



August 1, 2023

Sarah Frazier
Manager of Accreditation
National Architectural Accrediting Board
107 South. West Street, Suite 707
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

RE: Optional Response to the VTR
2023 Visiting Team Report of B.ARCH. Program: April 5 - 7, 2023
Ball State University, CAP: Department of Architecture

Dear Sarah Frazier:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Ball State University, College of Architecture and Planning, Department of Architecture, to offer this optional response to the Visiting Team Report (VTR) recently received following the NAAB Continuing Accreditation Visit conducted virtually on April 5 - 7, 2023. Most importantly, this correspondence includes, but is not limited to our response to conditions determined to be “not met” or “not demonstrated” (SC.6 and 6.6). Hopefully, the inclusion of this response in our program’s dossier will be taken under consideration by the NAAB Board as it deliberates findings at the October 2023 Board Meeting.

IV. Compliance with the 2020 Conditions for Accreditation

3 - Program and Student Criteria

3.1 Program Criteria (PC)

PC.7 Learning and Teaching Culture

The team comments note that “some faculty and students are not aware of the studio culture policy.”

Our Studio Culture Policy is included in each and every studio syllabus.

It may be accurate to suggest that some students are not aware of studio culture policy (as some students may or may not recall discussion at the beginning of the semester, and some students may not actually *read* their syllabus despite being strongly encouraged to do so). However, studio faculty are familiar with our Studio Culture Policy and are required for it to be included in their respective studio syllabi.

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PC.7 Learning and Teaching Culture - continued

During the team visit, some of our contract faculty were interrogated by the so-called student representative of the NAAB Team who demanded that faculty recite specific passages of our Studio Culture Policy as if it was expected to have been memorized. To further clarify, we learned that the student representative was not an active student at the institution we were told he represented. This fact has been confirmed by said institution. Regardless of the fact that this condition was determined by the visiting team to have been “met”, this frequent, belligerent, and unchecked behavior by a team member undermined the entire visit and contributed to this and other inaccurate statements contained in this report.

3.2 Student Criteria (SC): Student Learning Objectives and Outcomes

SC.4 Technical Knowledge

Although these criteria were determined to be “met”, the team analysis indicated that there is a “need for the college to provide a stand-alone or workshop course for Building Information Modeling (BIM).” Not only is this a prescriptive and subjective conclusion, it is inaccurate. All 3rd-year architecture students are offered a workshop in BIM software – more specifically, REVIT.

Information on the workshop was provided to the team during the visit. Participation in the workshop is not mandatory; however, each year, many students take advantage of the opportunity, for it may be favorable to cite such experience on their respective resumes as they prepare for internships during the subsequent year.

The following was a question presented by the visiting team during the visit:

Why has the program not prioritized the importance of building information modeling (BIM) that reflects the caliber appropriate for this century? Why are ARCH 214 and ARCH 314 reliant on graduate students for Autodesk REVIT tutorials rather than permanent (sans doctorate) faculty acumen?

The VTR suggests that “there seemed to be a lack of agreement in approaches to providing a cohesive building technology approach within the program.” This too is inaccurate. On the contrary, we offer a full-range of approaches to providing a comprehensive approach to developing technical proficiency within our program, and will continue to do so. With respect to capacity issues, our department offers faculty with a broad range of expertise with said tools. We will continue to address issue with BIM with the understanding that software and technology constantly evolves.

SC.4 Technical Knowledge - *continued*

SC.6 Building Integration

The team analysis determined that the criteria for Building Integration was not met. We strongly disagree with this determination. Several statements contained in the summary are highly questionable.

The summary indicates that structural systems “were not evident in almost all plans or building sections. Life safety systems shown were inadequate because none of the selected student work showed a layout with more than 1 stairwell enclosure with fire-rated walls.”

We find this determination to be tragic at best. Based on evidence displayed by One Drive, combined with questions asked of our team, it was clearly evident that some team members first opened folders containing our materials during the week of the visit. We struggle to find ANY structural work with the absence of development as outlined in this assessment. In addition, it should be noted that many of our undergraduate (and graduate) students enrolled in our ARCH 400 sequence were involved in the design and construction of the “Alley House” as part of the Building Challenge for the U.S. Department of Energy, Solar Decathlon Competition. In April 2023, our program submission finished in **first place** in the International Design Build Challenge. This outstanding achievement was among many amazing work examples uploaded for NAAB review. The tremendous student work under the instruction of Building Integration by Dr. Tom Collins, Janice Shimizu, and others within our department was available for NAAB Team review.

As part of this Optional Response, we solicit your willingness to revisit this determination. We are not suggesting that our program is perfect, or that improvement and/or modifications are not warranted; but we take issue with the inaccuracies contained in this assessment. We invite reviewers of this response to revisit the materials furnished to NAAB as originally uploaded. Additional materials can be provided upon request.

6 - Public Information

6.6 Student Financial Information

According to the team analysis summary, evidence was not provided of information made available by the program to students regarding the cost of program specific books, supplies, and materials. Thus, the condition was not met.

We find the determination by the team to be questionable. Students enrolled in our undergraduate architecture program are generally aware of the cost of program specific book, supplies, and materials. With respect to materials, many of the supplies used by architecture students can be purchased in CAP. Architecture students have the freedom and agency to determine what materials best represent their design intent based on their personal budget. With respect to books, the following was provided to the team during the visit:

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6 - Public Information - continued

6.6 Student Financial Information

Books are assigned by class, with estimates given to students at the beginning of the semester. Additionally, the university (and by extension, the department), has moved toward Open-Access Educational Resources when possible, meaning that many of the courses do not require a textbook, or have an online textbook available for free through the library. The Textbook Affordability and Ball State (TABS) program provides benefits to students and faculty and is consistent with Ball State's commitment to inclusive excellence. TABS is part of the affordable education movement across the country, an important effort to reduce costs and remove barriers for student access to course learning materials. At Ball State we define textbook affordability as \$40 or less per course. Affordability can be achieved through use of Open Educational Resources, low-cost textbook alternatives, or use of library services and resources.

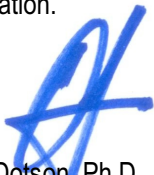
<https://www.bsu.edu/about/administrativeoffices/provost/facresources/textbook-affordability>

The other key cost for students is a computer, and students are able to self-select what they would like as long as it meets the minimum requirements for being able to run software. Students are given a hardware requirements sheet after their acceptance into architecture. Here is the latest:

https://www.bsu.edu/-/media/www/departamentalcontent/architecture/pdf/architecture-departmentcomputer-specs202223v001.pdf?sc_lang=en&hash=F4400444988B20E427A3122CE7338B4FF19881C1

Additionally, the program director and department chair meet with incoming potential architecture students in the Spring of the first-year program to discuss these costs and the cost of the fall field trip. All other costs of supplies, printing, etc. are specific to each course and outlined by the professor at the beginning of the semester.

In conclusion, we hope that the information contained in this correspondence will be helpful toward reconsidering the findings and what at times was a difficult and challenging visit leading to 2023 VTR of our Bachelor of Architecture Program in the Department of Architecture at the Ball State University, College of Architecture and Planning will be useful as NAAB endeavors to objectively determine the accreditation status for of program. If you have any questions, concerns, or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time, interest, and consideration.



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