

HARDING

A R C H I T E C T U R E

January 30, 2024

NAAB Board of Directors

Re: Optional Response to Visiting Team Report

The students, faculty and staff of the Harding University Architecture Program would like to express our gratitude to the Visiting Team members and the NAAB staff for their efforts to ensure our Virtual Site Visit for Initial Candidacy was thorough, constructive and beneficial.

The following brief responses are intended to confirm that we value the process and are already taking steps to address areas where rapid progress is practical.

Condition 4.2 Professional Degrees and Curriculum, Sub-Criteria 4.2.3 Optional Studies:

The visiting team noted: "...options for electives are limited within the required 168 credit hours. The curriculum as currently described does not provide sufficient flexibility for all students to develop additional expertise outside the required professional studies curriculum."

We agree with this assessment. We recognize the need for more flexibility in the curriculum and are currently working to reduce the number of required and prescribed hours in several ways to provide students with more opportunities for electives, optional studies, concentrations and minors.

We have already begun the process of implementing several changes through the university curriculum management system (Curriculog) that are intended to accomplish this goal.

ARCH 1010 - Introduction to the Built Environment, will be reduced from 3 to 2 hours.

A new Physics course, PHYS 2000 - Construction Applications in Physics, is being developed collaboratively with the Physics Department specifically for Architecture and Construction Science students. This course will take the place of PHYS 2010 - College Physics. The new course will reduce the physics requirement from 4 to 3 hours.

ARCH 4870 - Architecture Internship, will be reduced from 4 to 3 hours.

We are working to reduce the number of Liberal Arts requirements outside the major from 38 to 30 by seeking approval for more of the Liberal Arts requirements to be met within the content of the major. The Engineering Department has set a precedent for this and we believe Architecture is well qualified for the same consideration.

Due to the fact that ARCH courses are co-taught with Interior Architecture during the first year, it is not too difficult for a student to earn a minor in Interior Architecture since the first four ARCH courses (10 hours) will count toward both a major in Architecture and a minor in Interior Architecture. At this time, two students in the first cohort are pursuing that minor.

Condition 4.3 Evaluation of Preparatory Education:

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The visiting team stated: “The APR-C describes the university’s general policies for review of prior coursework. The Harding Architecture Program, however, does not have a documented process for how transfer student’s prior academic course credits are accepted and whether any gaps exist in satisfying NAAB accreditation criteria.”

We agree with this assessment. Because the program is designed as a full five-year path to the M.Arch degree, the anticipated student demographic (for at least the first three years) has always been first-time-in-college freshmen. However, we also recognize that as the program develops and we begin offering graduate-level courses, we will likely receive inquiries from transfer students and applicants from different academic backgrounds. We recognize the need to develop a process for the evaluation of previous coursework to ensure that NAAB accreditation criteria are met for every student.

Prior to the start of the 24/25 academic year, the program director will be working together with the Department Chair, Associate Dean, Dean and Provost to establish a documented process and policies for the evaluation and acceptance of prior undergraduate academic course credits and to establish criteria for waiving the requirement for certain courses. In addition, the process and policies for the evaluation of applicants with pre-professional degrees in architecture and related fields will be developed and documented. These procedures and policies will be designed to ensure that NAAB accreditation criteria are satisfied for each student.

Condition 5.2 Planning and Assessment:

The visiting team stated: “The program has not demonstrated that it has in place a planning process for continuous improvement.” also: “The program, at the time of the visit, had not yet established a long-term plan that addresses strategic multi-year objectives beyond the requirements for seeking NAAB Accreditation while supporting the institutional and architecture program mission.”

We agree with this assessment. Since the site visit was completed, the Harding Architecture Program has established a Strategic Planning Focus Group consisting of the Program Director, one member of the faculty, the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, two students and two members of the Architecture Working Group of the ARCH & IAD Advisory Board. A draft outline for the Strategic Plan has been created and shared with the group members for review and development. A comprehensive strategic plan and process will be developed over the next three months, to be finalized at a meeting of the focus group scheduled on Saturday, April 27. A copy of the draft outline is attached.

Condition 5.5 Social Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:

The visiting team stated: “The program described its commitment to social equity, diversity and inclusion in the APR-C, but as confirmed in the meetings during the Virtual Site Visit, the team was unable to find evidence of a plan that clearly outlines the program’s goals regarding this condition through self-established benchmarks.”

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We agree with this assessment. While the program openly and honestly strives for diversity and embraces the goal that the student body should reflect the demographics of society, we also recognize that in the absence of documented plans and policies, even honorable ambitions may legitimately be viewed with skepticism. Similarly, our desire that a diverse student body should be taught and mentored by faculty and staff who reflect those same demographics requires affirmation through documentation.

Initiatives as meaningful and important as DEI merit confirmation through documented policies and goals designed to result in cultural change. One example of the university's commitment to effecting meaningful change is illustrated by the planned visit to campus from a nationally recognized scholar who has led national DEI initiatives for the military, agencies of the federal government and other institutions of higher education. In addition to conducting workshops for the administration, faculty and staff, Dr. Charles Barber will address an assembly of the entire campus on Thursday, February 29. The Architecture Program Director has already met virtually with Dr. Barber and will continue working with him during his campus visit to develop program-specific plans and policies.

The DEI initiative and policies of the Harding Architecture Program are being crafted to result in a culture of inclusion by:

1. Establishing measurable goals
2. Identifying and eliminating exclusive or preferential language
3. Assessing barriers
4. Pursuing opportunities with the Alex Foundation to engage middle school students in underserved communities
5. Employing methods for seeking new faculty that are intended to increase diversity
6. Seeking resources for and mentoring minority students
7. Identifying partnering opportunities with nearby MSI's

Achieving equality and creating opportunities for everyone to succeed can only result from the pursuit of equity and that form of justice must be founded on demonstrable commitment.

Sincerely,



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Draft Outline 2024 Strategic Plan Harding University Architecture Program

1. Pursuit of NAAB accreditation
2. Support the Harding University mission and strategic plan
3. Develop processes and policies to promote and ensure DEI
4. Curriculum development (professional courses, electives, concentrations, minors, etc.)
5. Develop processes and policies for the evaluation of preparatory education
6. Faculty recruitment
7. Student recruitment
8. Scholarships
9. Student retention and persistence
10. Short and long-term facility requirements
11. Equipment needs, student supplies
12. Capital improvements
13. Community engagement and service
14. Collaboration with other academic disciplines
15. Study abroad
16. Internships
17. Preparation for licensure (AXP & ARE)
18. Program strengths
19. Program challenges

Continuous review and plans to respond if goals are not achieved