

The American Institute of Architecture Students' 2020 Learning & Teaching Culture Policy Project

Studio Culture: A Brief History

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Framework for Implementation

Tips for Tough Discussions

Resilient Learning & Teaching Cultures





Studio Culture: A Brief History

University of Houston College of Architecture and Design

Development of positive culture in schools of architecture has been a focus of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) since the late 1990's, and this concept has developed over the past two decades into Learning and Teaching Culture Policies. Here is a brief overview of the steps we have taken to get here:

2000: The first AIAS Studio Culture Task Force is created in response to unhealthy and stagnant culture in schools of architecture, as well as incidents which revealed severe deficiencies in the health and safety of architecture students.

2002: the AIAS publishes [*The Redesign of Studio Culture*](#) because, "Change is needed to produce healthier, more optimistic, and more engaging architecture school graduates."

2004: The requirement of a Studio Culture Policy is added to the NAAB conditions for accreditation.

October 2004: The AIAS holds the Studio Culture Summit and subsequently publishes [*The Studio Culture Summit: A Report*](#).

2008: The AIAS Task Force on Studio Culture publishes [*Toward an Evolution of Studio Culture*](#) to reassess the impact of Studio Culture efforts and investigate needs that are not being met.

2015-2016: The AIAS Advocacy Advisory Group publishes [*Studio Culture: Stories and Interpretations*](#), which researched impact and interpretations of studio culture on individuals.

2017-2019: Rise in questions of enforcement within schools of architecture and overall impact of existing policies.

2019: The AIAS NAAB ARF Steering Committee successfully lobbies to officially redefine Studio Culture as Learning & Teaching Culture in order to better encompass the scope and goals of the policies.

2019-2020: The AIAS begins the Learning & Teaching Culture Policy Project, which is tasked with developing a Model Learning & Teaching Culture Policy from which architecture and design schools can adopt and/or borrow.



2020 LTCPP Summary

Judson University School of Art, Design, and Architecture

In the Summer of 2019, the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) resolved to establish a Model Learning & Teaching Culture Policy (LTCP) Project in response to a recently significant outcry from the membership about outrageously unhealthy studio classes, as well as the impending 2020 National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) Architectural Review Forum (ARF) where Studio Culture and Studio Culture Policies had infamously not been taken seriously. At the NAAB ARF, the AIAS' Steering Committee Representatives successfully changed the term "Studio Culture" into officially "Learning & Teaching Culture"; this move reinforced the AIAS' belief that a real and healthy Studio Culture was not a list of demands or expectations placed exclusively on students or faculty, but an agreement between the two parties and their administrators to prioritize methods of behaving in the school community that were not detrimental to very purpose of providing and earning an education.

During the Fall semester, the AIAS convened the Model LTCP Project collected existing Studio Cultures - many of which had been compiled the year prior by the Health & Wellness Task Force. Under the Co-Chairing of **AIAS President Sarah Curry** and **Oklahoma State Chapter President Scott Cornelius**, members of 2019-2020 AIAS National Committees met three times to discuss and plan a method by which a Model LTCP could be considerably crafted. The initial, obvious goal was to draft a Model LTCP that could be adopted or advocated for by AIAS members and students. However, this was met with a general fear that anything drafted exclusively by students would be dismissed or unenforceable. These fears prompted the idea that this model document could be endorsed by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, and then presented to the NAAB for their use as a resource and standard for their Accreditation Visiting Teams. ACSA President Rashida Ng and NAAB President Barbara Sestak were very agreeable to those pursuits, and both were supportive and welcome of the AIAS' guidance.

As 2019 came to a close, the Model LTCP Co-Chairs wrote and released a survey for students and a survey for faculty about their experiences with and knowledge of Studio Culture at their institutions. As the data came in, the Co-Chairs were still deciding how best to interpret the information into a new model document that was as unbiased and holistic as possible. President Curry remembered the promises that were made by the allied-architecture organizations at the NAAB ARF just a few months ago to work together more frequently, and to support each other's missions more often. After broaching the subject at a meeting between the Presidents and Executive Directors of the AIAS, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB), and NAAB, the Co-Chairs spent the Winter Break preparing a plan and schedule, and in January of 2020, President Curry wrote to each organization, including NOMA, to ask for two representatives to serve a 6-month term with the Project.

The National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), NAAB, the ACSA, and the AIA recommended individuals who joined the AIAS Co-Chairs on the team: **Leslie Epps, NOMA; Jose Gamez, ACSA; Amy Larimer, ACSA; Nathan Leonard, AIA; Rebecca O'Neal-Dagg, NAAB; Robyn Payne, NAAB; and Malini Srivastava, AIA.** The truly collaborative group would go on to meet 6 times in as many months of 2020. Through all the humbling and harrowing experiences that wracked the globe, the United States, and the very schools and students we were doing our best to serve, the Model Learning & Teaching Culture Project Team stayed the course and produced an incredible amount of work. Their rich thoughts and discussions culminated in a universal, representative, and equitable stance on what students, faculty, and administrators deserve to expect and how they should conduct themselves in a productive and healthy environment. Over the six months of their meetings, the team analyzed the survey data and made inferences about what would be most important to cover in the model document and pay attention to in the sample Studio Culture Policies they all reviewed.


This studying helped create a familiarity with and criteria for the spectrum of well-written and educationally supportive behaviors. The first rough draft of the Model LTCP was built on the information gleaned from that research.

Early into the Summer of 2020, the final draft of the Model LTCP had been critically edited by the group and was unanimously approved. Even so, the team's work was not complete, as there were other concerns that needed to be addressed in order to consider the Project officially complete. Among other concerns, the early worries of students about the difficulty of advocating for this kind of cultural change was still a priority, so the team devised a few accompanying guides to ensure the effectiveness of the model document: "Resilient Learning & Teaching Culture" enunciates the facets of any educational environment that make it most effective; such aspects are unalienable, even in the face of unprecedented circumstances like pandemics and virtual schooling. "Tips for Tough Conversations" anticipates the 6 responses a student might hear when facing an unwilling faculty or administrators, and provides reasonable responses and reminders. "Framework for Implementation" outlines in more detail the ways that the Model LTCP can be adjusted per school, and how it can be adjusted equitably and annually as a living document. "History of Studio Culture and the AIAS" recounts the AIAS' journey through fighting for the rights of students over the past few decades, and the efforts that led to this most recent movement. We feel that this combination of resources packaged together is the best way to give students and faculty an advantageous opportunity to make a fundamental shift in their school cultures.

The next steps include, of course, monitoring the use of the Model LTCP and its effectiveness with NAAB and at universities and schools. Although this team should feel very proud of themselves, the work is not yet truly finished, and it will not be until the profession values a healthy process over ill-imagined results. As long as there is a lack of understanding of or a disregard for the health, wellbeing, education, and growth of any who are involved in the noble pursuit of training architects and designers, the AIAS and its allies will pursue as many iterations of justice as is necessary to protect those the system overlooks.

The 2020 LTCPP Team would like to thank the following schools and their students and faculty for offering their Studio Culture policies for our research:

