

College of Architecture, Art, and Planning (AAP)
Planning Process Executive Summary
October 5, 2009

1. Context

The disciplines represented by the College are experiencing remarkable transformations. Collectively, the design arts and sciences are tackling many of the urgent social and environmental issues of the day, and doing so with an expanded sense of their disciplinary boundaries. The College aspires to be the University's gathering point for these expanded art and design practices as they relate to the form of the designed environment. To achieve this, AAP must confront the contemporary role of the design arts by teaching and theorizing not just a new range of skills but new, often hybrid, domains such as landscape-urbanism, digital arts, digital modeling and fabrication, ecological planning, infrastructure design, and a broadly conceived history and theory of the arts and the designed environment. With the construction of Paul Milstein Hall underway, and with vibrant programs in two of the world's foremost design centers (Rome and New York), AAP imagines itself as becoming a more visible, more extensive, but also more focused, design college.

2. Budget Reductions

The goal of AAP's budget reduction efforts is to reduce/realign select areas of expenditures while preserving the ability of the College to fulfill an expanded role in the near future. The College has already extracted 10% from its budget by tapping all activity areas. The three most significant budgetary actions proposed or enacted to date are:

- Closing the Knight Visual Resources Facility.
The KVRF, a historic slide-based visual resource center serving both AAP and other units on campus, was closed in June, 2009. KVRF was ill-suited to an advanced digital environment which is the inevitable future context for most image-based disciplines. The College is committed to building a robust and advanced digital visual infrastructure together with partners across the university.
- Restructuring AAP's administration.
As of July 1, 2009, the college centralized all admissions and shops, streamlined IT and facilities, and shifted modest resources to support City and Regional Planning (CRP) (for sponsored research support) and Architecture (for increased enrollments following anticipated accreditation of graduate architecture program). The College reduced its staff by approximately 10%.
- Faculty Retirements:
In 2009, three faculty accepted phased retirement agreements; one additional negotiation is anticipated; three senior faculty departed the university for other opportunities. Collectively, this represents an opportunity to refocus expertise with future junior faculty hires.

3. Structure

AAP's three departments as currently configured do not cover important emerging domains mentioned above. Nor is the University at large configured to promote and advance its design-related activity. AAP can contribute to Cornell's broad design activity by focusing intensely and deliberately on those disciplines that are directly engaged in shaping the constructed environment, and by partnering with cognate departments and programs across campus.

Forging an enhanced design-based college demands introspection to ensure that internal resources are properly channeled. For example, CRP is home to a number of distinguished scholars whose research is resonant with various public policy and social science disciplines, but lacks depth in physical planning and urban/infrastructure design. AAP lacks a high profile digital arts/new media component, a glaring and, given campus expertise, inexplicable deficiency. GIS (Geographic Information Systems), remote sensing, and the general area of mapping data on to place and thereby spatializing social action is a powerful new domain for art, architecture and urban design. Similarly, digital modeling, visualization, and fabrication is not just essential for projecting and assessing sustainable design proposals but increasingly used in contemporary art practices. AAP aspires to become the home for such technologies and expertise to advance progressive design research and creative practice.

Beyond AAP, the significance of a deeper partnership with Landscape Architecture (CALs) can hardly be overstated. Similarly, the body/technology interface is vital intellectual territory for contemporary art, design, and scholarship; a reconfigured AAP would hope to contribute to the visibility and distinction of this area with a dedicated program. The Johnson Art Museum is the principal public venue for design and the visual arts on campus. AAP enjoys healthy academic exchange with the Museum and would work to enhance this relationship in the future.

Partnerships with other colleges, departments, and colleagues are important to the success of a top-rate design college and would ideally be scripted into the curricula and activities of the College's departments and programs. This could take the form of dual degree tracks and other formal arrangements including joint appointments.

Design, broadly conceived, captures under one rubric much excellent scholarship, creative practice, and teaching already present at Cornell, and describes a knowledge domain that is increasingly recognized as essential to addressing pressing global issues. Structuring AAP as a design college is an achievable undertaking, and now is a propitious time to begin.