Who is the Ideal Grad Student? Rhetorical Aspirations Versus Historical Reality

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A commitment to change

Our school strives to be a leader in embracing DEI through research and action

Statement from our strategic plan

We seek to nurture diverse and inclusive built environment discourse and action through our teaching, research, scholarship, and practice. In particular, **we seek to be change agents that broaden and deepen built environment practice and research across many dimensions and to fully reflect the diversity of our communities and citizens** (p. 7, my emphasis)

https://arch.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/mapp_strategic_plan_0.pdf

Rhetoric vs. reality

Rhetorical aspiration is good, but it does not necessarily reflect the lived reality of students, departments, institutions, and places

The grammar of schooling and the hidden curriculum

Tyack & Tobin (1994) noted how the "grammar" of schooling remains fixed in the face of efforts to change it

Apple (1979) spoke of the hidden curriculum of schooling- how certain social habits, traits, or dispositions are rewarded or cast as desirable through structures and content in educational systems

Different rewards for different forms of capital

Bourdieu (1984) noted how specific cultural, economic, and social capital is rewarded through access to higher levels of education and schooling

Example: First gen student who grew up speaking language other than English in a low-income household vs. child of two architects who grew up in the local area and have high-paying jobs

In practical terms, the entire structure of schooling, through seemingly minor rules, structures, and policies can serve to reward particular groups of students and disenfranchise others

A systemic approach to analysis

Any policy devoid of context cannot reflect the reality of how the policy is actually taken up and enacted at various levels
Even successful policies can still be hampered by elements in different parts of a given context (Thompson et al, 2013)- example of fully funded university education in Denmark
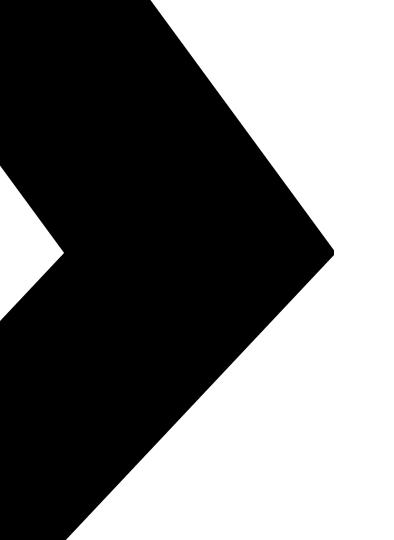
A systemic approach to analysis

Bronfenbrenner (1981) provided an approach to this in his ecological systems theory

Eaton (2020) adapts this into a more practical method for the university level with the 4M framework

4 levels of analysis: **micro** (individual), **meso** (departmental), **macro** (institutional), and **mega** (community/external entities)

The context of the M.Arch degree at UMD

The only NAAB accredited degree in Maryland- the M.Arch

Architecture and NAAB accreditation

The National Architecture Accrediting Board (NAAB) specifies the requirements for a terminal degree in architecture in line with the licensing requirements for being a professional architect These include documented work hours, several professional exams, and possession of an accredited degree in architecture
https://www.naab.org/

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Architecture and NAAB accreditation

More than 50 accreditation districts exist in the USA

Most require a Master of Architecture (M.Arch)- this is the case for Maryland

Some allow for an extended bachelor of architecture, provided that it covers equivalent knowledge and preparation to the M.Arch

Fun fact: the only Ph.D. in architecture in the US is at the University of Hawaii at Manoa

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Who is the Ideal Grad Student?

UMD's M.Arch

Requires between 60 and 105 credits

Meets all NAAB requirements for professional licensing

Several pathways to the degree exist depending on prior coursework

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Path A

Requires 60 credits, 15 credits per term, 2 years
of study
Presumes completion of the majority of
lower-level studio, structures, and history during
undergrad years
Admitted students are first in consideration for
grad assistantships based on their prior
knowledge

Path B

Open to all applicants who can demonstrate design potential

Does not require any prior coursework or knowledge

Requires 105 credits at 15 credits per term, 3.5 years of study

Admits are last in line for grad assistantships owing to their lack of prior knowledge

Path B+

75 credits of study required, equivalent to Path A plus one semester

Presumes completion of all lower level coursework in studio, structures, and history, but with less than exemplary performance

Admits are considered for grad assistantships along with those on Path A

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Pathways into the M.Arch

Path A and Path B+ require the equivalent to a B.S. in architecture from UMD

In practice, there are few degrees considered equivalent to the B.S. in architecture from UMD except from some international institutions

Students from outside UMD often are required to complete certain fundamental courses, even though they are admitted to path A

Pathways into the M.Arch

Path B is open to all, including B.A. architecture students from UMD

The BA in architecture meets some of the basic NAAB requirements for structures and history, but none of the more advanced coursework

The BA in architecture at UMD thus allows for waiving of some coursework, but does not shorten time to degree for path B.