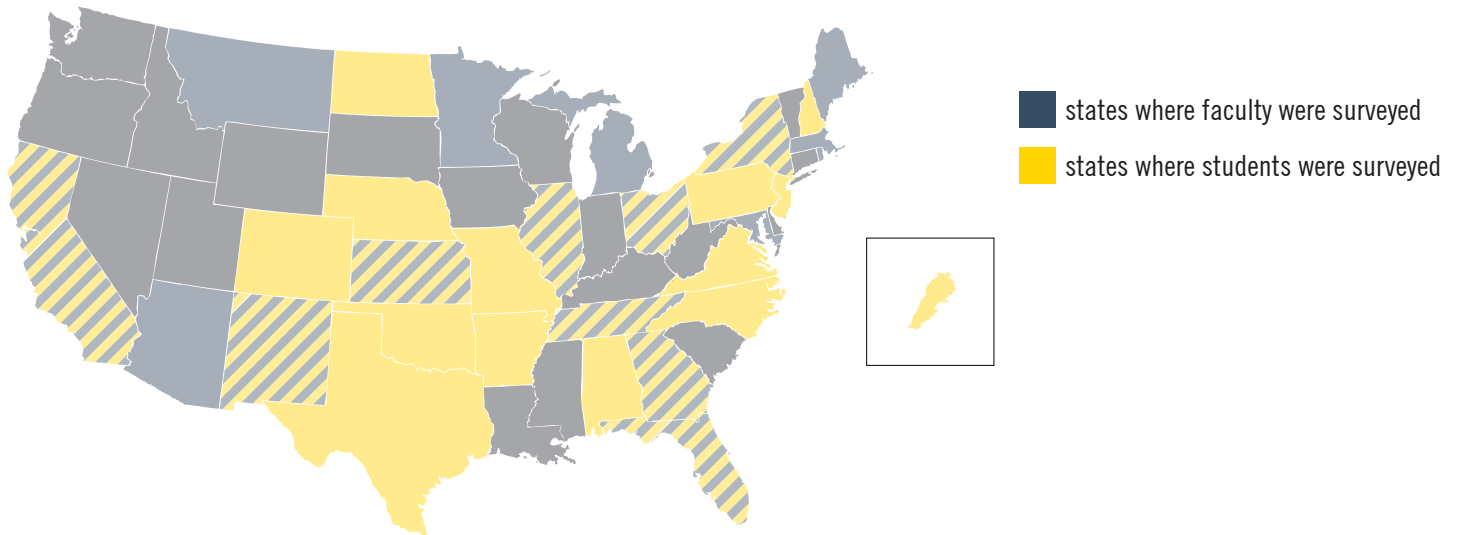
Andrews University
Ball State University
Boston Architectural College
Bowling Green State University
Carnegie Mellon University
Catholic University of America
Clemson University
Cornell University
Drury University
Florida A&M University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Harvard Graduate School of Design
Illinois Institute of Technology
Iowa State University
Kennesaw State University
Kent State University
Lawrence Technological University
Miami University
New Jersey Institute of Technology
North Carolina State University
Northeastern University
Oklahoma State University
Pennsylvania State University
Pratt Institute
Princeton University
Savannah College of Art and Design
Universidad de Monterrey
University of Kansas
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of North Carolina, Charlotte
University of Texas, Arlington



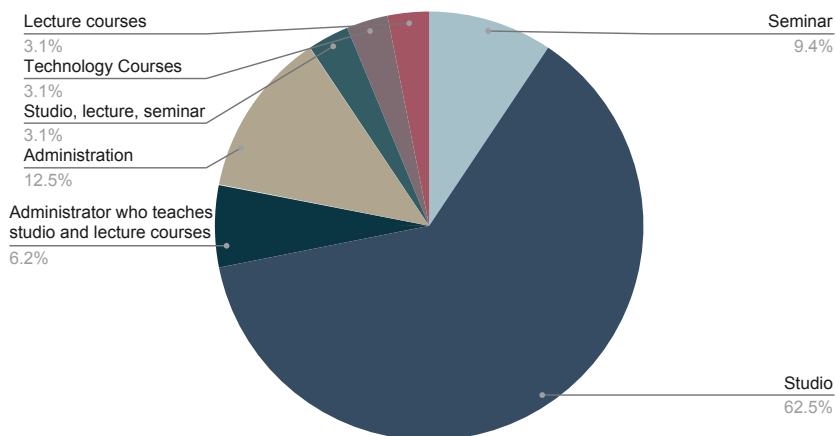
AIAS Faculty & Student Studio Culture Survey Results

Montana State University School of Architecture

Survey Demographics:



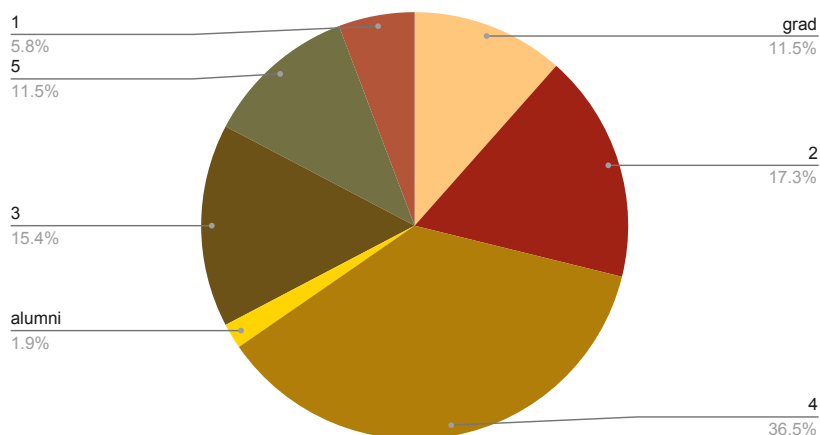
QF2: What do you teach?



Over 70% of the faculty respondents teach at least one studio class.

Other members of faculty that answered help make the survey results a good mix among faculty and administrators.

QS1: What is your year level?

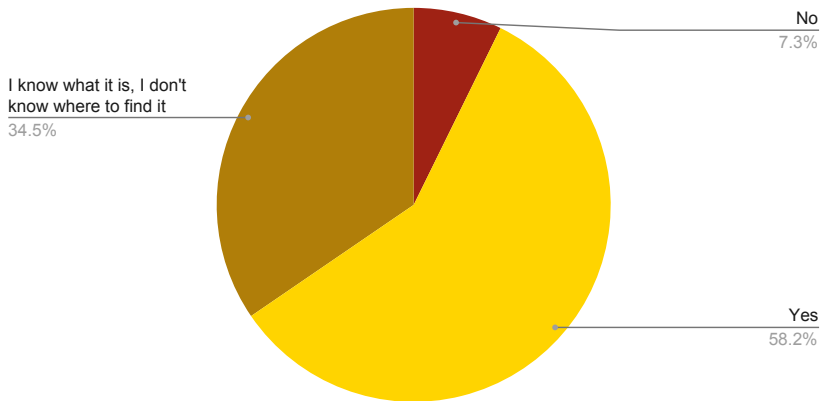


77% of students surveyed are above year 2,

which lends credibility to the survey results. The spread of students across different year levels is almost ideal.

Existing Culture Awareness:

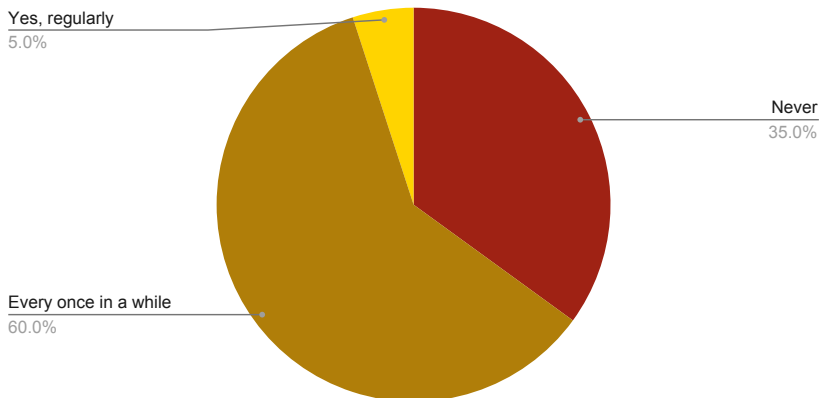
QS2: Do you know what a Studio Culture Policy is, and do you know where to find your school's?



92.7% of students know what a Studio Culture Policy is.

This is great news, and means that efforts of this Project Team should highlight accessibility to and awareness of Learning & Teaching Culture Policies.

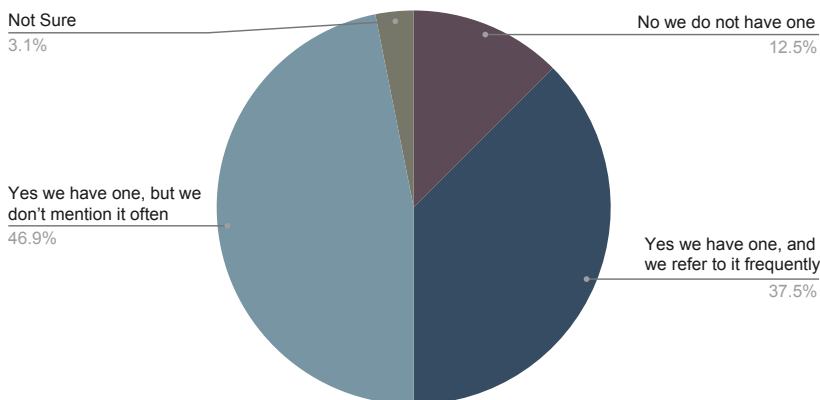
QS3: Is Studio Culture formally discussed at your school? (i.e. a Town Hall or presentation of the Policy)



Almost every student surveyed attends a school where Studio Culture is not formally discussed.

