

welcome



Professionalism in a Professional Faculty

Completing my first year as Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, I find myself in the very privileged position of knowing a Faculty comprised of dedicated instructors, hardworking and highly competent staff, and, above all, a passionate and engaged student body. I also find a constructive and supportive environment encompassing the expectations of professional communities, professional accreditation authorities, and the University of Manitoba's aspirations for fostering a barrier-free learning environment, increasing internationalisation, and enhancing the student experience.

Students, of course, are both our responsibility and our future; it is our students who will be left to solve the problems that we ourselves have created and left unsolved. It is to our students that we owe our dedication:

as educators, it is for our students that we are committed to raising standards of excellence and adapting to an ever-changing world. Today's students will also become tomorrow's alumni; if we are supportive of our students today, they will be all the more likely to be supportive of future students tomorrow. What does this commitment entail for our profession and what does this imply for a professional education, for professionalism in education, and for an education in professionalism?

I suggest that the mark of professionalism is to strive for excellence while embracing change. To be a professional means to expect the unexpected, to do so with grace and compassion, and to engage colleagues across the widest spectrum of interests and expertise. A professional is worldly and accommodating, and has the capacity to bring an overarching set of principles, ethics, and standards to bear on a complex array of problems and issues. In terms of people, cultures, ideas, and technologies, a professional welcomes diversity.

The design professional has a further capability: the ability to design, to create, to set into the world a quality sensed but not yet seen—an unfolding of promise within parameters of principles, ethics, and standards. In the twenty-first century, a design professional must also engage digital media. Professionalism in education imparts these values and skills to students through focused instruction and diversity. An education in professionalism has to prepare students for the transition from the rigorous but protected environment of the university to the complexities of the public realm.

The Faculty of Architecture encompasses four professional graduate programs in design (Architecture, City Planning, Interior Design, and Landscape Architecture), a unique and remarkable undergraduate program in Environmental Design, and a nascent PhD Program in Planning and Design. This richness of offerings provides a highly

nurturing milieu for any student of architecture to work and learn in a Faculty aspiring to ideals of insight, tolerance, multiplicity, and inclusivity. A comprehensive grounding in environmental issues is central in an epoch that will surely be marked by accelerating environmental change, material scarcity, technological sophistication, and—in the industrialized world—an aging population.

These issues are very different from those that occupied the design professional twenty years ago; the issues confronting us today are clearly urgent. It is in engaging these urgent issues that true research becomes essential. Whether done in terms of scholarship or design, it is the coupling of interdisciplinary and globalising concerns with a rigorous and progressive deepening of disciplinary expertise that constitutes today's educational imperative. These are the skills that we must impart to our students if we are to serve them in their preparation for our collective future.

What challenges confront the Faculty of Architecture today? Clearly we must be cognizant of developing the core competencies of our students as well as our own. In this regard, the challenges of our century mentioned above, of environment, scarcity, technological advancement, and an aging population, are in fact the challenges of our Faculty. However, no one Faculty can meet such complexities alone. Therefore, it is essential that we develop partnerships and networks with other Faculties at the University of Manitoba as well as with local, regional, national, and international research centres and industries. In this regard, our participation in the Canadian entry to the Venice Biennale in Architecture in 2012 is an important marker and milestone in a new and concerted effort towards outreach and global engagement.

Equally essential is the establishment of partnerships and networks with our peer institutions, both in Canada and internationally. Which institutions might these be? The

answers are for the Faculty of Architecture to determine, but it has always been my personal goal to set such standards as high as possible, that is, to compete with the very best. I would consider it a fundamental success if—in facing a choice among graduates from the leading architectural schools and a graduate from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba—a prospective employer anywhere in the world would choose the University of Manitoba graduate.

Achieving such goals requires the cooperation and integration of each department's respective professional organisation. Strong professional programs at the University of Manitoba are essential for a strong professional presence in Manitoba, in Canada, and in a globalised world. I very much look forward to the coming year and to planning, strategising, and meeting our common goal: professional education worthy of our contemporary time and place, an education positioned to take us well into the future!

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