

from the executive director

K-12 PROGRAMS ON THE RISE IN SCHOOLS

BY MICHAEL J. MONTI

Programs to engage high school and middle school students are becoming increasingly prevalent in architecture schools. Whether as a way of extending a school's presence in the local community, promoting the architecture profession, preparing the next generation of clients, or recruiting future students, K-12 programs are becoming a logical next area of focus—beyond college-level recruitment—to strengthen the profession.

Following a request from the National Endowment for the Arts, which, according to Design Director Maurice Cox, noticed a marked increase in requests for support for K-12 design education projects, ACSA asked our member programs last spring to tell us about their K-12 initiatives. In response, only a few schools said they did not have such initiatives. Instead, we received a widely varied picture of new and longstanding programs that happen both during the year and the summer.

Nationally, there is a network of educators and practitioners working through the Architecture + Design Educators Network, or A+DEN, to promote innovative architecture and design education for K-12 teachers and students. Initiated by the American Architectural Foundation and the Chicago Architecture Foundation, A+DEN (adenweb.org) is holding a conference in Chicago November 5-7. See the website for information on the speakers and sessions.

Another national presence of note is Next.cc, an "eco web" site with content that can be used with 3rd through 12th graders to introduce them to ethical and ecological issues related to the built environment at a range of scales: nano, pattern, object, space, architecture, neighborhood, urban, region, and world.

At the university level, summer programs appeared to be the most frequently reported programs, ranging from multi-day camps to shorter "exploration" events. A list of respondents is below. Other schools reported individual relationships with local high schools, providing, for example, service opportunities for architecture students to introduce younger students to careers in design and architecture.

A third category of respondents described partnerships with local AIA chapters or the ACE mentoring program. ACE (acementor.org) is another national program that raises the awareness of high school students to career opportunities in the architecture, construction, and engineering industries. Their mentoring and scholarship programs work on a local or regional level, pairing teams of 15-25 students with industry mentors to work on a mock design project. The teams work weekly for about 15 weeks.

A total of nearly 40 schools responded with information about their programs. Student ambassadorships (Prairie View A&M), programs for at-risk students (UMass, Amherst; Southern Illinois), programs focusing on sustainable design (Washington University), scholarship programs (Boston Architectural College), weekend studios (Mass College of Art) are among those many programs.

ACSA is developing a K-12 education page on our website, which will include a list of summer programs and information on other member activities for pre-college students. The following list of universities with summer programs is likely not complete, if your school should be listed here, please email Pascale Vonier, pvonier@acsa-arch.org, so we can update our Web page.

Summer Programs:

Arizona State University
California Polytechnic SLO
Catholic University of America
Drexel University
Massachusetts College of Art
North Carolina State University
Pennsylvania State University
Southern Illinois University
Université de Montréal
University of California, Los Angeles,
University of Cincinnati
University of Houston
University of Idaho
University of Illinois at Chicago
University of Memphis
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