This Project Team should also emphasize the importance of discussing Studio Culture regularly - not just prior to an accreditation visit.

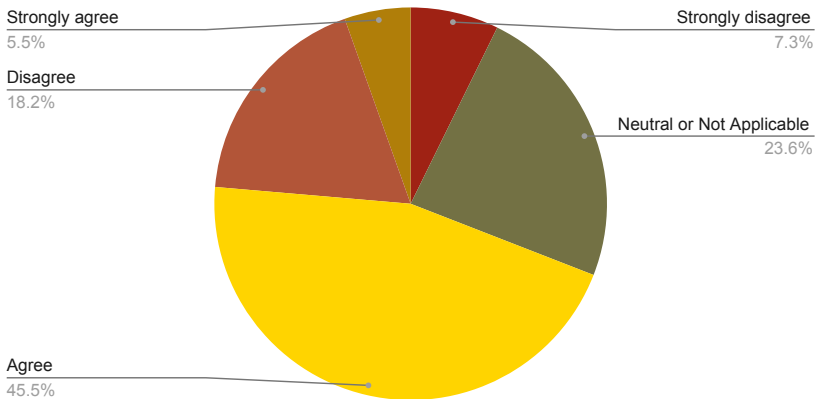
QF3: Does your school have and abide by a Studio Culture Policy?



Over 80% of faculty are aware of their school's Studio Culture Policies, but almost 50% admit that the policy is not referenced frequently.

Positive Lifestyles:

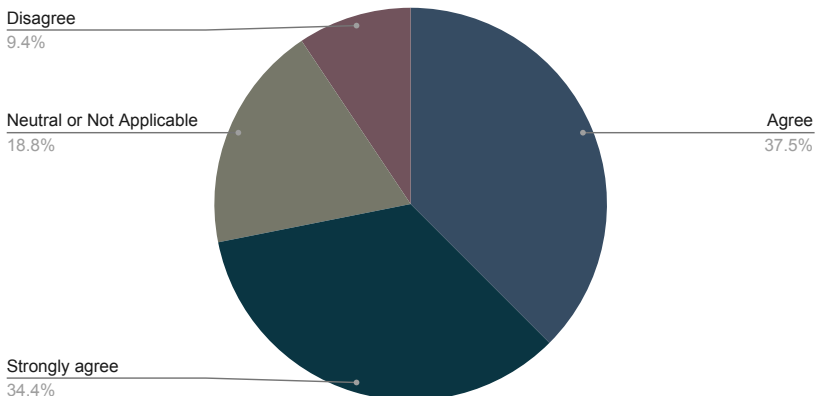
QS4: Do you feel that the Studio Culture Policy at your school portrays a positive lifestyle of learning and teaching?



Only 50% of students feel that their existing Studio Culture outlines a positive lifestyle.

A Model Learning & Teaching Culture Document portrays an ambitiously healthy and positive culture such that the environment and its inhabitants are always striving to reach it.

QF4: Do you feel that the Studio Culture Policy at your school portrays a positive lifestyle of learning and teaching?

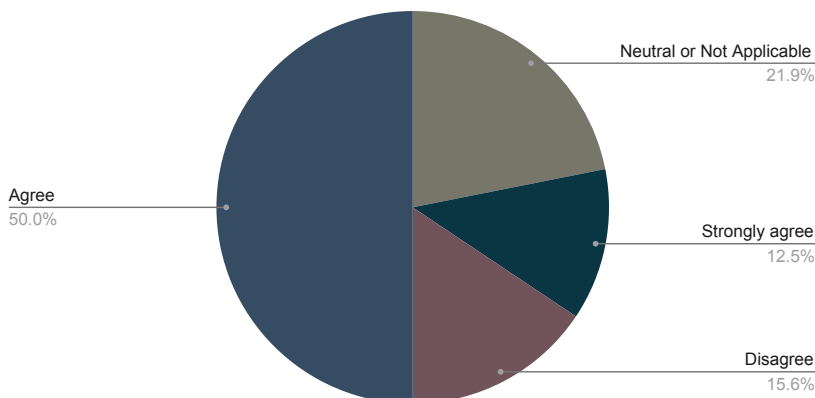


On the other hand,

71.9% of faculty feel that their existing Studio Culture outlines a positive lifestyle.

This indicates a slight disconnect in terms of what is considered “positive”, and what expectations are.

QF5: Do you feel that the reality of academic life at your school matches what’s outlined in the Studio Culture Policy?

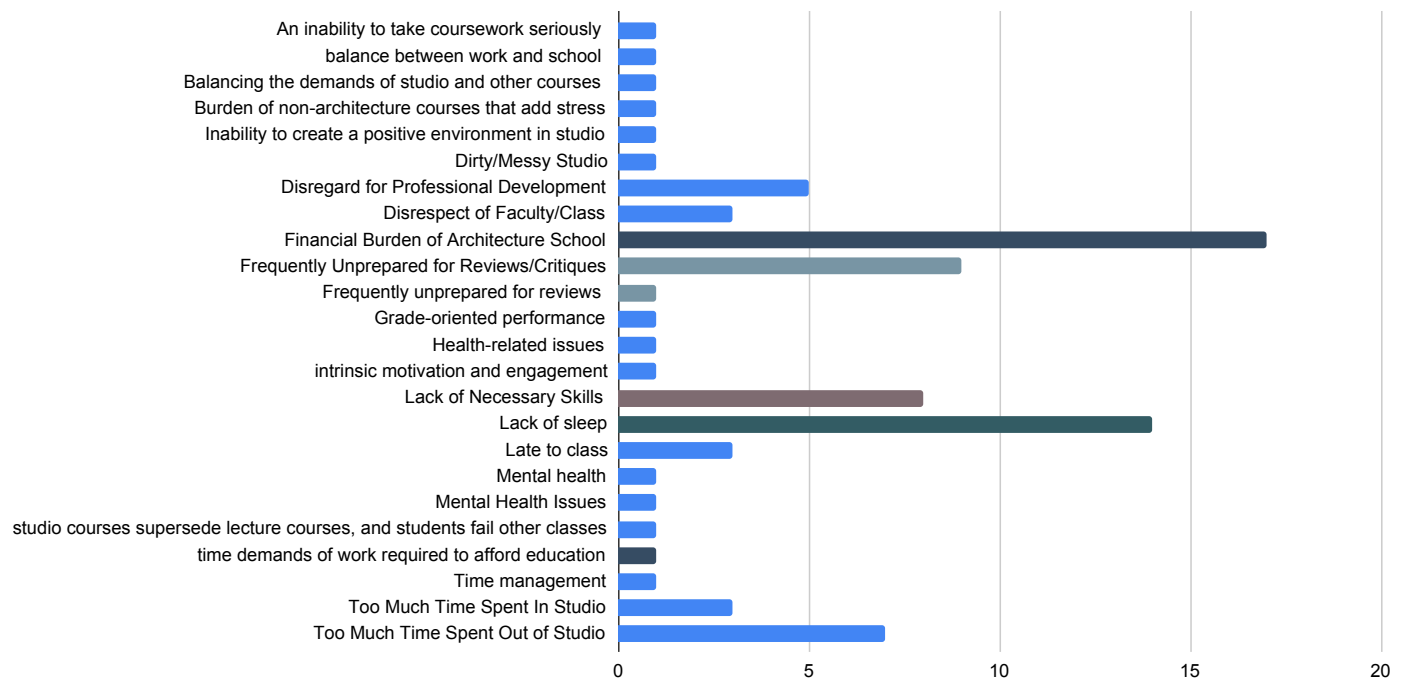


62.5% of faculty feel that the reality of academic life matches what is outlined in the Studio Culture Policy.

