

RESPONSE: Vetting implications of Curriculum modifications

In addition to specific questions about courses and credits there are some general points that I feel strongly need to be vetted before I would feel comfortable moving forward with this or any proposal? In particular I am concerned about the implications on two of the stakeholders we have yet to involve in this conversation the Adjunct Teaching Faculty and the Students.

I am also not clear what about the NAAB initiative forces us to change our current curriculum other than deciding in which course we hit NAAB objectives. Lia has asked repeatedly “What is wrong with our current AAS curriculum?” The two changes that seem necessary are to combine foundations and visual studies and re-align the curriculum of the Building Tech Sequence, particularly building tech 1 & 2. Does NAAB require that we increase hours for design?

No, NAAB does not require a particular number of credits or contact hours for studio courses. The proposal, as discussed during our meetings in September, is seeking to improve the learning outcomes for studio courses by providing contact hours per student that are at least close to that of a significant majority of B Arch programs around the country (Public and Private Institutions). Many programs dedicate 12 contact hours per week for studio. This proposal dedicates 9 hours per week, which was proposed at a September faculty meeting as a compromise. The metric behind this compromise was the provision of 30 minutes per week of one-on-one instruction. If the studios are limited to 15 students, 9 hours meets this metric. Also, this compromise addressed the 9 contact hour limit of part-time faculty that was raised in September.

The combination of Foundations and Visual Studies courses will also result in 9 hour studios first and second semester, a goal that no one has disputed. The proposal maintains this standard through Studios III and IV.

This metric was devised not arbitrarily, but as a pedagogical response to the positive impact of one-on-one instruction on City Tech architecture students, the mentoring and modeled behavior that our faculty can share with each

student as an individual. Quality interaction between faculty and students is a research supported method of raising student success. Also, this increased allocation of time provides students with increased opportunity for peer to peer learning, also a research supported approach to improving learning outcomes. This increase allows for more lab work to be executed in class, rather than at home where many student lack the proper tools and resources. Finally, this increased lab work is supported under the guidance of the faculty and CLTs.

One way to look at the increased studio contact hours is to see it as a balance to the workshops, many of which are on weekends and are hard for students to attend. If we can provide the support they need in class, the students that cannot make the weekend workshops will be at a lesser disadvantage. This particularly would apply to students that work on weekends. The workshops are entirely extracurricular and add time to their schedules that we don't formally recognize but we often rely heavily on, especially for our digital spine.

Our NAAB consultant has emphasized the importance of Integrated Teaching, and the specific things NAAB teams look for in the student work. He mentioned that NAAB wants to see a knowledge of technology expressed in the studio work, not just form making and conceptual thinking. This includes structural concepts (not detailed structural design, but basic identification or recognition of structural concepts.) He noted that the team looks at sections for plausible thicknesses and demonstration of understanding of the relationship between space and structure. As pointed out in our recent faculty meeting, Design V students struggle to design space let alone consider structure, even after 4 semesters of Building Technology and 1 semester of Structures. I have observed 4th year design students with the same lack of ability to integrate technology into their studio work, and that is after additional studios and technical courses. If this is the case, we need to improve our studio pedagogy and teaching.

I am not trying to make this difficult for us but I would feel remiss if I did not bring discussion of these things to the forefront. I also want to be clear that I

support the idea of a 5 year professional degree at our college. I just want to be sure we do it right.

I keep hearing everyone say we can make changes later – but I am not convinced that will create a good and cohesive and well thought out program – if we rush our decisions. Last time we made a major revision we spent a year and a half working on it – this time we are trying to do it in a month in a half.

I am not suggesting that any of my assumptions below are true – I just don't know the answers as we have not had time to ask these questions of the adjuncts and the students and ourselves. Is everyone willing to withdraw it completely two months from now if we realize things are not working? Are we allowed to withdraw it?

Potential Implications on Full time Faculty

1. How will this affect our ability to teach our courses as the required workload will be lowered again soon as our course hours increases. Only Tenured faculty are allowed to work beyond their workload. This may require more splitting of courses. Typically when this happens we work more than the split and spend almost all the time in the classroom teaching together.

Co-teaching definitely is challenging, and requires usually more time than solo-teaching. The opportunity of co-teaching is a mechanism for increased camaraderie amongst the faculty, sharing of pedagogical strategies that some faculty have been able to study through campus initiatives such as Living Lab, the Gen Ed Committee, and Bridging the Gap to name a few. Dissemination of such strategies is a major initiative on campus that we should support vigorously.

Co-teaching also offers an opportunity to improve course coordination and communication throughout the semester. Co-teaching models professional teamwork for the students.

