

# BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

## ARCHIDES 1ST ANNUAL REPORT | 2015 - 2016 |

**Notable accomplishments in 2015 - 2016 include:**

### **Our first strategic plan is completed**

Jamal Abed served as a Chair of the University Strategic Planning Committee, a significant recognition. As a subset to this activity, the strategic plan of ARCHIDES have been formulated to map a future that inspires us to respond to the demands of our time and the needs emerging out of the inception life of the Faculty.

### **Re-envisioning our Mission, values, and goals**

Backed by the Faculty Advisory Council, ARCHIDES - through the collaborative effort of its staff - articulated our mission, vision, core values, and goals to lead a roadmap for distinction and impact.



## **Letter from the Dean**

There is nothing more capturing and igniting one's imagination than the sense of freedom to design and build the education system for architects of the future. However, starting on a tabula rasa is both exhilarating and grave.

The activity of building the foundations of education at the Faculty of Architecture & Design [that we have dubbed ARCHIDES] has been undertaken within a critical discourse that probes the in-depth phenomenological nature of architecture and architecture education on one side and the sensibilities towards the distractions of temporal market conditions on the other. In that sense, our building activities are precariously positioned between the belief of the University as a social institution and the current conditions of the industrialization of learning (with its positive and negative underpinnings). In practical terms, the activity of building the foundations of ARCHIDES has been inevitably fraught with a number of uncertainties starting with the critical discourse itself that is bound by its own connection to the present, passing by exogenous but equally important political and social conditions of the region (political instability in the country and the region and economic recessions leading to an



## Reconceptualizing a Curriculum to meet the challenges of tomorrow

The new undergraduate program of Architecture was offered for the first time during the 2015 - 2016 application cycle. Twenty two students were enrolled - a modest but a solid start. The curriculum has been restructured based on five main axes: Design, Engineering, History & Theory, Computation Design, & Material Science and Fabrication.

Through a rich set of electives in the different axes, the structure of the curriculum enables the students to graduate with different specialized inclinations.

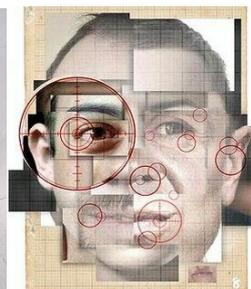
Four summer internships are designed to foster the necessary professional practice integration in the curriculum.

unprecedented increase in the percentage of the local population under the poverty line with the amounting number of refugees heavily weighing on the social and decaying physical infrastructure just to name a few), the mapping of contemporary critical theories of education of architecture, arriving at the unfettered rope-thin distinction between transient fads and market/economic/social/cultural/technological transformations that carry fundamental impact on the purpose of and the way architecture is both produced and taught. These uncertainties have been balanced by an unwavering belief in the materiality and the ennobling act of building in architecture and by the dynamic and visionary team committed to forging solid foundations of a culture of inquiry, discovery, and leadership - the whole mark of what constitutes good architecture. Mapping our philosophy through a questionnaire that has been distributed to the top tier architecture firms in the world, I am happy to report that the feedback was very supportive to our outlook to architecture education.

It is my pleasure to provide our stakeholders with this report, which is a snapshot of the highlights of the wide-ranging, multidimensional and infinitely exciting activities of ARCHIDES during our first academic year 2015 - 2016. From defining its strategic planning based on new articulation of its vision, mission, goals to its key game-changing initiatives that are elaborated on in this report, ARCHIDES owes its achievements to the dedication, ingenuity, talent, and collaborative efforts of its academic and administrative personnel as well as to the full support of the President of the University and its founders.

I encourage our stakeholders to use this report as a launching point to learn more about, and possibly get involved in, these and many other of our faculty's intellectual investigations.

Jamal H. Abed



## Re-inventing the foundation year and the foundation studios

Backed by the University Preparatory [UP] Program, incoming students are able to directly register courses in the major while simultaneously taking remedial courses commensurate with the capabilities of each student.