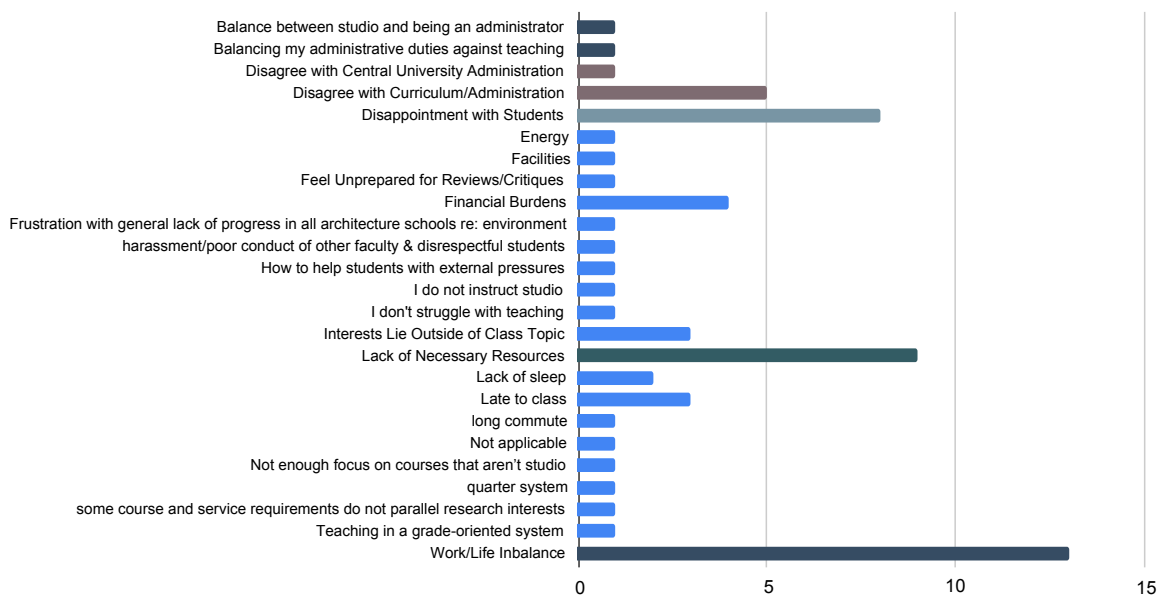
Supplementary Guides for students and faculty that discuss best practices for “walking the walk” should help this percentage increase for the better.

Struggles:

QF6: What are the top three issues your students struggle with most in their architectural education?



QF7: What are the top three issues you struggle with most while teaching?



Topics to Include:

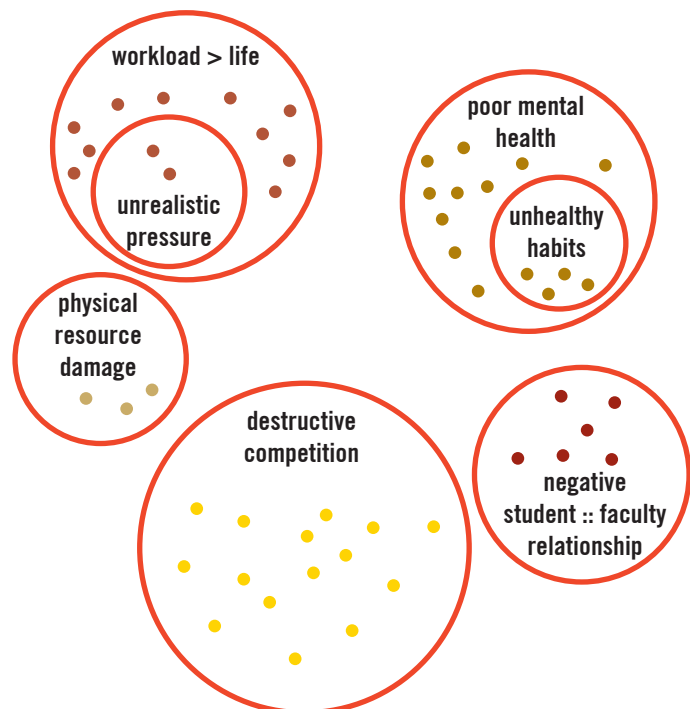
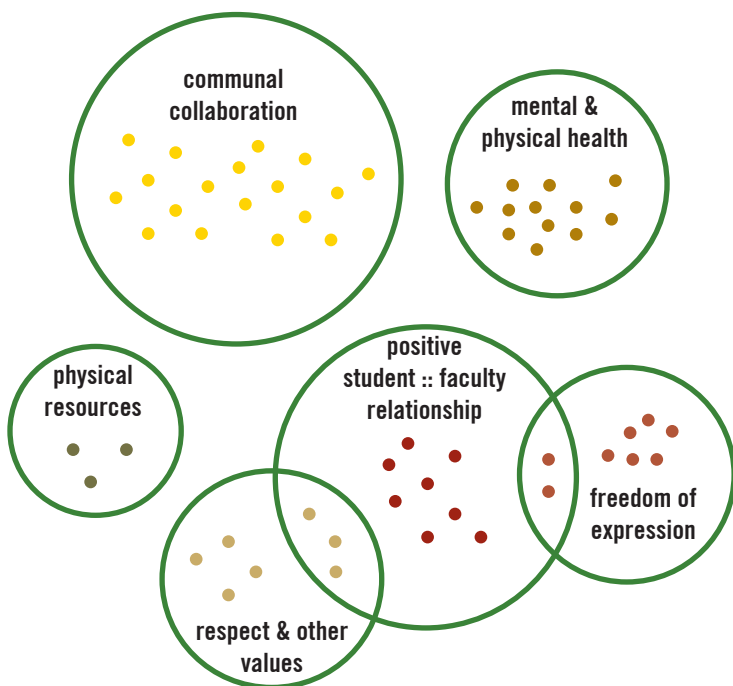
QS5: If you do have a Studio Culture Policy at your school, what is the most important topic it covers?

respect
physical and mental health
time management/amount of work
physical studio facilities
teacher :: student relationships
student :: student relationships

QS6: An ideal Learning & Teaching Culture Policy would

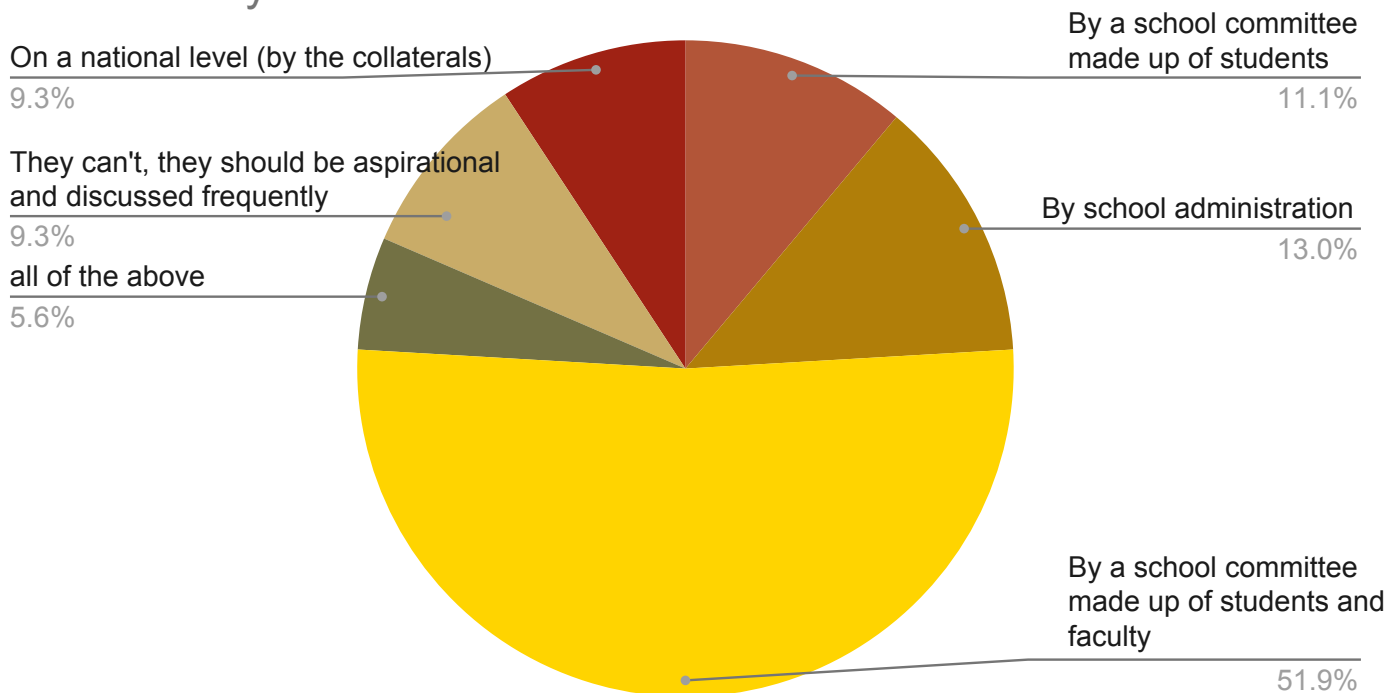
protect

prevent



Enforcing Studio Culture:

QS7: How do you think Studio Culture Policies can be successfully enforced?



