

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY THE FIRST KANSAS
CITY DESIGN CENTER URBAN DESIGN STUDIO AND RECOMMENDATIONS
ON HOW TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

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B.S., Kansas State University 2006

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

Department of Regional and Community Planning
College of Architecture, Planning, and Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2010

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Abstract

The Kansas City Design Center (KCDC) Interdisciplinary Urban Design Studio is one of a myriad of design studios throughout the country, which seek to bring students of differing educational backgrounds together in an urban environment. In this setting they collaborate with each other, faculty, and outside professionals in an effort to stem many of the problems associated with urban America today. While these design studios have made their goals and objectives clear to the public and their studio participants, what are they offering in terms of a quality interdisciplinary educational experience? How interdisciplinary are these urban design studios? Are students receiving the same educational experiences? The above questions can only be answered by documenting the processes involved as well as looking to the students for their insight and feelings of their own individual educational experiences while taking part in the studio.

The Kansas City Design center builds its educational endeavors around its interdisciplinary design studio. The goal of this studio is to “strengthen the educational experiences of future planning and design practitioners by engaging university faculty and students with real world issues facing Kansas City’s built environment.” Through this studio, faculty and students are able to work closely with local client groups working towards improving the built environment in Kansas City. If Kansas State University and the University of Kansas continue to send students to KCDC to study each year, it only seems appropriate that their faculty and potential students understand what is taking place at this particular studio.

Therefore, the goal of this research paper is to describe the projects undertaken during the inaugural Kansas City Design Center Urban Design Studio and to analyze the interdisciplinary environment of the studio.

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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

Design and planning the built environment is a very complex and comprehensive undertaking. Professionals from a wide range of disciplines take part in making our places better suited for the future ahead. No longer is the built environment, dominated by architects and planners, many other disciplines are joining in as we strive to make our world as sustainable as possible.

Witnessing this need for increased collaboration, universities around the country have begun making an effort towards interdisciplinarity in the fields of architecture, planning, and design. Today there are seventy accredited planning programs, one hundred and forty accredited architecture programs, eighty accredited landscape architecture programs, and one hundred and forty nine accredited interior architecture/design programs. Of the seventy planning programs twenty of them are housed in colleges with architecture and landscape architecture. According to my analysis, Kansas State University is one of only a few universities, which houses all four programs in the same college.

What does all of this mean? Well for one it means these universities realize the potential impact interdisciplinary study can have on the disciplines of planning and design, second they realize it would be a disservice to not allow these disciplines to interact with one another. Universities have now begun to take these interdisciplinary ventures further by developing interdisciplinary urban design centers like the Kansas City Design Center (KCDC). These design centers offer new opportunities for students to interact with students of differing

disciplines, something they might do very little of in their traditional degree programs back at their home university.

Historically, as you will find out later in this paper, the academic world has been slow to adopt interdisciplinary practices; with the political bantering that takes place between departments over funding, students, etc. creating worthwhile partnerships is often difficult. Thus, when these interdisciplinary ventures do take place they are often viewed through a microscope. Professors of the participating disciplines want to make sure their students are learning what they should be and are contributing to the efforts of the interdisciplinary group.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a detailed description of the inaugural Kansas City Design Center Urban Design Studio and also to answer the following question. Are students at the Kansas City Design Center gaining the same educational experience? The paper is structured in the following way; chapter 2 is the literature review. The first section of the literature review focuses on urban design centers, the many forms, what they do, etc. The second section on interdisciplinarity provides a historical overview of the evolution of the concept of interdisciplinarity in higher education. The Final section provides a very brief overview of the studio concept of education. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology used in analyzing the studio. Chapter 4 moves into the ethnography that was conducted of the studio. This section summarizes the main events, which took place at the studio. Chapter 5 summarizes the results received on the questionnaire presented to the students taking part in the studio. Finally, Chapter 6 is the conclusion.

Description of the Kansas City Design Center

The Kansas City Design Center emerged in 1988 out of a joint initiative between the architecture and planning schools of Kansas State University and the University of Kansas. In 1992 the Kansas City Center for Design Education and Research was created. Now named the Kansas City Design Center, it functions as an interdisciplinary facility where undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of design and planning students take part in urban design research and professional development. KCDC is also an active member of the Kansas City Community, having conducted numerous community service activities, public education and awareness seminars as well as design competitions revolving around such topics as light rail and the redesign of the Paseo Bridge.

As mentioned in the above paragraph, the Kansas City Design Center acts as an urban laboratory where sixteen graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Kansas and Kansas State University come together each school year to study urban design issues in Kansas City. These students, under the direction of a faculty member, represent the fields of planning, architecture, landscape architecture and interior architecture/product design. The goal of the studio is to integrate students into an interdisciplinary design and planning environment where they work together with students from differing disciplines on urban design and planning issues. Along side the group projects to be completed during the academic year, each student is additionally required to complete an individual assignment that is directly tied to the larger group project. Group projects and individual projects will be discussed later in this report.

The general academic goals of the KCDC Urban Design studio are too have an impact on the urban fabric of Kansas City, create designs and plans which are as comprehensive in scope as possible, to utilize its interdisciplinary foundations, and to work towards promoting green urban

design strategies. In addition to these four academic goals, six student goals were established.

They are as follows.

- 1) Gaining insight into urban design and its role in society.
- 2) Exploring alternative methods of design and planning.
- 3) Gaining contacts in the industry.
- 4) Gaining the opportunity to publish our work.
- 5) Using the concepts of sustainability in our work.
- 6) Change the attitudes and perceptions of KC residents.

The Kansas City Design Center is giant leap towards greater integration amongst the public and planning design professionals as they seek to plan for Kansas City's future. The Kansas City Design Center has already accomplished great things. Now, with the inception of the KCDC Urban Design Studio the legacy of the Kansas City Design Center could reach greater heights.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

Urban Design Centers

Urban design centers come in many different forms. According to John Rahaim (2002) there are three different forms of urban design centers. The first form is the city design center. These design centers are wholly housed within a cities' government structure, usually as an offshoot of its planning and development department. The second form of urban design center is the independent not-for-profit organization devoted to urban design and planning issues. Finally, the third type of urban design centers is the hybrid. These design centers usually acquire funding through a number of sources, the most common are private donors and academic endowments. While each of these types of design centers is different in construction and appearance they are all similar in a number of ways. First, they are each a vehicle of collaboration. As you will notice later in this section, each of the urban design centers describes this as its most important priority. Second, these design centers make it their priority to offer design review of development projects. Thirdly, they utilize outreach and education to teach the public and private sectors about the importance of intelligent urban and civic design.

City Design Centers

CityDesign: Seattle, Washington

Seattle's CityDesign provides an excellent example of the first type of design center listed above. CityDesign was made part of Seattle's department of planning and development in 2004. The mission of CityDesign is to transform and shape the character of Seattle's built and natural environment, as well as to support design excellence throughout the city. CityDesign has developed the following four principles to achieve its mission.

- 1) Develop and maintain an urban design mission for Seattle consistent with our department's policies and goals.
- 2) Act as an urban advocate of design excellence in the City's built environment upholding standards of consistency and coordination between public and private agencies.
- 3) Facilitate collaboration between the City of Seattle departments, property owners, other commissions, developers, and community in general, groups and agencies responsible for the public realm.
- 4) Facilitate citizen dialogue on urban design issues, policies, and actions affecting the public realm.

As is evident in the principles above, collaboration, education, and outreach are very important to the success of CityDesign as an urban design center. According to John Rahaim, the director of CityDesign, CityDesign can only be effective if it “takes on a full range of activities, from large scale urban design plans to coming as close as possible to implementation. That is not only our best hope for political survival, but it also helps us learn from each end of the spectrum; the street design work greatly informs our larger urban design work and vice versa.”¹ In order to influence civic design, the CityDesign Center staffs the Seattle Design Commission, responsible for reviewing Seattle's capital public projects. CityDesign also staffs a panel responsible for reviewing the design of Seattle's light rail system. Finally, CityDesign takes on strategic urban design work focused primarily in the city center.²

CityDesign offers a wonderful example of how cities can implement intelligent and thoughtful design, which enhances the urban fabric of a city. However, as goes with any public agency, politics and bureaucracy can have a detrimental effect on the integrity of certain

¹ "FORUM: City Design Centers".
John Rahaim, Ray Gastil, and Karen Hundt
Places, Forum of Design for the Public Realm, vol. 15, Issue 1 (2002)

² Rahaim, pg. 3

agencies. In response, many urban designers began taking on entrepreneurial roles, thus creating urban design centers outside the doors of city hall.³

Charleston Civic Design Center: Charleston, South Carolina

The Charleston Civic Design Center (CCDC) is another example of a design center housed within a city's governmental structure. The role of the CCDC is “to enhance the quality of life in Charleston by engaging the community in creating a dynamic urban direction for the city.”⁴ The CCDC was founded by Mayor Joseph P. Riley to create an urban design dialogue amongst city officials and residents. It was also a major recommendation proposed in the city's downtown plan. In order to create a dialogue of urban design the CCDC holds lectures, symposiums, exhibitions, and design workshops that are open to the public. Additionally the CCDC is home to a multidisciplinary urban design studio that “fosters innovation and sensitivity in promoting the best Charleston possible.”⁵

In addition to the lectures, exhibitions, and workshops that the CCDC holds it, also adheres to three guiding themes in promoting community oriented urban design. Those themes are education, collaboration, and innovation. Currently the CCDC is working on a number of projects in Charleston ranging from the construction of a new Cooper River Neighborhood Bridge to bike lanes and a Charleston green infrastructure master plan. As one would expect, the CCDC has its hand in projects, which could have a lasting effect on the character of Charleston.

³ Rahaim pg. 3

⁴ <http://www.charlestoncity.info/dept/content.aspx?nid=338&cid=187>

⁵ <http://www.charlestoncity.info/dept/content.aspx?nid=338&cid=187>

Not for Profit Design Centers

Project for Public Spaces: New York, New York

One of the most well known nonprofit centers is the Project for Public Spaces, located in New York City. The Project for Public Spaces was founded in 1975 by Fred Kent, the organizer of New York's Earth Day events in 1970.⁶ The premise behind the creation of PPS was the work by William H. Whyte on how people use public spaces. Since 1975 PPS has helped over 2,000 communities worldwide reshape their public spaces. The PPS is staffed by individuals trained in a number of fields such as environmental design, architecture, planning, landscape architecture, urban geography, environmental psychology, and information management. PPS's mission is to "act as the central hub of the global Place making movement, connecting people to ideas, expertise, and partners who share a passion for creating vital places."⁷ In its efforts to create better public spaces PPS focuses on nine program areas.

- 1) Parks
- 2) Transportation
- 3) Civic Centers
- 4) Public Markets
- 5) Downtowns
- 6) Mixed Use Development
- 7) Squares
- 8) Campuses
- 9) Waterfronts

The Project for Public Spaces is a highly regarded urban design organization, their philosophy on creating spaces around the person and their interactions with one another has allowed them to recreate public spaces around the world. While similar to many of the urban

⁶ Project for Public Spaces. (2005) "30 Years of Placemaking."
http://www.pps.org/info/newsletter/thirtieth_anniversary/timeline

⁷ Project for Public Spaces. (2005) www.pps.org

design departments found within the sphere of city governments, they are able to free themselves from the current status quo and focus on reshaping our spaces for future generations.

New Cities Foundation: Lexington, Kentucky

The New Cities Foundation was created in 2001, by the Kentucky League of Cities in response to a growing concern over the lack of public engagement in the cities and communities of Kentucky. The board of directors of the Kentucky League of Cities thought it would be appropriate to create a non-profit organization to “research, study, educate and innovate communities about civic engagement.”⁸ The New Cities Foundation was created with strong financial and staff support from the Kentucky League of Cities.

The mission of New Cities is to “define and promote the economic and social prosperity of communities, regardless of size or location, through citizen engagement.”⁹ In order to achieve their mission the New Cities Foundation does the following:

- 1) Encourage citizen participation in community decision-making.
- 2) Identify community core values.
- 3) Create practical step-by-step action plans.
- 4) Collaborate with community leaders.
- 5) Develop creative educational curricula
- 6) Construct profession public official training opportunities.
- 7) Design customized strategic solutions.
- 8) Conduct skilled facilitation.
- 9) Deliver expert commentary.
- 10) Provide speaking engagements.
- 11) Convene public forums and informal community discussions.
- 12) Perform collaborative research.
- 13) Foster unique and strong partnerships.

⁸ <http://www.newcities.org/about/index.asp?article=1044>

⁹ <http://www.newcities.org/about/index.asp?article=932>

Overall the motivation behind the creation of the New Cities Foundation was well founded. The struggle to include the public in the planning process is an ongoing battle for most cities, counties, and state in the United States.

