

## **Principles of Community**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is a unique aspect of the education of architects that allow faculty, students, and staff to work together in a mutually supportive and close-knit environment. It is thus even more critical that we affirm the policy of the USC School of Architecture that all of the members of our community should treat each other with dignity and respect. Debate and discussion of ideas are encouraged, however, when differences occur, steps should be taken to prevent behavior that is harassing, abusive, or offensive, and instead resolve conflicts in a satisfactory and amicable manner.

### **UNIVERSITY POLICIES**

"The University of Southern California expects that all members of the community – students, faculty, staff and friends – should be able to pursue their work and education in a safe environment, free from sexual coercion, violence and intimidation of any kind." (Scampus 2000-2001, pg. 100) To this end, the University has well defined policies related to harassment, discrimination and violence that specify the appropriate university offices and procedures that are to be followed in the event of a complaint. Conduct violating community standards that is not specifically mentioned may be subject to disciplinary action. Please refer to the Scampus, Staff Employment Policies and Procedures, or Faculty Handbook as appropriate. This document does not deal with those specific issues, but instead concentrates on those issues affecting the day to day interaction between students, staff, and faculty in the School of Architecture. If occurrences of harassment, discrimination, or violence occur, they **MUST** be reported, in writing is preferable, to the Associate Dean and Dean.

### **WORKSPACE AND PROFESSIONALISM**

The School's spaces are designed for informal learning opportunities, formal exchanges of information, and a professional workplace. Balancing these different agendas can be complex at times, but certain basic rules apply. Respect each others' equipment, work products, and workspace. Please check with the appropriate individual before borrowing an item and return it when it is due and in working condition. Items like slide projectors, overhead projectors, and keys should be signed out. Rooms like the faculty lounge and cafe are heavily used and shared spaces. Respect concurrent use of the rooms and clean up after yourself before leaving. Smoking is not allowed in the building and at restricted times on the bridges between Watt and Harris Halls. In addition, food and drink are not allowed in the lecture rooms, especially Harris 101.

In general, an ideal workplace would rely on the "Five Basic Principles for a Collaborative Workplace":

1. Focus on the situation, issue, or behavior and not the person. You should work constructively with the people involved; if problems occur, focus on how that situation can be resolved and not on interpersonal dynamics or specifically personal characteristics.
2. Maintain the self-confidence and self-esteem of others by pointing out what they are doing correct and with good intent, discovering ways for them to overcome shortcomings.
3. Maintain constructive relationships.
4. Take initiative to make things better.
5. Lead by example.

At all times, students, staff, and faculty should treat each other in a professional manner. Loud shouting or insulting speech is not acceptable. Obscenity, profanity, or intimidation of any kind should not be used at any time in the presence of others. This concept also applies to all non-verbal communications, such as e-mail and memorandums. For example, many consider e-mail correspondences written in all capital letters to be "shouting." This should be avoided to eliminate any misunderstanding or else make it clear that you are using capital letters or bold type as a way of differentiating between your comments and the previous message. Also be aware of the cultural diverse backgrounds of the students, staff, and faculty as people may react in ways they feel are acceptable, but you may not; communication can often alleviate this problem.

The exchange of ideas work best when all participants are there to contribute. Please make a special effort to attend class, meetings, appointments, lectures, and other events on time. It is disruptive and disrespectful to be tardy.

### **Studio**

As much of a student's time is spent in studio, it deserves special mention. The School of Architecture is the only School on campus that provides each one of their students with their own workplace. It is a unique aspect of the education of architecture that allow students to work together in a mutually supportive and close-knit environment. A better kept working environment produces better work and relations from the students. It is crucial that we maintain a good working environment in the studio.

Architecture is a major that involves close interaction with the faculty. Students share their ideas and inspirations that lead to closer bonds with their professors. Yet these bonds are still different from friends, and a professional manner of interaction should still be applied. Even though the studio often is an informal setting, during studio hours it is the professors' classroom, and their guidelines should be followed.

A basic regard for the right and needs of others should be a sufficient policy, but some guidelines require explicit mention.

1. Interaction with your fellow students is central to the quality of the studio experience. However, it is our responsibility to keep this interaction constructive and not merely social. Conversation should emphasize architecture-related topics.
2. The studio is a collective space. Be mindful of your workspace and take care not to inadvertently deface it. This includes spray painting or spray mounting inside the building.
3. The attendance policy is outlined in your syllabus, but be advised that attendance is mandatory. Please check with your studio instructor about the policy concerning unexcused absences; in many studio class, 3 absences are grounds for a failing grade in the course. If you are absent, you are responsible for obtaining your assignment, lecture notes, etc.
4. Students are required to attend and are expected to actively participate in the review sessions to which they are assigned; in addition to those of the jurors, these comments can be valuable to your peers. In addition, listening to others' reviews is a learning experience and may help contribute to understanding your own project better.
5. Respect the community work environment by listening to music with headphones. Also, turn off cell phones and pagers during class time.
6. As computer space is limited, the computers in the studios are to be used for only studio work during studio hours. There should be no other class work done in the studio at this time. Outside studio hours, the computer should be used for studio work and other academic classroom work. Recreational use of the computer is a low priority.
7. When you leave the studio, leave it in the same or better condition that you found it at the beginning of the semester. Clean-up dates will be posted; work and material left after than date will be disposed.
8. Do not eat in studio. Drinks are permitted, but not at the computer stations or in the computer studio area. If drinks are brought into the studio, any damage caused by spills are your responsibility.
9. Although material left on the floor is likely to be removed by the janitors, you should make every effort to keep your studio space clean. Place all waste material and rubbish in the trash cans.

