



Rensselaer

EVAN DOUGLIS, DEAN, SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

TO: Ms. Cassandra Pair, Director of Accreditation
National Architectural Accrediting Board, Inc.

FROM: Evan Douglis, Dean
School of Architecture, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

DATE: June 27, 2016

RE: **Response to the Visiting Team Report**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Evan Douglis".

Per our recent communications with your office, I am offering this document as my School's formal response to the Visiting Team Report (draft), which we received June 8, 2016. We responded to the VTR on June 15 but, as you said, since we did not have "corrections of fact," the VTR will not be modified. Although we do not offer corrections of fact, I feel most strongly that the following explanation is required in order to put the facts of the VTR into proper context.

I am providing you with this important explanation in advance of your June 29th deadline in order that this document (attached) will become a permanent part of our School's accreditation record, and so that it will be reviewed, along with the VTR, by the NAAB Directors who will make the decision on our accreditation.

Thank you for your assistance in ensuring that the attached document is part of our accreditation record. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 518-276-6460.

ED:pz
Attachment

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
School of Architecture

RPI Response to Draft Visiting Team Report

Respectfully submitted to NAAB Directors as they consider our school's accreditation decision

June 27, 2016

This report contains 3 sections, as noted below. In each section, the wording from the VTR is printed in blue; our School of Architecture (SoA) response is printed in black.

Please note that the section covering SPCs A.7 and A.8 includes references to course binders, which are available electronically:

Go to: <http://www.arch.rpi.edu/naab>
Login: reviewer
Password: naab2015

Table of Contents

<u>Section</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Condition 4 – Social Equity	1-4
Criterion 13.14.....	5-6
SPCs B.1 and B.3.....	6-8
SPCs A.7 and A.8.....	9-12

2016 NAAB VTR – Rensselaer's SoA Social Equity Response:

Condition 4 – Social Equity

2004 Condition 4, Social Equity: The accredited degree program must provide faculty, students, and staff – irrespective of race, ethnicity, creed, national origin, gender, age, physical ability, or sexual orientation – with an educational environment in which each person is equitably able to learn, teach, and work. The school must have a clear policy on diversity that is communicated to current and prospective faculty, students, and staff and that is reflected in the distribution of the program's human, physical, and financial resources. Faculty, staff, and students must also have equitable opportunities to participate in program governance.

Previous FE Review Team Assessment: 2010 VT Assessment: "This criterion has been met, yet again, *with concern*. Although student demographics and retention have improved at an impressive rate – the issue of diversity in the area of full-time faculty remains a chronic concern."

2016 Draft VTR, Team Assessment, page 3: "The visiting team found evidence indicating that this condition continues to be **Not Met**. RPI and the program have undertaken efforts toward meeting this condition, but they have not yet resulted in a student body or faculty that is reflective of the region or society as a whole."

RPI School of Architecture Response:

It is our position that 2016 NAAB Team's Assessment of our program's performance regarding Social Equity does not adequately acknowledge, nor assign proper credit to our school concerning the profound efforts and achievement our program has made in this area since the 2010 FE Review Team Assessment.

Increased Faculty Diversity

It is important to be reminded that at the time of the last visit in 2010 there were 2 female Assistant Professors, 1 female Associate Professor and 0 female Full Professors (females were 15% of the total tenured/tenure-track faculty) compared to 2016, when we have 3 female Assistant Professors and 2 female Full Professors (females are 25% of the total tenured/tenure-track faculty); there were only 3 underrepresented minority FT tenure-tenure-track faculty teaching at the school, compared to 4 in 2016.

In 2010, there was little to no attention paid by the administrative leadership with respect to addressing diversity among the visiting critics invited to the school for midterm and final reviews; the school did not have a *Promotion and Tenure Mentorship* program in place providing the necessary guidance and empowerment required for our junior professors to be successful in the P&T process; the school had no official lecture series program providing a broad body of theoretical and applied knowledge for our students in support of promoting intellectual, gender and ethnic diversity; and beyond the efforts made at the university level regarding the recruitment of students from diverse populations, the school had no strategic plan to increase outreach in support of attracting more female and underrepresented minority students to the school's professional programs.

