Looking back, moving forward

College of Architecture marks its first century

Robert Nesmith
Communications & Marketing

The analogy is a visual one: One pebble starts a cascade of falling rocks that grows into an avalanche. In this case, one student asked a college president about starting a new curriculum, one that would change the face of a new institute, its city and the discipline as a whole.

Credited to a conversation with Tech president Kenneth Matheson in 1907, the Georgia School of Technology’s architecture program began in September 1908. A freshman asked Matheson what was required for Tech to start an architecture program. After Matheson responded “15 other students interested in the program,” the freshman had located 20 before the next year. With this offering, Tech began the first four-year architecture program in the South.

“The production of gifted architects—not only to be able to build well, but to anticipate the emerging realities—has shaped Atlanta and helped drive its economy,” said College Dean Alan Ballou. “And the strength and success of architecture has, over the years, given rise to associated disciplines—from the micro issues dealt with by Industrial Design to macros in our highly influential program in City and Regional Planning.”

To celebrate the anniversary this milestone, a three-part exhibition of past students’ works—“A Century of Architectural Education at Georgia Tech”—will be shown in the atrium of Architecture West, and notable alumni return to present lectures in the Architecture Auditorium in the East building. Alumni and Atlanta architect John Portman kicks off the centennial celebration with the inaugural lecture Aug. 27, followed by the opening of the exhibition “Part 1: 1908–1940.”

NWF recognizes Institute’s campus sustainability efforts

The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) has recognized the Institute as an exemplary campus as part of its initiative, “Campus Environment 2008: A National Report Card on Sustainability in Higher Education.”

The recent study analyzed trends and new developments in environmental performance and sustainability at 1,068 institutions, recognizing colleges and universities for exemplary efforts and giving awards for collective, national performance on environmental literacy, energy, water, transportation, landscaping, waste reduction and more. The 2008 survey is the nation’s largest study to date created to gauge trends and new developments in campus sustainability. It was also the first.

Summer engineering program LEADS students to Tech

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During three weeks in July, Tech was the site for an inaugural program to increase underrepresented minority high school students’ exposure to engineering. The College of Engineering collaborated with the Leadership Education and Development program to host the Summer Engineering Institute (SEI).

For more than 25 years the Leadership Education and Development program (LEAD) Summer Business Institute has encouraged students from more diverse communities to pursue careers in business. More than 7,000 academically strong students have graduated from the program. In an effort to increase the number of American students pursuing careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields, LEAD launched its inaugural SEI at Tech, with the University of California-Berkeley hosting a session later in the summer. During the 2007 National Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers’ Conference, conversations about hosting the first LEAD SEI at Tech were initiated between Felicia Benton-Johnson, director of the College of Engineering’s P-12/Diversity Programs, and Richard H. Ramsey, LEAD president and CEO. Initially the program was slated to be a one-time experience for rising juniors. Based on Benton-Johnson’s recommendation, the program became a two-year program. “From our perspective, we needed two years for students. The first year would be most
In April a blacktie gala will be “a grand fete in which we will celebrate in appropriate style the rigor, innovation, and excellence and, yes, fun of our years at Georgia Tech,” Dean Alan Balfour stated in a letter to alumni.

**Genesis of a program**

Architecture’s evolution—at Tech, in Atlanta, and as a discipline—is primarily visual. From the program’s inception until the 1930s, Beaux-Arts architecture dominated the design curriculum. After this, the Bauhaus, or modernist, movement held sway, characterized today by many of the Institute’s buildings, including Architecture East (1952), the Library and Information Center and the soon-to-be-renovated Hinman building.

In keeping with the original mission of the Institute, the program was mostly centered on architectural concerns in Atlanta, the state and the region. Upon offering a five-year bachelor’s degree in 1934, the department conformed to curriculum requirements from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), broadening its influence nationally. In 1948, the School of Architecture was formed, and in 1975—the same year a study-abroad program was established in Paris—the school became the College of Architecture.

From its inception, identification with the visual and liberal arts has separated the architecture program from its engineering-based counterparts, while its applied-technology approach to instruction has placed it firmly within the Institute’s mission. In fact, it was the addition of the program as part of the general sciences curriculum that granted Tech admission into the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1925.

**Making their mark**

Almost half of the College’s alumni live in Georgia, and 12 of the top 15 Atlanta firms count Tech alumni as founders or key partners. These have proceeded not only to mold Atlanta’s skyline, but also to expand and innovate the discipline.

Class of 1950 alumnus Portman created a new concept in the atrium hotel, and also revolutionized the business aspect of architecture by becoming the first dual architect-developer in the 1970s. George Heery, class of 1951, pioneered construction program management in the mid-1970s, which expanded the role of architecture to include real estate management, “strategic facility’s planning” and new methods to reduce the risks and costs for owners.

Several transformative concepts for the city—both Atlanta Station and the proposed Atlanta Beltline—started as projects in the College’s graduate student studios. And faculty also have made their contributions to the field, on both the regional and global scale. The campus itself is a reflection of faculty contribution, as more than a dozen buildings on Tech’s campus were designed by members of the architecture faculty, including Old Civil Engineering (1939), East Architecture (1952), Binneman Research Building (1939, 1951), and several residence halls. Longtime faculty member Julian Harris designed many of the sculptures that decorate the campus buildings.