Hybrid/Academic Design Centers

A third type of urban design center is the hybrid/academic design center. These centers are usually funded through a combination of private donors and/or academic institutions.

Phoenix Urban Design Laboratory: Phoenix, Arizona

The Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory is part of the College of Design at Arizona State University. According to its website, it is described as “part think tank, part project center.”¹⁰ The laboratory pursues a multifaceted agenda comprising funded research and design studies, studios, online and print publications, lectures, exhibitions, and conferences.¹¹ The PUDL also holds knowledge-building workshops for professionals and high school students.

Similar to KCDC, the PUDL is a link between Arizona State University and the city of Phoenix Arizona. PUDL is described as a forum where the “academic, civic, cultural, and business communities meet to discuss and debate multiple scenarios for the future of one of the fastest growing cities in the United States.”¹² The projects undertaken by the PUDL are both internally and externally created. Currently the PUDL is undertaking the task of making their space in downtown Phoenix as sustainable as possible. External projects include projects brought to PUDL by both public and private contacts that are seeking progressive design

¹⁰ <http://design.asu.edu/purl/>

¹¹ <http://design.asu.edu/purl/>

¹² <http://design.asu.edu/purl/>

thinking. The PUDL usually focuses on projects with the largest public presence; additionally most of their work takes place in the early conceptual design stages.¹³

Currently the PUDL is working on two projects concerning downtown Phoenix. The first is the Capitol Mall Centennial Plan, which is a plan to reinvigorate life into the 300-acre Arizona State Capitol District. The plan focuses on connectivity, accessibility, and efficiency. The second project concerned the development of a master plan for the Maricopa County Campus. This campus would comprise 16 blocks in downtown Phoenix and would be home to all of Maricopa County's offices. The Phoenix Urban Research Laboratory is a great example of what the KCDC could become in the future.

Interdisciplinarity: Origins and Evolution

What does the word interdisciplinary mean? When asking this particular question it is important to realize the broad scope of such a term. For professionals working in the field on a complex problem, interdisciplinarity could take the form of a last resort of sorts, conceding to the notion that maybe the problem being faced is boundless. Thus, requiring the expertise of individuals representing differing professions. In the academic world interdisciplinarity could be used as a tool for creating new disciplines and opportunities for students. As is evident, pinpointing an exact definition of interdisciplinarity can be challenging, thus many publications have been devoted to this very problem. The amount of literature on the subject of interdisciplinarity is staggering, however a handful of academics have produced a number of works commonly referred to as the seminal works on interdisciplinarity.

¹³ <http://design.asu.edu/purl/projects.shtml>

Earliest Origins

A common starting point in any discussion of interdisciplinarity is a discussion of its origins. In her book “Interdisciplinarity History, Theory and Practice” Julie Thompson Klein speaks of the conflict among scholars regarding the origins and definitions of interdisciplinarity.

“any attempt to understand the concept of interdisciplinarity is complicated by a considerable difference of opinion about its origin. For some it is quite old, rooted in the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, Rabelais, Kant, Hegel, and other historical figures that have been described as “interdisciplinary thinkers.” For others it is entirely a phenomenon of the twentieth century, rooted in modern education reforms, applied research, and movement across disciplinary boundaries.”

Klein notes that the roots “of the concept lie in a number of ideas that resonate throughout the modern discourse; the ideas of a unified science, general knowledge, synthesis and the integration of knowledge.” In the days of the great philosophers interdisciplinarity occurred naturally. The academic structure of Plato’s academy differed greatly from the academic structure of modern institutions of higher learning in as much as there were no clear-cut boundaries among the disciplines.¹⁴ Plato stressed the importance of a unified science.

He believes that it was the duty of the philosopher to collect all forms of knowledge.¹⁵ Thus he trained his pupils in a manner of hierarchical learning, the beginning stages of ones

¹⁴ Hausman C. R., (1979). Disciplinarity or Interdisciplinarity. In *Interdisciplinarity and Higher Education* (pgs 3-10). University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press

¹⁵ Klein J.T., (1990) . *Interdisciplinarity: History Theory and Practice*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. Pg. 20

education focused on an understanding of nature and the human soul, followed by a final training that was to lead to a holistic knowledge of one's world.¹⁶

The next signs of the concept of interdisciplinarity did not surface until the height of the Roman higher education system. During this period scholars became concerned with the dangers of overspecialization. A number of scholars did not see specialization as a worthwhile form of higher education.¹⁷ Following the height of the Roman higher education system scholars began to develop what is now seen as the modern movement in higher education. Due to their fears of over specialization, the new modern university evolved. This modern university made use of such concepts as the trivium and the quadrivium. The trivium was composed of the subjects, grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The quadrivium was composed of music, geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy.¹⁸ The idea behind these concepts of education is very similar to the concept of general education today. Through the continued exposure to different disciplines students not only gain a very comprehensive education they also are able to choose a specialization through this method.

Modern Origins

For most scholars and historians devoted to interdisciplinary study, the term interdisciplinarity in and of itself was not mentioned until the twentieth century. Thus, the most detailed historical timelines of the development of interdisciplinarity do not begin until this period. According to Julie Thompson Klein, the modern concept of interdisciplinarity has been shaped in four major ways.

¹⁶ Hausman C.R. pg. 3

¹⁷ Bolgar R.R. (1954) *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 31

¹⁸ Paul Goodman, *The Community of Scholars* (New York: Random House, 1962)

- 1) By attempts to retain and in many cases, reinstall historical ideas of unity and synthesis.
- 2) By the emergence of organized programs in research and education.
- 3) By the broadening of traditional disciplines.
- 4) By the emergence of identifiable interdisciplinary movements.¹⁹

The industrial revolution proved to be a turning point in American higher education. As the industries began to expand and require cutting edge technologies they began to demand specialists. In response, the American university made it a priority to provide these specialists. During this period universities became increasingly divided down disciplinary and administrative lines. The social sciences began to break off into the disciplines of economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science and many others.²⁰ Each of these new disciplines became increasingly specialized, viewing the academic world with a very narrow lens. Additionally within the university structure, these new disciplines became very competitive in their quest to gain funding and attract new scholars. This rise in specialization and autonomy spawned the push towards interdisciplinarity.

The most visible movement towards interdisciplinarity took place in general education and the social sciences. The notion of general education arose as an antecedent to specialization. Followers of the liberal and general cultural movements argued for general education. They felt it was important to educate the “whole person” before specialization should occur.²¹ Following Greek and Roman examples, educators began devising a curriculum that surveyed the disciplines. Additionally, the pioneer interdisciplinary programs founded in the 1930’s at the University of Chicago and Columbia University are based on the civic model of the educated

¹⁹ Klein, pg. 22

²⁰ Hausmann, pg. 2

²¹ Flexner H, (1979). *The Curriculum, the Disciplines, and Interdisciplinarity in Higher Education*. In *Interdisciplinarity and Higher Education* (pgs 93-119). University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press

person. The civic model of the educated person is based on the notion that societies collective ideals are spawned in a literary culture. Thus the first courses to be deemed interdisciplinary were the “Great Books” courses at the University of Chicago and Columbia University.²² Other early courses considered interdisciplinary include a course based on comparing and contrasting an ancient and a modern civilization introduced after WWI at the University of Wisconsin and a course on social and economic institutions introduced at Amherst in 1914. Each of these courses proved to be a success at their respective institutions. Despite their success, the concept of interdisciplinarity was still not catching on. Julie Thompson Klein attributes the cause to the external influence of the great depression and the internal effects of increasing specialization among the disciplines.²³

During the postwar period the problems associated with recovery could not be dealt with adequately by one discipline. Such problems as social welfare, crime, population shifts and housing demanded immediate attention. Thus, social scientists in the academic, private and governmental realms began to see the importance of interdisciplinary cooperation.²⁴ One of the best examples of a move toward interdisciplinarity in the natural and social sciences was the adoption of the quantitative methods used in the natural sciences by the social sciences. The disciplines of political science and sociology made the most use of the quantitative methods.²⁵

Riding on the momentum of post-war reconstruction efforts of the 1930’s and 40’s a new worldwide effort had begun with the goal of achieving common terminology and laws among the sciences. The flagship organization was to be known as the Vienna Circle. The Vienna Circle was founded by a group of European philosophers to formulate a consistent epistemological

²² Klein, pg. 23

²³ Klein, pg. 24

²⁴ Decisions, values, and groups

²⁵ Klein, pg. 24

approach to the sciences. Another project known as The International Encyclopedia of Unified Science set out to integrate scientific statements.²⁶ Furthermore, a movement known as the “area” approach was gaining ground in American universities as a way to provide comprehensive and collaborative knowledge of geographical areas around the world.²⁷ The “area” movement spawned integrated social science courses as well as departments in universities. While the “area” approach was a significant leap forward in collaboration and integration among the disciplines, it ultimately failed. In an effort to pick up the pieces left after the failure of the “area” approach to integrative studies, the National Education Association published a book titled “Integration: Its Meaning and Application.” This book became the first and most important publication on the theory of integrative studies.²⁸

Contemporary History

Following the release of “Integration: Its Meaning and Application” a number of efforts were made at defining integration. However a unified definition was not established. This ambiguity in turn led to ambiguity in the definition and application of interdisciplinarity. According to Julie Thompson Klein the only formal distinctions made to the term interdisciplinary were made in the education and social science literatures during the 1940’s, 50’s and 60’s.²⁹ While a widespread consensus was not reached on the meaning of interdisciplinarity the British Group for Research and Innovation in Higher Education, in the

²⁶ Klein, pg. 25

²⁷ Klein, pg. 25

²⁸ Klein, pg 26

²⁹ Klein, pg. 27

1970's, noted two metaphors of the interdisciplinary movement. The first was bridge building between the disciplines and the second was the restructuring of several disciplines.³⁰

Moving through the post war era of the late 1940's and 50's interdisciplinarity gained tremendous ground during the 1960's and 70's. With the help of major funding towards interdisciplinary organizations in the United States and Europe, awareness grew exponentially. Organizations such as the Carnegie Foundation, The National Endowment for the Humanities and the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education played major roles in defining the concept of interdisciplinarity.

In 1972, a European organization known as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or OECD held a seminar on the problems of interdisciplinary teaching and research in universities. Following the seminar the OECD published a book titled "Interdisciplinarity: Problems of Teaching and Research in Universities." Today this book is one of the most often cited books on interdisciplinarity.³¹ Prior to the release of this book, literature on the concept and definition of interdisciplinarity was very fragmented. Thus, the book developed a framework and definitions for a number of interdisciplinary approaches.

Following the release of the OECD publication, another major work titled "Interdisciplinarity and Higher Education" was published. This publication is the product of a postdoctoral seminar on the concept interdisciplinary learning held at The Pennsylvania State University between in 1975 and 1976. The seminar set out to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is meant by interdisciplinarity?
- 2) In what different forms is interdisciplinary work to be distinguished?
- 3) What is to be expected from interdisciplinary projects?
- 4) Why should one engage in interdisciplinary efforts?

³⁰ Klein, pg. 27

³¹ Klein, pg. 36

- 5) What is the origin of the concept of interdisciplinarity?
- 6) What are the effects this movement is to have on the organization and administrative structure of the university?

In order to answer these questions the participants in the seminar wrote essays. The topics included; definitions of interdisciplinarity, histories of the disciplines and interdisciplinarity, methodology involved in conducted interdisciplinary research, and potential problems associated with interdisciplinary research and education.

Other tell-tale signs of the growing momentum of interdisciplinarity include the creation of the Association of Integrative Studies and the International Association for the study of interdisciplinary research. Each of these organizations was founded in 1979. The Association for Integrative Studies is an American organization and perhaps the most comprehensive of any of the organizations devoted to interdisciplinary studies. Its primary mission is the promotion of interdisciplinary theory, methodology, and curriculum.³² The International Association for the Study of Interdisciplinary Research is an international organization that continually sponsors international conferences on interdisciplinary research and problem focused research.³³

Recent Studies

The editors at Metropolis Magazine conduct an annual survey on the state of design education where is footnote for this source. In 2004 the subject of the survey was collaboration. Both students as well as teachers were asked to define collaboration, describe their collaboration projects etc. Metropolis received 1,115 responses to the survey, 690 of them were from students. In total six surveys were distributed. They are as follows;

³² Klein, pg. 37

³³ Klein, pg. 37

- 1) Teachers Define Collaboration
- 2) Students Describe Collaboration Projects
- 3) Teachers Describe Collaboration Projects
- 4) Teachers' Explain Collaboration Methods, Motivations, and Barriers
- 5) Students Describe Their Non-Academic Collaborators
- 6) Teachers' Comments on the Survey

In the first question, teachers were asked to define collaboration in fifty words or less.

