

## Southern University and A&M College Reconsiders Plan to Terminate Bachelor of Architecture Degree

### Background

Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge (SUBR) proposed the closure of its School of Architecture and termination of the Bachelor of Architecture (BAR) degree. This proposal was put forth with great reluctance. The School of Architecture is the leading producer of African American architects in the state of Louisiana. A 2007 working paper by the Center for the Study of Practice in the College of Design Architecture, Art & Planning at the University of Cincinnati lists Southern University as one of seven HBCUs attended by nearly 45% of African American students in professional architecture programs in the United States. The same working paper placed Southern fourth among 11 institutions from which 555 African American architects reported that they earned at least one professional degree.

Clearly, the architecture program at Southern University is a major contributor to diversity in the profession of architecture. However, given the cost of maintaining the program in the face of dwindling state appropriations and the need to prevent the decline of its other degree programs, the SUBR administration recommended the closure of the School of Architecture. The determining factors were the School's low completion rates; declining enrollment over the past three years; relatively low student credit hour production compared to other programs on campus; and annual costs of more than \$766,000 for salaries and benefits.

The proposal to close the School has generated much discussion and concern locally and nationally. Chancellor Lomotey met with alumni of the School during the recent Southern University Alumni Federation meeting in Washington to discuss ways in which graduates of the program can assist financially. In addition, the Architecture program's outreach efforts in the Scotlandville Community have done much to create opportunities for building relationships between the community and Southern University and A&M College.

### Moving Forward

Two proposals have been generated at SUBR to strengthen its architecture program. One, presented by the School of Architecture itself, is a proposal to align the Department of Visual Arts in the College of Arts and Humanities with the School of Architecture. This plan received approval by the Board of Supervisors as part of the overall 2009-2010 SUBR budget reduction plan. Secondly, the campus-wide SUBR

Program Review and Evaluation Task Force recommended in May 2010 that the School of Architecture be restructured as a department in the College of Engineering. Given the merit of these proposals and genuine concern for the continuation of the architecture program emanating from a wide array of constituencies, SUBR is withdrawing its recommendation to terminate the Bachelor of Architecture degree. In lieu of its previous proposal, several options are being considered by SUBR, including the following:

1. The School of Architecture and the Department of Visual Arts in the College of Arts and Humanities will align.
2. The School of Architecture and Department of Visual Arts will merge to become a single department in the College of Engineering.
3. The School of Architecture will become a department in the College of Engineering.

These recommendations were discussed with the dean and members of the School of Architecture faculty. They have requested an opportunity to discuss the recommendations among themselves before responding.