



WHAT MAKES THIS **EDUCATOR/PRACTITIONER** TEAM CLICK?

DARIUS SOLLOHUB (LEFT) AND JOHN C. "JAK" INGLESE (RIGHT) WORK WITH STUDENTS ON THE NCARB PRIZE WINNING PROJECT, "THE BOX AND BEYOND."

Working together, educators at architectural schools and architects in the community can greatly enhance students' ability to turn theory into practice. The 2010 NCARB Prize encourages this high level of professional collaboration by awarding cash prizes to six outstanding examples of it throughout the nation. The program was developed to foster relationships between schools of architecture and the architectural profession on an ongoing basis.

To illustrate the dynamics that can occur, the faculty member and the architect who led students to capture this year's grand prize talk about the challenges and rewards of working together on this project.

The New Jersey Institute of Technology's School of Architecture received the NCARB Prize grand prize for giving students unparalleled exposure to community-based design and construction while working alongside the project's architect. Students participated in a start-to-finish project that resulted in design, acceptance and planned construction of a low-cost, yet sustainable, townhouse complex in a low-income neighborhood in Newark, NJ. The client for this project, property owner Habitat for Humanity of Newark, needed a new and efficient model for housing for disadvantaged families. The project delivered a design that met the challenge of Habitat's desire to break out of its mode of building nondescript single-family houses. [See page 26 for more information.]

Commenting on their experience together here are NJIT's Director of the School of Architecture, Darius Sollohub, AIA, and the non-faculty architect practitioner who was involved in the project, John C. "Jak" Inglese, AIA, PE, LEED AP, of Inglese Architecture and Engineering, East Rutherford, NJ. Inglese concludes with an invitation to those on either side of the equation: "I think practicing architects should teach more and educators should practice more."

Describe the model architect/educator collaboration for a project such as this.

EDUCATOR

DARIUS: The success of an architect/educator collaboration is predicated on mutual compatibility and respect. While both offer design instruction to the student, the architect typically offers real-world practical knowledge while the educator contributes cutting-edge research and theory. These should be viewed as two sides of the same coin and never hierarchically, where one trumps the other. The message to students should be unified and complimentary. Where the architect and educator disagree, it should be framed as different viewpoints that a student must reconcile.

PRACTITIONER

JAK: One would look like me and one would look like Darius. Seriously though, it just takes an educator who wants to draw on the experience and working knowledge of practicing professionals and a practicing professional who is willing and able to contribute that information on a schedule and in a format that works for the class.

Why does this type of project that brings together students, educators, and architects appeal to you?

EDUCATOR

DARIUS: It's exciting. Students are "adrenalized." After years of abstract exercises, this one can make a difference. As an academic who came from practice, but today is involved exclusively in teaching, administration, and research, it's nice to get involved in the nuts and bolts of design. Also working with Habitat for Humanity brings inherent nobility to the whole undertaking.

PRACTITIONER

JAK: I guess because it seems to fix what I thought was broken in my own education. I'm interested in contributing to the built environment. Actually getting projects built requires a fuller understanding of all of the forces that shape a building. Many of these forces can seem tedious, restrictive, and sometimes plain foolish, but you need to learn them and understand them if you want to direct any kind of development.

What three ways do you believe *Jak/Darius* excelled at achieving the objectives for this project?

EDUCATOR

- DARIUS:**
1. Jak is a consummate architect and a spectacular role model to our students. He is very well organized. He runs a complex practice, but always makes time to be in class. It goes without saying that he is a very good designer.
 2. He has an encyclopedic understanding of the applicable building codes, local zoning, and building costs.
 3. He makes the design process and the teaching process one in the same. He naturally draws out the best in students while making their projects eminently practical.

PRACTITIONER

- JAK:**
1. He got me to commit a fair amount of my time, which is no small feat.
 2. He got Habitat for Humanity to go along with the concept and spend the time necessary to meet with the students and review their work.
 3. He designed the studio objectives so that the students looked at various alternatives and actually produced a lot of work while narrowing the focus down at the end to create the prototype that the project required.

In general, what do more *architects/educators* need to know about today's architectural students who are heading into the profession tomorrow?

EDUCATOR

DARIUS: They [students] think differently than we do. We may think that because they are constantly texting each other they are not paying attention, or that if they have a TV re-run open on their computer screen, they are not working efficiently. This is a superficial understanding and ultimately condescending. They were born into a world of digital media and [they] intuitively multi-task. This is a good thing; how they combine information is a thing to marvel at. Older practitioners and educators can learn a lot from them.

PRACTITIONER

JAK: I think it would be that practicing architecture requires a number of different skill sets and we need to identify these at least at this [educational] level. Learning to solve problems is crucial. As time goes on, the act of building a building only becomes more complicated.



What can *architects/educators* working with students really teach them about many of the other necessary business, management, negotiation, community relations, and budgeting skills required to work in a firm?

EDUCATOR
DARIUS: Most schools so over-emphasize formal design that these concerns never enter the studio. At best students may be exposed to these needs in a lecture or seminar course. Recognizing that these can be design generators for formal decision-making can re-introduce them to the design process. We found that our students were energized by these concerns and never saw them as constraining. Showing students how the practices of Rem Koolhaas [architectural theorist and visionary practitioner] or MVRDV [acclaimed Dutch firm specializing in futuristic urban architecture] use these concerns as beginning points can also be illuminating.

PRACTITIONER
JAK: If you come purely from an academic background without having had any outside experience in the profession, not a great deal. But there always seemed to be a fair amount of architectural educators who had practiced or still practice and they brought with them those other skills and experiences.

Why don't more *architects/educators* connect with architectural schools in this way for the sake of the profession's next generation?

EDUCATOR
DARIUS: Many architects can't afford the time. A major benefit of our arrangement was that this was a fee-generating project in Jak's office and that the best students would ultimately work there to complete the drawings. If we can foster creative, mutually beneficial arrangements such as this, perhaps more architects would get involved.

PRACTITIONER
JAK: I don't know. I suppose it's because there is so much to learn in four or five years and educators might feel that you then have the rest of your career to learn the practical things.

Can you think of other ways that architects and educators can and should work together to integrate education and practice?

EDUCATOR
DARIUS: We have had great success using students and studios in the community design process. Citizens seem to relate to students in unique ways.

PRACTITIONER
JAK: I think practicing architects should teach more and educators should practice more. **DC**