

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

**DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
GOLISANO INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

OPTIONAL RESPONSE

**to the
VISITING TEAM REPORT (VTR)
for the
CONTINUING ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT – MARCH, 2021**

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The faculty, students, and staff in RIT’s Golisano Institute for Sustainability and Department of Architecture are extremely appreciative of the tremendous effort, thorough review, insightful observations and constructive input by the visiting team during their March, 2021 visit. While the global pandemic necessitated the postponement of our accreditation originally scheduled for 2020, and required that the visit be held virtually in 2021, the entire team’s collaborative and engaging spirit, resulted in a very valuable and productive event. There were a number of observations, comments and ideas made during both the visit planning meetings and in the Virtual Site Visit that continue to guide us and the program, and improve the delivery of our degree offering. We are especially pleased by the team’s support for the significance of integrating sustainability into our curriculum, and recognizing two SPC as “Conditions Met with Distinction” - SPC C.3. Integrative Design, and SPC D.3. Business Practices.

What follows is a brief overview of how we have already begun to evaluate, adjust and modify our program, specifically in response to the two items identified as “Conditions Not Achieved”.

Condition I.1.3 – Social Equity: states “*The program must have a policy on diversity and inclusion that is communicated to current and prospective faculty, students, and staff and is reflected in the distribution of the program’s human, physical, and financial resources.*

- *The program must describe its plan for maintaining or increasing the diversity of its faculty, staff, and students during the next two accreditation cycles as compared with the existing diversity of the faculty, staff, and students of the institution.*
- *The program must document that institutional-, college-, or program-level policies are in place to further Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA), as well as any other diversity initiatives at the program, college, or institutional level.”*

2021 Team Analysis/Review: *The program does not have a plan for maintaining or increasing the diversity of its faculty, staff, and students during the next two accreditation cycles that has been communicated to current and prospective faculty, students, and staff. Therefore, this condition has not been demonstrated.*

RIT has an institutional focus on expanding diversity among its faculty and student ranks. On March 15, 2021, it released the RIT Action Plan for Race and Ethnicity. Although still in draft form, the program will be working to implement a department-level plan to complement the Institute-level action plan. In response to this plan, the program has drafted a Diversity Equity Inclusion Statement (DEI) for the M.Arch program (dated March 16, 2021). The statement has not yet been presented to faculty, staff, and students.

According to reports from the program, the 2020 student enrollment numbers for the Master of Architecture program are as follows: 64% male, 36% female, 25% white, 7% Asian, 7% black/African American, 0% Hispanic, and 54% international.

The Office of Institutional Research, Data, and Analytics reports the RIT 2020 student enrollment numbers as follows: 65% male, 35% female, 57% white, 9% Asian, 4% black/African American, 7% Hispanic, and 15% international. In comparison, the program has a significantly greater percentage of international students.

International students bring diversity into the program, opening students up to a wide range of global perspectives, especially when paired with the Global Experience requirement for all students. Additionally, the program enrolls students from a wide range of previous academic backgrounds, with approximately 50% of students having degrees in fields other than architecture. Students and faculty commented on how this intellectual diversity has positive impacts on the program. As home to the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), RIT provides rich opportunities for students in the deaf and hard of hearing community, including enrollment in the M.Arch program.

Neither the full-time nor part-time faculty are reflective of the student body in terms of gender, race, or ethnicity. Recent hires in the full-time faculty ranks have helped to expand the diversity of the faculty, but these faculty remain at the junior level.

Students and faculty report a strong sense of collegiality and inclusion in the program.

Progress Since the March, 2021 Visit: RIT has maintained, and continues its commitment to build on its comprehensive diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, as was reported in our APR-CA. Most recently, and as noted by the Visiting Team in their comments above, RIT recently launched its Action Plan for Race and Ethnicity, and - in addition to this - the department prepared a Diversity Equity

Inclusion Statement (DEI). During our end-of-year Retreat/Advance in May, the DEI was vetted and formally adopted. A few of several plans for implementation of initiatives in the DEI include items such as: the creation of a student chapter of NOMA; working with the local AIA chapter to initiate a “Diversity in Design” series; participating in RIT’s Diversity Office Future Faculty Career Exploration Program for Fall 2021; re-energizing the department’s K-12 outreach efforts; and working to establish an endowed diversity scholarship for student recruitment and retention. Each of the planned items are being put in place to improve and enhance cultural, racial, ethnic and diversity awareness; align the department efforts directly with the RIT Action Plan for Race and Ethnicity; and establish a metric based reporting and assessment system on an annual basis.

Student Performance Criterion A5 – Ordering Systems: states “*Ability to apply the fundamentals of both natural and formal ordering systems and the capacity of each to inform two- and three-dimensional design.*”

2021 Team Assessment: *This criterion is not met. After requests for additional evidence, the team did not find evidence demonstrating students’ ability to graphically analyze and synthesize formal ordering systems. While final design work demonstrates formal order, the team did not find evidence of students understanding that their designs have formal ordering systems.*

Progress Since the March, 2021 Visit: We continue to explore, develop and implement ways in which ordering systems are identified, understood and effectively communicated to inform two- and three-dimensional design exploration. With this in mind, we had students graphically present their ordering systems approaches during their spring term projects immediately following the Virtual Site Visit. From our Retreat/Advance discussions in May we identified methods to further connect ordering systems concepts introduced in ARCH-611 Architectural Representation I with each of the subsequent studios, both with process work and presentation of final design ideas. This is intended to provide a more definitive, deliberate, and deliverable element to demonstrate how ordering systems inform design decision making throughout the design process. As we transition from the former 2015 SPC to the 2020 Program Criteria (PC) and Student Criteria Learning Objectives and Outcomes (SC), we will assure ordering systems will be developed and applied in student work, and assess this criterion during our upcoming Retreat/Advance in 2022. This will provide for a more fully developed array for students to not only examine, document and comprehend the fundamental principles of ordering systems, but also to make logical, grounded, and informed choices regarding ordering systems and effectively communicate their significance in design exploration and decision making.

Finally, the Master of Architecture program in the Golisano Institute for Sustainability continues to evolve on a positive trajectory since its launch in 2011, and we pride ourselves in offering a unique and immersive program that has as its cornerstones urbanism, technology, integration and sustainability. Again, we are deeply appreciative of the ongoing support that the NAAB and its recent Virtual Site Visit Team has provided to help shape, direct and to add value to our program’s ongoing evolution, growth and enrichment.