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RWU's Master of Architecture Program Reaccredited with Distinction

Accreditation team impressed by school's practice integration, computer applications and career investment efforts



September 14, 2018 | By Edward Fitzpatrick

BRISTOL, R.I. – Not only has the Roger Williams University's Master of Architecture program been reaccredited, it has achieved all 46 conditions for accreditation, meeting five of those criteria with distinction.

For example, the National Architectural Accrediting Board team said it was impressed by "the depth and breadth of the work presented" in the Comprehensive Design Studio, "including experiences where students engaged with professional offices." It was impressed by how the RWU School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation uses its Teaching Firm in Residence Program "to offer opportunities for exchange between academy and practice." And it was impressed by how the school uses its Career Investment Program "as an innovative way to expose students to practitioners and experience the synergy of practice, community and engagement."

"This recognition is a credit to the leadership and faculty of the School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation," RWU Interim President Andy Workman said. "And this is further evidence of the school's reputation as one of the most innovative and excellent programs of architecture in the nation."

"Roger Williams University's ethos is all about knowledge serving society," SAAHP Dean Stephen White said. "The idea is that education can instill the teamwork, the engagement, the vision so that many people can take on the issues facing society and take on the great projects both locally and further afield."

White noted that more than half of the 46 accreditation conditions involved student performance. "It tells you the students are high-achieving and that we have developed a program that covers all the necessary areas," he said.

"We work to achieve a balance between the practical and theoretical aspects," SAAHP Associate Dean Gregory Laramie said.

A five-member National Architectural Accreditation Board team visited the school in March and recently released a 29-page report on the reaccreditation of RWU's master of architecture program. Among other observations, the team found "a very positive, engaging and personal concern and relationship between the faculty and students."

The team said, "The students also enjoy equitable access to resources for educational productivity, such as software, digital fabrication tools, printing, travel opportunities."

Thanks to a partnership with Samsung Electronics America Inc., RWU is on the leading edge of screen technology and provides a virtual desktop infrastructure (also known as the rCloud) that offers support for all students, exceeding the reach and quality offered in most academic and professional settings.

"The reality is that every student has their own computer monitor at their desk and access to cloud-based computing system," White said. "That is unique in U.S. architectural education."

Having just a few excellent graduates is not enough, White said. "We have tried to achieve a program where everyone can do good work through access to strong teaching, resources, leadership opportunities, engagement opportunities and working with practitioners," White said. "Society benefits from that. Society needs a lot of people to be able to go out and do good work."

The accreditation team cited the success of the Career Investment Program, which combines federal and university funds to support paid internships for all students in the school. The innovative program earned White and Laramie an American Institute of Architects/Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Practice + Leadership Award earlier this year.

Also, the accreditation team said it was impressed by how the architecture program served as "an innovator and leader across the university, with many excellent initiatives originating in the department and/or the school." As examples, the team cited the Community Partnerships Center, the Samsung cloud-based computing initiative and the Institute for the Future strategic visioning effort.

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