At the time of the recent 2016 NAAB Team Visit, the school's faculty roster was

comprised of: 4/20 underrepresented minority T/TT faculty, compared to 3/20 in 2010 (which represents a 25 % increase); 3/6 (50%) FT female Assistant (tenure-track) Professors, compared to 2/5 (40%) in 2010; and since 2010, a total of 2 female faculty were promoted to Full Professors (one of them being of Latino heritage) representing a 200% increase in female full professors.

Given the challenge to obtain FT tenure-track lines from the university, we are very proud of the extraordinary efforts we have placed on changing the diversity profile of our school since 2010. We have had two successful waves of FT faculty searches over the last six years. The first one enabled us to make a total of five 5 outstanding FT appointments. Of these new hires, one 1 was an African American male, one 1 was a Caucasian female and the three 3 remaining hires were Caucasian males. Each of these individuals were brilliant in their respective areas of expertise and immediately contributed to overall creative and intellectual vitality of the program. More recently, we were granted the opportunity to conduct faculty searches for 3 additional FT tenure-track faculty. Once again, we were successful in hiring a total of three 3 outstanding faculty: two 2 Caucasian females and one 1 Latino female.

Since the 2010 NAAB Team Visit: the school leadership made great efforts to invite, from one semester to the next, a diverse population of guest lecturers in order to not only broaden the intellectual discourse at these public events but to create a culture that was more reflective of the world at large (30% of guest lecturers have been women); the Dean also established the first *P&T Mentorship Program* in the school enabling every junior faculty member to have access to a total of three senior faculty in order to acquire a comprehensive assessment of their ongoing progress; and there's now an extraordinarily popular and educationally robust yearly lecture series in place comprised of a diverse community of men and woman from around the world serving as brilliant role models to our students. These new initiatives in conjunction with our successful faculty searches represent a massive cultural shift implemented throughout the school in support of embracing the importance of increasing diversity on all levels.

The success of both of these searches could be attributed to the genuine collective effort on the part of the administrative leadership and faculty to respond forcefully to the lack of diversity that existed in the school at the time of the last NAAB visit. We are proud to report that 50% of the FT tenure-track hires since the last NAAB Team Visit in 2010 have been diversity hires.

I think its fair to conclude, that with respect to the school's effort to strengthen the gender and ethnic diversity of our full-time faculty, the facts indicate that over the last six years here at RPI there has been impressive achievement in this area worthy of positive recognition from the 2016 FE Review Team.

Increased Student Diversity

With respect to increasing diversity among our student population, the school's administrative leadership has made this a significant priority since the 2010 NAAB Team Visit. Unable to rely exclusively on the institute's admissions department to make strides in this area, and in recognition of the increasingly competitive market concerning student enrollment throughout the country, as well as the limited number of underrepresented minority young men and women pursuing architecture as a future profession, the Dean's office established an internal outreach team comprised of staff and faculty with the

specific mission of soliciting students from high schools with diversity populations. Every year over 3,500 emails are launched from the Dean's Office to guidance counselors, art and technology teachers throughout the northeast in order to raise awareness about the unique value of an architectural education here at Rensselaer. As a follow-up, direct phone-calls are initiated and webinars are conducted inviting these mentors and their students to our school.

Also in recognition of the importance of empowering the underrepresented minority students that are currently enrolled in our program, we continue to encourage our students from one year to the next to become active members in NOMAS (National Organization of Minority Architects – Student Chapter). The students receive funding support to participate at national events as an opportunity to broaden their perspective as well as strengthen their voice on a national stage.