There were many interesting and insightful responses below are a number of the most thoughtful responses.

“Working together on a common design challenge; using the ideas and methods of your various disciplines to develop innovative designs that are better informed than they would have been without collaboration.”

“Design is inherently collaborative. All rigorous and useful design is based on multi-disciplinary work, so students need to participate in it before going into the working world.”

“I take the position that the discipline is the built environment and that “interdisciplinary” experiences are simply looking at common issues through different lenses, thus encouraging a broadened, hopefully enlightened, perspective.”

“Two people are capable of achieving something beyond what either would have come up with separately. Just as hydrogen and oxygen form not two separate ingredients, but WATER, and Lennon and McCarthy achieved what became known as the “Third Voice.”

“No one can be an expert in all fields. So unless students can be exposed to other related fields, they will not be able to fully function in a real-world job.”

“Collaboration in the best way should be the sharing of knowledge between different interests to obtain not only a better understanding, but also a new perspective. Solutions

to problems can be found from unlikely sources, i.e. interior design and the electrical engineering departments as an example.”

Clearly, based on this sampling of responses, teachers are fully aware of the advantages of collaboration in the design fields. Teachers firmly understand its importance in preparing students for work in the real world. The second survey asked students to describe a collaborative project they worked on in fifty words or less. Below is a sample of the responses.

“We have an “urban studies” minor and have to take classes in a variety of departments, thus giving us a more rounded and realistic perspective. It is helpful because design alone does not get good planning built.”

“The project was an architectural competition of a magnet school in New Orleans. This was an informal collaboration. I was the designer but consulted with friends in other departments (biology and philosophy) for input, development, and consolidation of concepts and ideas. They guided me to specific research or books they thought would be useful. The project was better developed and more meaningful from their input, and I learned a lot, too.”

“Working with the Building Science students from our own college forced us to reconsider the constructability of our designs. Communication (or lack thereof) made us realize how wide the gap is between our architecture and BS students and how we need to improve the relationship.”

Overall students seemed to be very open to the possibilities of collaborative design, stressing its ability to open student’s eyes and allow them to think outside the box of their particular discipline. The third survey proceeded to ask teachers to describe a collaborative project worked on in fifty words or less. The following are a few responses.

“We run an interdisciplinary studio for 4th year interior design, architecture, and landscape architecture students. This past year, the topic was urban design using the

local downtown as the laboratory. It was a very fruitful collaboration for many reasons- no one discipline “owned” the problem, fieldwork required team-building, and everyone extended the notion of what their disciplinary boundaries were.”

“Integrated Design Studio – architectural design, interior design, and urban design, building systems, and landscape design – four classes over two years, each class taught by three instructors of various disciplines.”

“The architecture and landscape architecture departments have been combined into one department this year and I taught a graduate course where both groups of students worked on the same site, and in some cases collaborated. This was very productive. I am also starting a multi-disciplinary collaborative project next fall to design and build low-income, ecologically based modular homes, working with architecture, landscape architecture, environmental planning, and engineering students.”

Clearly collaborative projects and studios are being experimented with at universities across the country. From the sound of the teacher responses these ventures are proving to be very rewarding. To compliment this survey another survey was given to teachers, which asked five questions on collaboration methods, motivations and barriers. Following is a brief breakdown of each of the five questions:

Which methods of collaborative learning did you use?

“Collaboration between architecture, planning, business, geography, public policy, and law”

“User-centered research/Project with real clients (not-for-profit entities only)”

“Public service oriented projects with public participation”

Why did you initiate an interdepartmental collaboration?

“The need to learn from others”

“You can’t know everything. Be humble and ask others.”

“Real world scenarios and the effective need to know what other design professions were doing.”

Why did your academic department initiate an interdepartmental collaboration?

“Encourage students to pull ideas from non-visually oriented sources, to engage”

“Other fields have been taking research father than architecture has”

“Enhance student experience”

With which non-design academic departments did you initiate collaborations?

“My students have to read and write a lot for my classes, they take cultural studies and sociology classes.”

In your opinion, what do you consider barriers to interdepartmental collaboration?

“Lack of encouragement or incentive; threatening to people interested in keeping territorial possession of their various departments.”

“Fear and ignorance (in this day and age, and in academia!)”

“Students’ ability to understand others’ point of view at their age”

What did the survey accomplish? First, it reassured academics and professionals that all of the historical arguments surrounding interdisciplinary collaboration in higher education are still alive. Such things as discipline boundaries, competition, and lack of funding for these programs are still real issues. However it seems departments are increasing collaboration, teachers and administrators are noticing its benefits in expanding the student experience and its benefit to society as a whole.

The Studio Method of Education

The Kansas City Design Center Urban Design Studio is just that, a studio. Thus, it is important to include a brief description of the studio and its historical and contemporary influence on the education of design and planning students. The European tradition of architectural education was very influential in the United States during the first part of the nineteenth century. The Ecole des Beaux Arts was seen as the leader in architectural education at the time.³⁴ What the Ecole des Beaux Arts brought over was the idea of the design problem. The design problem was assigned to the student at the beginning of the term. Alongside the professor each student would develop the problem, sketch out their ideas and finally would produce official drawings, which would then be judged by a group of professors and other architects. The main premise behind this method of instruction was learning-by-doing.³⁵

Another form of instruction, which was very influential, was the German Bauhaus movement or the “Modern” movement of architectural education. The University of Oregon in 1914 was the first university in the states to adopt the modern movement. What the Bauhaus movement contributed to architectural education was practicality. Students were able to work with actual materials in shops and on buildings under construction.³⁶ Thus, the architectural studio utilized today is essentially a hybrid of the Beaux Arts method and the Bauhaus method. The basic form of the Beaux Arts method was retained with the addition of the practicality of the Bauhaus movement.

³⁴ A History of the Studio Based Learning Model

³⁵ A History of the Studio Based Learning Model

³⁶ A history of the Studio Based Learning Model

Description of the Design Studio

The design studio is a form of professional education commonly found in schools of architecture and other design fields. Within the studio, students are assigned design projects while under the close supervision of a professor who more often than not is well known in their particular field. The setting of the studio is very open with little to no separation between student workspaces. The studio essentially becomes a second home for its students. Students apply their personal touches to their work desks. The studio environment is very collaborative; students often become close friends and assist each other with design problems.³⁷

In their book titled “Building Community: A New Future of Architectural Education and Practice”, Ernest Boyer and Lee D. Mitgang stated just how important the design studio is and how it could impact education at every level.

“We became convinced, however that the core elements of architectural education, learning to design within constraints, collaborative learning, and the refining of knowledge through the reflective act of design, have relevance and power far beyond the training of future architects. The basic canons of design education to be found at the nation's 103 accredited architecture programs would be as enriching for students of all ages and interests as they are for aspiring architects, if only they were better known and more widely appreciated. We concluded, in short, that architecture education is really about fostering the learning habits needed for the discovery, integration, application, and sharing of knowledge over a lifetime.”³⁸

³⁷ Schon, Donald. (1983). *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

³⁸ Boyer, Ernest L. & Mitgang, Lee D. (1996). *Building community: A new future for architectural education and practice*. Princeton, NJ: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

The studio can either be a semester or year long. At the beginning of the term a problem is presented to the students by the professor. This problem will be the subject of the students work for the entire term. The design problem can be presented to the students in many ways. The more traditional method is the presentation of a hypothetical design problem, whereas the professor creates problems for the students to solve in their designs. Additionally projects may be modeled on an actual project, or as is the case for one of the projects being completed at KCDC, the project is living and breathing with an actual real life client group.

While working on the studio project students begin with research on issues regarding the subject of the problem proposal. Following the research period students begin to develop their designs and plans all the while the studio professor is there to critique the students work as it progresses and give them suggestions as to how it can be improved.³⁹ Overall the process is very comprehensive, students become familiar with every aspect of the project problem. Work is very intense at times while also being laid back at other times. Being new to the studio experience I found it to be very rewarding, working with a group of students, hearing their point of views, learning from them, and collaborating with them were all a part of the experience. Where else are students so free to learn and interact?

³⁹ Schon, Donald. (1983). *The Reflective*

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the section of the report is to give readers an in-depth description of the everyday activities that took place during the 2007-2008 Kansas City Design Center Urban Design Studio. First, it is important for the reader to understand what an ethnography is. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2009), ethnography is defined as “the study and systematic recording of human cultures.” While ethnography is often times stated in the same context as anthropology and the study of exotic cultures, it is really a broad term encompassing any study of the human condition. The following quote sheds light on ethnography as a tool in analyzing the classroom.

“Ethnography is a human model. Born out of anthropology as a way for the lone anthropologist to immerse herself in and come to understand a foreign culture, it now enables us to approach classrooms (something we are very familiar with) with freshness and clarity. In ethnography, researchers do not reduce classrooms to lessons plans or test scores, but rather we seek to bring to the surface what is intangible, hidden or overlooked in the unfolding of classroom dynamics. When we take this kind of approach to such complex phenomena we don’t end up with neat research designs, clear-cut boundaries and controlled variables. But we do find ourselves in an enormously rich task that often requires us to respond on a human level.”

The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed examination of the interdisciplinary method of urban design and planning education taking place at the Kansas City Design Center. Therefore, such topics to be discussed include the everyday interactions between the students at KCDC. Because this is both an interdisciplinary as well as inter-institutional studio, student interaction forms the support structure for its continued success. Additionally, special attention

will be paid to the projects assigned to students, the learning environment, the studio environment, etc. It is my goal that this ethnography will serve as a point of reference for students interested in taking part in future KCDC studios as well professors interested in the learning environment fostered by the studio.

Is there a need for this study? The answer to that question is yes; there is a need for this study. While the Kansas City Design Center has been in constant operation since 1992, the 2007-2008 academic year is the first year the KU/KSU urban design studio has been housed in a dedicated facility. Thus it is important that a detailed examination of the studio environment is presented in order to attract future student participants and to help faculty evaluate the studios value to each student participants overall education. Additionally, like any new academic program there are hurdles to be overcome; this study will shed light on those setbacks so administrators are able to alleviate them.

This study is also unique in the fact that it is the first study of its kind as it relates to the Kansas City Design Center. No report or study to date has taken the ethnographic approach. However, the research phase of his report unveiled a number of urban design centers of similar size, concentrations and overall organization but was unable to locate a report similar to this. What was discovered included a number of annual reports, and other publications relating to the work being done at these individual design centers. While these reports were a helpful resource they are not as descriptive or as in-depth as this report is intended to be.

Methodology

The proper methodology is crucial to an in-depth and descriptive ethnography and there are a number of ways to achieve whatever level of detail the ethnographer wishes. Such methods as interviews, surveys, questionnaires and field notes are the most commonly used. This particular ethnographic study employs formal methods such as questionnaires and field note taking. In addition to these formal methods, this study will include material gained through informal private conversations between studio participants and myself. It is important to remember that the material to be used will be material gained through my recollection of random conversations with members of the studio. These conversations were not interviews. Additionally no mention of the identity of the participants will be included as well as no mention to the source of the material.

The questionnaire used was given to each student participant in the KU/KSU urban design studio. While it was my goal to receive completed questionnaires from each student, some opted not to participate. However, nine of the students representing each participating discipline did respond to the questionnaire.

CHAPTER 4 - Findings

Ethnography, Beginnings

The Kansas City Design Center is located in a converted day care center beneath the Wyandotte parking garage at 1018 Baltimore Ave. Kansas City Missouri. The space itself is a two level multi-purpose space capable of acting as a center for learning as well as a gathering and exhibition space, all of which it has taken on at one time or another. Upon entering the Kansas City Design Center one is overtaken by the sheer vastness of the space. Odors of paper and ink let visitors know this is a space where ideas are generated. A few steps inward student workstations become visible; these stations are usually overrun with empty soda cans, pens and piles of trace paper evidence of the superior effort made by each student at the Kansas City Design Center. Once your eyes move away from the workstations and to the walls of KCDC one notices that the walls are covered with sketches and maps used as resources by the students as they try to solve issues facing the urban environment of Kansas City.

The gallery level of KCDC is a vast open area offering pinup boards along the central wall. The back half of the gallery level is most commonly used for class discussions and presentations. A screen and projector are supplied. Throughout the academic year the gallery level has been used periodically by a 5th year architecture studio for midyear critiques as they work on a project in downtown Kansas City. Additionally this area has housed meetings of the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority Light Rail Task Force, the Downtown Council and a number of other organizations with stakes in the future of Kansas City's downtown.

