Unit Plan for Assessing and Improving
Student Learning in Degree Programs

Unit: School of Architecture
Unit Head approval: **Date: 9 May 2008**

SECTION 1: PAST ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Brief description of changes or improvements made in your unit as the result of assessment results since 2000.

The School of Architecture has made several changes to the undergraduate and graduate curriculum since 2000. Results of the previous assessment revealed that there was a lack of uniform rigor across our Options in our professional M. Arch program. To correct this condition the School has adopted a uniform core of required courses to be taken by all M. Arch students. The core includes four design studios including design thesis, professional practice, structural planning, architectural thought, and professional issues.

The assessment also revealed that the School needed to revise our BS in Architectural Studies program as well. The undergraduate program lacked a course that all students would take that would teach about non-western traditions. This content was added to a required survey course in architectural history.

Upon recommendation of a faculty curriculum committee assessing outcomes at both the graduate and undergraduate levels, the design capstone studio was moved from the sixth year to the fourth year. Capstone studio is the course in which students are evaluated on their ability to complete a comprehensive design project, a requirement for national accreditation. Placing this evaluation into the fourth year allowed the sixth year thesis studios to place more emphasis on pursuing more theoretical inquiry in design thesis projects.

SECTION 2: REVISED ASSESSMENT PLAN

(a) <u>PROCESS</u>: Brief description of the process followed to develop or revise this assessment plan.

In the academic year 0708 the School's Assessment Coordinator attended workshops conducted by the Center for Teaching Excellence. The workshops provided advice on how to develop assessment plans based on what the unit needed to know about what students need to know to be successful in their respective disciplines.

The Coordinator, also Associate Director for Graduate Studies, critically reviewed the 1999 Student Outcomes Assessment Plan with the Director of the School and the Associate Director for Undergraduate Studies. As a result, some of the plan was validated for continued us and other parts were determined to be less useful and were deleted from the 2008 plan. The Coordinator also met with the Assessment Coordinator in the Department of Landscape Architecture. Because Architecture and Landscape Architecture are very similar disciplines it was assumed that student outcomes in both units would be comparable.

(b) <u>STUDENT OUTCOMES</u>: List Unit's student learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes).

Outcome 1.

BS in AS and M Arch students will possess the ability to think critically and creatively.

Outcome 2.

BS in AS students will possess sufficient knowledge and skills to begin pre-professional careers in architectural practice and related fields within the building industry.

Outcome 3.

BS in AS students will be prepared to conduct advanced studies in architecture.

Outcome 4.

M Arch students will be prepared for professional careers in architectural practice, related fields, and architectural education.

Outcome 5.

M Arch students will be prepared to meet or exceed the 34 student performance criteria of the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB). Those criteria are 1. Speaking and Writing Skills, 2. Critical Thinking Skills, 3. Graphic Skills, 4. Research Skills, 5. Formal Ordering Systems, 6. Fundamental Design Skills, 7. Collaborative Skills, 8. Western Traditions, 9. Non-Western Traditions, 10. National and Regional Traditions, 11. Use of Precedents, 12. Human Behavior, 13. Human Diversity, 14. Accessibility, 15. Sustainable Design, 16. Program Preparation, 17. Site Conditions, 18. Structural Systems, 19. Life Safety, 21. Building Envelope Systems, 22. Building Service Systems, 23. Building Systems Integration, 24. Building Materials and Assemblies, 25. Construction Cost Control, 26. Technical Documentation, 27. Client Role in Architecture,

28. Comprehensive Design, 29. Architect's Administrative Roles, 30. Architectural Practice, 31. Professional Development, 32. Leadership, 33. Legal Responsibilities, 34. Ethics and Professional Judgment.

Outcome 6.

M Arch students will be prepared to pass the nine-part Architect Registration Examination (ARE) to earn the authority to practice as a Licensed Architect.

(c) MEASURES AND METHODS USED TO MEASURE OUTCOMES:

Outcome 1.

Student papers, especially in Architectural History courses allow regular assessment of students' ability to think critically. Student design projects are juried by guest faculty and architects each semester so creativity is routinely assessed by individuals not teaching in the studio being evaluated. M Arch students submit a document at the end of the sixth year demonstrating their abilities to think critically and creatively.

Students' abilities to think critically and creatively are assessed by NAAB criteria 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 11 as evaluated regularly by the NAAB Visiting Team during accreditation visits.

Outcome 2.

Undergraduate students complete their education by executing a capstone studio assessing their abilities to do a comprehensive design project, similar to what they will be expected to do in a professional office and in accordance with NAAB criteria 28 shown above.

Firms attend the School's annual "Career Expo" providing professional architects the opportunity to assess students' abilities to enter the profession. School of Architecture administrators and faculty members interview the architects at the Expo to learn how students were "graded" by those in practice.

Outcome 3.

Faculty and administrators of the School of Architecture review student portfolios and student transcripts as part of the admissions process to get into the M Arch program. This process allows the School to compare the work of UIUC BS in AS graduates with those from other Schools of Architecture. Faculty and administrators use this opportunity to assess how effectively courses are preparing students for advanced studies

in architecture and to propose revisions to the program to correct any perceived deficiencies.

Outcome 4.

Graduate students complete their education by executing a design thesis project. Their projects are documented in a thesis publication which they prepare for evaluation of their abilities to complete comprehensive design at a more advanced and thorough level than BS in AS graduates.

Similar to the assessment of Outcome 2, M Arch students' work in evaluated by NAAB and by attendees at Career Expo.

Outcome 5.

A periodic assessment of student performance is conducted by the NAAB Visiting Team. A Visiting Team Report is provided to the School of Architecture following each visit allowing the School to make any necessary adjustments in the curriculum to improve student outcomes.

Outcome 6.

ARE pass rates are now published at the web site of the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (www.ncarb.org). Their list by schools allows the School of Architecture to view Illinois graduates' success rate on each of the nine parts of the ARE and to compare this data with pass rates of all of the other Collegiate School of Architecture in the United States and Canada.

SECTION 3 : PLANS FOR USING RESULTS

(a) PLANS: Brief description of plans to use assessment results for program improvement.

The Architecture Council is the curriculum committee of the School of Architecture. The Council meets monthly to evaluate proposals for new courses or improvements to existing ones. Results from Student Outcomes Assessments will be provided to the Council and School administration for the development of curriculum revisions to be proposed to the School faculty for review and approval.

(b) TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

The Architecture Council evaluates the School of Architecture's curriculum continuously. Since the Council's work is current and continuing, this plan to assess student outcomes has already been implemented.