Unfortunately, the difficulties we have experienced in achieving full diversity among our student population are also common to Architecture schools nationwide. An April 2016 article in [Architectural Record](#)¹ discusses results of a recent AIA diversity survey showing sadly low numbers of under-represented minorities engaged in the profession of Architecture. Laura Raskin, author of the article, states: “*Last month, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) released the results of its 2015 Diversity in the Profession of Architecture survey and the numbers tell a grim – And unsurprising – story: the profession doesn’t look at all like the society it serves.*” Raskin reported that African Americans comprise less than 2% of the AIA, and that 70% of women respondents believe they are not well represented in the profession.

A quick Google search on the internet reveals that many Architecture schools are scrambling to develop diversity statements, organizing workshops and outlining new steps to encourage minority students and faculty to apply to their programs. **We are no different!**

In a [Diverse Education](#)² article (2013) entitled *In Architecture African-Americans Stuck on Ground Floor in Terms of Numbers*, author Lekan Oguntinyinbo said that fewer than 2% of the nation's 105,000 licensed architects are African-American, and that minority architects are rare at top tier firms and in management positions. Oguntinyinbo noted several possible reasons: lack of role models for African American high school students makes it unlikely they'll consider architecture as a field of study, the 5th year of college is expensive and daunting, it's expensive to become licensed, and far fewer minorities than whites are clients of architects. The profession itself is not well known to minority students.

The City University of New York's 2015 *Inclusion in Architecture*³ document is on the Internet, and addresses the very problems that we (and other architecture schools) encounter in trying to overcome obstacles to achieving diversity. Interestingly, the article quotes American Institute of Architects statistics showing less than 10% of Architects are African American or Hispanic, and that only 15% are female. The CUNY document also shows that most Hispanic B. Arch and M. Arch students are enrolling in schools in the West and Gulf states, and most African American students are enrolling in gulf and Mid-Atlantic states.

The figures from the 2013 article and the 2015 CUNY study do indicate that there has been some headway nationally in increasing diversity in Architecture programs. Of

course, there is a very long way to go, and it is the responsibility of every Architecture school in the nation, including ours, to work toward social equity.

While we admit that our School has not achieved all we set out to accomplish to bring about social equity in our student body, it is important to point out that we have been taking deliberate steps to increase diversity and that we are diligent in our efforts to bring in under-represented minorities. **It's also important to be reminded, that the challenges concerning diversity are a national issue that affects every architecture program throughout the U.S. Given that larger context and all the great work we've done since the 2010 visit to address this priority, it seems that the 2016 NAAB Team assessment regarding Social Equity has unfairly penalized us for a national trend that is ultimately beyond our control.**

Be assured that we are not relinquishing or deflecting any responsibility here with respect to our unwavering commitment to overcome the lack of diversity among our student population. We just feel strongly that receiving a NOT MET solely because our current student body does not meet an *idealized aspiration* is not a fair and an adequate evaluation of the broad range of efforts and success that our school has achieved regarding Social Equity in its entirety as a Condition since the 2010 NAAB Team Visit.

Final Comments

In closing, because we at Rensselaer are making deliberate and diligent efforts toward creating an inclusive and socially equitable School, and because of the resounding success we have achieved with respect to the diversity our FT tenure-track appointments since 2010, we respectfully request that you change the **Not Met** designation to indicate that we are indeed making great strides toward social equity, at a time when Architecture schools nationally are struggling to address diversity concerns. Our Leadership Team and our Faculty Search committees will be continuing to make progress and we want to succeed, not just to satisfy NAAB requirements, but because of the exciting promise of new opportunities for engagement and vision that social equity will bring to us all.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

References

¹Raskin, Laura. "AIA Diversity Survey Yields Bleak Results, Architectural Record (Apr. 2016), 204(4), 23-24.

²Oguntoyinbo, Lekan. "In Architecture, African-americans Stuck on Ground Floor in Terms of Numbers," Diverse education, Aug. 5, 2013. (<http://diverseeducation.com/article/55050>.)