Many present and former faculty members are recognized experts, having authored several books on the history, impact and future of architecture and the new urban landscape. Architecture faculty expect to release six new books this year, on topics ranging from “retrofitting” suburbia to New York skyscrapers to Francis P. Smith, the program’s first director. In addition, College Dean Alan Balfour is a distinguished scholar with award-winning books on cities and culture, including works on Berlin, Shanghai and New York. In fact, Balfour soon will deliver the keynote address at the opening of the new American Embassy in Berlin.

This year, nearly 1,200 students walked through the doors of both College of Architecture buildings preparing to absorb the history, shape the present and design the future of the discipline. In keeping with both the Institute’s and the architecture program’s original mission, linking applied technology with the fine arts will continue to underscore the College’s curriculum.

“At its best, architecture is an evolutionary art, with each succeeding age learning from what preceded it—not just in the form and structure of a building but in the way a building defines and advances social, political, and—all else—economic goals,” Balfour said.

This now-century-old practice will aid in facing future challenges, as architects, builders and city planners must approach design and construction with increasingly limited resources and energy consumption as part of the equation. In keeping with the use of technology in education, digital tools aid students and create a new pathway for design without losing the fine arts core.
Knotts named interim director of Federal Relations

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Robert Knotts, assistant director of the Institute’s Federal Relations Office in Washington, D.C., was named interim director, effective Sept. 2. Patricia Bartlett, director of the Institute’s Federal Relations Office in Washington, D.C., has accepted a position with the Smithsonian Institution.

Knotts has been with the Institute since February 2007. Prior to working for five years on Capitol Hill, most recently as a legislative director for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. He also served four years as an officer in the Army. “My primary responsibility is to promote the Institute’s strategic vision and goals as they pertain to federal research and education programs and policies,” Knotts said. Increasing the Institute’s visibility, influence and support among federal decision-makers and the higher education community at large, as well as “maintaining Georgia Tech’s Washington, D.C., ‘footprint,’ ” have been among these duties.

Bartlett began her tenure with the Institute in 1982, serving as a Washington, D.C.-based consultant and representative for Tech. She was hired full-time in 1996, and was promoted to director in 1997 after then-Director William Smith died. Bartlett will serve as executive assistant to Smithsonian Institution Secretary and former Tech President G. Wayne Clough. She starts in her new position Sept. 2.

At Tech, Bartlett serves as a liaison for Georgia Tech and key government officials. “As director, I develop legislative, policy and problem-solving strategies to enhance and maintain Tech’s federal funding base,” she said.

(1) also advise senior Institute administrators, deans, school directors, research faculty and staff on matters pertaining to higher education policies and regulations, science and technology trends, and policies and research program opportunities. In addition, Bartlett is the director represents Tech before members of Congress, federal agencies, and public and private research organizations.

According to Bartlett, Knotts’ background will continue to be “an incredible asset” for the Institute. “Tech won’t miss a beat under Robert’s leadership,” Bartlett said. “He’s well-respected in the university federal relations community and has been engaged in every aspect of our office’s functions. I’m confident the Institute will continue to make progress on all strategic fronts pertaining to federal relations.”

LEAD, cont’d from page 1

effective for grabbing students’ attention regarding a career in engineering, while a second year would help to solidify their interest in engineering and strengthen their relationship with Tech,” said Benton-Johnson.

Tech’s SEI hosted 25 students—12 male and 11 female. Three-quarters of the participants were from Georgia, with the rest from across the nation—two from Puerto Rico.

While the program’s focus was on under-represented minorities, admission was open to all. SEI participants were required to have successfully completed a minimum of two sciences and Algebra II, and to have a GPA of 2.4.

“We were looking at people who had a passion for engineering and technology to solve real-world problems,” Benton-Johnson said. “HOMER to explore the design awareness in the kindergarten well as increase engineering awareness components. The Institute has also set a study of its kind when conducted in 2001.

In brief:

Student designs in competition

Seventeen furniture design projects—representing the works of 12 students—were finalists in the 2008 NWF Design Emphasis Furniture Competition, held last week at the Georgia World Congress Center. Students created the works in the senior design studio of the Advanced Wood Products Laboratory. For more information, visit www.coa.gatech.edu.

Management hosts blood drive

The American Red Cross will hold a blood drive Sept. 3 on the third floor of the College of Management, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. All types of blood are needed, particularly types O and B. Walk-ins are welcome, or donors can schedule an appointment by visiting the Red Cross Web site and logging in with code “comgt.” For more information, visit www.give4life.org.

Thinking globally, eating locally

Tech’s Office of Environmental Stewardship and Students Organizing for Sustainability have added their support to an initiative for creating a local, sustainable food system.

By signing A Plan for Atlanta’s Sustainable Food Future: The Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI), Tech has lent its support to the ecologically minded plan, which outlines goals and objectives to create a system to provide affordable and nutritious food from local farms and gardens.

For more information...

College of Engineering www.coe.gatech.edu

For more information...

Green Buzz www.greenbuzz.gatech.edu


August 25, 2008  3