I first entered the Kansas City Design Center on the first day of class in August 2008, having only met a handful of the other participating students over lunch a month prior, I felt like a junior high student on his first day of class at a new school. Our professor for the year, our

studio professor , treated us to a tour of the space and explained to us in his fashion all of the ins and outs of his efforts to make this space as user friendly as possible. Following our tour of the space we sat down and in typical first day fashion introduced ourselves and told the class why we joined the studio. I responded by stating my love for urban areas and a desire to better the urban environment, responses of the rest of the class seemed to follow the same idea. This question along with many others will be discussed in more depth in the section regarding the questionnaire I issued to each of the participating students. Following our introductions, the professor began describing his intentions for the studio. He stressed the importance of the studios interdisciplinary nature and the fact that we would be working on potentially real projects with far reaching implications.

The first four weeks of the studio were designed to familiarize the students with downtown Kansas City, its history, its future and the problems it faces today. In doing so the professor took on a lot of the responsibility himself. Through guided tours, the professor gave us an invaluable history lesson on the architecture and planning that has morphed Kansas City into what it is today. Furthermore, a number of notable Kansas City, planning and design professionals spoke before us on pressing historical and contemporary issues facing Kansas City.

The first speaker, Vicki Noties, a Kansas City planner, spoke to us about the history of Kansas City's development. Her discussion centered on how transportation has shaped the development of Kansas City. During her discussion she spoke of several important factors such as John Kessler's parks and boulevards plan, the racial barrier created along Troost Avenue and the political machine era.

The second group of speakers, Steve McDowell a partner at BNIM Architects, and Steven Hardy, a planner at BNIM Architects, spoke of issues such as Kansas City's struggle to meet an

EPA mandate and its journey in achieving light rail. Mr. McDowell and Mr. Hardy developed BNIM's light rail transit proposal, which was the winning selection in KCDC's light rail design competition. McDowell and Hardy's discussion focused on issues such as the EPA mandate affecting Kansas City, as well as the history of light rail in Kansas City.

The first four weeks of the studio flew by. When not listening to speakers and taking tours around downtown Kansas City, we were doing book reports on selected planning and design works. The professor assigned these reports with the goal of creating a studio library with each book having its own brief review. Following this introductory period we began thinking about and discussing the various projects available for us to work on throughout the year. To assist in the decision-making process The professor invited a number of individuals to KCDC to speak on potential projects.

The first speaker, Matt Kauffman, a local Kansas City Architect, spoke of the concept of commuter rail. His project proposal would require the studio or a group of students within the studio to create a regional commuter rail transit plan for Kansas City and the surrounding area. Mr. Kauffman specifically mentioned the abundance of unused railroad track, which could be utilized for the commuter rail. Following the creation of a master transit plan, the project would then move into transit oriented development designs for those towns where commuter rail stations would be located.

The second speaker, Vincent Gauthier of the Kansas City Port Authority, came to us with the river front development project. This project, currently under development, had the most real life implications. The site is a 55-acre area between the Paseo and Oak Street along the Missouri River. The Kansas City Port Authority is seeking to develop a catalyst commercial area. To be included in the development area would be a commercial center similar to that of the Kansas

City Power and Light district, a Missouri River and Kansas City interpretive history center, an aquarium, an IMAX theater and many other attractions. In addition to the aforementioned program requirements the overall designs of the development site are to be environmentally sensitive. Mr. Gauthier described it as a market driven development based on sustainability.

Mr. Gauthier was the final speaker we heard. Our discussions in class turned towards nailing down what projects we would be devoting ourselves to for the rest of the year. On September 24, 2007 the studio met at our regular meeting spot, a make shift conference table comprised of three smaller tables and hashed out the projects and the student teams that would be tackling them. To begin the professor thought it would be appropriate to break the studio into five teams of three, thus we would have to decide between the five which project we would most like to work on. The following is a list of the chosen five projects:

- 1)River Front and River Market
- 2)Downtown Loop
- 3)I-670 Deck
- 4)Crossroads District
- 5)Crown Center Area

Once the five projects were outlined the students began a three step voting process to decide who would be assigned to each project. The first round of voting consisted of the students telling which of the five projects they were interested in. In the second round of voting they each wrote down their first and second project choices on a piece of paper and gave them to the professor. This second round inevitably produced some inconsistencies in the voting, some of the projects received very few votes while others received many. Thus, the professor had a tough job in making the process fair and equitable. In the third round of voting The professor listed our birthdays in descending order. He then took that order and went around the class asking what project each student wanted to work on. Those first in line chose their first choices

while some of those listed later settled for their second choice. Through my observation and brief conversations with a number of students, they felt the voting process was fair and were happy with the project they would be working on. The following table breaks down each project by each participating discipline. Despite the method of assigning students to project groups, the groups came out surprisingly interdisciplinary with the deck project group being the only exception.

| River Front | Downtown | Deck | Crossroads | Crown Center |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Landscape | Planning | Architecture | Landscape | Landscape |
| Architecture | Arch./Planning | Architecture | Architecture | Architecture |
| Interior Arch. | Architecture | Architecture | Architecture | Architecture |

Once the project teams were designated each group went their separate ways. The beginning stages of these group projects centered on research, research and more research. The professor wanted the students to gain a firm understanding of the places they were working with. To begin this state of the process the loop group members began gathering important facts and demographic data on downtown Kansas City. One of their main resources was the Kansas City Downtown Council. Listed on the Downtown Council’s website are a number of downtown housing studies, development timelines, previous plans and many other valuable resources.

Previous plans were very helpful to all of the project groups. For example, the deck group had access to over twenty years of planning material; the idea of decking over I-670 has been around for sometime. The loop group had access to a plethora of previous plans. One of the most useful was the recent “Sasaki Plan”. The previous plans were helpful in many ways. First, they shed light on the issues Kansas City is most concerned in dealing with in the immediate future. For example, the “Sasaki Plan” placed great emphasis on rebuilding the streetscapes in

downtown Kansas City as well as adding green space and reducing surface parking, all of which we deemed important when creating our plan.

The river front group had the luxury of working very closely with the director of the Kansas City Port Authority who visited with our class regarding the riverfront project. Throughout the groups project they had regular meeting with the director to discuss their progress and to learn about what has been done thus far. When asked, one of the river front's group members how their project was coming along, he responded by saying he has really enjoyed the work thus far, it has felt more like a real life project he would be working on with a firm rather than a school project. That assertion seemed to be commonplace among the other student groups. Talking with other students in architecture and landscape architecture I discovered that many of their projects are usually make believe with little to no real life constraints. They found the projects at KCDC to be exciting in the fact that they presented real life constraints.

In summary, the first month of the studio was in many ways an introductory period. The professor did an excellent job in introducing the students to Kansas City's urban condition, through his tours throughout downtown Kansas City, our discussions of urbanism, the reading assignments, and the speakers heard throughout this period. An understanding was gained of Kansas City and its problem areas. This period was crucial to the success of the Kansas City Design Center Urban Design Studio.

Phase 1

Following the one-month introductory period and the selection of projects and project teams the creation of plans and designs began. As mentioned in the previous section each team began the planning and design process with data gathering. Following the data-gathering period and exploration of the study area, the loop group walked around the designated planning area with clipboards in hand inventorying the buildings. This process, completed by all of the project teams, provided a firm understanding of the amount of services in each particular area. Additionally it allowed the opportunity to document the density of buildings, the areas walkability and transit oriented development capabilities and finally teams were able to document the existence of historic buildings as well as derelict buildings in the project area.

The documenting of historic and derelict buildings was especially important to the loop group for many reasons. First the study area, which can be seen in image 1 on page 40 contained a number of historic buildings as well as historic districts. By having a broad understanding of the building makeup of the area, smart decisions on which buildings to keep and which buildings to remove would be made.

Efforts during the second month of the studio culminated in a presentation to KSU faculty on October 24th, 2007. The purpose of this presentation was to showcase what had been accomplished thus far to the KSU faculty. Each group presented their work in PowerPoint format for about 30 minutes then another thirty minutes was devoted to professor criticism. In the following section I will summarize each groups presentation.

The Loop Group: Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Planning: KSU

This group focused on redeveloping a portion of Kansas City’s central business district. The area in question is bounded by I-35 to the north, 11th street to the south, Main Street to the east and Central Street to the West. Choosing the location of the study area was a relatively easy decision. The team wanted to focus on an area in downtown that has seen little to no development over the past five years. The two areas in downtown that caught the team’s immediate attention were the areas described above and the east edge of the downtown central business district. The team ultimately chose not to focus on the east edge due to the developments currently being proposed for the area. Image 1 below illustrates the study area. The top of the image is north bounded by Interstate 70. The eastern boundary is Main Street, the southern boundary 11th Street, and the west boundary is May Street.



Image 1: The Loop Group Study Area

The goal in creating the master plan was to create more public space and a healthy environment

for living, working and playing in the central business district. Essentially, the objective was to develop a more densely populated urban core based on ecological and transit oriented development principles. The strategy to accomplish their goals and objectives was the utilization of energy, momentum and attributes of existing successful pedestrian-friendly development areas in the urban core of Kansas City to connect and infill adjacent underutilized sites.

The River Front Group: Architecture: KSU, Interior Architecture: KSU, Landscape Architecture: KSU

As mentioned in the section titled beginnings, the river front group had the opportunity to work closely with Vincent Gauthier of the Kansas City Port Authority. Currently the Kansas City Port Authority owns 55 acres just north of Berkley Park. This section of the riverfront has been proposed to be the future home of a large-scale mixed-use entertainment district. In choosing the location of their study area the river front group felt it would be appropriate to focus on the area known as the river market and its riverfront. In creating their design and plans, the river front group focused on the following issues:

- 1) Create a meaningful connection to the river.
- 2) Create an unambiguous sense of place.
- 3) Use catalytic projects to encourage urban infill throughout the river market.
- 4) Create meaningful connections between the Downtown Loop and Columbus Park.
- 5) Convey the riverfront stories in ways that can be experienced in a didactic manner.
- 6) Respect and preserve the history of the site, but make it accessible!
- 7) Continue the socioeconomic success of the city market and examine expansion.
- 8) Increase population densities by creating a walk able environment.
- 9) Introduce more green space!
- 10) Embrace and accept the railroad as important site elements.

In order to achieve a number of these goals, the river front group proposed the construction

of a number of buildings and improvements near the Missouri River. Their goal was to make the riverfront more accessible and enjoyable for visitors. In order to do this they proposed the construction of a 4,000 square foot interpretive center. This interpretive center would be built with sustainability in mind and would serve as a Missouri River education center. Visitors would gain firsthand knowledge of the founding of Kansas City, the Missouri River ecosystem, and environmental sustainability. Additionally the team also proposed the relocation of the Steamboat Arabia museum. Currently the museum sits adjacent to city market. The proposed museum would be a 100,000 square foot structure.

The design of the river front interpretive center and the adjacent river front park were based on several precedents from around the country. Those precedents included; Olympic Sculpture park in Seattle Washington, Louisville River Front Park in Louisville Kentucky, Hastings River Flat Interpretive Center in Hastings Minnesota and many others.

Another important feature of the River Front Urban Design Plan is the Town of Kansas Master Plan. The town of Kansas was the first settlement in Kansas City and currently is home to a large-scale archeology dig. The river front group created a master plan for the area; they based that plan on the following nine goals.

- 1)Respect the archeological site and make it more accessible.
- 2)Expand the knowledge of the Town of Kansas area.
- 3)Create a living archeological site.
- 4)Allow visitors a role.
- 5)Tell the many stories that can be uniquely presented on this site in exciting ways.
- 6)Provide a catalyst for the Second Street area redevelopment.
- 7)Reach for the river market area and downtown.

8)Reach for the river.

9)Embrace and accept the railroad as an important site element.

All in all, the river front group created a dynamic and interesting development proposal for the river front area. They were able to meet their client's needs while also maintaining a certain level of academic freedom.

The Deck Group: Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU

The concept of covering over the I-670 freeway, which creates a canyon between the central business district and the crossroads art district, is not a new one. Design and engineering firms have been creating plans for over twenty years. These previous plans were very useful to the deck group as they began working on their project. Out of the many proposals to date, the deck group utilized three of the most recent as precedents for their design. The first, HNTB's plan created in 2005 proposed to stack the existing Truman Boulevard above I-670, this in effect would create new developable land. The second plan utilized was the Sasaki Plan finished in 2005. The Sasaki plan proposed to fill in the canyon and replace it with a boulevard at grade, connecting it to the surrounding city. The third plan, the BNIM light rail plan submitted in 2007, proposed to create a park and transit hub above I-670.