³Inclusion in Architecture, report by the J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City, Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture, City University of New York, Sept. 14, 2015. (https://ssa.cuny.cuny.edu/programs/jmb-reports/InclusioninArchitectureReport_WebDec2015.pdf.)

2016 NAAB VTR – Rensselaer’s SoA Response to Criterion 13.14, SPCs B.1 and B.3

2004 Criterion 13.14, Accessibility (Not met in 2004 & 2010): Ability to *design both site and building to accommodate individuals with varying physical abilities*

Previous Team Report (2010): This criterion has not been met, again. The course manuals indicated that students had an awareness of the ADA requirements. However, the studio projects did not clearly demonstrate an ability to design for accessibility. Projects lacked identification of handicapped parking and curb cuts. Some flat sites might work out to be accessible, but sites on sloping surfaces do not appear to have been closely studied nor solved. Some door and egress issues were not resolved. Areas of refuge in stairwells were non-existent in the majority of the design projects.

2016 Team Assessment: The visiting team found evidence indicating that this criterion continues to be **Not Met**. As noted under SPC B.3 below, the ability to design sites, facilities, and systems for accessibility is not consistently demonstrated in the students’ studio work for the B. Arch or M. arch programs.

RPI School of Architecture Response

It is our position that 2016 NAAB Team’s Assessment of our program’s performance regarding Criterion 13.14 and SPC B.1 and B.3 is not an adequate assessment and the criterion have in fact been met as outlined below.

Student Performance Criteria are not all met in every studio of which there are 10 in the B.Arch and 6 in the M.Arch at Rensselaer. Effective education requires focus on a limited number of achievable outcomes in each course and/or studio and for SPC B.3 Rensselaer has identified ARCH 4540 / ARCH 5380 Professional Practice 1 and ARCH 4300 Design Development Studio as the primary places where attention to the ethic and specifics of designing for accessibility as a human right, lacking which amounts to discrimination and/or limitation of access to employment, participation in buildings, institutions and programs with others, is taught. There (and in ARCH 2820 Design Studio 3 / ARCH 5200 Graduate Architecture Design 1 and ARCH 4240 Design Studio 4 / ARCH 5210 Graduate Architecture Design 2 in relation to accessible site design) we also teach, as demonstrated in the course binders, 1) the relevant accessibility codes to which spaces must be designed, including but not limited to ADA, IBC and ANSI, and 2) specific standards of practice pertaining to parking, site accessibility, entries, accessible paths, the details of designing sloped surfaces and ramps, elevator access, turning radii, doors, and washroom design, etc. They are taught and examined in the professional practice course and applied in the Design Development studio. Whether low pass or high pass, projects in the DD Studio and demonstrate the provision of accessible entries and movement throughout the building in accordance with codes and standards, a matter that is required, consistently made a part of the design discourse, and met in the projects.

One NAAB team member commented that the building designs in the DD studio were accessible, however, the team made the same comment as that which is included in the VTR regarding studio projects in general; that accessibility *“is not consistently demonstrated in the students studio work for the B.Arch and M.Arch programs”*. This implies a higher standard than NAAB outlines and infers that accessibility must be taught at the outset of the program and applied throughout each of the studios. After being

introduced early in the B.Arch and M.Arch programs, the principle applications of codes and regulations including accessibility standards, as indicated in the SPC matrix, are in the DD/ Design Development course near the end of the studio sequence in advance of Final Project where broader, more speculative research based projects are carried out – typically at a larger scale.

B.1 Pre-Design: *Ability to prepare a comprehensive program for an architectural project, which must include an assessment of client and user needs; an inventory of spaces and their requirements; an analysis of site conditions (including existing buildings); a review of the relevant building codes and standards, including relevant sustainability requirements, and an assessment of their implications for the project; and a definition of site selection and design assessment criteria.*

2016 Team Assessment:

B. Arch

The visiting team found evidence that the Pre-Design criterion is **Not Met** at the level of ability in the B. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 2820 Architectural Design Studio 3, ARCH 4300 Design Development, and ARCH 4110 An Architectural Genealogy 2. This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. Through these courses, students demonstrated an ability to prepare most of the elements of a comprehensive program listed for the SPC, with the exception of relevant sustainability requirements.