Pathways into the M.Arch

Two articulation agreements exist with local CCs (Anne Arundel and Montgomery College)

These allow for direct admission to the BS in architecture upon completion of an AA in architecture

Has allowed us to admit more transfer and first-gen students than any other department

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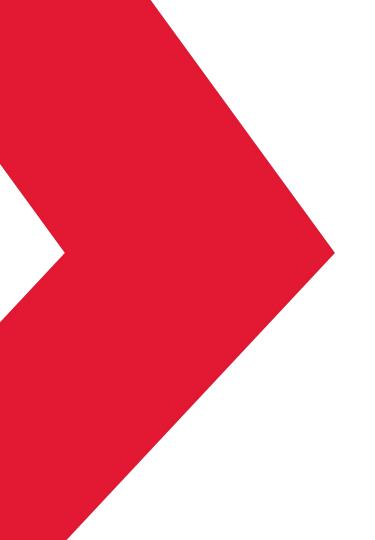Who is the Ideal Grad Student?

The BA vs BS

- Originally, all architecture degrees were BS, designated as limited enrollment program
- Increased demand led to the degree being split between BA path (no longer LEP) and BS (competitive admission based on application during sophomore year)
- Admission requires high grades, completion of all prerequisites, outstanding portfolio, evidence of design work

The BA vs BS

- Seats in BS track limited to 75 current UMD students, 25 external candidates
- Efforts to limit admission to BS track have been ongoing owing to lack of physical space in the studio

Goals versus given reality: the 4M in practice

"we seek to be change agents that broaden and deepen built environment practice and research across many dimensions and to fully reflect the diversity of our communities and citizens"

Interaction between mega and meso: NAAB requirements

- 105 credits and specific coursework required- cannot change this

- However, department limits enrollment in key undergrad courses, specifically studio courses

- Studio courses offered to all over summer term

- However, this is extremely expensive compared to courses during normal term

Who is the Ideal Grad Student?

Result: BS track privilege

- BS track students at UMD are set up for success in entering the M.Arch degree
- BA students are at an immediate disadvantage

- BA students with the financial means (and high enough grades) are allowed to take 2 out of three required studio courses
- In rare cases, this allows them access to path B+, but never path A

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Issues at the meso level: BS privilege in culture

- As noted, key courses restricted to BS track students
- However, in practice, unrestricted courses are also shadow" restricted

- Culture among professors that BA students are less desirable to have in both electives and studio
- Actual requests from professors to limit number of BA students in electives

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Issues among the meso, macro, and mega levels- International Applicants

- Ultimate admission determined by grad school, not department

- Particularly with English proficiency, this is problematic

- Only TOEFL and IELTS scores accepted- no DuoLingo

- TOEFL and IELTS offered infrequently in some countries, with prohibitive cost

- Test scores often take a long time to arrive

- This can make students ineligible for visa

Who is the Ideal Grad Student?

Issues among the meso, macro, and mega levels- International Applicants

- Putting I-20 visa together requires students to show financial ability to support themselves for a year (plus any dependents)

- Applicants are not guaranteed an assistantship, are classified as out-of-state

- DC metro area is extremely expensive

- Processing times for visas can sometimes run past the deadline to enroll in classes, requiring deferral or not taking classes

Actual wait times

Taken from
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wait-times.html

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Mumbai (Bombay)

Nonimmigrant Visa Type	Appointment Wait Time
Interview Required Students/Exchange Visitors (F, M, J)	655 Calendar Days
Interview Required Petition-Based Temporary Workers (H, L, O, P, Q)	
Interview Required Crew and Transit (C, D, C1/D)	8 Calendar Days
Interview Required Visitors (B1/B2)	437 Calendar Days

