

The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art
The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture
Anthony Vidler, Dean
Elizabeth O'Donnell, Associate Dean
Last Accreditation Visit: 10-14 April 2010

Brief Description of Changes to the program

On 18 October 2011, Jamshed Bharucha was inaugurated as the twelfth president of The Cooper Union. President Bharucha has spent much of the first months of his tenure meeting with students, faculty and staff in large "town hall" style meetings as well as in smaller informal meetings that bring together faculty from the four divisions of the college and has been invited to address the Joint Student Council, governing Faculty bodies, etc. to learn about the history, culture and aspirations of the school.

President Bharucha has been frank in his meetings about the challenges facing The Cooper Union given the present difficult financial climate. The Institution's operating revenues have declined due to decreases in the endowment and flat giving to the Annual Fund, resulting in a large operating deficit for the previous fiscal year that is expected to continue this fiscal year.

In addition to developing a sustainable financial model, the president has outlined a plan of reinvention for the college with four main elements:

1. Foster a culture of vigorous research, scholarship and other creative pursuits, as well as inventive and entrepreneurial activity.
2. Affirm Peter Cooper's commitment to enabling students of merit to benefit from a fine education that would otherwise be out of reach.
3. Affirm Peter Cooper's commitment to service for the public good
4. Cultivate a global perspective on every level of thinking and enterprise.

The president is working with the senior administration, the Deans, Associate Deans, the Faculty-Student Senate and student representatives in developing the specifics of this reinvention plan.

Response to Section 1.4 Conditions Not Met

Condition 8, Physical Resources

"Despite significant improvements since the 2004 visit, the full scope of necessary improvements continues to be scheduled, but not completed. ... faculty office space remains an on-going concern." VTR 10-14 April 2010

Given the immediate financial challenges facing the college, the Board of Trustees has asked all schools to put non-essential capital projects on hold for 2012 fiscal year.

Nonetheless, there have been improvements made to School of Architecture facilities. The School of Architecture Computer Studio was reconfigured to create a three-dimensional digital output center. A new laser cutter was purchased, and the existing 3-D printer was relocated from an unoccupied office on the 3rd floor. Our student staff can now more efficiently and effectively administer the output center, and student use of three-dimensional technologies has increased

Lever handles to replace the existing orbit knobs on all doors on the 3rd and 7th floors (as required by ADA) will be ordered this fiscal year and installed by The Cooper Union head carpenter. Additionally, the installation of an ADA required automatic door opener at the Foundation Building entry has been made an institutional priority.

Currently, all full-time faculty in the School of Architecture have private office space. Although the rooms are small (approximately 88 sq. ft.), and do not have natural light, they are located close to the studios and therefore are readily available for meetings with students. In addition, there are three shared but dedicated offices (two in the new academic building at 41 Cooper Square) that provide 5 spaces for research and writing by proportional time faculty and three small offices on the third floor for shared use by approximately 30 other proportional and adjunct faculty. This represents a net gain of one office since last year (made possible by relocating the 3-D printer to the 7th floor Computer Studio).

Response to Section 1.5 Causes of Concern

Condition 13.6 Fundamental Skills

"While the team determined that sufficient evidence is present to deem this condition met, they find cause for concern that [an engagement of non-urban sites] is not as thoroughly represented in the evidence as it might be." VTR 10-14 April 2010

This year, the semester long project for the Design IV fall semester studio is "From Nowhere to Somewhere, Investigations into Suburban Transformations." The faculty team is headed by Professor Kevin Bone, a Resident faculty member and practicing architect. He is joined by Rafi Segal, who leads an office engaged in architecture and urbanism and who recently co-edited a special issue of AD magazine titled "Cities of Dispersal", and Susannah Drake, Landscape Architect and principal of the Brooklyn based practice dlandstudio. The Design IV studio seeks to

"challenge patterns of American Sprawl and the life it brings with it. Our working assumption is that suburbia will and must change. We ask whether architecture can play a role in this change. Can we imagine a better environment in place of the suburb, particularly the suburban sprawl of the past thirty years which is resource intensive, unproductive, neglectful of the environment, culturally segregated and destined to become difficult to sustain at reasonable economic and energy investments".

Students have been asked to thoroughly analyze and then make proposals for transformations at five sites, distinct in geographic and climatic conditions, but all typical of “American sprawl”: Hennepin County, MN; Lucas, TX, Aurora, CO; Simi Valley, CA and Mission Viejo, CA.