M. Arch

The visiting team found evidence that the Pre-Design criterion is **Not Met** at the level of ability in the M.Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 4300 Design Development, ARCH 5200 Graduate Architecture Design 1, and ARCH 6610.8 Graduate Architecture Design 3 (CASE). This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. Through these courses, students demonstrated an ability to prepare most of the elements of a comprehensive program listed for the SPC, with the exception of relevant sustainability requirements.

RPI School of Architecture Response:

It seems from the draft VTR that the team, in examining ARCH 4300 Design Development did not include consideration of exercise 5 (Energy Performance and Human Comfort) together with exercise 7 (Programming). The premise of the Design Development studio is that several criteria relating to design are addressed separately in relation to one another as the basis of developing a comprehensive understanding and command of the many criteria that build upon one another. Predesign is addressed through several assignments including Programming, assignment 7, Energy Performance / Human Comfort, assignment 5, and Life Safety and Code, assignment 6. Each is given a dedicated week resulting in studies, reports and conclusions (included in the course binder) that are a part of predesign and demonstrably impact students' designs including, but not limited to iterations addressing sustainability concerns in relation to programmatic placement of spaces which is evidenced in the projects.

Assignment 5 (Energy Performance / Human Comfort) does so by explicitly requiring the development of a matrix-relating program and climate design considerations. Students

are asked to identify and integrate best practices of sustainable design for their specific program and climate beginning Week 3 of the studio. By this time students have just begun to develop the form of their building – not having yet fully developed program nor finalized a bulk & mass - a critical time to integrate sustainable practices. Week 3 contains a tech-talk (in studio lecture) on sustainable design principles, an in-studio charrette, and an assignment that demonstrates evidence of students identifying what would be good passive strategies based on analysis of their program, site, and climate. Assignment 5 – Energy Performance and Human Comfort, contains three “Energy Programming” worksheets that require students to place block diagrams of the program on a series of charts that help identify which passive strategies work best for different part of their project and in turn helps them organize their program to be responsive to these needs. The first chart plots “Allowable Temperature Range vs. Internal Heat Gain” to evaluate the ease of using natural ventilation to reduce cooling needs for each specific program. The second chart plots “Navigation light levels vs. Task Light Levels” to evaluate the ease of using daylighting for each specific program. The third chart plots “Allowable Temperature Range vs. Occupancy” to evaluate passive ventilation for air supply needs for each specific program. The outcomes of this assignment lead directly to their organization of the program in Assignment 7 (Programming) the next week. Assignment 5 also asks students to develop façade and comfort strategies that help to mitigate energy consumption. These are modeled and tested in Climate Consultant and Velux Daylight Visualizer and evaluated against the type of program that was enclosed by this façade strategy. Evidence of integrating sustainable design into studio is clearly evidenced in this assignment (as presented in the course binder) which requires the students to identify the primary challenges, use Energy Programming charts to identify which parts of their program are most applicable to specific passive strategies, and to develop technical façade strategies that are tested to evaluate one aspect of their comprehensive passive strategy. All of this information was well represented in the Team Room binders.

The School has made significant efforts to integrate sustainability considerations. They are introduced in ARCH 4110 An Architectural Geneology 2 and ARCH 2370 and Climate Comfort and Energy, and dealt with at length in ARCH 2360 Environmental and Ecological Design and ARCH 6610.8 Graduate Architecture Design 3 (CASE). ARCH 4300 Design Development and directly integrates them as part of predesign requirements linked to programming and predesign as evidenced in student reports for assignments 5 and 7 in the course binders.

