



February 28, 2019

Ms. Ellen Cathey
Associate Director
National Architecture Accrediting Board, Inc.
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW Suite 410
Washington, DC 20036

Sent via e-mail, March 1, 2019

Dear Ms. Cathey and NAAB Board:

Our response to a correction of fact in the 2018 VTR for SUNY Alfred State College is limited only to a small number of issues enumerated below along with a very hearty thank you to the visiting team for their expertise, professionalism, and assistance during our most recent visit. It was truly a privilege to work with Barbara, Thomas, Kerry, Deborah, and Krish.

We benefitted significantly from their visit, expertise, and insights, and have already begun to prepare for our next visit.

Principally, we remain confused by and wish to clarify the following errors of fact:

I.1.5 Long-Range Planning: The program must demonstrate that it has a planning process for continuous improvement that identifies multiyear objectives within the context of the institutional mission and culture.

[X] Not Demonstrated

2018 Analysis/Review: Upon review of the information provided in the APR and visiting the facilities, the program has completed their first draft version of the strategic long-range plan that spans AY 2018-2019 to AY 2033-2034. The draft plan is derived from a regular cycle of

assessment already in place and follows the methodology for review and planning per SCUP (Society for College and University Planning).

While the evidence suggests that a long-range draft plan with program goals/objectives has been established with a methodology for assessment, **it was not easily usable by the team**. The objectives/goals identified in the long-range draft plan are: Promoting Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity; Supporting Student Development; Strengthening Student Development, Fulfillment, and Advancement; Building New Courses and programs; Enhancing Alumni Engagement and Philanthropic Support; Reinforcing Hands-On Education through Spaces and Technologies, and Advancing Our Reputation. A timeline, priority and process of implementation are not apparent for these goals/objectives.

Four chief policies that support the long-range draft plan are in evidence. These plans were reinforced during meetings with college administration. The chief policies are: The Staffing Plan; the Admissions Recruitment Plan, Academic Portfolio Review, and the Spacing Plan. The Staffing Plan amended in 2017 outlines past performance and future strategy for staffing and recruitment through to 2025. In AY 2017-18 the plan provided a formal curriculum coordinator. The Admissions and Recruitment Plan intends to keep a steady rate of growth of 1% per year through 2025 (this is less than the campus target of 1% to 3%). The Academic Portfolio Review, beginning in 2017, provides a comprehensive review of existing academic portfolio and develops a long-range ten-year plan to examine future growth. The Space Plan will include a “refreshed course structure, studio options and future new faculty” to comply with the NAAB five perspectives. The Space Plan will be part of the campus master plan, which is currently underway. The outcome will require the re-registration of all department programs through New York State. Per the program chair, this re-registration will not affect student or program progress, and is part of the SUNY process.

The plan provided to the team was a printed copy of what is available in our campus online Taskstream (planning, goalsetting, and reporting) system. **This system outputs “DRAFT” on the document as a matter of course. While the plan may not have been in a format that was “easily usable by the team,” the plan—in accordance with SCUP (Society for College and University Planning) guidelines—is robust, detailed, and assessment is constant, ongoing, and tracked in our Tasksteram system in fine-grain detail. The visiting team did not access the Taskstream system during their visit or time on campus, and therefore made this assessment based on only the summary document. Therefore, the assessment by the visiting team is factually incorrect.** For a small campus with a flat management structure, our departmental plan is inordinately detailed compared to any department on the Alfred State

campus and contains much the same structure used by two—much larger—NAAB-accredited programs at neighboring institutions who helped to advise and guide the genesis of our strategic planning efforts.

D.3 Business Practices: *Understanding* of the basic principles of a firm’s business practices, including financial management and business planning, marketing, organization, and entrepreneurship.

[X] Not Met

2018 Team Assessment: Evidence of student achievement at the prescribed level was not found. Specifically, evidence of understanding financial management and business planning was not found in either ARCH 8003 Professional Practice or ARCH 8793 Professional Development.

SPC B.3 Business Practices was “Met” by ARCH 8003 in 2014 and 2016. In fact, the 2016 Visiting Team noted that II.1.1 Student Performance Criteria: Realm D. Professional Practice was “Met with Distinction.” There was no substantive change to the ARCH 8003 or 8793 courses content from what the 2016 Visiting Team reviewed to what the 2018 Visiting Team reviewed, and all material was prepared for review by the same faculty members. While no substantive change has occurred to the course, content, or instructor, this time the course was cited as “not met.”

Evidence related to business planning was not located in one portion of the course, but instead was integrated over three units:

- Unit 1 discussed the instructor’s personal experience as an entrepreneur and sole practitioner, along with education, experience, examination and registration. This included material devoted to the Architecture Experience Program (AXP) – specifically the Practice Management experience area.
- Unit 2 discussed firm formation and organization, including legal organizations, and other business decisions such as the business plan, financial management systems, billing, staffing, taxes and insurance. Project delivery options and how clients select architects were also covered in Unit 2.
- Unit 3 discussed computations, multipliers and expenses using billing worksheets from real projects.

In addition to ARCH 8003 Professional Practice, the course material for ARCH 8793 Professional Development provides applied learning for the business practices that were introduced in ARCH

8003. The faculty teaching ARCH 8793, a recently retired practitioner, includes examples from his professional experience and practice related to financial management, business planning and entrepreneurship that were directed to students on a personal level. Marketing was discussed in terms of large projects thru the RFQ and RFP process, and reinforced with related assignments. All course material and student work for ARCH 8793, like that for ARCH 8003, was available to the Visiting Team. We believe that examples of this work may possibly have been overlooked.

We are unsure how an SPC that was met in the most recent visit (and in a realm that was Met with Distinction) could be deficient on the next visit when nothing has changed?

Also, the VTR notes: “Formal input into the budget process by instructional technology staff was not evident.” This statement is factually incorrect. The instructional technology staff related to our department has the same formal mechanisms of input as all other members of the faculty and is —and always has been—included in all communications and meetings as are all department faculty with regard to the budget process. In addition, the instructional technology staff has the added “special” opportunity to encumber an allocation from the department budget and expend this allocation without line-item oversight and approval by the chair. **Perhaps this additional flexibility on part of the instructional technology staff was misunderstood by the visiting team?**

Sincere thanks to you, Ellen, for your incredible patience with us and your expert guidance and insight.

Many thanks to all involved for helping us to realize our goal of becoming an ever better program and for keeping us true to our mission of “Good architecture for the social good.”

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Bitterman", written over a horizontal line.

Alex Bitterman, M.Arch. Ph.D.
Chair and Professor