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Dr. Kofi Lomotey, Chancellor
Southern University
J.S. Clark Administration Building
Baton Rouge, LA 70813

Dear Dr. Lomotey:

I am writing in response to a news report yesterday about your proposal to close Southern University's School of Architecture. This report came as quite a surprise to me, given the assurances your administration provided to the visiting team sent by the National Architectural Accrediting Board in spring 2009, just a little over a year ago.

Perhaps you will recall that I served as chair of that visit; these are the notes I took, which are pretty much verbatim, documenting the commitment your administration made on 30 March to the School of Architecture:

The architecture program is important to Southern University, to the campus, the system, and state in its ability to attract and prepare students of African American heritage for the practice of architecture . . . Our commitment is to sustain the program. We don't see ourselves as having a choice. We don't want it to exist under threat. We ll have to reprioritize. The situation is as bad as any situation I've heard about nationally. We re beginning a strategic planning process. We are looking at programs that are not as productive as the Bachelor of Architecture. In response to the low completer report, we made the determination to sustain and further develop the program . . . We have to have a rationale for getting the funds that we will divert toward this program to protect our academic interest.

You further went on to elaborate the contributions that both students and faculty of the School of Architecture make to the university and to both private and public development in the broader Baton Rouge community, where most graduates remain. Finally, you acknowledged the School of Architecture's national importance as fourth among the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in graduating African Americans who become licensed architects, a group that themselves generate 35 percent of the few—just 1,764 persons or less than 2 percent—of the licensed black architects nationally.

So impressed was I, and my colleagues on the visiting team, that I stood before the school at an exit meeting and announced that the team's recommendations would, first and foremost, be informed by:

The new University Administration's affirmation of support for the School of Architecture as evidenced by its commitment to shift resources from programs that are not as productive as SUSA and in its recognition of the school's vital role in increasing the number of African Americans entering the field of architecture.



Based upon the team's recommendation, the National Architectural Accrediting Board awarded the school a full term (six year) accreditation in July 2009.

Perhaps the team—and the NAAB—were duped by the platitudes that accrediting visits generate, but certainly in March 2009 your administration *seemed* truly sincere in recognizing the unique role of this program, both locally and nationally. Yet, you are now willing to balance the university budget by axing a single program—one you promised to sustain, further develop, and protect.

Budget constraints are real, and I am sure that from your vantage point as chancellor, saving \$200,000 in a single blow looks like a rational decision. After all, Louisiana has other architecture programs that could absorb the small number of Southern students who will be displaced by the closure. But have you thought to check how many of Louisiana's 19 registered African American architects have actually graduated from those programs? And have you thought about the implications of having just 19 registered black architects in a state with extraordinary architectural challenges in its black communities?

Before you make a hasty decision on Friday that will have a profound effect not only on individual students and faculty but on Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the national architecture community, I would respectfully request that you put this decision on hold until other solutions can be generated.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dr. Sharon E. Sutton, FAIA

Professor of Architecture, University of Washington

Distinguished Professor, Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture

cc: Dr. Mwalimu Shujaa, Provost
Antonio Clayton, Chair of the Board of Supervisors
Dr. Sudhir K. Trivedi, President of the Faculty Senate
Lonnie Wilkinson, Dean of the School of Architecture
Wendy Ornelas, FAIA, President of the National Accrediting Architectural Board
Andrea S. Rutledge, Executive Director of the NAAB