B.3 Codes and Regulations: *Ability to design sites, facilities, and systems consistent with the principles of life-safety standards, accessibility standards, and other codes and regulations.*

2016 Team Assessment:

B. Arch

The visiting team found evidence that the Codes and Regulations criterion is **Not Met** at the level of ability in the B. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 4300 Design Development, Arch 4540 Professional Practice 1, and ARCH 4963 Integrated Design Schematic. This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. The ability to consistently design using accessibility standards was not demonstrated in student work.

M. Arch

The visiting team found evidence that the Codes and Regulations criterion is **Not Met** at the level of ability in the M. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 4300 Design Development and ARCH 5380 Professional Practice 1. This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. The ability to consistently design using accessibility standards was not demonstrated in student work.

RPI School of Architecture Response:

A comprehensive understanding of and ability to apply building codes and standards is taught in ARCH 4540 / 5380 Professional Practice 1 and ARCH 4300 Design Development Studio by means of lectures and a joint assignment between the courses that requires a comprehensive code analysis of each students' project, including accessibility standards. Upon discovery of deficits in their design, students iteratively develop design solutions to bring their projects into compliance as is demonstrated in the Design Development.

These are the primary places where attention to the ethic and specifics of designing for accessibility as a human right, lacking which amounts to discrimination and/or limitation of access to employment, participation in buildings, institutions and programs with others are taught. There, (and in ARCH 2820 Design Studio 3 / ARCH 5200 Graduate Architecture Design 1, and ARCH 4540 Design Studio 4 in relation to accessible site design) we also teach, as demonstrated in the course binders, 1) the relevant accessibility codes to which spaces must be designed, including but not limited to ADA, IBC and ANSI, and 2) specific standards of practice pertaining to parking, site accessibility, entries, accessible paths, the details of designing sloped surfaces and ramps, elevator access, turning radii, doors, and washroom design, etc. Whether low pass or high pass, projects in the DD Studio demonstrate the provision of accessible entries and movement throughout the building in accordance with codes and standards, a matter that is required, consistently made a part of the design discourse, and met in the projects.

One NAAB team member commented that the building designs in the DD studio were accessible, however, the team made the same comment as that which is included in the VTR regarding studio projects in general; that accessibility *"is not consistently demonstrated in the students studio work for the B.Arch and M.Arch programs"*. This implies a higher standard than NAAB outlines and infers that accessibility must be taught at the outset of the program and applied throughout each of the studios. After being introduced early in the B.Arch and M.Arch programs, the principle applications of codes and regulations including accessibility standards, as indicated in the SPC matrix, are in the DD studio near the end of the studio sequence in advance of Final Project where broader, more speculative research based projects are carried out – typically at a larger scale.

Final Comments

In closing, we respectfully request a reconsideration of the **Not Met** designation associated with these three items based upon our detailed commentary above.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

2016 NAAB VTR – Part Two (II): Section 1 – Student Performance – Educational Realms and Student Performance Criteria

Realm A – A.7 (History and Culture) + A.8 (Cultural Diversity and Social Equity)

A.7 History and Culture: *Understanding* of the parallel and divergent histories of architecture and the cultural norms of a variety of indigenous, vernacular, local, and regional settings in terms of their political, economic, social, and technological factors.

2016 Team Assessment:

B. Arch: The visiting team found evidence that the History and Culture criterion is Not Met at the level of understanding in the B. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 2150 The Ethos of Architecture, ARCH 4100 An Architectural Genealogy 1, and ARCH 4110 An Architectural Genealogy 2. This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. Issues of indigenous, vernacular, and regional settings regarding political, economic, social and technological factors other than American and European canons were not sufficiently addressed.

M. Arch: The visiting team found evidence that the History and Culture criterion is Not Met at the level of understanding in the M. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 4100 An Architectural Genealogy 1, ARCH 4130 Modernity in Culture, Civilization, and Architecture 2, ARCH 5100 History, Theory, and Criticism 1 (composed of ARCH 4110 An Architectural Genealogy 2 and ARCH 4120 Modernity in Culture, Civilization and architecture). This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. Issues of indigenous, vernacular, and regional settings regarding political, economic, social, and technological factors other than American and European canons were not sufficiently addressed.