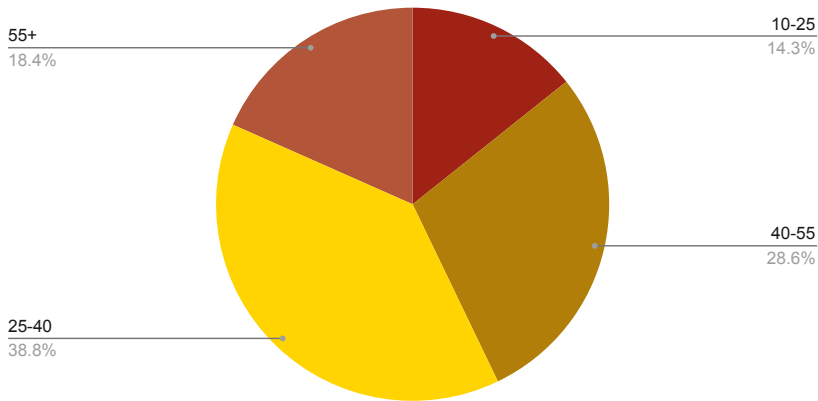
More than half of survey respondents agree that

**a school committee
made up of students
and faculty**

is the best way to enforce and monitor Studio Culture. Evaluating the feasibility of the Model Document and how it is referenced and revisited will be a big part of our work.

Current Student Workload:

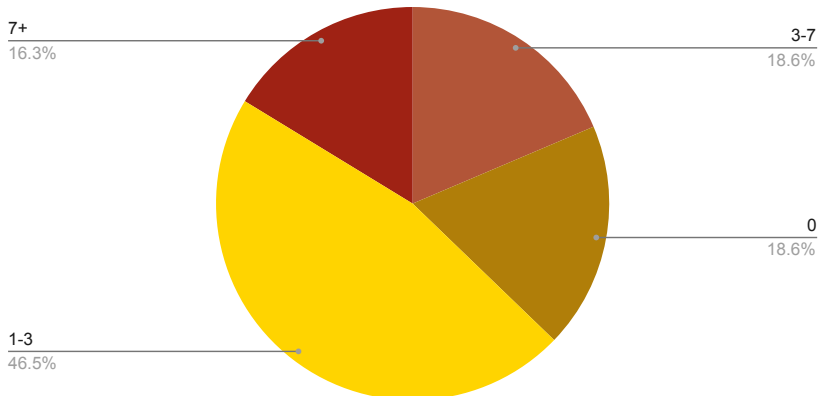
QS8: Roughly how many hours a week do you dedicate to studio work?



Over 46% of students spend over 40 hours a week on studio work.

This compares interestingly with our survey from 2015, in which students indicated that, on average, they spent 32 hours a week in studio.

QS9: Estimate how many times a week you skip or forget meals due to studio work:



81% of students miss meals due to studio work.

This is slightly more than our 2015 survey which indicated that 75% of students miss meals due to studio work.

Setting Expectations:

QF8: Please list 3-5 behaviors you expect of your students that help make class a positive and productive environment:

Arrive on time
good attendance
attendance
solid time management
on time
Be in class
Be on time
Punctuality
minimizing procrastination
Take charge of time

#timeliness

willingness to speak during discussions
Exchange of ideas
collaboration with team
collaborative
Collaborative
good listening skills
Share and engage with one another
sharing openly with others in class
open communications
working iteratively
work in studio and in collaboration with classmates
openness to critique
speaking up
articulate issues before they become unresolvable problems
Willing to communicate about their concerns/ work.

#collaborative

well prepared for class
Preparation
Prepared
prepared
prepared for class
be prepared
Come prepared to participate
Coming prepared.
coming to class prepared
Motivated
Be productive during each studio meeting
having work prepared to discuss at the beginning of class
have created something visual for me to respond to

#prepared

Commitment
committed
Consistent progress in projects
curiosity
Curious
Intelligence
Initiative to do research on their own
Thoughtfulness
Imagination
Inquisitive
be curious
interest in topics
ask questions
always explore multiple-solutions to any problem
Bring passion and curiosity
Passionate
meaningful research
dedication

#curious

eager
eager to learn
Eagerness to Learn
earnestness
Encouragement of others
Be engaged
Be engaged
Engaged
engaged with each other
engaged with me
Engagement
engagement with the work
engagement with their classmates (critical, discussion, collaboration when warranted)
ethics and collegiality.
Willingness to engage in their educational experience.
working on studio only
active participation
present
participation
participation
Participation
contribution during class
try hard and engagement in the topic/their education
hard work
work beyond minimum expectations
diligence
Honesty
Honesty

#engaged

Open Mind
Open-Minded
Perseverance
positive
Positive Attitude
Organization
Professional
professional attitude/behavior
Professionalism
Discipline
Respect
Respect
respect
Respect and work ethic
respect for one another
respectful
responsibility

#respectful

take risks
taking ownership of their education and looking deeply into things that self interest
try to link what is learned in one class with another
understand that University is the beginning of lifelong learning.
understanding the reading material
use the library, at most institutions it is an underutilized resource
Be human

#other

QF9: Please list 3-5 behaviors your students can expect of you to help make class a positive and productive environment:

timeliness
on time
Commitment
committed
Be ontime and engaged
active teaching in place of projecting slides
Be engaged
engaged
engaging discussion
enthusiasm
enthusiasm for teaching
Collaborative
high energy and enthusiasm for topics
I am always engaged and provide directed activities/exercises
I try to create an open environment to entice students to participate in discussions
Teach in active, rather than passive way
Inclusivity
Leave my administrative duties outside of the classroom
passion
passionate
Passionate and curious
working on studio only

#engaged

honest and forthright
Honesty
being fair
honest critique
Honesty
Humbleness
Humor
Mentorship in and out of class
Mutual respect
not sarcastic or dismissive
Personable
positive and proactive actions
positivity
Patience
Respect
Respect
respect
respect
respect and professionalism.
respect for student diversity
respect for their interests
respect for them and their time
respectful
Respectful
Willingness to listen

#accessible

sharing
sharing experience
support for development
realistic expectations
clear directions
careful step-by-step approach to instruction
articulation of expectations
clear and transparent communication
checking in with each student daily, even if short
Attention to individual students
Be an Advocate
being attentive to student objectives and needs
Constructively Critical
direct answers
Critical but supportive and productive feedback through the process
Open attitude toward their ideas
Open-minded and responsive
The class is re-evaluated every time it is run to make improvements

#attentive

well-written curricula
Be organized
being prepared
broad knowledge
Creativity
Driven
expertise
I am sure to bring some real world experience into class discussions to show how what we are doing applies to the profession outside of school
I come to class prepared to discuss the new topic
Knowledge of course content
making connections to professional practice
Organized
preparation
prepared
preparedness
preparedness
Professional
Professional knowledge
Professionalism
professionalism
provide pleasant but rigorous learning experience
purposeful work
thoughtful development of course
willing to share
Willingness to help

#knowledgeable

#kind
transparency
trust
I am open to students suggestions and comments of how to make the class work better for their need
Care
Approachable
Availability for discussion
availability outside of class time
Availability outside of class times
Available
Be kind
Compassionate
Collegiality
empathy
encouraging
encouraging
encouraging participation
fair
fair, transparent, and equitable assessment
Fairness
Fairness
flexibility
Give clear feedback on course performance.

What we wish they knew:

QS10: What is one thing you wish faculty knew about your experience attending architecture school?

