



Fall Advancement Board Meeting  
September 25, 2020 9am-12pm

## MINUTES

**In Attendance:** Keith Christensen, Jan Striefel, Ken Brooks, Jay Bollwinkel, Randy Jackson, Abram Nielsen, Geoff Ellis, Josh Runhaar, Nola Chavez, Wade Peterson, Brent Chamberlain, Stephanie Grigsby, Joe Diaz, Mark Vlastic, Mark Dawson, Kurt Altvater, Chris Sands, Caroline Lavoie, Prashanta Bhat, Mary Ann Anderson, Mark Johnson, Jake Powell, Alyssa Chamberlain

### Action Item Motion

#### State of the Profession Discussion

- Randy Jackson (California)
  - Most people are still working from home
  - A corporate-wide survey indicates the following:
    - Some employees have concerns returning to the office. The possibility of spreading COVID-19 to co-workers or family members appears to be the biggest concern.
    - People are generally having a good experience working remotely
    - Across the company they are converting everyone to laptops to enable flexibility in work locations. Sometimes this is tricky due to availability and the type of laptops needed to run certain software.
    - Most people would prefer a split schedule of some sort, with both time in the office and remote work
    - Some people have a hard time finding good “office” space at home. The company is providing a stipend for some individuals to improve a space for office work
  - The company will be creating a different type of office space moving forward.
- Jay Bollwinkel (Salt Lake)
  - Business has been booming here in Utah
  - Had a USU intern this summer
  - The private sector is going strong, but public sector is slower
  - Back in the office since July, with appropriate distancing and use of masks when in meetings
- Mark Dawson (Boston)
  - Working remotely since March 15
  - The experience has transformed how we are going to work moving forward
  - There is still a need to be with people in-person to some degree
  - People have had a lot of different experiences with working remotely. Some find the flexibility very helpful while others have experienced a lot of stress
  - It has been more difficult to pursue projects without travel



- Have been hiring, but mostly related to attrition
- Stephanie Grigsby (Tahoe)
  - Most Design Workshop offices have around 30% who have felt comfortable to go back to the office
  - There's an excitement when you actually get to work with people in-person. We've been finding creative ways to do that.
  - Company has hired, but it's been about keeping the same headcount
    - Haven't done internships but are still hiring entry-level
    - Charles Fountain internship is set to happen this winter. Hopefully other internships will follow.
  - How do we on-board people in a remote environment?
  - Remote work has caused a lot of stress for young families as they try to balance everything
- Wade Peterson (Texas)
  - It didn't slow down, but I think we won't see the affects until further down the road
  - Hiring interns still. Maybe looking for an intern this winter.
  - About to 100% working in the office again
- Kurt Altvater (California)
  - There will be delayed affects in real estate
  - Everyone's cautiously optimistic, but there will be change and economic hardship in making these transitions
  - Gateway cities are feeling a lot of stress, but smaller cities are getting benefits
- Are productivity levels improving?
  - More productive initially, but progressively less productive after that
  - Productivity has been good, but people are having to work longer to accomplish the same thing they would have before

#### State of LAEP

- Faculty Highlight – Caroline's Sabbatical
  - Traveled Highway 89 from Canada to Mexico
  - Explored landscapes to increase understanding of large-scale landscapes
  - Presented in presidential inaugural lecture in the Fall
  - Presented in France
  - Visiting Professor at Christ University in India
    - Indian students are the same as our students
  - BNCA visiting professor as well
    - Will be working with them on a design Charrette in October
  - Lots of traffic and cows in the street
  - Silk and Sari Production
  - Farming
  - Food and Cooking
  - Made it back to the US the day before India shut their borders
- Introduction to Keith Christensen, Department Head



- It's awesome to be here
- In November 1997 Keith showed up unannounced at LAEP where he met Craig Johnson, who convinced him that LAEP was the only place to find true happiness. Craig then walked him down the hall to meet Dick Toth, the Department Head.
- When Keith joined our faculty, his office was the very same office that had been Craig's and now his office as Department Head is the same office that was Dick's
- Fall semester instruction
  - Hybrid model, with some face-to-face instruction. Nothing is true face-to-face as is typical for LAEP at this time
  - Studios are split into cohorts so that groups of them are able to attend in-person while others join via Zoom
  - Unique challenges
    - Wonderful to have them in studio, but it's difficult to teach a course with students both in the classroom and on Zoom
    - Freshman/Sophomore or 1<sup>st</sup> year grad courses are being taught remotely. There are too many students in this group to get meet physically
    - There may be around 55 students in those early studios, which is great to see the interest but tough to teach in our circumstances
  - Ben George is an expert in online/remote learning and has helped us to get ahead
    - He is teaching LAEP 2700 completely online/remote, which is quite the feat.
  - About 300 active COVID cases on campus. Although this is much lower than most schools, there's still added stress by the circumstances that we are always working through.
- Graduate Studio renovation
  - Renovation occurred over the summer
  - Box removed; grad classroom created
  - Every space is capable of remote learning
  - Jury room wall was knocked out to open the studio and provide more room for our students
- Degree Updates: MsEP and PhD in LAEP program changes
  - MsBRP → MS in Environmental Planning
    - Stays true to the focus of the program, but this name aligns better with what potential students are searching for and doing after graduation
      - 42,000 Google Ad impressions on searches for landscape architecture; 2,000 clicks
      - 9,000 Google Ad impressions for environmental planning and only 3 for bioregional planning
    - Students were finding environmental planning positions
    - We are still maintaining the landscape-scale emphasis of the program
    - Application to create a B+MsEP program submitted and should hopefully be starting in the next couple years
  - PhD in Landscape Architecture → PhD in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning



- Research/Scholarship
  - 32 enrolled Grad students
  - 23 of those students have some sort of support as RAs or TAs
  - Funded Research Projects
    - Just under \$1 million in external research funding. A record for LAEP!
    - There is also a fair number of projects that has funding through the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station
    - Brent's Department of Defense Research
      - 11 students funded in lab
      - Came to USU specifically to be heavily involved in research
      - Research explores:
        - How we embody and remember spaces
        - How we perceive them based on the layout and structure
        - Spatial memory and how that relates to us as planners

#### LAEP Initiatives

- Diversity (diverse touch points and mentors)
  - 130 declared undergrads
  - 32 grad students
  - We need to work on diversity in many senses
    - We have good gender diversity among students
    - There is less gender diversity among students
    - We need mentoring for our students, particularly for our female students
  - What are barriers to recruitment when it comes to recruiting diverse populations?
    - There's not a specific problem. There has been an effort in recent hires to hire for increased diversity. We have extended offers to diverse individuals who chose not to accept the offer. When asked why, they don't express that the culture is a factor in not accepting.
    - Maybe the message of what work is going on isn't getting out? This is something we are always trying to improve.
    - For some people, there's a great culture shock coming to a small town or rural environment from larger areas
    - There are a high number of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the student body and this lack of diversity can be a barrier for some potential students
      - For others this may relay to a sense of it being a safe campus community in some people's minds
    - There could be a lot more international students
      - CIP codes have been changed to STEM codes, which will open doors for many international students in terms of funding, visas, etc...
  - Diversity conversations used to be about political correctness. Over the years, this has shifted. We must always make sure that our motivation is that we value diversity and the richness it gives our program



- Seeking diversity should be intentional and genuine
  - We need to be specific about what our goals are and who we are trying to reach
    - Environmental Planning may be a good fit to reach out to some of the Native American populations in Utah and surrounding states
      - Jerry Fuhrman recruited students in this group before
      - Students may need financial assistance to make it a possibility
      - Funds are often available, but we may need to help people find it
  - It will be a process that takes time
    - We can't force diversity.
    - We don't want to sacrifice what the program offers to force a feeling of diversity. We don't want to step backward in the attempt to promote diversity
    - It's not an issue that will be solved in a year but will take time.
    - We need to be intentional in making little steps to encourage diversity.
    - We can appreciate the diversity that we do have. Even though we may not have great diversity currently, there's more diversity among the faculty now than when I graduated 30 years ago! It's a process and will continue to take time.
  - Faculty should create a vision of what we are trying to accomplish
    - This will likely take a few months
    - Report back at next meeting
- Canyon House Residency (visiting, residency, endowment) Visit website [here](#).
  - We are looking for someone who will bring a diverse perspective to stay for the Spring semester in a paid visiting professor position.
  - If it's not you, is it someone that you know? We invite Advancement Board members to share this opportunity with people who they know
  - Facilities waived the last "mortgage" payment with the agreement that we will use those funds for an endowment to maintain the house.
    - The way our funds are earmarked, we can't move them into an endowment
    - MOTION:: Use \$15,000 Advancement Board funds to put into a Canyon House endowment and use department funds for things that usually would have been paid with Board funds
      - Board members in attendance are in support, but a quorum wasn't present at this point in the meeting.
      - We will write it up and distribute it for vote electronically.
- Personnel - Careers Coordinator (continued support for new hire)
  - Hiring someone for Tanya's position
  - This person helps connect students to practice, which is another focus
  - Hiring ASAP. Advertising in the next few weeks.
  - MOTION:: Provide a portion of the funding for this position, as has been done in the past.
    - Board members in attendance are in support, but a quorum wasn't present at this point in the meeting.



- **Formal vote will be sent electronically.**
- Connecting Students to Practice (Placement, and during program)

### **11:15am-Noon**

Advancement Board Discussion with Students

- Virtual Practice
- Employment/Internship outlook and suggestions

### **3:30-4:30pm**

LAEP Invited Speaker – Mia Lehrer, Studio-MLA

Zoom link: [laep.usu.edu/speaker-series](https://laep.usu.edu/speaker-series)