The foundation studios were reconfigured away from the Beaux-Arts tradition focusing on the design as a process involving a renewed sense of observation, materiality, and representation.

## Re-imagining our studio space for the 21st century

Our first year students were directly involved in suggesting alternative platforms for creativity, research, and design collaboration. Their designs questioned the outdated design models that define the current studio environment, and proposed adaptable design systems that encourage a culture of experimentation and creative interaction and collaboration.

We are at present entertaining the idea of teaching history courses in the studio and teaching design in the classroom.

Our plan for next year is to make the new studio a reality.

# ARCHIDES 21st Century Vision, Mission and Core Values

The Faculty of Architecture and Design is developing an academic environment that is distinguished by being contextually grounded, collaborative, diversified, multidisciplinary and experimental.

ARCHIDES is committed to developing a culture of inquiry, discovery, and entrepreneurship, graduating responsible architects/designers that meet the changing needs of the globalized market.

Within this broad vision, we carry unwavering belief in the value of design as scholarship. Design- as an adisciplinary skill- is approached as a creative and reflective process that is engaged in scholarly work and inquiry and that contributes to the advancement of knowledge in Architecture. Our course of action in the search for excellence in teaching is set through differentiated learning whereby we provide a flexible delivery system that is tailored to the varied strength and outlook of the student body in the Faculty. More specifically, we value:

- Excellent and accessible higher education. Rooted in the Bauhaus tradition, our motto is: every committed person can become a designer.
- Sustenance in our life and design practice.
- Craftsmanship and material and technological innovation.
- Creative and pragmatic design practice propelled by the social and environmental challenges of our context.
- Critical pedagogy and learning will to cross disciplinary boundaries.
- Active engagement with the community.
- Network with the global research and professional communities for an effective build-up of our capacity to create value on the local and global scenes.

Moving forward, we aspire to achieve seven key goals:

1. Create and sustain a culture of teaching excellence.
2. Promote pedagogical innovations/best practices and integrate them in the general assessment framework of ARCHIDES.

## **A New Summer Architecture Laboratory Camp for fresh incoming students is introduced**

With the objective to contribute in the awareness and sensibility of the general students population who is interested in the field of architecture, ARCHIDES is prepared to launch its first laboratory camp during this summer.

## **Building the academic staff with great addition of two full-timers**

Reviewing more than ninety applications to the announced academic position opening, we are considering to welcome two distinguished full-timers - the name of which and credentials shall be announced in the near future.

## **Designing and building state-of-the-art facilities**

The team at ARCHIDES assisted in the design and the supervision of the execution of an outdoor multipurpose court, a university cafeteria, and a music hall. Projects in line are a metal and wood workshop, a new Digital Fabrication Lab, a state-of-the-art computation lab, and a media lab.

3.Intensify the integration of academia and professional practice for students through a varied set of internships on the national and international levels.

4.Promote both the cognitive and affective domains of students - the latter is built on the longer-term educational legacies of engaging in the public good and the development of the human capital and the reconstitution of a social contract.

5.Strengthen efforts to attract and educate a talented body of students.

6.Foster an exciting intellectual environment by providing a wide exposure to and engagement with other national and international renowned programs, professional, artistic, and other intellectual activities.

7.Develop ways to enable the faculty to integrate their teaching with research, scholarship, creativity and public engagement - one of the main important criterion for NAAB future accreditation.

## **Five Foundational Initiatives**

Our vision, values and goals set our course, and concrete initiatives allow us to achieve them. In the span of less than a year, ARCHIDES identified and launched "Initiatives" that are: essential; clear and actionable; mobilize human and physical resources; and lead to a well defined and distinguishable institutional niche in the market promoting ARCHIDES and Azm University's leadership.



## Fostering Communication of our Vision to stakeholders

A number of meetings have been carried with the head of Admissions addressing heads of schools and students communicating our vision for a unique education at ARCHIDES. Given the relatively high initial number of students who have already voiced their interest in applying to the program, the student recruitment campaign is proving to be very successful.