### **Faculty and Staff**

The School's mission is to provide the highest quality educational experience. While this does not mean that last minute academic requests should automatically be given absolute priority, it does mean that we should judge our actions in terms of this basic fact. It is important to realize that, though something might be of top priority to you, to someone else it might be something that needs to wait while other pressing matters are addressed.

It is important to remember that the School is a collaborative effort among other departments in the University system and that deadlines must be both properly defined and observed. Because we outsource for so many things (outside vendors, printing, parking, copying, reimbursements and payroll, textbooks, etc.), strict adherence of stated deadlines must be met to alleviate any undue anxiety. Observance of deadlines is everyone's responsibility. When dealing with financial matters or things that need to get approval from the Dean, other departments, or the like, it is also important to figure in a lead-time into the equation when figuring out when the submittal should be turned in so that deadlines can be met. Also, do not short circuit the process for approval; give yourself enough time to work through and with the coordinators and directors of the various programs.

Student workers are also to be considered staff. Their work is valuable for the School, and they have the responsibility to act in a professional manner when on duty. These rules of conduct also apply to anyone representing and employed by the University including readers, teaching assistants, lab consultants, etc.

At no time should faculty, staff or students try to circumvent appropriate procedures in order to try to get special consideration. This is especially critical with outside sources (such as Purchasing Department, University Print, and Transportation Services) as certain relationships have been formed with these entities. Ignoring appropriate channels could ultimately result in strained relations with suppliers that could result in greater problems in the future.

### **Faculty Behavior**

Faculty are frequently in the position of requesting staff members to perform work, reviewing that work, and requesting corrections. Here is a general guideline of expectations.

1. Faculty must understand that staff members are also being assigned tasks by university and departmental administrators as well as other faculty members. If important tasks are left to the last minute, staff members may not be able to respond because they are performing other important tasks. Organization and forethought are the keys in ensuring that deadlines are met.
2. Staff should not be asked to perform duties of a personal (non-school related) nature, nor request a staff person to utilize University equipment or supplies for personal matters. Additionally, faculty should not request of anyone in the office to guard any personal items, such as briefcases or handbags. All faculty members will have an office allocated to them in which to keep personal belongings if they choose.
3. Faculty should keep in mind that staff desks are actually personal workspaces of the staff and should not be entered into or rummage through. E-mailing or phone calling can be done from the faculty lounge; if possible, discussions with other faculty, staff, and students should not be done in a communal work area. Additionally, some people bring in their own personal supplies for particular projects, so taking any item -- even if it appears to belong to the School -- should never be done without asking. Also, faculty should not simply place things on a person's desk hoping that they will see it. People work differently and while something may appear "disorganized" to you, there may be a system in place for that staff member that you could potentially disrupt. Ask if you do not know where to put something.

### **Staff Behavior**

1. Staff members must understand that faculty and other staff frequently assign tasks that are important and that scheduling is difficult. Reasonable attempts should be made to complete such tasks.
2. If faculty or staff make a request that cannot be fulfilled in the available time or which conflict with other assignments, staff members should immediately inform the requester of the conflict. This will allow the faculty to make alternate arrangements for job completion. Communication is essential so that all parties understand the deadlines and priorities involved.
3. Staff members should make the attempt to contact someone in person at the office if they are going to be out for any reason. If it is before regular office hours, then an attempt should be

made to leave a voice mail message on two answering systems. This will help prevent any ambiguity in absences.

4. Communication is a key element in any successful organization. Keeping co-workers abreast of schedules, deadlines, and pertinent information is essential in maintaining a well-organized work environment.
5. At no time should a staff member take something from another staff member, faculty, or student's desk without asking, even if it appears to be an item belonging to the School. Some staff members bring in their own special supplies to help complete projects, so just because something is on a desk, that does not mean that it is community property.

## **METHODS OF RESOLVING CONFLICTS**

The School of Architecture is dedicated to the fair and equitable treatment of all members of the university community. Resolution of conflicts or disagreements between individuals is of great importance to the operation and morale of the School. The goal is always to facilitate the quick and fair resolution of any disagreement or conflict.

Faculty, both through their academic credentials and professional status, are expected to be appropriate role models for the students and colleagues of the staff members in the School of Architecture. Staff members are professionals, working within a diverse environment and should act as the situation demands. Students are adults, in the pre-professional stages of their career, and are not all alike -- some have families, some have other careers, others are balancing commitments to jobs and school. In all cases, everyone should show respect for the other members of the community and help to provide an environment where people are encouraged to learn, express diverse opinions, and interact in a mutually beneficial manner with others.

