ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
BEYOND THE SWITCH: MAKING LASTING IMPROVEMENTS TO ONLINE STUDIOS

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• Abstract (300 words):
Some architectural colleges were successful in making the emergency switch from on-campus to online teaching in Spring 2020. Colleges with previous online experience built on top of their existing expertise to manage the transition. Not all colleges had the resources to make the change and those that did now need a more thoughtful solution for students returning to campus for an altered learning experience that will include hybrid and online courses. Lessons learned from providing online education during the pandemic and the decade prior present an opportunity for two reasons. First, these programs had more time to test alternatives. Second, they emerged during a time with fewer technological solutions and thus relied on altering course fundamentals to align with the online format. Meeting the teaching and learning outcomes requires acknowledging the differences between on-campus and online formats and taking advantage of the opportunities presented.

Among the primary realizations is that technology is secondary to achieving learning outcomes. Another is students seem to learn more online when the course is highly structured, rather than an open-ended discovery format, as are many on-campus
This is disturbing for professors at first glance, but constraints lead to creativity, as architects understand. Another observation is that online education tends to isolate students and provides an obstacle to collaboration, missing out on the problem-solving comradery usually provided within on-campus studios. As a result, professor-student communication is essential to address this and needs new approaches. Another realization is that opportunities for engagement are realizable but different. The time spent together live must be meaningful, and intentionally model the creative and thinking process. There are valuable lessons learned regarding live activities such as charrettes, virtual site visits, lectures, and feedback. This paper reports on findings from the past 11 years of online studios and lecture courses.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Robert Fryer is an Associate Professor and Founding Member of the MS Sustainable Design Program at Thomas Jefferson University. His contributions have won awards from the National Institute for Building Science and the USGBC. He is also a Senior Research Associate with the Engineering & Design Institute and a Deputy Director of the Jefferson Center for Injury Research and Prevention.

Among the courses he teaches, Robert oversees the Thesis Sequence, where students undertake research into adaptive sustainable high performance design that spans seven countries. Thesis projects have also led to the creation of over 10 new businesses.

His research interests include sustainable design education, systems thinking applied to education, performative building and assembly design, and biophilic senior care. He has presented research at national and international conferences such as PLEA, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, the World Symposium on Sustainable Development at Universities, and Environments for Aging. His personal practice includes the development of biophilic adult day care centers (with BAU Architects), LEED consulting, charrette facilitation, and sustainable residential design.

Robert has degrees from The Architectural Association (London, UK) and Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA), and is a registered architect.