

**Tipping Point Update**  
College of Environmental Design

March, 2009

**1. Recent examples of how assessment feedback has been used to modify activities for continuous improvement**

All but one of ENV's degree programs are accredited by one of four professional accrediting bodies. Ongoing assessment is required by each of the accrediting bodies and this process plays a primary role in the College's assessment activities. The Architecture and Art programs have undergone the most recent accreditation reviews. Recent examples of modification due to assessment include:

- The Architecture Department has continued to review the digital media component of their curriculum and has made some significant changes. They have collected feedback from students, as well as the accreditation teams, alumni and practitioners (through visiting juries) in assessing the knowledge and skill levels of students in the third year of the B. Arch. program and the second year of the M. Arch. program. In response to identified weaknesses, the Department established a new digital media class (ARC 591) for graduate students, and made substantial revisions to the content in ARC 150, 201, 202 and 203 in the undergraduate program.
- The Architecture Department has also been assessing their building construction and structures sequences and has made some important modifications. Student performance and feedback, as well as suggestions from the accreditation teams, alumni and practitioners (through visiting juries) are being used to restructure these curricula. Advanced structures and seismic design courses have been modified to emphasize exam proficiency in preparation for professional licensure, and 3-D digital technology is being fully integrated into the building construction sequence.
- The Art Department has submitted a proposal to elevate the subplan option in Art History to its own Bachelor Degree program. This is in direct response to feedback from students and alumni who have encountered difficulty qualifying for employment opportunities for art historians, due to their degree being in Art, not Art History.
- The Master's program in Regenerative Studies (the one program in ENV that is not accredited) has continually used student focus groups to provide feedback on the curriculum, and augment assessment by faculty and visiting juries. Student feedback noted a weakness in the program in the application of regenerative principles to real-world environmental problems. In response a specific course in Methods and Applications (RS 540) has been developed and will be implemented in 2009-10.
- Student feedback in all programs has continually emphasized the desire for greater collaboration between disciplines within the college, as well as with related entities across campus. A number of recent collaborations have been initiated in response to such feedback, including a collaboration between Architecture and Civil Engineering in a pedestrian bridge design class; a collaboration between Architecture and The Collins College in the design of their new facility; a collaboration between the Lyle Center and Administrative Affairs in the development of the campus Climate Action Plan; an interdisciplinary course on entertainment design for Architecture, Art, Landscape Architecture and Planning students to be offered this spring (ENV 499).

**2. Recent examples of measures taken to encourage students to take charge of their learning**

ENV's accredited professional programs are highly structured and have limited options that support students taking charge by exercising choice. However a number of recent changes have focused on providing opportunities for specialization and pursuit of personal interests:

- The Department of Urban and Regional Planning is now encouraging graduate students to select a concentration in one of five areas: Transportation, land use, environment, housing, or community development. Undergraduate students are empowered to develop a senior project of their own choosing and to pursue electives that support their senior project investigation.
- The Master's Program in Regenerative Studies was developed with the intention that students would be responsible for designing their own curriculum in consultation with an advisor. The students supplement a core with electives in a self-chosen focus area that constitute 35% of their unit requirements for the degree.
- The Department of Landscape Architecture has recently shifted their curricula to emphasize current and innovative topics at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This affords students the opportunity to select specific project topics based on their interests, to fulfill design studio requirements at the advanced levels of both programs.
- The Department of Architecture has also implemented topic studios at the undergraduate level. At the graduate level, students are now encouraged to develop a program concentration in either historic preservation or environmental sustainability.
- The College has significantly increased its international programs in recent years, which offer an important opportunity for students to choose interesting geographic areas and interdisciplinary opportunities to augment their professional education. Each Department offers one or more programs, including interdisciplinary opportunities in China (architecture, landscape architecture, and urban & regional planning) and Latin America (Lyle Center).
- Extra-curricular activities supported by the college are an important opportunity to empower students to take charge of their learning. Each Department supports a wide variety of student activities, ranging from student-managed lecture series and workshops, to community dinners and discussions. At the college level, the ENV career day is an annual student-managed event, that continues to enjoy broad participation of students from all disciplines.

### **3. Recent examples of effective methods used to measure customer satisfaction**

- ENV career day is an annual event that brings to campus dozens of firms, agencies and organizations that employ ENV alumni and students. Recently, we began surveying participants to gain feedback on student preparedness from the professional sectors. Feedback has been used to refine curricula, determine appropriate topics for studio courses, and to provide career advice for students.

### **4. Recent examples of effective methods used to measure student learning (vs. what is taught)**

- Urban and Regional Planning recently measured student learning in a discussion-oriented planning class that featured both in-class and on-line (hybrid) methods of teaching and learning. Research compared the performance under the hybrid model with a traditional format based on measured student performance, student evaluations, supplemental surveys and instructor reflection. The results suggested equivalent performance in each, with unique student learning benefits from the hybrid model. This work, which culminated in a peer-reviewed publication for the faculty member, may offer a framework for ways of measuring student learning in other ENV courses.
- All of the programs in ENV continue to use the long-standing model of visiting juries for many design and planning courses. Guest experts, practitioners, alumni, and community members, participate in the final review of materials produced by students. This provides students and faculty with direct feedback about their work from multiple perspectives, providing qualitative data about the effectiveness of

student learning directly from the source material. Jurors are typically asked to comment on specific learning outcomes that relate to objectives for the particular course.