In addition to past plans, the deck group also utilized completed deck projects in other cities as inspiration. The decks chosen as precedent were the Freeway Cap in Seattle, Washington, The Papago Deck in Phoenix, Arizona, and the High Street Cap in Columbus, Ohio. Each of these decks was 9 acres in size, covered roughly 1,620 linear feet of highway and cost between 100 and 500 dollars per square foot of deck.

The site for the deck groups proposed freeway deck was a 200,000 square foot site

covering 1,950 linear feet of freeway. The cost of the property to be acquired is roughly 100 dollars per square foot. In creating their design the deck group utilized three strategies.

- 1)Renewing the urban fabric
 - Small-scale infill
 - Central space to attract and stop people
- 2)Iconic catalyst
 - Large-scale infill
 - Retail as a magnet for people and development
- 3)Topographical re-building
 - Large scale, reconstruction
 - Create a flow of people and space

In developing their concept the deck group concentrated on creating connections within their development site. They felt the location of the deck, directly between the Power and Light District and the Crossroads Art District, could act as a pedestrian collector, an area seen as a central activity hub by downtown residents as well as visitors. In order to create this atmosphere of collection the group utilized such precedents as Trafalgar Square, Centre Pompidou, and the County Club Plaza. Each of these locations represented a concept the deck team tried to achieve with their designs. First, the Trafalgar Square provided an example of how random and intermixing of pedestrian paths can collect and transport people through an area. Second, Centre Pompidou was used as a precedent for flowing space. Thirdly, the County Club Plaza provided a great example of how to achieve small block sizes.

The final design of the site was essentially to be a giant superstructure that acted like a development of smaller structures. The deck group proposed to raise their new development above street level, creating a new semi-private development. Finally the group proposed to create a roof structure over the deck development. This roof would unify the smaller scale developments while also allowing it to maintain a larger scale similar to the convention center,

the Sprint Center, and the KC Star building.

The Crossroads Group: Architecture: KU, Architecture: KSU, Landscape Architecture: KSU

The Crossroads district is a well-known area in Kansas City's urban core, which sits directly between the central business district and Crown Center. The Crossroads is known for its large population of artists, galleries, restaurants and bars. Recently, the Crossroads has become a hot spot for urbanites on the first Friday of each month. First Friday's as they are dubbed, transforms the Crossroads and downtown into a bustling urban area where visitors flock to art galleries, performances, restaurants and anything else downtown Kansas City has to offer.

The recent rise in popularity of the Crossroads has prompted city officials, developers, planners and designers to study the area and figure out how to make it better. Currently several proposals have been made to increase the density and diversity of housing in the Crossroads. Noticing the current focus on creating housing in the area, the Crossroads group chose to focus on adding more public space to the area; currently there are very few options for residents and visitors to gain access to parks and other forms of open space. In order to achieve a sufficient and effective level of public space in the Crossroads the group proposed the following goals.

Incorporate a centrally located public center that will unify the currently fragmented pockets of activity in the Crossroads.

- 1)Space that is open and free to all.
- 2)Provide spaces for both planned and unplanned social interaction.
- 3)Provide a variety of types and scales of spaces.
- 4)Proved “green” space.
- 5)Develop sustainable spaces.
- 6)Achieve spaces that are adaptable and versatile.

7) Incorporate both indoor and outdoor spaces.

In creating their public space plan the Crossroads group began the process by conducting extensive field research of the area. This allowed them to break the area into nodes, each node was chosen by a defining characteristic. Those nodes are the freight house district, the art gallery district, movie row, the performing arts center, the north end and 18th and McGee.

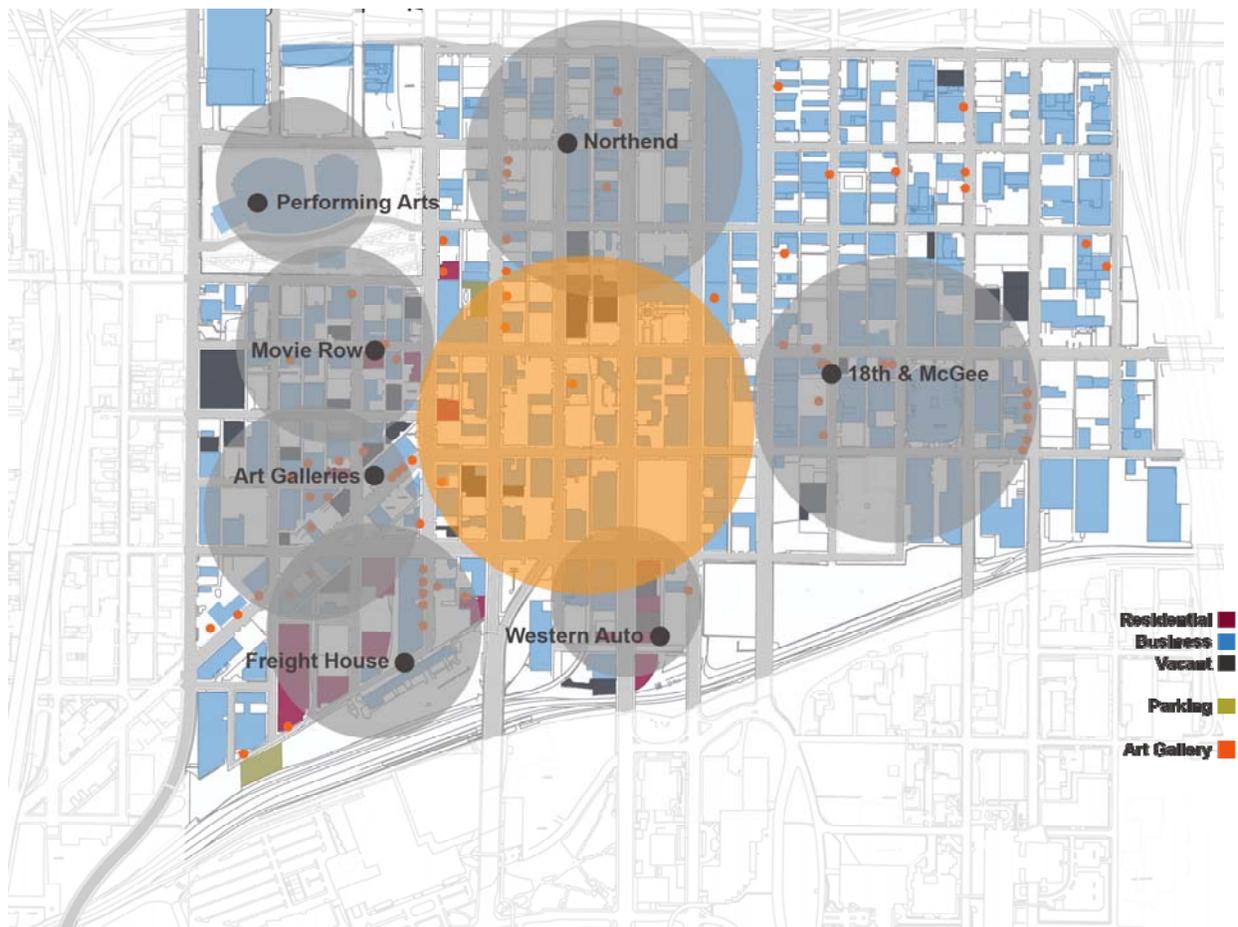


Image 2: The Crossroads Project Area

Image 3 above illustrates the location of each node in grey. The orange circle represents the area in which the group placed most of its focus. They felt the Crossroads lacked a unifying center of activity. In designing a center for the Crossroads, the group utilized a number of precedents in their design. The main precedent utilized was the Asian Culture Complex in

Gwangju Korea. This particular design incorporates open space both above and below grade. In addition to the Asian Culture Complex the Crossroads group also utilized several plazas and sculpture parks around the world as inspiration. They wanted to create a center that embraced Kansas City's identity as the Fountain City as well as the arts identity of the Crossroads. Overall the plan for open space presented by the Crossroads group proposed to increase public space in the Crossroads area from .5% to 10%.

Commuter Rail Group: Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Landscape Architecture: KSU

The commuter rail group developed one of the most interesting and regionally inclusive development plans. The railroad has played a huge role in the development of Kansas City since it's founding. During the glory days of the railroad, Kansas City was a regional hub, with most every train coming from the east passing through. Due to a strong railroad industry Kansas City and the surrounding region is crisscrossed with miles upon miles of both used and unused railroad track.

The commuter rail group began the planning and design process by reviewing the history of the railroad in Kansas City. This research steered them towards Union Station and its prominence among U.S train stations. The group felt Union Station would need to become the commuter rail hub if the concept were to be successful in the Kansas City region. They felt that if Union Station were to serve as the commuter rail hub, a number issues would need to be resolved in the area surrounding Union Station. Those issues are as follows:

- 1) Improve linkages between Crown Center, Liberty Memorial and Union Station.
- 2) Improve the design of Washington Park.
- 3) Add civic buildings to frame Liberty Memorial, as specified in original plans.

- 4) Remove existing buildings obstructing rails and views of the city.
- 5) Create additional office and residential space.
- 6) Re-routing of the possible Highway 71.

Following the groups work on Crown Center and their development recommendations they moved into the individual stations that would serve the commuter rail. The group noted that issues would need to be resolved at every stop along the commuter rail line, thus the group focused on creating a plan for the first stop along the Olathe line, which is the town of Rosedale Kansas. Rosedale is a community within Kansas City, Kansas and is located in the southwest portion of KCK. Rosedale was the logical choice for a stop due to the presence of the KU Med Center in Rosedale.

In creating their plan the group utilized a recent master plan that the Rosedale Development Association commissioned Gould-Evans to complete. The conceptual plan sought to develop boulevards along Rainbow and Southwest in addition to the development of community centers and improving the streetscape. The commuter rail group's proposal called for placing a commuter rail station at the northwest corner of Rainbow and Southwest Boulevards. Currently this site is an underutilized, and home to light industrial, and commercial establishment. Additionally a number of restaurants, including the famous Rosedale BBQ are on the site. The team proposed to keep those establishments.

When designing the train station site the group focused on creating a space using the principles of transit-oriented-development. The group's goal was to make the train station a center where people can carry out their basic needs, such as picking up groceries, dropping off recycling, or buying a cup of coffee before getting on the train. The group wanted to create a place that would be used by members of the community as well as commuters. Additional goals

of the group include the following;

- 1) Increase density.
- 2) Minimize parking and keep it out of sight.
- 3) Develop pedestrian-friendly spaces.
- 4) Provide needed services.
- 5) Consider how multiple transportation systems will work together.

Overall, the plan created by the commuter rail group was an excellent vision into how commuter rail could potentially transform several struggling communities in the Kansas City Metro area. Not only did the group propose to redevelop the area around the station, they also proposed to redevelop the town center using transit-oriented-development practices.

First Project Conclusions

The first project of the inaugural Kansas City Design Center Urban Design Studio was a learning experience for everyone involved. The students were able to gain valuable knowledge of the Kansas City area through the wisdom of The professor and a number of notable speakers. This portion of the studio was perhaps the most important. Many of the students I spoke to about this particular portion of the studio agreed that it was an essential component in helping them understand Kansas City and how the particular project they were working on fit into the urban fabric of Kansas City. Overall, as you will see in the responses from students who participated in the survey, the first stage of the studio was a success.

Phase 2

Following the students work on the first urban design project at KCDC, which culminated in a presentation to KSU faculty on October 24th, began the process of narrowing the 5 projects just completed into 3 projects, which the students would work on for the remainder of the year. In order to choose the 3 projects each of the 5 groups was required to prepare a presentation to the rest of students, these presentations allowed the students to pitch their projects to the other students. Following each groups presentations they then voted on the three projects they would work on for the remainder of the year. The projects chosen were the Downtown Loop, The River Front, and the I-670 Deck, additionally one of the students chose to work alone on a project in the Crossroads District.

The three projects in a sense represented a new beginning for the studio. This time the groups would be larger and more interdisciplinary than the first project, the deck team was comprised of all architects, this was something The professor wanted to avoid for project 2. The beginning stages of project two were similar to project one however less time was given to acclimating to Kansas City since the students had already spent much of the semester doing that. Time was taken to familiarize new group members with the project areas and the research already conducted. In order to do this the original group team prepared a binder with all of the material they had gathered throughout project number one, all of the concepts, data, and inspiration used were contained in this binder.

In assessing the other group's efforts to acclimate their new group members, it was noticed that similar tactics such as showing new group members around the site and sharing important information, which was used in the first project. Overall it seemed to that each of the groups did a superb job in familiarizing new group members.

2008 Urban Land Institute Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition

Before I begin describing each of the three projects in detail it is necessary to discuss the KCDC's participation in the 2008 Urban Land Institute Gerald D. Hines Student Urban Design Competition. One of the participating students, brought the competition to the studios attention shortly after we returned from Thanksgiving break, the application deadline was December 7th. She along with The professor felt this was a competition perfect for KCDC as it stresses interdisciplinary design and planning. After a discussion of the competition The professor asked the studio who would be interested. The team consisted of; one planner and four architects.