Actual wait times

Dhaka	✎

Nonimmigrant Visa Type	Appointment Wait Time
Interview Required Students/Exchange Visitors (F, M, J)	220 Calendar Days
Interview Required Petition-Based Temporary Workers (H, L, O, P, Q)	59 Calendar Days
Interview Required Crew and Transit (C, D, C1/D)	129 Calendar Days
Interview Required Visitors	

Issues between meso and macro levels:

- Heavy difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition (https://billpay.umd.edu/GraduateTuition)

- In-state tuition for 1 year, 15 credits per term (standard plan): $26,123

- Out-of state tuition for 1 year, 15 credits per term (standard plan): $55,433

More on the money

- Total cost of degree, in-state, path A: $52,246

- Total cost of degree, in-state tuition, path B: $91,430.50

- Total cost of degree, out-of-state tuition, path A: $110,866

- Total cost of degree, out-of-state, path B: $194,015.50

- Total amount international applicants need to have in their bank account to qualify for I-20 without guaranteed GA position: $84,300 (https://marylandglobal.umd.edu/sites/default/files/2024-02/Finances%202024_2025.xlsx%20-%20Website%20Version%202324.pdf)

- Average salary of beginning architect with M.Arch: $73,620 (https://info.aia.org/salary/salary.aspx)

Issues between micro and meso: Time, money, and opportunity cost

- Grad students expected to do 15 credits per term
- This practically eliminates ability to work outside of school
- Studio and structures must be taken in sequence- no flexibility

- Students who work even part-time find difficulty completing the degree
- 5-year limit on degree completion at the master's level

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Issues between micro and meso: Time, money, and opportunity cost

- GA positions only 10 hours per week- covers 5 credits of tuition remission, moderate salary
- Tuition remission not over summer term

- GA position reclassifies as in-state for tuition purposes
- Other departments offer 20 hour positions with 10 credits of tuition remission

So who is the ideal student?

Who is each pathway created for?

Path A: BS from UMD going full time

- The curriculum was specifically devised with a UMD BS student in mind

- All other applicants are judged on their degree's similarity to the UMD BS in architecture

- Full-time is a stated requirement, meaning no outside work

- This means someone of independent means is most desirable, or someone who has the ability to self-fund or absorb debt

- However, much more feasible to take on debt here if the student is in-state ($52,246)

Who is the Ideal Grad Student?

Path B+: Also BS from UMD going full time

- New path designed only a few years ago to address UMD BS applicants whose grades were not great in key courses

- Possible for BA track students, but only if they prohibitively expensive summer courses

- Nearly impossible for students from outside schools

- Full-time is a stated requirement, meaning no outside work

- This means someone of independent means is most desirable, or someone who has the ability to self-fund or absorb debt

Path B: A chimera

- Someone who has completed an undergraduate degree, yet has enough time to complete another undergraduate degree (3.5 years)

- Someone with design ability and demonstrated dedication to the built environment, but no (or little) coursework

- Someone able to take on immense debt or self-fund while not working (again, $194,015.50!). Compare this to an MBA at Harvard Business School, which costs $115,638 (see here: https://www.hbs.edu/mba/financial-aid/tuition-assistance/Pages/cost-of-attendance.aspx).

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Who is the Ideal Grad Student?

International students: Lots of money, short wait times

- Someone with $84,300 in their bank account

- Someone able to continue to attend without an assistantship

- Someone able to obtain a visa in a timely manner

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So <u>where are we</u> and what do we do?

Issues of privilege are clearly embedded in the curriculum and culture at multiple levels

The most inclusive pathways (path B and path B+) still privilege students of means from UMD

Expectations for international students are such that some countries are essentially excluded

So where are we and <u>what do we do</u>?

Expand outreach

- Two CC articulation agreements in place
- Entirely possible to create more
- By reaching out to CCs, we can increase number of diverse, first gen students from multiple income levels
- Consider out-of-state outreach and equivalencies

Reconsider path B

- Consider searching for scholarship or assistantship opportunities for path B students specifically
- Consider creating 20 hour GA positions for path B students
- Examine alternative curricula allowing for work

Consider international partnerships

- International-specific GAships, scholarships not possible
- Independent funds are possible
- Consider outreach towards independent entities for funding students from underserved countries

Bottom line: It will not be easy

However, many possibilities exist moving forward.
As with graduate education in general, the ideal student may exist at a point in time, but they never are eternal

Thanks!

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