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Introducing the NCARB Prize Class of 2006

In early April 2006, former NCARB President Robert A. Boynton, FAIA (2004), and jury chair Barbara Sestak, AIA, announced the newest class of NCARB Prize winners at the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) Annual Conference in Salt Lake City, UT. Led by grand prize winner Montana State University, the six NCARB Prize winners showcase outstanding, unique, and highly thoughtful efforts to integrate practice and education in an academic setting.

As the 2006 grand prize winner, Montana State received a \$25,000 award; the remaining Prize winners each received a \$7,500 award. To date, NCARB has distributed more than \$310,000 through the Prize initiative. A new grants program will debut later this academic year, which builds on the momentum created by the NCARB Prize. (See page 12 for more information about the NCARB Prize Grants program.)

Montana State University— “Engaging the Advancing Edge of the Architectural Profession”

Through this integrated program, students enrolled in a professional practice class focused on relevant components of architectural practice—including trends, business research, and strategies—by working with firms and other entities such as the Montana State School of Business. Student investigations flow from one semester to the next, creating an iterative experience for those involved. Meaningful interaction with practitioners is a key factor; because practitioners often are the object of such investigations, students are constantly working with primary sources.

Montana State Assistant Professor and program coordinator Michael Everts, AIA, explained, “We took the approach that the profession is in this constant state of competition, which tends to put firms in a continual cycle of invention. Firms that are facing evolution or even revolution are the most interesting. This may occur as the result of a certain project, client, economic condition, etc. The point is that the agent of change is critical to realize and understand. Many times, changes in one firm are synonymous with changes in the profession; thus, identifying these changes gives students access to a trend that may become more relevant by the time they are practicing in three to five years.”

The 2006 NCARB Prize jury described the Montana State submission as innovative in dissecting how a practice evolves in relationship to trends as well as its response to them. Prize jurors also recognized that students are developing theory by way of participating in this course. They noted that Montana State students are on the cutting edge of how practice is changing.

California College of the Arts— “Studio | Practice Program: Comprehensive Building Design”

A high degree of collaboration characterizes this innovative studio curriculum in design research. Sponsor firms, which are paired with a faculty member in order to co-teach the Comprehensive Building Design studios, provide a team of experts as well as access to their offices, construction sites, consultants, and clients. Publication also plays a key role within this initiative. Sponsor firms use their

teaching stipends to fund publications about student work, which include related essays by practitioners, academics, and outside critics.

In their program description, CCA representatives noted, “The publications place our students at the center of current real-world issues within the discipline, locally and beyond. For the [sponsor firms], the publication is an opportunity to further the firm’s particular design research goals and is a tangible marker of their commitment to educating future design professionals.”

Beyond innovative publications, CCA’s Comprehensive Building Design studios also provide an emphasis on mentorship for students; a structure in which senior-level professionals can actively participate in the academy; and an opportunity to reinforce the collaborative and integrated ethos of comprehensive building design.

The 2006 NCARB Prize jury especially admired the program’s dialogue with sponsor firms and its publications, which share the collaborative studio experiences with a broader community and capture them for posterity.

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute—“Bedford Studio Initiative”

The Bedford Studio Initiative comprehensively links a professional practice course and a studio in order to investigate performance-based design principles. Students concentrate on the design development—including building systems integration, materials strategies, and code requirements—of a project

they previously created or of an unbuilt, published project. They also visit construction sites and professional offices to discuss practice issues related to their work.

Under the auspices of the Bedford Studio, senior architecture students and fourth-year engineering students jointly develop a project in studio under the guidance of a structural engineer and architect. RPI Associate Professor and program coordinator Mark Mistur explained, “The objective is to [expose students] to the potentials and pitfalls of working across disciplines [as well as] the concerns and needs of various partners, and to help them develop a literacy within and appreciation for diverse roles.”

