we navigate the various stages of our path to gain licensure and earn the right to call ourselves architects. Optimism will serve to encourage us to continue our journey and achieve the goals we originally set out to accomplish. We should approach our learning environment with enthusiasm, trust and a positive attitude for the future of our community and our profession.

Respect

The architectural profession has long been a profession with the unique ability to view problems with respect for a variety of viewpoints which has enabled us to offer a holistic solution that benefits all parties. In keeping with that tradition, is important that our learning environment creates a culture of balance, perspective, growth and engagement. Faculty, staff and students should respectively assign, support and complete studio work that reflects a thoughtful workload and a carefully crafted *solution* to design problems. As collaborators in this endeavor it, is understood that preparation goes both ways and we should all approach the learning environment with the intent to contribute. As professionals, our students should be taught the value of their time and should never be made to believe that an architect's time is less valuable. Respect and optimism for the future of our profession should be guiding principles for the faculty, staff and students. Knowing that life happens outside of studio, faculty, staff and students should be encouraged to balance studio with outside endeavors. It is essential that we all make time for personal growth and engagement in outside activities as these are essential to a healthy learning environment.

Sharing

The profession of architecture has a rich heritage that has contributed to our global culture in a way that few professions can match. For centuries we have been the model for civic responsibility and collaboration in the arts, sciences, and humanities. As architects we have shown a unique ability over time to share our expertise for the greater good of our society. To continue that tradition as we work to create our learning environment, we need to strive to encourage the sharing of knowledge through the promotion of teamwork and collaborative critic. We should encourage cross disciplinary engagement with our fellow students in studio and offer critic to one another on a regular basis. As a guiding principle we should view civic engagement and community involvement as an opportunity to share our profession with the community at large and work to build a continued respect for the profession of architecture.

Engagement

The importance of engagement will span the entirety of an architect's career. By embracing a culture of engagement the school will further prepare its students to serve as successful architects, leaders and above all good citizens. This includes affecting change that would better the community, society and users as a whole. Leadership and architecture are too often thought of as two separate entities when in reality they should be cultivated hand in hand. It is important that studio projects fully consider social, cultural and environmental implications on any given community. This experience will make communication and working with future clients more effective. Lastly, the student must engage with the profession. Architecture is a lifelong educational endeavor and an architect never truly stops being a student. The best way to foster this need is to have access to professionals in the field. This means opportunities for mentorship, critique and firm visits. This partnership will give a better understanding of the realities of the practice of architecture.

Innovation

It must be understood that architecture and innovation are one and the same as innovation is the nature of design that allows us to create something new and unique. But there is more to the equation there must be improvement. These concepts cannot be enhanced if there is no exploration, spontaneity or creativity. To promote these concepts, the studio environment must provide student s the opportunity to take risks in their designs. Along with exploration and creativity, there must also be support provided for critical and analytic thinking. Utilizing these concepts together will create a sound base for a student to begin to question existing conditions. This will further allow for new levels of innovation and creative discovery. Innovation should not only be expected of the student, the faculty and administration must embrace it as well. Existing practices should consistently be rethought and creative alternatives should be continually redeveloped.

Revision

The studio culture policy is a living document that should continue to reflect the learning environment of the most current faculty, staff and students. Further, the document should always be available to critic. To that end, we offer the following as proposed guidelines for revision: January—Faculty and Student leaders meet to discuss existing policy and opportunities for growth; early March—Students and Faculty come together to discuss respective recommendations for changes and draft the newly proposed document; Mid April—Revision should be distributed to the general populous at the SA+P.

*Note: With or without changes, the studio culture policy should reflect the most recent date for which the policy was reviewed for revision.

Revised March 2010, March 2011, February 2012