Learning and Teaching Culture Policy – Spring 2024

Main concepts:

A learning and teaching culture that:

1. **Encourages creativity, optimism, curiosity and experimentation throughout the design process**;
2. **Fosters inclusivity, diversity and solidarity;**
3. **Connects studio projects to real-world applications and generates community impact;**
4. **Cultivates a sense of camaraderie, collaboration and community, fostering a more enjoyable studio space**;
5. **Encourages sharing knowledge and tips to improve design workflow and skill-building;**
6. **Builds motivation to excel in architectural learning based on the understanding that each semester presents a unique opportunity to create a lasting portfolio;**
7. **Reinforces good habits including attention to detail, time management and digital file management;**
8. **Promotes project development processes that draw upon diverse backgrounds and learning styles;**
9. **Encourages health and wellbeing by providing time for mental health checks and offering the studio as a platform to discuss non-studio related matters; and**
10. **Invites faculty engagement with student organizations and activities outside of class.**

1. Encourage creativity, optimism, curiosity, and experimentation throughout the design process

Encouraging Creative Exploration: At the architecture studio space, fostering a culture of creative exploration is fundamental. To achieve this, faculty, mentors and students involved with the studio are urged to actively adopt a mindset centered on curiosity and experimentation. Open-ended projects should be introduced to provide students with the freedom to explore and develop their unique ideas and solutions. Moreover, emphasis should be placed on the significance of taking calculated risks and embracing failures as learning opportunities. It is essential to cultivate an environment that values experimentation and recognizes that setbacks are integral to the creative process, fostering a culture of continuous learning and innovation.

2. Foster Inclusivity, Diversity and Solidarity

Inclusivity of Non-Traditional Backgrounds: Achieving inclusivity involves actively recruiting students from diverse academic and professional backgrounds. With that, studio faculty and students should generate a welcoming environment by acknowledging and valuing the unique perspectives and skills that each individual brings to the studio. Design tasks and their

development should encourage peer-to-peer learning and foster collaboration among students from different backgrounds.

3. Connect studio projects to real-world applications and generate community impact.

Designing Beyond Aesthetics and Making Real-World Impact: Connecting studio projects to real-world applications and community needs is a key responsibility for students fostering a studio culture connected with the contemporary challenges of society as it also bridges the gap between theoretical learning and practical implementation. By anchoring design endeavors in real-world contexts, students are challenged to develop solutions that not only showcase their creative prowess but also serve tangible purposes in society. This approach nurtures a mindset of social responsibility, encouraging students to empathize with diverse communities, understand their unique challenges, and craft designs that directly address these needs. Moreover, this connection instills a sense of purpose and relevance in students' work, fostering a deeper understanding of the impact design can have beyond aesthetics. Ultimately, it equips aspiring designers with the skills and mindset to become catalysts for positive change in their communities by translating their creative visions into tangible, impactful outcomes. Studio work should emphasize the interdisciplinarity of the architecture profession through the collaboration with external partners representing multiple disciplines and fields of knowledge.

4. Cultivate a sense of camaraderie, collaboration and community, fostering a more enjoyable studio space.

Camaraderie and Collaboration: Building a sense of camaraderie and collaboration within studio space can be achieved by organizing regular group discussions about various topics related to the studio project, workshops, and social events of all sorts. Professors and students can work together to create a comfortable, inviting space that encourages constant critical reflection, interaction, learning, and idea sharing. Having a shared area for relaxation can foster bonding and collaboration.

5. Encourage sharing knowledge and tips to improve design workflow and skill-building.

Knowledge Sharing: To promote knowledge sharing, students are encouraged to hold informal workshops or tutorials on specific skills or software they excel in. Professors can facilitate these sessions or allocate time during studio sessions for students to share their insights. A digital repository or platform where students can upload and share tutorials, resources, and helpful tips should be established. This platform can serve as an ongoing resource for students to access information shared by their peers. Cross-level interaction, as mentioned before, can help students learn valuable tips from their peers.

6. Build motivation to excel in architectural learning based on the understanding that each semester presents a unique opportunity to create a lasting portfolio.

    Motivation for Excellence: The school must continue to emphasize the importance of a strong portfolio and how the work done in the studio contributes to it daily. Students should view their studio and other projects as unique opportunities for professional growth. Each semester represents also an opportunity to build a different piece of knowledge. Each studio or course addresses different topics or the same topic through different perspectives, skills and learning modalities. Faculty should provide constructive feedback and recognizing exceptional work, inspiring students to present the best possible version of their work. Establishing shared objectives at the outset of each semester and monitoring progress regularly throughout the coursework is essential for both professors and students.

7. Reinforce good habits including attention to detail, time management and digital file management.

    Attention to Detail, File and Time Management: It is the responsibility of students, with support from faculty members, to cultivate skills in effective file and time management practices early in their education, especially within the architecture studio. Emphasizing daily progress, students should be adept at file and time management routines that secure the preservation of their work and ensure meeting deadlines. Assignments can include specific requirements for organization, saving routines, and attention to detail, reinforcing the importance of these skills. Offering resources and guidance on best practices for file management can further enhance this aspect of studio culture.

8. Promote project development processes that draw upon diverse backgrounds and learning styles.

    Effective Communication and Collaboration: To nurture an inclusive studio culture that challenges traditional norms set by historical perspectives, professors should actively integrate group projects or assignments that encourage collaboration among students with diverse backgrounds and learning approaches. Through group projects, it is incumbent upon students to cultivate skills in appreciating diverse viewpoints, fostering a culture that values the cross-pollination of ideas as an essential aspect of solving intricate spatial challenges.

9. Encourage health and wellbeing by providing time for mental health checks and offering the studio a platform to discuss non-studio related matters.

    Empathetic Support: Mental health and well-being are one of the most important topics to be addressed by architecture education. Students are encouraged to focus on achieving a healthy

work-life balance, while professors play a crucial role in mitigating overload within the studio environment by thoughtfully scheduling assignments and setting reasonable expectations. The studio environment should be a safe space where students are cognizant of the significance of their mental health and are encouraged to engage in regular check-ins, utilizing the resources available on campus or within the community (counseling services, support groups, or wellness workshops). Both faculty and students should prioritize the well-being of individuals as much as the quality of the studio work. Professors and students should create opportunities to discuss non-studio related matters. Creating a safe space for open conversations, between students and professors, about challenges outside of academia can reinforce the idea of a supportive studio culture. Confidentiality and non-judgmental nature of these discussions should be promoted, facilitating discussions on personal challenges or mental health concerns without fear of judgment or repercussions. Within the studio environment physical health should be encouraged and supported as much as mental health.

10. Invite faculty engagement with student organizations and activities outside of class.

Professors and students alike should be aware of and participate in student organizations and activities outside of class to foster a supportive and connected studio culture. By participating together in events such as design competitions, exhibitions, workshops, or field trips, both students and faculty foster a sense of community and shared interests, encouraging collaboration and strengthening bonds within the studio, enriching the overall educational experience.