How hard we push for our projects to reach a certain level without any help sometimes
My other classes have work as well, and it is difficult to complete everything fully for studio and non studio courses
While studio is an important class, there are other aspects of an architecture students life including other classes, work, and extracurriculars.
That students have other classes outside of studio that also take up a significant amount of time.
That I was able to accomplish all of my work and excel in studio and other courses BECAUSE I told myself to go to sleep each night, try to eat healthy, and get moderate exercise while in school. I had straight-A's in studio during my undergrad and was still able to take care of myself. When I wasn't able to always get enough sleep, exercise, or eat well, I could see the negative impacts on my mental health and how that made me feel less able to participate in all classes and coursework.
Materials and prints add up quickly. Students shouldn't be spending \$500+ on a single project let alone a semester
a lot of students have to balance studio work with work for other classes/minors/etc and jobs off campus
Life is about more than just architecture!! It's important to be involved in the community
How truly stressful it is on not only me but my loved ones
Just because a school is relatively affordable compared to other schools doesn't mean students don't have to work in order to afford it
Technical courses are not inferior to design studio.
We have other classes and jobs. Studio is NOT the most important thing going on. And is NOT acceptable to skip other classes due to studio
We celebrate differences
it is not and should not be the same way it was when they were in school. just because faculty suffered when they were in school does not mean that students should pull all nighters that ruin their health
I wish they knew that school today is not the same as it was in their time, I wish they would adapt to today's culture and shift their expectations to today's relevant matters.
I value my mental health more than my studio grade.
Architecture faculty are not held accountable for their apathy and perpetuation of toxic studio culture and overworking.
Engineer discrimination!
I work two jobs to afford school. I wish they would understand that working isn't a choice for me, and I can't just quit because they tell me to focus more on school.
poor habits seen as standard or expected
Overarching guilt about taking breaks from studio, that I feel guilty not using every waking minute to work on studio, even when I cannot think straight and need to take a break. Anxiety about scheduling breaks, spending time with friends, extracurriculars, etc.
I loved my experience. I dont think Ive had a situation where I needed to use or refer to it.
The workload that all the other classes expect
Sleep and mental health
A professor shouldn't recommend his/her students to skip lunch/dinner time, sleep less and care about other class work less for focusing more on studio especially when he/she has no idea about that Students health story (advising an anorexic student to skip lunch is not something we want to see right?)
Architecture is constantly evolving. The way it is taught should evolve accordingly.
Most of our faculty pretend we don't have day jobs and set unrealistic time constraints
It's harder than they think
Students need to work during school to afford classes
We need communication
While I love the workload and late nights, there are points where I need to take time for myself to stay sane, so there might be a day when I do not perform as well, but that does not mean I am any less of a student than my surrounding peers.
The level of sacrifice their teaching policies have inflicted
The undue stress they cause by indirectly forcing unhealthy work flows
They know all of our unhealthy habits of all nighters. Assurance would be very helpful. Positive words not necessarily a critique
The stress and overwhelming responsibilities sometimes
Many people of our age group are still trying to learn who they are as a person, so helping to lead them into a positive direction would help improve students mental health and future within the field of architecture.
oppressive practices don't breed greatness. pushing your students beyond their physical and mental limits doesn't make them stronger. it alters their outlook on school and the practice in a negative fashion
The biggest benefit of our program is the large ouch for interdisciplinary learning and exposure to not only design based projects but also a strong passion for Building Sciences which I think is the biggest upside to our department, We volunteer heavy with the downtown and towns in our area
I wish that my faculty would essentially just advocate for students and their needs more in general. I feel that there is a thick barrier of separation between students and faculty that should be more transparent.
How each student coming in has such different knowledge and skills based on which studios they have taken previously
Our college, its students, and the studio culture policy must continually evolve while maintaining our core values. - edited quoted from UTK studio couture policy
The enormous amount of effort and dedication I put into work
That it is doable only if you sacrifice something (sleep, social life, club commitments, other classes, etc). It is honestly not possible to do it all, which i feel like some faculty members believe is possible (and react with disbelief when we say so.)
studio is not our entire lives
The ebbs and flows of workloads of other classes
We have other classes that also require work so not all time can be committed to just studio work
I have other commitments
It can be overwhelming
Students need time to dedicate to doing not studio related things. Having time for this ultimately makes more well rounded students.
I wish they told us in advance what we need to complete. Work is just thrown at architecture students with no warning, so we often have to cancel plans. It is very hard to plan out my weeks.
As a commuter, sleep is super important. There are many dangers when it comes to sleep deprivation and commuting.
How valuable it has been when studio professors spend class time after reviews to chat with us individually and discuss the project/class/life. Much thanks to those professors because often it was those chats which were far more helpful in understanding the successes/failures of my project than during the critiques. A good human check-in!
Lack of community/acceptance, importance of equity vs equality
I wished I could get critical feedback and mentoring.

QF10: What is one thing you wish students knew about your experience teaching architecture school?

Passionate
That teaching is only about 30% of what we're expected to do for the university; we have research and service requirements that occupy 70% of our time.
Studio requires that we adapt our teaching styles to the learning style of each student, which is very demanding. Student experiences and expectations are not cookie-cutter. While it may seem that students are not treated equally, they are treated equitably (that is hard for students to understand).
my passion for the discipline
That we definitely don't do it for the money
Dedication and Time is takes.
That it can always be better
As a career advisor, I encourage students to research practice. I do my best to share my knowledge to benefit students in pursuing their interests.
I always have the students best interest in mind.
How much I enjoy the interaction with students and how much that interaction keeps me "young" and intellectually stimulated.
It is hard work.
it's not in their best interest for me to "tell them what to do"
I see in my students only possibility. Each one has the ability to shape the world around them. Come prepared to learn and participate in your own development.
That I enjoy doing it.
personal dedication to teaching architecture in studio and beyond
Education should be taken very seriously, and can be very costly. Don't waste anybody's time.
That there are solid pedagogical reasons for the parameters I establish
How much enjoyment I get in seeing students succeed!
Difficulty of addressing varying skill levels and engagement among the students
that my expertise is not restricted to the courses I teach
That I am here to help in a positive way. Listen and learn so you don't repeat the mistakes we have all made prior.
That we shoulder just as much of their emotions and feelings as they do, and take that times the number of students we have in a semester.
I genuinely want them to succeed and will go to great lengths to empower them, but I also have high expectations for them.
How strongly I desire to make this class the best experience they have had yet and care about giving them skills they need to succeed.
That I work just as hard as they do to help them succeed.
That professors do more than teach & that their plates are often very full.
faculty are human too and we have our own struggles, both personal and professional, that impact our day-to-day effectiveness
I am here to help you succeed and I won't have all the answers, but we will figure it out together.
regardless of the specificity of the assignment or studio project, I try to approach my role from a holistic point of view - intertwine many facets (technological, historical, cultural) that, I think allows for productive dialogu with a broad range of students
That I continually learn.
I think they know but that I always have their best interests in mind

Not every survey taker wanted to answer this question, but those who did answer frequently mentioned that

even though the work is difficult, there is a lot of passion.

There is also a yearning for understanding and a willingness to understand. It will take more inferences and discernment from the team to determine what prevents these conversations from happening.

Model Learning & Teaching Culture Policy

North Dakota State University

Model Learning & Teaching Culture Policy

INTRODUCTION

This Learning & Teaching Culture Policy (LTCP) is a living document, maintained by a Committee of faculty, students, and administrators, and designed to guide our learning community toward an ethical environment that productively educates and champions healthy, capable, and intelligent students and faculty. This goal can only be achieved by ardently working together as an entire team and as committed members of this school. By nature of the institution and the object of our studies, we are all always learning and practicing how to operate and function to the best of our abilities.

In addition to the overarching values and ethics of the university, this School of Architecture is dedicated to: optimism, professional conduct, constructive evaluations and instructions, collaborative community, time management and school-life-work balance, health and wellbeing, diversity and solidarity, respectful stewardship and space management, and well-rounded enrichment. The pedagogy of architecture and design is as complex as it is rewarding, and as dynamically evolving as the people who learn and teach it. That understanding is the core of this document.

VALUES

a. Optimism

- i. Students and faculty will strive to be curious and academically-minded, and to constantly be working toward positive solutions in design, for the profession, and in the method of teaching; the learning process should be continuous.
- ii. This school will provide an atmosphere of enjoyment that fosters creativity.
- iii. Students and faculty will display empathy and strive to be kind to their community members while respecting academic freedom.

b. Professional Conduct

- i. Students and faculty will maintain a professional manner of respect with their peers and with each other. Open dialogue and respect of others' identities, property and well-being are always expected.
- ii. In order to maintain positive work-life balance, productivity and professional readiness, workload expectations of students and faculty will be well-communicated and realistic, and will prioritize health and wellbeing for rigor.
- iii. University-sanctioned breaks and holidays will be honored and will be designated as time for students and faculty to rest.
- iv. Students and faculty will always respect others' time and strive to complete tasks in a timely manner. Students will arrive to class on time and turn in projects on time, while faculty will also arrive to class on time and provide information and feedback in a timely manner.