When applying to participate in the competition teams are unaware of the site location until they receive the competition packet. The competition packets were emailed to the participating teams on January 21st. The competition briefing material includes a comprehensive problem statement, background information on the site, market information, relevant existing design and planning proposals, maps, etc. Participating teams are also given a list of presentation materials to be included in each submittal. The first round submittals were due Monday, February 4th, 2008. A two-week period is given for this stage of the competition.

The competition problem was titled "Planning, Design, and Development of a Dynamic Downtown Edge Dallas, Texas. Each team was required to do the following;

- 1)Propose a master land use plan for a 464-acre study area in the Cedars neighborhood immediately south of downtown Dallas.
- 2)Adopt the role of a private master developer; identify a development site within this study area for phased development beginning in 2010.
- 3)Propose an urban design plan for the study area.
- 4)Propose a development plan and financial proforma for the first then years of a development on your chosen development site.

All of the required materials were to fit on seven 11x17 boards. Image ? is a map of the

Cedars location. The yellow area is the 546-acre study area, the lavender area is the I-30 canyon, and currently a proposal has been approved to deck over this portion of the interstate. The red line is the Dallas Area Regional Transit light rail line.



Image 3: Urban Land Institute Design Competition Study area

After getting acclimated to the project and facing the realization that the team had a lot of work to do in the next few weeks they began to research Dallas. We spent the first day of the competition familiarizing themselves with the Cedars neighborhood. This involved looking at current plans for the area, analyzing the development that has taken place over the years, cataloging the business located in the area, and gathering demographic data for the area. This research allowed them to gain as much first hand knowledge as possible. Following the research we began to develop our urban design concept, since teams were limited in only presenting a board to the judges they wanted to create the most catchy yet realistic urban design concept as possible.

There were a number of factors that played into the final design concept. The first was the frequency of artists and art galleries in the area. The Cedars is very well known for having a large population of artists and even holds an annual event in the Cedars celebrating it. The second factor was connectivity; the team wanted to place a lot of emphasis on the light rail stop located in the area. Additionally they wanted to improve the Cedars connection to downtown. The third factor considered was sustainability. Creating a sustainable development was one of the main factors to be considered in each teams designs. In order to achieve a sustainable development design, the team talked of incorporating storm water management best practices, green roofs, a community farm, and reforestation of the Cedars neighborhood. The fourth factor addressed was flexibility. They wanted to create diversity in the development in order to achieve the most vital neighborhood possible. The team proposed to achieve this by creating a mix of land uses, transportation options, and rent costs.

Once the urban design concept was achieved the team began creating the master plan for the 463-acre study area. In creating the land use plan they utilized the existing land use plan and created minor changes to it. The changes included decreasing the amount of industrial land, increasing parks and open space, and adding more mixed uses to the area. During the creation of the land use plan the team began to choose the area of our 20-acre catalyst development. The creation of such a development was required of all the teams. This plan was to be more detailed than the master land use plan and was to include a financial proforma. The area chosen for the 20-acre area was a wedge shaped site encompassing the DART light rail stop. The team chose this location because they felt it was at the center of what was happening currently in the Cedars neighborhood. Over the past few years several new apartment buildings had been built along with a few industrial loft renovations. The team wanted to take this momentum and create a

synergy between the developing west side and the struggling eastside.

The most challenging part of the ULI competition was designing and planning with financial constraints, one of the mandates of the competition was to create a development plan that was also financially feasible. Thus the team had many discussions about density, structured parking, and highest and best uses. In order to calculate costs while also designing at the same time, the team utilized base costs for parking, materials, and other infrastructure needs. This allowed them to tweak their designs as they went instead of finding out the designs were too expensive after the fact.

Once they nailed down their designs and the numbers, the team began the production of their graphics for the presentation board. The production of our graphics took place as the competition was nearing its conclusion on February 21st. The final three days of the competition were very strenuous for the team as they were pulling very late nights, in fact one student actually slept in the studio a few nights in order to get work done.

Overall my experience in taking part in the ULI competition was very rewarding. Not only did it improve my relationships with other members of the studio it also gave me a glimpse into the struggles professional planners, designers, and developers face as they create new places. Additionally, the workload we faced was a true eye opener. Facing such an extreme deadline was fun and stressful at the same time. I truly hope students at the KCDC urban design studio make taking part in this competition a tradition. Not only is it a great educational exercise, it could also bring publicity too KCDC depending on how well future teams do in the competition.

The Loop Group: Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Interior Architecture: KSU, Landscape Architecture: KSU, Planning: KSU

The new and improved loop group acquired four new members for project number two.

The new group was also represented by each of the participating disciplines at KCDC, planning, architecture, landscape architecture, and interior architecture/product design. As mentioned above the team spent around two weeks educating the new group members about the downtown loop area and the work and research each had completed up to this point.

Following the introductory period they began to decide what area of the downtown loop to would focus on. Given the large group size they immediately knew they wanted to expand the area previously worked on. That is exactly what they did; the team realized that the northeastern edge of downtown has seen little development compared to the rest of the loop. Additionally, the Downtown Councils goal to dramatically increase the number of residents in downtown was a motivating factor in increasing the size of the study area. The team felt the northeastern edge was a great place to create a pedestrian and transit friendly residential area.

Once the study area was narrowed down the team began to discuss the concepts and ideas they felt were important to the proposal. Not surprisingly their efforts focused on sustainability, curing Kansas City's addiction to the automobile, increasing density, and increasing diversity among downtown residents. Once these principles were decided on they each began researching one of the topics individually. For example, one student began cataloging all of the historic buildings in the study area and researching design guidelines for the redevelopment of historic structures. Other students researched housing, storm water retention, urban furniture, and many others topics deemed appropriate. In order to keep all of the students up to date on the other projects going on, The professor required each student to prepare a five to ten minute presentation about the research we had been working on.

Additionally, during the first stages of project two, the team began discussing the possibilities of guerilla marketing tactics. One of their goals was to increase awareness of the

downtown loop area and its limitless potential. The team's discussions included the possibility of urban design installations, these installations would be abstract murals depicting downtown as a center of activity. The team went as far as writing a letter to business owners describing their idea. While they saw limited results of this effort the idea was strong and is something future KCDC students should think about pursuing. Given the extensive design and arts community in Kansas City, the efforts would not go unnoticed.

All of the above events took place during the first semester after the students finished work on project number one. Upon their return to KCDC they began the initial stages of planning and design. Most of the student's efforts focused on creating urban design guidelines for their development sites. The creation of these urban design guidelines is something each of the three groups completed. The professor put a lot of emphasis on these guidelines; he believed they would allow the students to get a sense of what it is like to design in the real world. Not only did they get experience writing design guidelines they also gained experience in designing and planning within the confines design guidelines. A discussion of each groups design guidelines will be covered in their respective sections.

The loop groups design guidelines document was very extensive given the size of the study area and the number of members in the group. The design guidelines consisted of four sections, introduction, urban design framework, focus areas, and urban design proposal. The introduction talked about such things as the context of downtown, this included the topography, barriers faced, transit, open space, and a number of others. Additionally the introduction stated the intent as well as the mission. The urban design framework section described the three principles central to the team's initial proposal; sustainability, open space, and transit oriented development. Each subsection contained examples and precedents used in the designs, the

sections also created best management practices to be used in the design and future designs in the downtown area.

The third chapter of the urban design guidelines was devoted to the focus areas within the site. This section begins by stipulating standards for parking, building mass, roof and mechanical penthouses, and services to be provided. This section was essentially to act as a written blue print. Following the universal guidelines section each neighborhood within the development site was described in detail. The first neighborhood was the north edge neighborhood, the second was the library district and the third was the educational node. In each neighborhood section, building types and the site planning to take place in each neighborhood was described. Finally, section four of the urban design guidelines presents the final plan of the area. This section is primarily made up of images and graphics depicting the designs and how the team envisioned this section of the downtown loop.

The River Front Group: Architecture: KU, Architecture: KU, Architecture: KSU, Landscape Architecture: KSU

The river front project was one of the most popular projects of the semester, after the loop. As mentioned in an earlier section, the river front project had the most real life implications. Additionally this group worked very closely with a real client. In the river front groups design guidelines and overall design they wanted to accomplish four goals:

- 1) Use catalytic projects to encourage urban in fill throughout the river market.
- 2) Enhance mobility by improving pedestrian, public, and alternative transit.
- 3) Improve the neighborhood vitality by increasing housing, commerce, services, and entertainment.
- 4) Improve the overall physical environment of the area.

The catalyst projects to be incorporated into the plan included a state of the art aquarium, transit center, interpretive center, expansion of the Steamboat Arabia Museum, and a redesign of the physical Missouri River front. The state of the art aquarium would provide a world-class destination for the river market area, similar to that of Union Station and its Science City. This aquarium would act as the main development catalyst for the area. The transit center would act as a hub for the future KC light rail and its bus-rapid-transit system, which currently serves the KC metropolitan area. The interpretive center would act as an educational center for visitors and residents to learn about the history of the area, its ecosystem, and why future preservation of the area is vital to Kansas City. Expansion of the Steamboat Arabia Museum has been a priority for the river market area for sometime. The group's plan includes moving the boat to a state of the art facility, near the aquarium. The goal of the river front redesign is to reconnect people to the riverfront and its historical significance.

In order to enhance mobility in the area the group focused on the pedestrian, public transit, and alternative modes of transit. In order to increase the pedestrian experience the group focused on enhancing walk ability and the sidewalks in the area. For example, the proposed minimum width of sidewalks is to be 6 feet; on main street corridors the minimum width is to be 10 feet. Additionally, pedestrian corridors are to be created that are continuous, well lit, and provide a safe area for pedestrians to travel within the area.

Public transportation in the area was very important to the river market group. In addition to enhancing the bus-rapid-transit system in the area, thought was given to the possibility of light rail and smart streetcar systems, and the incorporation of a commuter rail stop in the area. By incorporating a number of public transportation options the River Markets visibility would increase greatly, additionally the area could become a model for successful transit oriented

development.

The river front group also discussed alternative modes of transportation. Incorporating the cyclist into the redevelopment of the area was very important. The River Market, area is already popular with cyclists due to the Heritage Trail. To do so the group developed standards for bike parking similar to those of vehicle parking standards. Additionally bikeways would be provided within the right of way. Car sharing was another concept the group focused on. Car sharing is very popular in some of our largest cities such as San Francisco and Philadelphia. Car sharing lessens the need for individuals to have a personal automobile. If they need to take an extended trip they can rent cars for a certain rate per hour or day.

In order to accommodate vehicles, the group proposed centralizing parking to enhance retail and commercial opportunities. Surface lots would be kept to a minimum and would be required to be located in seldom seen areas behind buildings. Parking structures would need to be built underground or behind buildings when possible, in order to minimize their impact on the surrounding environment. Overall the group realizes the vehicle is still the prominent mode of transportation in our country, thus it must be accommodated.

Increasing neighborhood vitality was the second goal of the river front group. In order to increase vitality the group proposed to create diversity in housing, services, and commerce. In order to increase diversity in housing, high-end condos and apartments, assisted and subsidized housing, and single-family housing would be provided in the area. All residential developments would be required to provide private open space for residents, which offer a safe and relaxing environment for residents to retreat to. Additionally, residential buildings to be located near high traffic areas will be required to include 60% of its bottom floors space to commercial and retail establishments.

To enhance commerce within the area the group developed guidelines to increase the frequency and diversity of commercial and retail establishments. For example for every 5,000 square feet of residential development, 500 square feet of commercial space must be made available. In order to control big box development and single use commercial development, structures no larger than 35,000 square feet will be permitted unless the building is occupied by a number of businesses. Entertainment space will be required at 27 square feet per resident.

Improving the physical environment was very important to the river front group. In order to do so, the group focused on improving the streetscape, buildings, and absolute space. In order to improve the streetscapes, strategies to improve the four types of streets, which circumnavigate the area, were created. These improvements focused on strategically locating retail and residential along certain streets. Improving site elements such as landscaping, sidewalks, and curbs along the streets, and incorporating lighting, way finding, and public art were also deemed important. All of these features together would dramatically improve the street environment.

Buildings would be required to address the context of the surrounding environment in the design. In case of the construction of significant and prominent buildings, the regional context would also need to be addressed in the design. Such things as the facade, building materials, solar access, water retention, and energy conservation were addressed in the design guidelines. Diligent attention to details in each of these areas will allow the creation of note worthy and energy efficient structures.

