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Boston Architectural College earns National Council of Architectural Registration Board prize for BIM project

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The Boston Architectural College was awarded one of five National Council of Architectural Registration Board (NCARB) prizes for creative integration of practice and education. Chosen among a field of 35 entries submitted by 29 NAAB accredited architecture programs nationwide, the announcement underscored BAC achievement realized through the AIA's Practice Academy Grant Program. This awarded initiative focused on building information modeling (BIM) in partnership with a select group of architectural firms transitioning to BIM and integrated project delivery.

The college's NCARB prize entry follows the progress made on a national 3-year grant begun in the fall of 2006 that focused on building information modeling (BIM) in partnership with a select group of architectural firms transitioning to BIM and integrated project delivery. This original project represented experience in areas of practice culture that included the experience in: professional education and leadership, changing project development and practice management. Academic initiatives encompassed topics that included improving studio culture, sustainability, and the proper adoption of new digital technology into design instruction.

According to the BAC the following 12 design firms whose commitment to this project over its 3 year tenure led to its success and national recognition: ADD Inc, Burt Hill, Cannon Design, Conyngham Associates, CBT Architects, Cutler Associates, Ganek Architects, Goody Clancy Architects, KlingStubbins, Prellwitz Chilinski Associates, Sasaki Associates, Shepley Bulfinch Richardson and Abbott.

The initiative provided opportunities and challenges to: (1) develop a model for ongoing collaboration and partnership with practitioners; (2) study how the incorporation of new digital technology into a student's design education might lead to an increased understanding of building tectonics and potentially lead to his/her generating more thoughtful and well-crafted design solutions; (3) apply what was learned and create an incubator for new interdisciplinary courses; and (4) formulate and deliver as many lifelong learning opportunities for practicing architects and allied AEC professionals.

Specific project activities included the following: A series of semester-long case studies conducted by students and practitioners focused on the influence that building information modeling is having on the practice of architecture and the changing roles and responsibilities of student interns. Recommendations and findings then became the basis for a distinctive demonstration charrette an innovative design workshop and advanced studios involving the introduction of new digital technology along with the formation of intercollegiate - interdisciplinary teams functioning in a collaborative learning environment. In addition to classroom experimentation that is having a direct impact on the college's core curriculum, the NCARB Prize entry describes professional outreach initiatives to a broad audience of AEC professionals. These involved participation in conferences

and public presentations surrounding the adoption of BIM and changes that are warranted in design education.

Finally, the college has begun during this 3rd year of the grant, a unique organizational behavior research project encompassing the field of collaborative inquiry. Activities, are shaped by an outside educational leadership consultant guiding a newly-formed team of representatives from 5 architectural firms, a graduate research assistant, faculty and senior college administrators. This diverse group meets regularly to learn and apply the principals of collaborative inquiry, a recursive group learning process designed to change organizational behavior and foster greater communication. The main goal will be to address individual questions/problems and challenges each of the 5 firms face as they adopt building information modeling and integrated project delivery. Upon receiving news of the award, BAC head of practice, Len Charney said, "The value proposition for firms to participate in the education of BAC students has largely been founded on their vested interest to prepare the next generation of design professionals by teaching them both during the day as well as at night. With the work we have done through the Practice Academy, there is a notable shift - firms involved are clearly coming to understand that the BAC can play an important role by helping them to navigate transformative change by bringing them together and enabling them to learn from each other." President Ted Landsmark said, "The NCARB Prize recognizes outstanding collaborations between design education within the academy and professional practice. Such collaborative learning is so intrinsic to the BAC that we have been challenged to present a clear distinction between what we do every day in our practice-based education, and what might stand out as truly exceptional. This year's BAC submission focused on the innovative work undertaken by our Practice Department, in conjunction with local design firms of varying sizes, to assess how schools and firms could best introduce and assess the impact of new design technologies into practice. Many schools are introducing Building Information Modeling into their curricula, while our practice-based pedagogy moved this introduction into practice as well. What this collaborative work has taught us is that there are multiple paths toward successful introductions of BIM into practice, and certain avoidable pitfalls. Working together with practitioners produced student-sensitive and pragmatic approaches to teaching how to introduce any new technology into the workplace, and we are grateful for NCARB's recognition of our teams' contributions to improving learning in the academy and in practice."

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