

Design Academy at Menaul School

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PROPOSAL FOR A NEW
DESIGN ACADEMY AT
MENAUL SCHOOL
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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design plus education

School Zone Institute

2009

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2010

A proposal for an advanced study program in design for the Albuquerque metro area at Menaul School

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Why is this idea important?

Design Education promotes an innovative method of thinking closely related to methodologies promoted and used at all levels of society, not just within the profession of Architecture and Design, but in all types of work and social interactions. Our goal is to promote the benefits of creative problem solving, inherently important to emerging regional, national and global economic systems and already attributable to the success of societies around the world. The underlying focus of design education is to promote a holistic view to a problem, with a multi-faceted solution derived from rigorous trial and error, making the process of finding the answer as critical as the answer itself.

It is our feeling that a design program could do more than give students the ability to propose creative solutions to a given problem. It can provide a foundation for a needed class of thinkers to take on any problem that is presented, regardless of what the problem is. Societies are now turning to their creative populations to pave the way to growth and innovation. The usefulness of a student trained in design is no longer limited to the architect's studio or limited to the Creative Department of major corporations. Rather, the ability to be creative is now a necessity to flourish in any industry or profession, and at all levels in society.

"For the first time in history, the further development of the economy literary turns on the further development of our combined human creative capabilities."

R. Florida, 2006

Introduction

Our training in architecture and design is unique and effective because it is rooted in holistic approaches to a problem and embraces process as part of the solution. While some professions may utilize parts and pieces of the design process our training also requires clear and effective presentation of not just products and data but, more importantly, ideas developed from our collective efforts.

For a student, History, Sociology, Humanities, Literature, Science, and the principles of Mathematics are subjects and skills required by any community to attain what is today a minimum level of achievement in our society (high school diploma or GED). It is reasonable to interpret that students, who are surrounded with imagery, innovation, and creativity at an unprecedented level, are generally disengaged and under-performing in structured classrooms today. Even if a student reaches post-Secondary education they are typically ill trained to succeed in a more competitive and rigorous environment. The drop out data for first and second year post-secondary students is well known but continues to show little improvement. Gifted and talented students also need rigorous programs, ensuring that our intellectual potential is fostered and challenged.



As a past instructor of first year design students and creating programs for high school students, as well as a business owner in the design field, I have witnessed a need for educational opportunities that give motivated high school students a more focused and rigorous environment and a foundation of skills needed to succeed at the post-Secondary education level and beyond.

There are well known and recognized programs for high school students throughout the country focused around design. However, in our region there are no established programs intent on training our most creative and brightest students in the design fields. The proof is there, industry and economies worldwide are desperately searching for creative employees and our community is not giving our students the skills to compete for these opportunities.



“Trying to preserve existing jobs will prove futile – trade and technology will transform the economy whether we like it or not. Americans will be better off if they strive to move up the hierarchy of human talents. That’s where our future lies.”
New York Times, May 2004 (from The Flight of the Creative Class, R. Florida)

This is where we can find common ground. Our firm and the School Zone Institute would like to make a proposal to Menaul School to develop a partnership. We propose to work together to start a program that moves beyond limited exposure to design for the sake of discovery and career placement, or limited to vocational programs. If students want to succeed in an ever-changing global environment they must be ready to think creatively and with purpose. Along the way, maybe a few students will want to be professional designers too.

Proposal

We had been asked to create a summer program to compliment the courses offered at Menaul School, similar to courses we currently offer at the Albuquerque Academy Summer School. After meeting Mr. Williamson, Mr. Gilbert, and talking at length with Ms. Sizelove both myself and Dr. Taylor saw an opportunity to bring our experiences and ideas to a local school open to new ideas that will benefit their program and students, beyond a summer offering.

There are three parts to our proposal: Introduction (Summer Program), Promotion (Marketing and Recruitment), and Planning and Implementation (Start of a three year design program):

[1] Summer Program - Introduction to Design - Course Description

The intent of the course is to provide insight into the architecture, design, and construction professions to high school students, grades 10-12. It is designed to be offered as an introduction to the design process and would promote the larger, more intensive Menaul program to be offered as an Academy over the following school year.