The creation of absolute space was the third strategy in improving the River Market neighborhood. Absolute space is space protected by the community for the betterment of the community. It is space, which cannot be removed, as it is integral to the historical significance of the area. The City Market, City Market Park, the riverfront, and the Town of Kansas

Archeological Park are the most important absolute spaces in the area. Preserving them is of the highest priority according to the river front group.

The I-670 Deck Group: Landscape Architecture: KSU, Architecture: KSU, Architecture: KU

In the second go around of the deck project the main focus was turned towards increasing air quality in Kansas City while also creating a viable connection center between two very important parts of Kansas City's downtown; the Crossroads and the Power and Light District. In creating their urban design guidelines the deck group relied on a lot of very strong evidence in why improving air quality in Kansas City is extremely important. For one, the I-670 area is the largest contributor to Kansas City air quality problem. Thus the group proposed integrating state of the art, pollutant-catching technology into the I-670 deck.

In developing their guidelines and designs the group utilized a number of precedents around the country as well as an example close to home. The example close to home was the Bartle Hall Ball Room, which spans over a section of I-670. In their design guidelines the group discussed the scope of the proposed project. The project area is to be 10.1 acres of I-670 right of way, this equates to roughly 2,000 linear feet of freeway to be covered. This project would add 6.3 acres of developable land to the downtown area. It would cost roughly 500 dollars per linear foot of freeway, totaling 220 million dollars. The deck group created four goals it wished to achieve with this project they are as follows:

Mitigate Environmental Impacts

The group felt the proposed deck would not only capture unwanted air pollutants from

automobiles. It would also incorporate smart design principles which in turn would alleviate the urban heat island effect, ensure solar rights to urban residents, improve storm water collection, and encourage energy efficiency through the construction of LEED accredited structures.

Strategies for Mitigating Environment Impacts

The main strategy to be used is the removal of CO₂ from the air in and around the deck Area. The remainder of the strategies focused on sustainable building practices and the use of LEED guidelines in the design and construction of each new building.

Strategies for Stitching the Downtown Loop and the Crossroads Back Together

In order to improve the connection between the downtown loop and the crossroads the group proposed to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation in the area. Their goal was to create a transition space, which incorporated public transportation and restored the natural rhythm to city block. Essentially the goal was to create a connection so seamless; passerbyers would never realize the freeway was there.

The strategies to be utilized included the creation of a transition zone between the downtown and the crossroads. Additionally, emphasis would be placed on the pedestrian and public transit. Other strategies included a number of building and site orientation principles, which would contribute to increasing pedestrian and vehicular, flow.

Strategies for Increasing Vitality in Downtown:

In order to increase vitality in downtown the group proposed the construction of many structures. These structures would include new residential, retail, and commercial establishments as well as the construction of a hotel. The group felt the creation of public transportation opportunities, public space, iconic retail destinations, and new hotels would add to the excitement being generated in downtown now. The ultimate goal is to compliment the KC

live district, not to compete with it.

In order to do this the group proposed the construction of a number of attractions. First, they envisioned this area as a retail hub, home to a number of well-established retailers like IKEA. Second, they wanted to create an attractive transit stop in order to persuade more people to utilize public transportation. Additionally, the group wanted to add diversity among the services and entertainment available to visitors and residents.

Strategies for Increasing Public Space:

Compared to most cities its size Kansas City is lacking in public space, just 8.6% of the land in Kansas City, Missouri is public space. The group believes the creation of public space in downtown is essential to creating a vibrant neighborhood while also contributing to environmental improvement.

One of the main features in the groups design was the incorporation of an amphitheater, which was also accessible to the public when not in use. Additionally the group wanted to incorporate spaces for both planned and unplanned activities, in order to do this they wanted to incorporate seating, open space, and water features. Finally, a main public plaza for the area would also be created.

The groups proposal was very ambitious. This type of development in downtown Kansas City could further the progress and image of the downtown and Kansas City in general. Currently the I-670 rift between the Crossroads and downtown is very ugly. This vision for KC is very important, thus this project could potentially be one the KCDC studio is involved with for times to come.

CHAPTER 5 - Conclusions

Student Questionnaire Results

The student questionnaire was the main tool used in this study to gauge student's feelings about the studio, their experiences, and their motivations in choosing to take part, and their thoughts on its interdisciplinary nature. The questionnaire was composed of ten questions. The questionnaire was deliberately open-ended, participants were free to answer each question however they felt was appropriate, and no sort of rating system was used. The reason for conducting the open-ended questionnaire was primarily due to the study group size. The study group was the fourteen student participants in the studio. While it was my goal to receive questionnaires from each of the students, that ultimately did not happen. Responses from nine of the fourteen students were received for a return rate of 64% was achieved. However, each participating discipline is represented. In order to protect the student's confidentiality they were not required to put their names on the questionnaires, however they were required to list their discipline. Additionally, the actual questionnaires will not be made available.

The questionnaire was presented to the students the week following their return from winter break. I chose to issue it during the second semester, as I wanted the students to become as familiar as possible with how the studio was going to work. I also chose to issue it at this time because by now all of the students had developed relationships with the other members of the studio and had worked with students from other disciplines on a project. By waiting until second semester I was able to gain more thoughtful and in-depth answers to the questionnaire questions. In order to summarize my findings from the questionnaire this section will be broken into ten sections. Each section will include a discussion of one of the questionnaire questions.

Question 1: What motivated you to take part in the KCDC urban design studio?

The responses to question 1 were relatively consistent throughout the nine questionnaires I received back. The most common answer was the studio's location in urban Kansas City. A number of respondents saw this as a way to work outside the box; many felt the projects would allow them to gain more real world experience in their chosen fields. One of the best responses I received back was from an architecture student who was motivated by new ways of thinking, and the opportunity to work with other disciplines on projects that could shape the environment. Another great response I received was; "the studio provided a unique opportunity to bring the studio experience into an urban 'real world' setting. After talking with several other students about this, I was told many of the projects assigned in their respective program studios have no real life implications. All of the students at KCDC found the projects rewarding and refreshing.

Overall the responses I received to question one did not surprise me. My motivations to join the studio seemed to coincide with those of other students. Question number one, to me, was the most important question in the questionnaire. This question really allowed me to gauge how motivated each participating student was to be working in Kansas City on real life projects. Because of the problems KCDC studios have faced in the past, with students coming to Kansas City either to begin their careers or to be closer to loved ones, I felt this question could shed light on students' other motivations. Based on the responses to the questionnaire and my observations and conversations with students I've concluded that each student in the studio was very devoted to KCDC's mission.

Question 2: Upon choosing the projects for the semester, what motivated your choice?

While this question is similar to question number one the reason for asking was

fundamentally different. By asking this question it allowed me to gauge what types of work and issues each student was interested. Each of the projects worked on throughout the course of the year dealt with different issues. Thus students were able to choose a project based on the issues facing it.

For example one the student responder was very interested in the commuter rail concept. This student was very motivated by transit-oriented development and its potential benefits to the environment and the city of Kansas City. Being in the heart of the city and transforming its struggling downtown motivated students to work on the loop project. One student in particular felt the loop project contained the most urban design topics such as how to increase density, how to curb the heat island effect, the creation of more open space, etc. Another student was interested in the loop project because of their interest in how people live in urban areas. Other students chose projects based on what they wanted to work on once they began their respective careers.

Question 3: Have you had any difficulties thus far in relating too or cooperating with studio members from a different discipline?

The basis for this question was the studios interdisciplinary nature, the large amount of group projects, and the bringing together of students from different institutions who had never met each other before. Overall the responses to this question were very positive. None of the respondents noted any real difficulties in cooperating with students from other disciplines. Some respondents did note difficulty in relating to students from other disciplines. The most common reason listed for this was the difference in scope between each discipline. Architects and interior architects deal at a very small and personal scale, whereas planners and landscape architects often work at larger scales on parks or master planning communities. One architecture student

noted difficulty in working with students in the same discipline on urban design issues. The particular student spoke of a difficulty in communicating ideas due to the large-scale nature of urban design problems. Another student noted a fundamental difference in each disciplines idea about certain issues and the difference in the culture of each discipline.

Overall, based on the responses to the questionnaire, my observations of the studio, and my own group experience, I found that conflict was very rare in the studio. While some group members got a little heated at times, issues were quickly resolved. Many of us in the studio have developed friendships and even hangout with each other outside of studio. I would say the relationships developed between the students and The professor has been one of the highlights of the studio this year.

Question 4: Based on your experience thus far in the studio, what have you learned, if anything from the other disciplines represented in the studio?

Question four was a very important question, which had implications to the overall direction of this paper. To reiterate the goal of this paper is to describe the interdisciplinary learning environment of the studio. Every questionnaire respondent noted learning something from one if not all of the other disciplines represented. One architecture student noted learning to look at the big picture similar to the way planners and landscape architects look at the built environment. Another student noted learning a lot from urban planning students. The particular student said they learned a lot about the master planning process and how large of a scale it can be. Additionally the student noted learning a lot from the landscape architecture students and how landscape architecture and design can affect the built environment. The responses I received from the landscape architecture students were similar; each of the respondents learned a lot about architectural programming in addition to urban planning theory and practice. One of

the more entertaining responses to question four was “landscape architecture students are more laid back than architecture students.”

Overall, the responses to the questionnaire, and my conversations with students in the studio, each of them learned from all of the discipline represented in the studio. A more in-depth discussion of my recommendations on how to better the studios interdisciplinary environment will be included at the conclusion of this paper.

Question 5: Based on your work in the first studio project of the semester, how would you rate your contribution to the current status of the project?

Question five was designed to gain an understanding of the structure of each project group. As we are all aware in group situations more often than not, the workload among members is inconsistent. Some members tend to do more work while others do less. The responses from the students varied from a very high contribution to a low contribution. One of the landscape architecture students noted that they felt they had more to offer and had more knowledge of the problem given its large scale. The student felt their training as a landscape architect better suited them for work at the urban planning and design scale. Thus, they felt they contributed more to the project. Another student noted slight frustration in the fact that the first project she worked on was not selected to carry over into the second semester. However, the research the student had completed prior was applicable to the new project they were working on. Given the change in projects, this student had difficulty presenting design ideas to the other members who had been working on the project all year. Another student stated they had done most of the work until the very end of the project.

Question 6: How would you describe your workload this semester? Has it met, not met? Or exceeded your expectations?

Much to my surprise this question became one of the most important to the faculty at Kansas State. During many of my conversations with the other KSU students they mentioned that many of their professors were concerned with the lack of work we had produced during the first semester of the studio. Additionally, three of the questionnaire respondents stated that the workload of the first semester did not meet their expectations. Another student felt it was adequate given the long-term goal of the studio. One of the best responses to the question was, “a student workload can always meet their expectations. As students we can choose to dig deep into a project and work hard or we can choose to not take an opportunity to learn more. So it has met MY expectations.”

This response really summed up my feelings on this studio and our roles as graduate students. It is my belief that other students were motivated enough to learn on their own and create their own workloads, however the nature of their respected program was far more formally structured than the KCDC studio, thus they were not used to the freedom allowed by The professor at KCDC.

Question 7: Do you believe the interdisciplinary studio is an effective way to educate young planning and design professionals? If yes, why? If no, why?

The responses to question seven were very positive. Every respondent felt the interdisciplinary studio was a very effective way in educating students. The most common answer I received was the notion of interdisciplinary collaboration helping student’s gains valuable experience in working with individuals of differing disciplines on real world issues. One student felt it teaches us students how to work at different scales. Another student noted it

was important if utilized later in a student's academic career, after they had gained a firm grasp on their own discipline. Another felt it was important to teach students how to collaborate with other disciplines, however the student also felt they had not worked on enough architecture related projects, they felt we were not diving deep into our individual disciplines.

Overall the responses to question seven were what I had hoped for. It is apparent that students understand the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and its inherent benefits to problem solving. While some students would have liked more focused projects, they forget the KCDC studio was intended to study urban design issues at an interdisciplinary scale.

Question 8: How important do you feel interdisciplinarity is to the fields of planning and design?

The following statement was overall the best answer I received to any of the questionnaire questions. "Extremely important! The two fields have been at odds in many ways; politically, socially, and pedagogically; but both deal with the ramifications of the urban environment and seek to make beneficial changes. Our efforts will compound exponentially if we can work together towards a common cause, rather than against one another (esp. in environmental stewardship)." Every respondent to the questionnaire felt interdisciplinary collaboration was very important to the fields of planning and design. One student felt the two fields "depend on one another in the making of unique places/spaces that can function." Another student felt it was very important and defines how we will work as interns and/or professionals. The overwhelming thought was it fosters more collaborations and communications among persons of differing disciplines. Thus, as the problems facing the built environment transform greater collaboration among the fields is essential in curing them. Communication, and greater understanding of how each discipline works together were other

responses to question nine. Overall it seems students were fully aware of the potential benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration. Urban design is a very complex and all encompassing field, thus not one discipline is better suited to solve the problems than the other.