## ARCHIDES preparing for NAAB accreditation

Accreditation by NAAB is set as an objective right at the inception of the program at ARCHIDES. This is informing the articulation of objectives/ course learning outcomes within the curriculum. Our membership with the ACSA is to tap on valuable tips onto conference events and NAAB accreditation process.

## Imparting change in our students

Timespan: 2 semesters- a skyrocketing change in our students. Mapping this change through both their cognitive and affective facilities and skills - more specifically a more mature attitude to learning and understanding of the exigencies of the profession.

## Initiation of Research and Creative Practice

### *Initiative 1: Design as Scholarship*

Faculty members were involved in a number of creative practices. Mr. Mohamad Kabbara designed a residential complex in the Koura region - redefining the typology of residential complexes and presenting through this project a critical language of architecture that rejects a blind abidance to conventional vocabulary and materials and substitute it by a language that dialogues with the combined industrial and farming practices engrained in the area.

### *Initiative 2: Initiating Research Focusing on the Historic City of Tripoli and Extending Research Impact to Amman, Jordan and Beyond*

Funded by the university founders, the Dean of ARCHIDES initiated a research project leading to a manuscript that focuses on urban boundaries of the historic Mamlouk city of Tripoli to map the fragile and temporal conditions and transformations establishing the synergy between these urban and architecture transformations and the main cultural, economic, social, political, and technological changes acting on the city body.

Dean Jamal Abed was also invited by the Municipality of Greater Amman, Jordan to advise on the urban framework and directives that would direct the development of high rise buildings in the capital. The lecture offered to city planners, municipal agents, and local architects and urban designers was entitled: Development Controls: Constituencies and Institutional Framework.

Dean Abed was also a reviewer of a number of scientific articles in the urban planning and development field as well as an advisor/ jury member for a large scale urban development and a landmark high rise residential tower in Doha, Qatar.

## Building Community Spaces

### *Initiative 3: "Br" - the University Cafeteria*

As part of building the foundation of the University and its identity, the importance of the communal space that the Cafeteria can provide where students and faculty members can meet and interact is paramount. ARCHIDES worked on the design and execution of Br [all to the way to its branding and



name] with the objective that the resulting space will curate student and faculty design work, build shared cultural spaces for intellectual and professional debate, design exploration, collaboration and sociality. The design was oriented in ways to ensure a variety of interactions using materials and lighting that induce a sense of "home." In a very short period of time since its opening, B1 is the talk of the town as being a very different cafeteria from any of the universities' in the North of Lebanon.

#### *Initiative 4: Music Hall - a cultural meeting place geared towards the community*

In line with the effort to engrain a liberal education at the University and to implement its community outreach program, ARCHIDES contributed to the design and supervision of the construction of a music hall that can take fifty plus seats with a large platform stage that would accommodate music events, music courses, as well as general seminar/lecture space that can be used by the community.

## **Designing an Education with an Edge**

### *Initiative 5: Reconfiguration of the Curriculum of the Architecture Program*

The impetus of this initiative was this particular burning question: How does ARCHIDES matter In its geographic and disciplinary contexts? Our search for answers led us to devise a creative and flexible curriculum structure, the whole-mark of which are five main axes: Design, Engineering, History & Theory, Computation Design, & Material Science and Fabrication.

Through a rich set of electives in the different axes, the structure of the curriculum enables the students to graduate with different specialized inclinations.

Four summer internships are designed to foster the necessary professional practice integration in the curriculum.

A new outlook and philosophical approach to building the design foundation in architectural education manifested itself through forging a new experimental design studio that focuses predominantly on design as a process and communication. Both Basic Design I and Basic Design II generated a wealth of ideas and proposals.

Stay tuned as our building process continues to unfold, and ARCHIDES moves onward and upward!



**Sound** CNT-

in this exercise: First, is the comprehension of a set of multiple environments using technical and biological mapping tools. Second, is investigating sound as a catalyst/form generator, and vice versa?