While the course is introductory in nature it will be fairly rigorous and students will be expected to be focused while in studio and devote time outside of class. The option to provide credit to students could be explored. It would be offered as a program within Menaul's summer program.

Purpose and Course Description

The purpose is to offer high school students who are interested in architecture and design an introduction to the profession and to gain insight into what is expected at the university level. The quality level of work produced would be targeted for inclusion in a portfolio for entry into a professional, post-secondary level program. The major topics or course sections would be as follows (note: this anticipates a summer semester program and may alter for a fall or spring session):

Techniques - A brief introduction into visual thinking and analysis will introduce students to a new way of realizing the built and natural world around them. Students will then apply these basic concepts to communicate what is seen and what is imagined. To help facilitate discussion and presentation of these ideas, basic drawing skills will be introduced using simple tools such as graphite, pen and ink, and charcoal. The intent is to provide a foundation for these students to help in the transition to first year design studies, and to remove the fear of drawing.

Design – Basic design concepts will be introduced through readings and application. Concepts applied to 2d and 3d problems will help facilitate understanding of the role of process in solving design problems. Basic compositional concepts will be introduced and examples of how they are used in design will be presented. The value of attempt, “failure”, reassessment, and refinement as a way to work through a problem will be introduced. The process will be synthesized into solutions and presentations will be given in which the student's thought process is presented and discussed. There are no right or wrong answers. The development of thought processes, communication, and creative problem solving are paramount.

Practice – Through site visits and presentations by architects, designers, artists, engineers, and contractors, students are introduced to various aspects of the design fields. Working with the Albuquerque chapter of the AIA, visits will be arranged to see offices and possibly job sites. Also, professionals will be encouraged to give presentations on practice and present various types of technologies used in their offices. Students will be given notice of these visits and will be strongly encouraged to develop questions that will create a meaningful dialog between students and professionals.

Education and Culture – This section will introduce students to architectural history and contemporary architecture through slides, readings, and film. Also, faculty members and current undergraduate and graduate students will be invited to have discussions about what a design program and “studio learning” entails and make presentations about their field of study or interests. Possible invitations for visits from students and faculty from other programs would be investigated. Tour of the UNM campus and the School of Architecture and Planning.

The course will be open to anyone who shows interest and is committed. It is recommended that potential students present an application and written statement of their interest for the course. It would be offered to students within APS, Rio Rancho, Bernalillo, and Santa Fe Public Schools, and other area private schools.

[2] Promotion and Recruitment for the Design Academy at Menaul School

Recruitment and Opportunities

Our intent is for the Design Academy to compliment the positive environment created by the current staff, faculty and students of Menaul School. Our proposed program would be an additional tool to increase the recruitment of quality students from the Albuquerque metro area, as well as other areas in New Mexico that are unaware of what Menaul offers. It is beneficial to communities whose students lack opportunities for innovative and unique programs due to size of school or geographical limitations. This would be the first program in New Mexico of this kind.

For Menaul students, they can either take courses as one of their elective 'mods' (introduction type courses, stand alone enrichment) or apply to the Design Academy for the years 10 – 12. The schedules for the programs will be coordinated with the established schedules within Menaul School.

The proposed studio could be accommodated in unused buildings on campus. As investment in the program Design Plus would offer time and effort to analyze any potential facilities for accessibility and code compliance and work with Menaul School consultants to refurbish and remodel the facilities to accommodate the new program.

[3] Planning, Implement, Begin – Design Academy at Menaul School

Planning Outline

If Menaul School is open to our proposal we would start a plan to implement the program and coordinate the efforts of a variety of professionals, community members, educational consultants, school staff and faculty, and students to develop the program curriculum.

Design Plus Education will oversee the implementation of the design program, assist Menaul School with student application, training of teachers and counselors, and development of strategic partnerships with universities, design programs, and local, national, and international professional organizations.