Sometimes, however, conflicts do arise between faculty members and students, staff, and other faculty. These should be dealt with in a timely, proactive, and respectful manner. Sometimes things said in anger can be resolved with an apology, once the parties calm down and reflect upon the situation. In all cases, attempts should be made to settle problems directly between conflicted parties, without bringing in "upper levels of management" unless the situation warrants it. In all cases, both parties should focus on the problem itself, trying to separate the conflict at hand from personal issues. Issues should be resolved privately if at all possible and not discussed beyond the participants once the issues have been resolved, unless special conditions warrant informing specific people. In no case should this be considered a source of "gossip." Be calm, rational and remember the goal of resolving the problem rather than attributing blame. Also, because of our culturally diverse membership, "normal" reactions might vary more than what you expect. Be alert and considerate of the other party's view of the situation. Do not overreact.

If the conflict does need to be moved further along, include written documentation about the issue; in some cases, this might be as simple as a few sentences describing the problem and contact information; in others it might include more detail about the time / date of the event and positions taken by both sides. Of course, at every level a timely response is critical; for more serious issues, this will include a written response. Please see below for specifics on the proper course of action.

Overall, goodwill and willingness to resolve issues should be emphasized whether the participants are students, faculty, or staff. The goal is to resolve the difficulty so that the main objectives of the School, teaching and learning, can be continued in a supportive environment.

### **faculty / student interaction**

In the case of faculty / student interaction, the faculty should remember that generally this is not seen as an equal pairing. The faculty member is often in charge of grades, has some control over the situation, and is seen as an authority figure. Use good judgment in deciding when and how to discuss an issue with a student. Do not be confrontational. Rather, find a neutral place to talk the problem out. The faculty may find that it might be best if a faculty colleague talk with the student instead. For example, a male faculty member might find it better for a female colleague to talk with a student in certain cases or vice versa. Most problems can and should be resolved at this level.

A similar situation arises when a student has a grievance with a faculty member. Speak with the faculty member directly if possible or have a friend or representative of Student Council broach the issue. Do not just ignore the problem and be afraid to confront the problem; most issues can be easily resolved by discussion between the participants.

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached, the next step is to talk with the studio coordinator or program director in charge, bringing the written summary. He / she hopefully will be able to resolve the conflict. If not, the Associate Dean and then the Dean are the next layers up. Considering the honest attempt both sides will be making to resolve the issue, it is hoped that the problem has been solved before these people need to be involved.

#### **student / student interaction**

If conflicts were to arise, the student should always talk to the other person or people involved first. If speaking with the person involved doesn't produce a satisfactory resolution, then the Student Council representative of that year level should be brought in as a moderator; next the Student Council President and Studio Coordinator. Finally if all of the above does not help in resolving the conflict then the Associate Dean and Dean should be notified in writing so that they can help resolve the issue fairly and in a timely manner.

#### **staff / staff and staff / student interaction**

The individuals involved should attempt to resolve their differences between themselves informally. If the matter is unresolved after informal discussion between the parties involved, employees may request that their supervisor or manager investigate the situation. In many cases, the problem can be resolved without resorting to formal complaint procedures. If talking with the supervisor or next higher level of supervision does not resolve the complaint, the parties involved should follow the Staff Complaint Procedure as described in the USC Staff Employment Policies and Procedures handbook.

#### **faculty / staff interaction**

As with all the proposed methods of conflict resolution, the faculty and staff should try to resolve the issue together. Remember that you are colleagues and treat each other with the respect that you both deserve in your conversations. It appears that many problems are the result of poor communication and can easily be solved. If not, prepare a short written document to submit to the staff member's supervisor or to the Associate Dean for conflicts originating with the faculty. In dire cases, the Associate Dean and the Dean may need to become actively involved in the resolution of the conflict, but this is to be considered the exception rather than the rule.

#### **faculty / faculty**

Faculty can and do disagree, both on theoretical and mundane day-to-day how to do things issues. The School encourages discourse on an extremely wide range of issues, all within the correct context and time. Faculty must not say negative things about the actions or opinions of other faculty members to the students. Differences of opinion are welcomed, but to undermine another faculty member with the students is to show great disrespect for both the individual and the School as a whole and must be avoided. As with the other disputes, conflict resolution conversations between faculty should take place in a neutral, private location. In some cases, a studio coordinator, a program director, or mutually trusted colleague may be invited in to provide a different perspective of the situation and help in the discussions. If, after exhausting these methods, the conflict cannot be peaceably resolved, contact the Associate Dean with the written material; in extreme cases, he or the participants may decide that the issue demands the Dean's involvement.

### **SUMMARY**

The School of Architecture supports a highly interactive environment where students, staff, and faculty continue to learn and grow in a environment free from petty arguments, gossip, unresolved disputes, harassment, discrimination, and violence. Instead, we rely upon respect, mutual goodwill, and willingness to resolve differences in an equitable manner as the cornerstones of professional behavior at a University. The students, faculty, and staff are inter-dependent and together build the School of Architecture.