- v. Students and faculty will be prepared ahead of time for classes, meetings, projects and other tasks in a manner that is respectful to the time of other community members and is professionally acceptable.
 - vi. Students can expect and trust faculty to be equipped with a reasonable amount of knowledge in or around the particular class topic they are teaching. Faculty can expect and trust students to recall and be equipped with skills they have been taught up to that point in their education.
- c. Constructive Evaluations & Instruction
- i. All members of the community will be free and encouraged to express their ideas and purposes in whatever positive manner they see fit, and will receive constructive feedback on their process and methodology.
 - ii. Faculty can be expected to make every effort to be available for discussions outside of class during consistently scheduled office hours. Students can be expected to make every effort to attend those office hours if there is a need for additional instruction.
 - iii. Formal or informal reviews or critiques given by instructors or guest jurors will always be discussion-oriented; such discussions will never be critical of the person, but will always be directed to the work as it stands. It is the responsibility of the faculty at this school to inform guest instructors and jurors of how to conduct themselves during reviews in accordance with the school's mission and this LTCP. The student whose work is being reviewed will arrive on time, be well prepared, adhere to the schedule proposed by the design critic, and will be engaged with the entire review. Faculty will facilitate opportunity and motivation for all students to remain engaged in all reviews.
 - iv. Faculty and students will respect each other's physical and emotional boundaries at all times. Faculty and students can expect each other to be attentive to the other party's material and emotional complexities in ways that seek to help before they condemn. We are all members of the school community and shall be treated as such. We will operate under the understanding that everyone is doing their best to abide by the policies set forth in this document. The culture and process by which concerns are addressed by anyone will reflect that understanding in an open and conscientious way.
 - v. Via all communication means available (including syllabi, convocation, class meetings, email and other messages, etc.), students can expect faculty to be transparent and forthright about class details including, but not limited to: tentative dates of evaluations, grading scales, deliverable requirements per project, goals and intents of the class, and other things that are out of the control of the student. Faculty can expect students to receive, read, and retain these messages when they are sent.
 - vi. The entire learning community at this school understands the difficulty of evaluating a qualitative art with quantitative grading, but will do its best to be fair and evaluate work without bias.

d. Collaborative Community

- i. This school recognizes the power of the collaborative design process and will make time and space for students and faculty to work together in order to better prepare them for the professional work they will achieve and the global issues they will go on to solve.
- ii. This school has a zero-tolerance bullying/harassment policy [as referenced in another school document]. This program will not tolerate physical or emotional bullying by creating overly competitive learning environments or situations that weaken student-to-student relationships. Any behavior that resembles bullying will be addressed and punished per the University Guidelines. Anyone who would like to report an incident can refer to resources on the school website.
- iii. Students are responsible for embodying academic integrity and shall not participate in or instigate plagiarism among their classmates. Any behavior that resembles plagiarism will be addressed and punished per the University Guidelines.
- iv. Freedom of expression in art, architecture, and design are rights of all students and faculty so long as such expression does not offend or mitigate another individual's ability to express themselves.
- v. As part of a community, students will be actively engaged and take pride in their work. Students are encouraged and invited to share their successes with the rest of the school by showcasing in-process and completed work in designated spaces that are facilitated by the school.
- vi. All students will intend to meet expectations for team projects or collaborative discussions by helping each other learn new skills, and sharing resources. As architecture is an interdisciplinary practice, students are encouraged to always seek to uplift rather than tear down other students.

e. Health & Wellbeing

- i. The complex decision-making inherent in architecture education demands the focus and concentration that can only come from effective time management, personal well-being, physical health, mental health, sufficient sleep, and good nutrition. The architecture department encourages students to operate to the best of their abilities, something that can only be accomplished with a healthy balance of work, rest, food, and sleep.
- ii. A reasonable number of absences for sickness or wellness-related reasons will be excused with reasonable advance notice and without documentation or per University Policy. Students will make up missed work at the discretion of their professor.
- iii. This school provides assistance to those who are struggling with their health and wellbeing and taking advantage of those resources is encouraged of both students and faculty.

f. Time Management & School-Life-Work Balance

- i. Time management is a skill that will be taught and exemplified for students in their early curriculum with the intent of their development of responsible habits. Healthy time management allows for a reasonable schedule dedicated to class time, personal time or mental wellness, sleeping, and time for homework.
- ii. This school recognizes the diversity of obligations that make an education possible, and will not expect students or faculty to complete planning or schoolwork as if they have no other (familial or financial) obligations. Per a time management standard that centers on wellness, every assignment will be given enough time to be completed and constructively evaluated.
- iii. Adopting chronically unhealthy sleep patterns in order to complete studio or class work prevents mental health and is no longer a tolerated facet of this architecture school. Lack of sleep and other noticeably unhealthy time management practices of students or faculty are not encouraged and will not be praised.

g. Diversity & Solidarity

- i. This school recognizes the importance of diversity in and among architecture, and demands its own cultivation of an inclusive culture in the words we speak, the actions we take, the history we teach, the behaviors we model, and the buildings we design. This school will provide opportunity and safe spaces to have those open discussions.
- ii. This school respects the backgrounds (which could include any combination of but is not limited to: culture, race, ethnicity, religion, age, sex, gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic background, identity) of its students, and is open to accommodations through channels that are in accordance with University policies.
- iii. Financial barriers to succeeding in class will be addressed with provisions for those who are unable to participate financially.
- iv. All students will operate in an atmosphere of solidarity, shared effort, and mutual support. This entails meeting expectations for team projects, helping each other learn new skills, and sharing resources. Students are expected to be understanding and supportive of the realities their peers may be facing. Students are encouraged to establish a culture of generosity that will help ensure the personal growth and collective success of the class.
- v. Similar to the ongoing practice of architecture, this school will always seek to understand and learn more about the evolving stresses of its learning community, and how this institution can ease or solve them. Everyone's right to grow in their learning will be respected.
- vi. This school recognizes the importance of encouraging a diverse range of career opportunities post-graduation, and will endeavor to reflect that in curricular instruction.

h. Respectful Stewardship & Space Management

- i. All members of this school will respect the rights of others; this includes the property of other individuals, groups, and this school. Classrooms, studios, and other public amenities within the school of architecture are for the benefit of all and are expected to be treated with care.
- ii. This school will not knowingly endanger its students, faculty, administration or the environment by requiring or perpetuating the use of hazardous or toxic materials. As designers, future architects, and stewards of the Earth, it is the responsibility of the school to recycle used materials and mitigate waste.
- iii. Faculty and students can expect the school to be upheld and maintained in such a way that protects the HSW of its occupants on a regular basis, including security over school breaks. All members of this school are expected to abide by safety measures and regulations that are instituted by the university.
- iv. It is the responsibility of every member of this school to avoid bringing further damage and wear to critical common resources.

i. Well-Rounded Enrichment

- i. This school will incorporate time in the curriculum to teach students the skills they need to know in order to succeed in subsequent classes and post-graduate research, experimentation, fulfillment, or employment. In a field with an ever-shifting, technical and professional landscape, this school will do its best to combine fundamental skills with contemporary tools in ways that prioritize student's success and retention of skills.
- ii. An education at this school can lead to a diverse range of career opportunities, and such potential will be reflected in all curricular instruction.
- iii. This school recognizes that in accordance with a healthy school-work-life balance, this curriculum will facilitate or provide enrichment in the education of its students in order to create an environment that matriculates well-rounded graduates.
- iv. Exposure to and preparation for professional opportunities will be included in the curriculum or available resources at this school.
- v. Student participation in extracurricular activities (ie student-run organizations, activities, interdisciplinary cohorts, volunteerism, etc.) that enhance and supplement an education and life experience will be prioritized and modeled by faculty and administration.

PROCESS

Although a frequently updated LTCP is required by the 2020 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation (PC7, page 2), the Committee will revisit this document as often as necessary in order to stay connected and attentive to our learning community. The LTCP is always available to the public via the school's website, and will also be emailed and distributed to students, as well as discussed during Fall convocation each year. This document will be reviewed and revised annually by a committee composed of equally-empowered students, student leaders, faculty,

administrators, and the School Head. This committee is also responsible for interpreting the document and considering grievances, suggestions and discussions, and may be advised in the event of greater violations. Complaints can be submitted to the LTCP Committee by emailing and scheduling a meeting with the School Head.

Signatures:

Faculty Member	_____
Student Leader	_____
Student Body Member	_____
Administrator	_____
School/Department Head	_____

[Download a PDF of the Model Learning & Teaching Culture Document here!](#)



Framework for Implementation

Portland State University School of Architecture

A model document can be defined as “a set of minimum standards or guidelines, set forth as an example by an advisory group, that may be adopted as-is or amended by the body to which it is distributed.” This Model Learning & Teaching Culture Policy document is designed to serve as a starting point from which architecture and design institutions can create, compare, and modify their own LTCP’s.