A.8 Cultural Diversity and Social Equity: *Understanding* of the diverse needs, values, behavioral norm, physical abilities, and social and spatial patterns that characterize different cultures and individuals and the responsibility of the architect to ensure equity of access to buildings and structures.

2016 Team Assessment:

B. Arch: The visiting team found evidence that the Cultural Diversity and Social Equity criterion is Not Met at the level of understanding in the B. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 2820 Architectural Design Studio 3, ARCH 4100 An Architectural Genealogy 1, and ARCH 4110 An Architectural Genealogy 2. This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. Traditions and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Western and Southern hemispheres were not addressed. Islamic, Indian, and Chinese traditions and cultures were acknowledge in some faculty presentation, but not reflected in student work.

M. Arch: The visiting team found evidence that the Cultural Diversity and Social Equity criterion is Not Met at the level of understanding in the M. Arch program in student work prepared for ARCH 5100 History, Theory, and Criticism 1 (composed of ARCH 4100 An Architectural Genealogy 1 and ARCH 4130 Modernity in Culture,

Civilization, and Architecture 2), and ARCH 5200 Graduate Architecture Design 1. This was indicated in the SPC Matrix provided by the program. Traditions and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Western and Southern hemispheres were not addressed. Islamic, Indian, and Chinese traditions and cultures were acknowledged in some faculty presentations, but not reflected in the student work.

RPI School of Architecture Response:

It is our position that 2016 NAAB Team's Assessment of our program's performance regarding SPC A.7 (History and Culture) and SPC A.8 (Cultural Diversity and Social Equity) did not take into account vital material as outlined below, which was located in our digital and hard copy binders in the team room.

The following courses are associated with the two SPC's mentioned above: ARCH-2150: The Ethos of Architecture, ARCH-4100: An Architectural Genealogy 1, ARCH-4110: An Architectural Genealogy 2, ARCH-5100: History, Theory, Criticism 1, and ARCH-5110: History, Theory, Criticism 2. The latter two courses are part of the M.Arch. 1 program. These courses will be referred to by their course numbers in the following discussion. Included with this rebuttal are the digital binders of all these course, which are identical to the physical and digital binders that were available to the visiting team. The only binder that was not created and therefore not available to the visiting team was for ARCH-5110. This was an oversight because that course was being taught for the first time during the spring 2016 semester. That course was a composite of two other courses, one of which was ARCH-4110, which covered the associated SPCs. To access the digital binders, please go to: <http://www.arch.rpi.edu/naab>. The login is reviewer; the password is naab2015.

A.7 (History and Culture)

With respect to SPC A.7, the team assessment concerning ARCH-2150, ARCH-4100, ARCH-4110, and ARCH-5100 states the following: *"Issues of indigenous, vernacular, and regional settings regarding political, economic, social, and technological factors other than American and European canons were not sufficiently were not sufficiently addressed."* With all due respect, it must be noted that nowhere does NAAB define exactly what is meant by indigenous, vernacular, and regional architecture. Nor does it define what is sufficient to address political, economic, social, and technological factors.

The two courses ARCH-4100 and ARCH-4110 are necessarily connected to one another, as are ARCH-5100 and ARCH-5110. ARCH-4100 and -5100 address architecture of the western canon from the 18th century to Roman antiquity and ARCH-4110 and -5110 deal with Egyptian and Greek antiquity as well as spending more than half of the semester on the cultures and civilizations of the Islamic world, India, and China. The latter two courses were taught for the first time in spring 2016 and therefore complete binders with student work for these two courses in their present completed form were not included. In fact, only a binder for ARCH-4110 was prepared. It included the syllabus for that course and the syllabi from the two courses, which contained materials on Islam, India, and China, that ARCH-4110 and -5110 replace. In the -4110 binder were shown examples of the quizzes and tests that were given in the previous courses, which were the Building & Thinking of Architecture 1 and 2.