There are many positive examples of co-teaching happening regularly in our department. Many of these pairs are both full-time faculty. If we

increase the co-teaching between full-time and part-time faculty, we have the opportunity to build a stronger bond, improved observation of teaching skills, and improved mentoring of part-time faculty.

2. This semester I have a 4 day workload and have found it nearly impossible to work on scholarship. I have been unable to make the research trips that are required as many of these trips require an overnight stay. The new curriculum will start to bring many of us in 4 days per week or more every semester. To move forward here at the college for promotion and tenure scholarship is not optional. Ask yourself, when will you be able to complete your research and scholarship?

It is not clear that this proposal requires a change in workload and number of days for faculty. We should study the existing condition and compare it to the proposed to determine if this is the case. See below for more on studio meeting days.

Potential Implications on our Adjunct Faculty

1. If design classes are held three days a week how might this affect the ability of our adjuncts to continue to teach these courses? Most have full time jobs and they might not be able to come in 3 days a week. If we opt to make longer classes two days a week, how will it affect them if they are here till 11 pm?

The current proposal makes no statement of how the studio contact hours are divided. We currently run in the MCF the following courses that run 8 contact hours: ARCH 3610, ARCH 3630, ARCH 4710, ARCH 4810. All of these classes meet twice a week for 3 hours and 20 minutes, many of them running from 6:00pm to 9:20pm. (each contact hour is 50 minutes of actual class time.) The proposed studios could be scheduled twice a week to run 3 hours and 45 minutes each meeting. An evening section starting at 6:00pm will end at 9:45pm.

2. If course workload for a given course grows because we add credits or add hours how will this affect the workload of our adjuncts? The

concern here is that some of our adjuncts teach more than one course – keeping under the 9 hour workload limit but over the 6 hours needed for benefits. If the workload for some of our courses increases then they may no longer be able to teach two courses. If this results in them going from teaching 8 hours to 5 hours for a single longer course they will lose their benefits at the college and their healthcare. For example, each semester the site planning course is taught by John Seitz and adjunct who has been with us for several years. The increase in hours to site planning will no longer allow him to teach both classes. This will result in him falling below the 6 hours unless we can find him another course to teach to put him over 6.

This concern was not part of our previous development of curriculum. As a result, we run Building Techs I, II and IV all at 5 contact hours per week. Many of these faculty also teach history or other 3 credit courses to ensure at least 6 hours to meet healthcare requirements. A part-time faculty member could also solo teach one section and co-teach another section with a full-time faculty member (perhaps the course coordinator) with the benefits noted above.

3. We will likely need to manage a larger pool of adjuncts as a result of increases in course hours and this may require more splitting of courses between faculty. The new contract also requires that we monitor and document the teaching of our adjuncts more closely which will increase work for everyone particularly for the departmental appointments committee.

Co-teaching could be a wonderful opportunity to address the need for more close monitoring of part-time faculty. At this time, it seems the only opportunity to address this need and get paid for your time doing it.

Potential Implications on our Students

1. If design classes are held three days a week how might this affect the ability of our students to attend classes? Design courses three times a week will likely bring the majority of our students to school 4-5 days a week. If they travel 3 hours a day round trip – that is three less hours a week that they can do their school work or work at a job.

See note above regarding 3 day a week studios. 3 day a week meeting times are not required by this proposal, but there could be an opportunity for pedagogical research here: we could run some studios at 3 days a week and some at 2 (with faculty volunteering to run 3 day a week studios.) We could seek to control the factors in sections of each type and then assess if there is a learning impact of one structure compared to the other. Also, we might find students can fit other classes into the mornings and evenings of the shorter 3 day a week studio and are more efficient with their time rather than less efficient. Options seem to be a good thing to test on a limited basis and let the students show us if they see it as advantage or disadvantage through enrollment. It is not clear that this structure is inherently less efficient, except for those students who only come to campus 2 days a week.

2. If design classes are kept to two days but are longer ending at 10 pm this means that many of our students will get home 2 hours later at 1 pm. How will they be able to get back to school the next day for classes and function? As a student I travelled 2 hours a day each way to get to school – this often got me home around midnight or later, and then I had to stay up to get my work done, going with little or no sleep for extended periods of time.

See note above regarding meeting times. (Evening studios in the proposal running twice a week would end 25 minutes later (9:45pm) than current evening studios already running regularly (9:20pm) If we run evening sections of the combined Foundations and Visual Studies

studio, they will also end at 9:45pm.