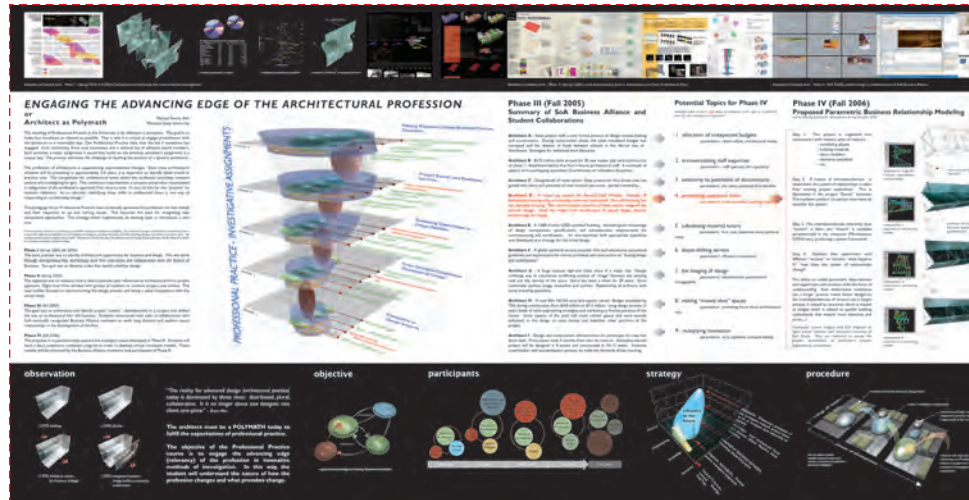
In addition, this initiative regularly sponsors a travel seminar for six architecture students and six engineering students, who participate in a workshop focusing on firms in the United Kingdom and in Germany. Workshop participants develop an integrated design proposal for part of a structure or building. By traveling abroad, students observe best practices that represent progressive architecture-engineering work.

The 2006 NCARB Prize jury identified one of the program’s strengths as bringing together fourth-year engineering students and senior architecture students in a setting where they jointly work on design development.

**Texas Tech University—
"Practicum + Studio"**

Since 2001, students from the rural Texas Tech University campus have enjoyed opportunities to explore, research, and engage large, complex building types—including medical, hospitality, educational, and transit facilities—in a metropolitan setting. This ongoing effort, comprising 17 studios completed over the past five years, has successfully introduced students to urban design issues. Students taking part in the studio work 35 hours per week in a firm setting and then meet at a host firm for a weekly studio.

David A. Driskill, AIA, associate dean for academics and program coordinator, provided



A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COURSE THAT INVESTIGATES TRENDS IN ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE IN AN ITERATIVE, DYNAMIC FASHION—MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY, “ENGAGING THE ADVANCING EDGE OF ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE,” 2006 NCARB PRIZE GRAND AWARD WINNER



COMPREHENSIVE BUILDING DESIGN STUDIOS THAT EMPHASIZE THE COLLABORATIVE NATURE OF ARCHITECTURE THROUGH CO-TEACHING, MENTORSHIP, AND PUBLICATIONS—CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, “STUDIO | PRACTICE PROGRAM: COMPREHENSIVE BUILDING DESIGN,” 2006 NCARB PRIZE WINNER



A STUDIO AND A PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE COURSE TAKEN CONCURRENTLY THAT FOCUS ON DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AS WELL AS BEST PRACTICES IN A/E WORK—RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE, “BEDFORD STUDIO INITIATIVE,” 2006 NCARB PRIZE WINNER

some background details about the Texas Tech entry: “The expertise to deal with specialized building types . . . is rarely found in the faculty of an architectural college, and the opportunity to engage students in urban issues through the practice and client cultures of urban firms is difficult for rural-based programs. Both of these issues are addressed directly by the Practicum + Studio program.”