Instead of addressing point-by-point the issues that the VTR notes as deficient regarding SPCs A.7 and A.8, this rebuttal includes the digital versions of the physical binder for

ARCH-4110 that was available to the team during their visit.

The general intent of ARCH-2150 is not to focus directly on “*the cultural norms of a variety of indigenous, vernacular, local, and regional settings in terms of their political, economic, social, ecological, and technological factors*” as stated in SPC A.7. However, in various places, ARCH-2150 refers to these concerns as important in the formulation of various aspects of the architectural ethos [examples from China and India are specifically mentioned]. In addition, in the cases of the development of the work of the various architects, an effort is made to demonstrate the influence of indigenous, vernacular, local, and regional architecture [Wright, Le Corbusier, and Aalto are of particular importance in this regard]. The course also includes discussion of indigenous, vernacular, and regional towns and cities – bastide towns in France, Indian villages, Italian hill towns, the evolution of Roman castrum towns, etc.

Furthermore, several assignments include an assessment of regional and local built phenomena. Two such assignments focus on both the buildings and urban order of Troy, NY – a regional and local city. We strongly urge the NAAB Visiting Team to acknowledge, as we do, that the use of our own City of Troy serves us well to address regional and local issues. Might the visiting team have overlooked that the place that students inhabit for five years and its relevance to the regional and local definitions – definitions that in fact are not specified in the SPC. Because ARCH-2150 is presented the way it is “understanding of the parallel and divergent histories of architecture” histories is inherent to the course content and its assignments. The digital binder of ARCH-2150 is included with this rebuttal for reference.

A.8 (Cultural Diversity and Social Equity)

SPC A.8 is not only ambiguous in its specification, it also presumes by its phrasing that one should attempt to explain how different cultures address matters of equity of access to sites, buildings, and structures. It also implies that cultures and individuals are somehow separate entities – that an individual is not somehow affected by his or her culture. Moreover is the clear implication that cultures per se are monolithic, which might have been the case in the civilization of ancient Egypt but certainly was not in the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. Nor was it the case in the civilization of India and its diverse indigenous cultures and also in the great regional diversity in the Islamic world. These differences are given significant discussion in ARCH-4110 and -5110. On top of all that, there is a further implicit assumption in the stated SPCs that culture and civilization are somehow identical. In fact, nowhere in the SPCs is the word civilization used. Architects like Mies and Loos made specific comments about the differences between the two, which are discussed in ARCH-2150. It is especially remarkable that in requiring an examination of traditional cultures, the word religion is never used in the SPCs. These cultures and their associated civilizations were deeply infused with religion, which affected every dimension of the lives of the individuals within them. ARCH-4100, -4110, -5100, and -5110 all include sustained discussions regarding the impact of religion at every level of the cultures and civilizations that these courses examine.

It is also somewhat of a mystery as to why an architecture program must discuss “the traditions and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Western and Southern hemispheres” or its program in history and theory is deficient. Nowhere do the SPCs state specifically the necessity for covering this material. Isn’t the point of an education to understand the broader implications of difference between one’s own culture and

civilization and those of another time and another place in order to understand that such differences occur and to understand the motivating factors behind one culture or one civilization's worldview and that of another? It seems that gaining such an understanding in some passable degree of depth, which I would strenuously argue the courses in question do, provides students with the capacity to apply that understanding and principles when they do encounter modes of living and practices that they have not studied.

Final Comments

In closing, after a close reading of the guiding text provided by NAAB associated with each of these two SPC's, we believe there is room for interpretation. We respectfully request a reconsideration of the **Not Met** designation based upon our detailed commentary above and the accompanied digital course binders offered as supporting evidence (accessible by using the link).

Thank you for your consideration of our request.