3. Will the increase in hours mean that students will not be able to take as many classes? For example, if they cannot compress the time to commute or the time they need to work then they will have fewer hours to attend classes or complete their work. Will taking fewer classes in a given semester affect their financial aid?

This proposal reduces the total number of classes students take for their AAS degree from 21 to 17. In three out the the four semesters, students take fewer classes:

# of Classes	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Semester 1:	5	4
Semester 2:	6	4
Semester 3:	5	5
Semester 4:	5	4

# of Contact Hours	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Semester 1:	14	16
Semester 2:	19	19
Semester 3:	20	22
Semester 4:	20	21

The proposal will might make the students time more efficient, but this should be studied in more detail to verify. It is clear they would have more focused homework with fewer classes. The number of additional

hours (each hour listed above translates to 50 minutes of class time.) each semester is listed above. The proposal adds 100 extra minutes on campus semester 1, no change in minutes for semester 2, 100 extra minutes for semester 3, and 50 minutes extra for semester 4.)

4. If the new program extends the amount of time it takes for our students to complete their degrees, another semester or year, how might this affect our attrition rate? Will fewer students graduate? Will it cost them more financially as they pay more tuition and it puts off when they enter the workforce?

The proposal extends the total time required to earn the degree across 4 semesters a total of 5 contact hours, which is a 6.8% increase. It is not clear how this impacts attrition, but there are other strategies in the proposal, such as applying General Education skills development and a scaffolded approach to learning that have been shown to increase retention which may be able to balance the impact of the increase in time. In essence, quality time with faculty is part of the strategy, supported by research, that can offset or even reduce attrition.

5. If we increase the hours of courses, how does this affect availability of our students to complete their work? The new plan has almost completely eliminates available lab time Monday through Friday. When will students be able to do their school work? We provide students with access to very expensive software that they do not have available to them at home?

There is no doubt that this proposal, along with the addition of a 5th year and the raising of standards required to earn and maintain accreditation will require additional allocation of resources from the college, including space. This is a long standing issue in our department, as we are under allocated space compared to other departments. Accreditation should be the best leverage we have ever had to increase space.

6. Additional hours in class will negate their ability to complete assignments during the week. My Building Tech class meets twice a week. Each day I assign some task that is due prior to the beginning of the next class. Increasing hours of other classes will limit their ability to complete assignments. At present they are already having a difficult time keeping up with the workload – and at times they skip my class so they can complete their design assignments. About 10% of my students skipped classes this week due to a design deadline.

This is undoubtedly a common problem for all architecture programs. It already exists in our current curriculum, so we need to address it regardless of changes. The increase of time in the studios (where the faculty need to provide true lab time based on Carnegie Hours standards) must include the allowance for students to execute assignment work during class with peer and faculty support. In essence, the extra 100 minutes for Studio III and Studio IV each week, if implemented with discipline, should reduce the homework time for the studio by an equal amount. As student resources are scarce at home, this provides 100 minutes of computer lab access per week in a required, structured environment with required software and support on hand.

7. Are we modifying our program for a small percentage of our students (BARCH) to the disadvantage of the majority who will complete only the BTECH?

Accreditation is prompting us to consider a number of things at the same time:

- The need for continuous, measurable improvement.
- The opportunity to integrate further General Education strategies into our technically focused curriculum.
- The balance of knowledge and skills, shifting the bar slightly in towards greater emphasis on knowledge while preserving

the strong dedication to skills development in our department.

- Our catalogue notes that our AAS degree is preparing students for positions as architectural technicians, CAD drafters, architectural renderers, architectural model makers, fabrication shop technicians..... This list speaks to the current priorities of the curriculum, but not the adjust priorities to train *Architects*. This is why we need to evolve.

These considerations and the strategies implementing them should be focused on one goal: improving outcomes for ALL students: AAS, BTECH, BARCH. Since the AAS is the common denominator for both the BTECH and the future BARCH, it needs to be balanced so that students entering either degree have the tools they need to succeed.

Interestingly, the major critiques of the proposal are logistical, with almost no mention of how students learn. There is also little or no mention of General Education and how it integrates into the curriculum even though this is the most significant college wide effort occurring across campus. Instead, the FIRST YEAR courses developed in this proposal that are seeking to directly reflect the scholarship of teaching and learning through professional development on campus led by the Faculty Commons and to integrate Gen Ed knowledge and skills are labeled as “**watered down.**”

The current proposal has been intensely debated by the committee for 6 months with the Chair’s participation, and has been discussed widely at our faculty meetings. I encourage everyone to read it thoroughly and give it a fair judgement.

Sincerely,

Jason