School Zone Institute will assist with teacher training and integration of the Design Academy's program to meet State of New Mexico curriculum standards. They will also work with Design Plus Education to keep records of student progress over time to monitor success and make adjustments to stay current and applicable to changing educational and employment environments.

We have an outline of a schedule to design and implement the design program. Implementation of the program can start as early as Spring 2009 with planning and small programs for a year, and have an Academy in place potentially in Fall 2010.



Programs, Benefits, and Results

- As a recruitment tool for schools of Architecture, Planning, Design, and Engineering. Menaul School will benefit from this exposure and will strengthen its pool of applicants entering university, art, vocational, and specialized programs. We have seen benefits of this exposure from programs with Rio Rancho High School. Students are encouraged and recruited to attend UNM SAAP and a number of students have attended and graduated from the program. One of the students from the program has gone on to pursue her graduate studies at Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, a globally prestigious architecture school.
- Create a project for the Albuquerque chapter of the American Institute of Architects, NM Architectural Foundation, and the American Institute of Architecture Students at UNM to adopt and further expand their role within the community. The input of these organizations will be critical to the success of this program and would provide good exposure for all organizations.
- Develop relationships with other design education programs in the southwest that could lead to exchange programs for youths in other communities. The value of travel and exposure is well documented and would further enhance our status among design programs and their communities. We are involved with national and international groups dedicated to the field of Design Education and would use those relationships to provide students with further opportunities to travel and study, including work with the Alvar Aalto Foundation and PLAYCE, an international collaborative dedicated to promoting Design Education worldwide.
- Provide a service to the community of which there has been interest among students, teachers and parents. Promote ties to schools in the metro area and provide an outlet for professionals to give time and effort to their community.
- Possible summer camps and workshops for students and teachers for educational and professional development.

There is a real potential for this program to grow. If it succeeds it can expand into a variety of other programs available to students throughout the country. The exposure will benefit the school and, hopefully, enhance the talent pool applying to the Menaul program. Professional will benefit from sponsoring and supporting the program, which will help develop a talented local employee pool to hire from.

Thank you for your time. We look forward to having further discussions with Menaul School and answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please contact us at 505.843.7587, or at www.designplusabq.com. We hope this will be the start of an exciting collaboration for all of us.

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Spring 09

- Introduce school faculty to the D.A. concept and enlist faculty committee.
- Start search for advisory committee members.
- Develop schedule for summer work sessions.

Advisory Groups (possible)

Menaul Core Curriculum Committee (MC3)
Post Secondary Design School Reps.
Menaul Students
Education consultants
Design Professionals
Community (Parents, Public Officials etc.)

Summer 09

- Work sessions with each advisory committee
- Survey of various focus groups
- Research similar programs and assess positive aspects

All groups will meet at the start to review goals and establish meeting times. Each advisory group then meets individually to focus on their specific expertise or concern, and establish goals for end of fall session.

Fall 09

- Meet all advisors and review information
- Develop action plan and rough draft (summer)
- Meet with school faculty and review plan and progress

D+E and School Zone Institute will consolidate materials and have a group meeting with all advisors. Work on the program document will begin. Work will start on the Electives 'mod' course at Menaul to start in Fall 09.

Electives Course Parallel Track

Electives Course

Series of courses will be developed to experiment with new program activities and introduce new course work.

Winter / Spring 10

- Create 1st draft of program outline and review with MC3, D+E, and advisor representatives
- Submit draft of program document to State of NM for review and comment

Work will continue developing the draft and program activities. Advisors will be sent copies to review on a regular basis.

Interview and selection of potential students.

Electives Course

Implementation of the electives course work and feedback from students and faculty

Summer / Fall 10

- Address State of NM comments and revise document as required
- Finalize document and review with RFK faculty
- Plan for implementation in Fall 2010

Publish final document and train faculty over summer. Begin construction of studio space and work offices.

Implementation of program:
FALL 2010

Electives Course

Offer courses to general student body, to run parallel with Design Academy courses