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Architecture gets a boost

Widening horizons at UB school a good match with region's treasures

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The University at Buffalo has played an increasingly important role in the planning and design of this area, from the school's role in the 2005 award-winning Queen City Hub plan for Buffalo to the impact of the North Campus in Amherst.

UB's School of Architecture and Planning, in its 40th year, now is among the top 20 public schools in that field and is the only architecture program in the State University of New York system. It is emerging as a leading academic center in those disciplines — a good fit for a place with both great planning and architecture, including a park system by Frederick Law Olmsted and master works by iconic American architects H.H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Today, the school's 800-plus students are involved in a variety of projects that combine hand-crafted methodology with digital technology producing 3-D images. University involvement with Buffalo in a number of projects helps connect the school and the city. A lecture series and an exhibition program about architecture and planning bring people from all over the world to the school, helping enhance its role as a focal point for discussions of architecture, planning and design.

An exhibition last semester at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, "Drawing Architecture," was co-curated with staff from the gallery and a California collector. It featured drawings from famous architects including Daniel Liebeskind, who visited Buffalo as part of the event. That fit well with growing public interest in architecture and community planning. Working with the gallery extended the reach of the school into the community.

Also important is the school's work with Habitat for Humanity, helping to build a few houses each summer while teaching students design and construction.



As the UB 2020 expansion project proceeds, one of the core principles is that the university aligns itself with the aspirations of the host region. That will be a challenge, especially in the Town of Amherst, as the university increases enrollment by 10,000 students. Currently, there

are five separate projects focused on the transportation implications of UB's growth.

Building real bridges is, apparently, something this region is not particularly good at. But under Dean Brian Carter, UB's School of Architecture and Planning has built some solid metaphorical ones through involvement with the Urban Design Project, the Olmsted Conservancy and Buffalo's master plan. With its Center for Urban Studies and its Center for Virtual Architecture engaged in digital research for visualization and fabrication and the IDEA Center which works on accessibility, it seems well positioned to continue influencing the shape of the future.

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