Question 9: How do you envision your experience in the KCDC studio to affect your future professional endeavors?

The inclusion of question nine was motivated by my goal of gaining a better understanding of student motivations in participating in the studio. Prior KCDC studios have had trouble with students using the opportunity to begin their careers before actually graduating. Overall the responses to question nine were positive except for one exception.

Two students noted the programs visibility to professionals in Kansas City and how those professionals are excited about the studio. These students felt the buzz surrounding KCDC would help them gain employment after graduation. Another student noted how the studio could make them more adaptable as they begin their career. Others noted how the large-scale nature of the projects worked on at KCDC would make them more marketable as they begin their careers. Overall the most common response to question nine was the studio would make students more marketable to firms. The student with the only negative comment felt their last year would have been more productive and beneficial to them as the move into the professional world if they would have stayed at their home university and completed their coursework there.

Question 10: As a resource for future KCDC studio professors and students, what would you change about the current method of organization and instruction used?

I was motivated to ask this question in order to gain insight from the students who were

actually here the entire duration of the studio on how the studio could be better for future professors and students. The KCDC studio took a lot of collaboration between KU, KSU faculty, donors, and interested parties to happen. Thus it is important for KU and KSU faculty to listen to the students who took part in the inaugural KCDC studio on how the studio experience could be better. This subject is perhaps the most complex issue facing the studio and could be the subject of its own master's report.

The answers to this question varied widely. One recommendation was to have students work on several small group projects during the first semester. This would give the students a chance to meet everyone and learn about others. Another student would have liked to see more emphasis on design and generating a final product. Another felt projects related to every major would have been useful. Many students would have liked to see a final project that was less planning based.

Analysis of Student Questionnaire Results

To reiterate the topic question of this paper, are young planning and design students gaining the same educational experiences at the KCDC interdisciplinary urban design studio? The questionnaire used was to be one tool in helping me determine the answer to this question. Perhaps the question was a little ambitious given this was the inaugural year of the KCDC urban design studio. However, it is my belief the results of the questionnaire and the ethnography will contribute valuable information to those responsible for making KCDC better for future students and instructors.

Based on the questionnaire results, my conversations and interactions with other students, and my own experience, I feel not every student gained the same educational experience. Now, what variables led to this discrepancy? There are many, based on the information I collected I

have created a list of the variables I believe to have caused the discrepancy in the educational experiences of the students at KCDC. They are as follows.

- 1) Individual student expectations
- 2) Negative reactions to the work being done at the studio by KSU faculty
- 3) Professor Farnan's method of instruction.
- 4) Unfamiliarity with the scope of urban design
- 5) Not enough contact with KSU professors.
- 6) An established goal for the studio
- 7) Too much time spent on one planning project
- 8) Lack of Complete Integration Between all the Disciplines

Individual Student Expectations:

Each student had their own expectations of what the studio was going to be like, what they wanted to get out of it and so on and so forth. In fact some of the students had no idea what to expect. It seemed the most common expectation among students was more work. The students wanted more projects early in the semester and they wanted those projects to be discipline oriented, not interdisciplinary. Based on my conversations with students this expectation, at least among the students from KSU, was caused by observations of the work being done by their peers in Manhattan. The landscape architecture students saw their peers working on significant individual capstone projects, the LA capstone is comparable to a master's report. The architecture students saw their peers working on large-scale senior design projects.

In seeing the amount of work students back in Manhattan had accomplished, a number of the KSU students at KCDC began to regret taking part in the studio. How did this affect the studio and each student's educational experience? First, these students became discouraged about the "lack" of work being done at KCDC; they felt they were at a disadvantage compared to the

students back in Manhattan. Thus, these students became less motivated and more cynical about the studio, and did not take full advantage of everything the studio had to offer.

Student expectations will always be a part of academia the question is how do we create an interdisciplinary studio that meets or exceeds student expectations. First, more thorough marketing of the studio could make a huge difference. In my own experience and in listening to other students in the studio most of us found out about the studio by sheer luck. We just happened to come across a lone flyer or heard a brief pitch for the studio. Additionally many of the students found out about the studio while they were studying abroad, this presented difficult situations for the students.

In order to better market the studio its efforts should begin a year in advance and should be a revolving cycle, just like the international study abroad opportunities are drilled into students heads the KCDC studio should receive the same marketing efforts. Students should become aware of the opportunity their freshman year. Now, how will better marketing efforts help create better student expectations. First, student expectations will become more realistic as the studio progresses over the years and a body of work becomes available to use in marketing efforts. Students will be able to see what past studios have done and visualize what their experience may be like. Neither the students nor the faculty had any idea of what to expect, thus they manifested their own expectations.

Negative Reactions to the Work Being Done at the Studio by KSU Faculty:

It became apparently clear as the year wore on that the KSU faculty was less than impressed with the work being produced at the KCDC studio. Just like students had their expectations of the studio, the professors had theirs as well. Likely, the professors expectations were shaped in the same way the students were. The KSU faculty had been working with

students in Manhattan all year, seeing their workday in and day out, the amount of time they spent on it so on and so forth. For students at KCDC there was little to no contact with professors for weeks at a time, sometimes even months. Thus, during these stretches of no contact the professors at KSU were seeing the amount of work being done by their students and in turn sub consciously assuming we were producing the same amount if not more material.

In response students became to become discouraged with their studio experience feeling as if they were not learning what they should be learning. And also feeling as if the faculty at KSU were not taking the studio seriously and not realizing this was the first go around. The fact of the matter is this was the first go around; it is my opinion that our work as students was unfairly criticized.

This dilemma has since been resolved. During the KSU student's trip to Manhattan on April 8th, we met with the faculty group responsible for the KCDC studio. The purpose of this meeting was for us the students to express our concerns with the studio and to give the faculty our suggestions as to how the experience could be bettered. The meeting was very productive and allowed us student's ample time to express our concerns.

Professors method of teaching:

First and foremost I want to begin this section by saying this is not a critique of the professor's teaching ability. I personally found, along with many other students, The professor to be a great mentor with a wealth of knowledge in urban design, planning, and architecture. However, some students are not suited to excel within his teaching framework.

The professor employed a very laizze fairre form of instruction. He places more pressure on the student to drive their own studies and to motivate themselves to complete the amount of work they deem to be sufficient in their own standards. In my observations of and conversations

with students from KSU, a number of them mentioned they were not accustomed to his method of instruction. They informed me that KSU is much more structured, thus less pressure is placed on the student to motivate themselves. Their professors demand a certain amount of work to be completed for each project. Thus it is my belief some students did not have the same experience as others because they were not accustomed to the professor's method, or they did not push themselves as hard as they would have been pushed at KSU.

Unfamiliarity with the Scope of Urban Design:

This was a big one for the studio; many of us did not know how vast of a scale we would be working with when dealing with urban design issues. Given the huge scope of urban design some of the students specifically the architects and interior architects had trouble adjusting to design at this scale. For us planners and landscape architects the scale was not as much of a problem. Architects and interior architects deal mostly at the human scale, the projects we worked on at KCDC were at a regional or city scale resembling a planning project.

In order to familiarize us students with urban design The professor assigned book reports at the beginning of the fall semester. Each of the books focused on urban design theories. Students were required to read a book then write a review and discuss it with the other students. While the professor's assignments gave us a brief introduction to urban design, readings should be assigned to the selected students to read during the summer prior to entering the studio.

My experience at KCDC, dealing with urban design issues has taught me a lot, my design and graphics skills have drastically improved, I have gained a better understanding of the urban environment, additionally I now think of planning in more of a physical sense then a statistical sense. While the studio has greatly benefited me, a number of the students did not feel it benefited them, as they did not ever see themselves working on projects of this scale once they

begin their careers.

While some students did not gain as much out of the urban design projects as others there is a positive side to this. For one, having a number of people working on a project who are used to working at totally different scales makes for interesting ideas and conversations about how to improve place. Being a planner I often fail at looking at the small things and really taking the person into context. I learned a lot from the architects and interior architects who design with the individual in mind. Additionally, as mentioned in the questionnaire summary, many of the architects learned how to see the big picture from the landscape architects and planners. Bringing all of these disciplines together to work on an urban design project allows a group of students to create a very comprehensive urban design plan which not only can be viewed in a regional context it can also be viewed at a very personal level. While many students complained about the large scope of urban design it was perhaps this scope, which allowed us to collaborate effectively and efficiently among the disciplines.

Not Enough Contact with KSU Professors:

This was a big issue for a number of the KSU students. Many of the KSU students felt their faculty should have been more involved in the studio. KSU faculty made it to Manhattan on two occasions and were only in the studio long enough to hear our presentations. A number of the students would have liked to have more contact with their professors during the design and planning stages of our projects. This way the faculty would have been aware of the work we were doing while we were doing it and in turn could of gave us suggestions as to how to improve our work or what other material to include.

This contact with the professors could have allowed us to better meet their expectations and would have allowed us as students to gain more out of our experience in the studio. In order

to remedy this for future studios, monthly visits by KSU faculty to the studio would be worthwhile in ensuring KSU students are gaining the most possible from the KCDC urban design studio.

An Established Goal for the Studio:

This point goes back to the overall nature of the KSU planning and design programs. Many of the KSU students expressed frustration because they did not know what we were ultimately working towards here at KCDC. Many would have liked to have been aware of a long-term goal for the studio, as this would have given them more direction in their work. Once again this point comes down to how some students are accustomed to learning. A simple remedy, which would not only enhance the learning experience at KCDC but also aid in marketing the studio to proposed students would be to develop a theme each year for the studio. Many firms around the country do this in order to effectively market their internship programs. For example, Norris Design, a planning and landscape architecture firm based in Denver, Colorado titled their 2008 internship program “Theory 2 Practice.” Their website includes a detailed explanation of the work interns would be conducting. Possible goals for future studios could be sustainability, transit, so on and so forth.

Development of a goal for the studio would allow students to better prepare themselves for it and would give them, even if vague, a sense of what they will need to accomplish as the studio progresses over the year. Additionally goals for each discipline could also be created this would give prospective students an idea of how their discipline would fit in with the goal of the studio as a whole.

To Much Time Dedicated to One Planning Oriented Project:

Obviously as a planning student I was very happy with the focus of the studio as I learned a great deal. However, a number of other students felt little emphasis was given to their disciplines. In preparing our points of discussion for the April 8th meeting with KSU faculty the student responsible for preparing those notes expressed in them a solution to this dilemma. The student stated the following “this issue may be presented as a positive if the complicated facets involved with such a project are fully explored, i.e. shifting scales, focus, and inter-disciplinary expertise throughout the semester.”

Thus it would be appropriate to say the non-planning students did not have the same experience as the planning students. Where as I spent most of the year working on projects in my discipline, the architecture, interior architecture, and landscape architecture students have only been working on projects in their disciplines since the midpoint of the spring semester when they began work on their individual projects. Accordingly it would be beneficial for future studios if the scale of the projects varied throughout the year. For example, perhaps a month to two months could be given to urban planning issues with the planning students carrying on the planning work the rest of the year. In order to accommodate the design students their individual design projects could be worked into the plans as a whole thus creating a more complex and detailed urban design plan as the final product of the studio.

Lack of Complete Integration of All the Disciplines:

Many students felt the disciplines represented in the studio could have been more integrated. As I mentioned above the design students have only been working on projects in their specific disciplines since March. The remainder of the semester was devoted to work on large-scale urban design and planning projects. As I have mentioned before many of the design

students felt they were not learning what they should be during their fifth year of school.

Perhaps integrating smaller scale projects throughout the year would be beneficial for the design students as well as planning students as it would foster more collaboration at smaller scales.

Additionally these smaller scale projects would assist planners in getting a taste for what it is these design students do while also allowing them to learn from the design students. This would allow planning students, as they move into their careers, to be familiar with design terminology and the process involved.

Conclusion

In finale, the inaugural Kansas City Design Center Interdisciplinary Urban Design Studio was an experience I will not regret. While other participating students may feel different it is my opinion that the KCDC studio should continue to be an option for interested and qualified students to take part in. As you may have gathered from the report, the environment of the KCDC studio itself and its urban setting is not suitable for every student. Thus due diligence when selecting students to take part, the studio's professor, as well as the projects to be conducted must be the highest priority. In addition students must feel as if they are getting an equal if not better education than they would if they had stayed at their home universities for their last year of study. I have no doubt that will happen as the studio becomes more imbedded in the Kansas City community.

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