It should go without saying that every school handles the longevity of their Learning & Teaching Culture Policy differently and this model document has no intention of replacing or standardizing the policies that already exist. After reading through the model document, ask yourself this: Does your school’s policy incorporate these topics and considerations? Does your school’s culture feel equally empowering to students, faculty and administration? Does your school’s community protect all those in it equitably? Are the best (or worst) parts of what it feels like to go to your school written down anywhere in an accessible location?

If your answer to any of those inquiries was ‘no’, your Studio Culture Policy could probably use some tightening up. Implementing ideas from the model document can be as simple as expanding on a section or two in your existing policy to include promises and protections of both students and faculty, or as serious as critically examining your LTCP to audit its explicit equity (as opposed to its implied equality which often leaves room for harmful biases). Over the course of our study, the 2020 LTCP Team has found that the cultures that are most successful and least performative possess these similar characteristics:

1. School Specific

In many places throughout the Model Document, there are mentions of “university guidelines” (part d). The best way to make your LTCP a useful tool is to integrate references to policies, codes of ethics, creeds, handbooks, etc. that already exist at your particular institution. This not only reminds all parties of a certain standard of behavior, it allows everything else in your LTCP to relate more specifically to your architecture department, school, or college.

2. Revisit Periodically

The only thing we can count on in life is the existence of change. Higher education is constantly evolving and turning over, which is what makes our institutions amazing and innovative. As students, faculty, and administrators matriculate in and out, and as never-before-seen circumstances arise, the LTCP should adapt concurrently. Once a year is the minimum frequency by which the entire learning community should look at and reaffirm their LTCP. It’s also equally important that the process by which the document is reviewed, revised, and redistributed is outlined and understood by everyone involved and affected.

3. State (and Re-State) Intent

Again, your LTCP can and should transform from time to time, but the intent behind the document should be fairly consistent: to guide your learning community toward an ethical environment that productively educates and champions healthy, capable, and intelligent students and faculty. Restating that intent whenever the document is being revised is an important and worthwhile part of institutional knowledge and should be preserved as a tenet of architecture and design school. Documents, practices, and people that contradict or conflict that goal warrant a closer look.

The AIAS develops resources on Studio Culture often, and they can be found by searching the aias.org website or keeping up with the News Blog. If you’re looking for a place to start, [here](#) is a great introduction to enacting the recommendations of this report.

Tips for Tough Discussions

American University of Sharjah College of Architecture, Art and Design

Introducing an equitable Learning and Teaching Culture Policy to a school that hasn't given enough attention to the concept before can be an uphill battle. In general, a good first step is to lead with openness and to emphasize and say thank you for work that's already been done (knowingly or unknowingly) by antagonists to help aid this effort towards a more equitable community.

Here are some speed bumps that anyone in the learning community may run into and how to get over them:

1. "There's no time to talk about learning & teaching culture right now. We have too much going on!"

- Actually, right now is a great time to discuss the culture by which we learn and teach precisely because there is so much up in the air. Remembering these promises will help us be more flexible in areas that won't compromise the tenets of what makes this school a great place to learn.
- We want to be as respectful of everyone's time as possible. It's not too long of a document to go through, even if analyzed line by line. Making any changes should be a conversation, and doesn't have to be taxing or aggressive.
- Particularly in the realm of architecture, when the culture is shifting, we must react; the way we learn and teach is no different.

2. "We're already doing these things, why do we need this document?"

- The fact that we already do most of these things is a testament to how much we should do our best to hold onto the current culture. When new faculty and students come in, we want them to know what they can expect, and what about our current culture is worth protecting.

3. "This is too much to ask of faculty!"

- If faculty are more concerned with perpetuating toxic teaching styles than they are about actually teaching, then that says more of the school than it does of this document.
- Pro-tip: Finding faculty allies can be beneficial to the cause, especially when they stand up and say that they're more than comfortable with these standards.
- Listen to antagonists when they tell you the truth; if they cannot hold themselves accountable for the bare minimum of basic decency in teaching, then students should not develop bad habits in order to compensate. The least that faculty and administrators are obligated to do is entertain the conversation.
- The pursuit of a healthy studio culture is not something that will happen overnight. A grace period of implementation as we work towards the lifestyle is perfectly reasonable while we all learn, grow, and do our best.

4. "This isn't in compliance with our specific University Policies or Codes of Conduct."

- This Model policy is built on equity, but other core values of this university may be greater or less than what is being recommended. Referencing other documents and editing what's written here to better match the architecture department is the primary intent of the entire exercise. The secondary intent is to inspire a dialogue between and among our community which leads to better understanding of the universal policies that apply to our campus.
- A model document is defined as an exemplary object in both structure and format of a particular document intended to be adapted by its users. Whether a specific university decides to adapt or adopt is their prerogative and is absolutely encouraged by the LTCPP team who specifically wrote this document to represent the bare minimum of what students, faculty, and school administrations should expect from each other.

5. “Students don’t feel like there’s an issue with studio culture at this school right now.”

- Again, putting something in writing that more clearly states our values and promises only solidifies what is good and what could be better about our learning community. However, before patting yourself on the back, consider if this is a feeling among all students or simply the majority.
- Having big conversations about fears or resistance to certain changes can air out inequities that are invisible. When administrators allow structured time to do this in the curriculum and schedule, the school actually has more control and better optics in the situation.
- A healthy day-to-day culture is integral to a good and worthwhile education and definitely isn’t something that students should leave up to chance.
- Students probably feel that there are other certain aspects of their curriculum that are also not worth studying, but ultimately, there are skills to be gained in the process of working towards this kind of culture. It’s a professional development exercise for everyone.

6. “We don’t have the capacity to police this.”

- The best way to enact change is not to “police” the situation, but to make time to talk it out when issues arise. There will probably always be issues and adjustments that need to be made, what matters most is the structure that allows us to discuss them, and drawing a line in the sand about what is unacceptable in order to protect and appreciate our students, faculty, and learning community.



A Resilient Learning & Teaching Culture

Auburn University College of Architecture, Design, and Construction

With the context of recent events the AIAS recognizes that while in times of crisis it is difficult to keep a focus on policies such as the LTCP, but we also know that in these times it is more important than ever to strive toward a positive and constructive educational culture. Dedication to cultivating positive culture and relationships is the necessary platform for high-quality education regardless of whether these policies exist in writing or not, so it is therefore best practice to ensure that Learning & Teaching Culture Policies, which ensure the existence of this intent, are written in a manner that enables them to stay resilient and useful under difficult circumstances. Here are some tips on points to cover to ensure resilience in your school's policy:

- **Equity in Access:** Not everyone has the same access to resources, e.g. the Internet, shop tools, . Schools should ensure that they are considering equitable access and opportunities to students in different situations. All members of the school community should be prepared to engage in multiple modes of delivering information and instruction.
- **Health & Wellness:** Schools should maintain focus on the health of their students and staff even in times of difficulty, like when working and learning remotely is necessary. Continuing healthy practices and accommodating situations such as students being in different time zones are necessary to consider and plan for early on. Stewardship and space management also fall under the topic of maintaining a healthy environment.
- **Culture of Respect:** Maintaining respectful relationships goes a long way toward keeping positive culture resilient. Respecting the diversity, personal beliefs and health needs of others is a must at all times, but becomes even more necessary when the world is changing. Respectful practices are often as simple as wearing a mask to protect the health of those around you, or agreeing to disagree when a discussion is becoming too heated.
- **Redefining & Reinterpretation:** Every major topic or section in a Learning & Teaching Culture Policy has a direct impact on quality of culture and education, and should therefore be constantly considered, even in times of crisis or change. In times like these schools should be prepared to revisit each of these topics and, if necessary, reinterpret them so that they are better suited to maintaining positive culture in the situation at hand.
- **Dedication to Positive Culture:** The most important consideration when ensuring the resilience of your school's Learning & Teaching Culture is that students, faculty and administration should all remain dedicated to the maintenance of a positive educational culture. In times such as these it becomes not less, but more important to actively work toward positive culture. Persistence and clear communication are basic necessities in this effort, and schools should be prepared to revisit and openly discuss their policies regularly, not as an insurance policy but as an effort to move toward a strong culture that enhances the value of education and helps create respectful, well-rounded and culturally intelligent graduates and professionals.