The studios have been held in Dallas, Houston, and El Paso. A unique characteristic of the El Paso studio iteration is Texas Tech’s efforts to work with El Paso Community College (EPCC). At this time, El Paso does not have an architecture program from which professionals may draw interns. Texas Tech is committed to working with EPCC and local firms to create a bachelor of science degree program. The Practicum + Studio may be expanded in the near future to include San Antonio.

“The [NCARB Prize] program continues to highlight the most innovative faculty efforts to link practice and education in a studio setting.”

The 2006 NCARB Prize jury was pleased to recognize Texas Tech’s ability to develop and sustain its long-term, successful program that integrates practice and education in response to their context.

The University of Arkansas Community Design Center—“Thickening the Professional Knowledge Base: Developing Planning Models and Solutions for Our State”

For more than 10 years, the University of Arkansas’ Community Design Center (UACDC), an outreach of the School of Architecture, has explored a variety of projects with a notable emphasis on historic preservation. Since 2003, UACDC has broadened its scope in order to “[focus] on developing models for the everyday public realm, working from the metrics, protocols,

and logics of organizational culture—a culture shared by highly structured market forces and government agencies alike.”

Guided by the concept of the teaching hospital, the UACDC is committed to delivering university-based professional services on a public scale. Its publications capture the design tools developed from each completed project.

Current multidisciplinary issues include a watershed urbanism project that has drawn the involvement of several organizations and an investigation of big box urbanism, a project that was chosen as a 2005 NCARB Prize winner.

UACDC Director Stephen Luoni added, “Since Arkansas does not have a planning program or a strong urban design tradition (many towns do not have land ordinances or a zoning code), we are serving an unmet need. The situation has become acute as the northwest

region of the state, where Wal-Mart, Tyson, and J.B. Hunt are headquartered, is now the nation’s sixth fastest growing metropolitan statistical area (third for jobs growth). Alternatively, the Arkansas Delta, in the eastern half of the state, is experiencing substantial city shrinkage as the region’s population reconsolidates around a few cities. Responsible stewardship of both regional land settlement dynamics requires planning and design solutions, even if the market and political decision makers don’t always realize it.”

According to the 2006 NCARB Prize jury, the UACDC has become a regional planning activist and leader of environmental issues for the surrounding area by emphasizing proactive responses to ongoing community needs.

The University of New Mexico—

“Small Town Urbanism:

The Main Street Studios”

Since spring 2002, the Main Street Studios have demonstrated the effective role that a university can play in improving small town design. Working with practitioners from 15 Albuquerque firms, as well as local architects, numerous local residents, and state planning and design staff, UNM students develop and lead a series of community design charrettes and workshops, with a focus on nurturing small town urbanism. The State of New Mexico’s Main Street Program is the primary funding source for these studios, which work toward the development of a series of projects based on community strategy—as opposed to the piecemeal development of several different and unrelated projects.

In supporting material for the NCARB Prize, Main Street Studios Director Mark C. Childs wrote, “[We] have attempted to follow [Ernest L.] Boyer’s recommendations for the ‘scholarship of application’ by providing students an opportunity for a clinical education that will develop their awareness of issues and points of view in the community, provide a setting in which to apply their technical skills to relevant problems, and expose them to some of the ethical and moral dimensions of their chosen profession.”

Tangible results of the Main Street Studios include “changing zoning regulations, developing community plans, advocating for legislation, applying for grant monies, . . . and, perhaps most importantly, building the organizational capacity and vision of the local not-for-profit sector.”

The 2006 NCARB Prize jury was pleased to honor the Main Street Studios for their thoughtful, well-done projects that assess themselves while maintaining a sense of where they are located.

NCARB Prize jurors also recognized submissions from the **University of Texas at Austin** (“Engage, Design, Build, Reflect”) and

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (“No Compromise: The Integration of the Technical and the Aesthetic”) as honorable mentions.

Thirty-three entries, representing 29 different colleges and universities, were juried for the 2006 NCARB Prize competition. Speaking on behalf of the NCARB Prize jury, former Council President Boynton said, “We are so pleased to celebrate the five-year milestone for the NCARB Prize. The program continues to highlight the most innovative faculty efforts to link practice and education in a studio setting. No where is this more obvious than with the 2006 Prize winners. Montana State University proudly maintains the high standards established by our previous grand prize winners—the University at Buffalo/SUNY, Oklahoma State University, the University of Kansas, and the University of Detroit Mercy.”

Since 2001, the NCARB Prize initiative has invited accredited programs of architecture to submit their most compelling efforts to integrate aspects of professional practice into an academic setting. All told, NCARB has received 175 submissions representing 78 of the 115 accredited programs in architecture.

Inspired by the 1996 landmark research report, *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture and Practice*, which was written by Lee D. Mitgang and the late Ernest L. Boyer, former NCARB President Peter Steffian, FAIA (2001), led the development of a practice education awards program that “honors innovative ways of integrating practitioners into the academy in order to expose students to the reality and culture of day-to-day practice.”

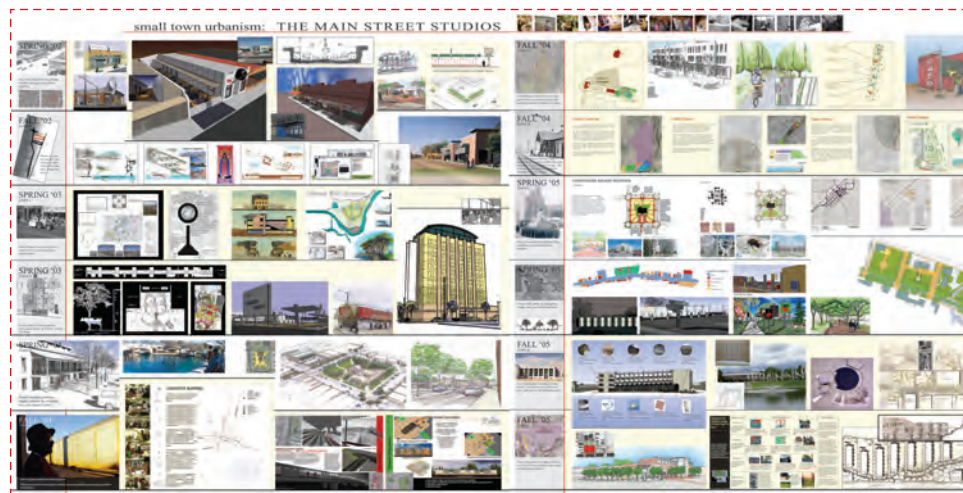
Among the NCARB Prize’s ongoing accomplishments are ensuring the continuation of research programs; jumpstarting outreach initiatives; purchasing additional technology resources; enabling the publication of research findings; and procuring building materials to transform computer models in to actual hands-on construction. **DC**



A RURAL-BASED PROGRAM THAT GIVES ITS STUDENTS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE SPECIALIZED BUILDING TYPES IN AN URBAN SETTING—TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY, “PRACTICUM + STUDIO,” 2006 NCARB PRIZE WINNER



A UNIVERSITY-BASED COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER THAT IS REDEFINING ITS ROLE AS A LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL RESOURCE FOR “PLACE-BUILDING DESIGN MODELS”—THE UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER, “THICKENING THE PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE BASE: PLANNING MODELS AND SOLUTIONS FOR OUR STATE,” 2006 NCARB PRIZE WINNER



A MULTIDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE STUDIO THAT FOCUSES ON THE DESIGN NEEDS OF SMALL TOWNS WHILE WORKING WITH LOCAL AND STATE OFFICIALS, COMMUNITY RESIDENTS, AND A VARIETY OF PRACTITIONERS—THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, “SMALL TOWN URBANISM: THE MAIN STREET STUDIOS,” 2006 NCARB PRIZE WINNER