Student Life at the SoA: Inside and Outside of Studio

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Student life at the UNLV School of Architecture is as unique as the people that make up our small community on the corner of Maryland and Tropicana. With a blue-collar work ethic and ambition, our students have carved a niche for themselves in the diverse, global network of design. With one foot in academia and the other in the community, our students walk a very fine line that allows them to fully embrace both the challenges of a design school and the opportunities Las Vegas and UNLV affords.

A local firm principal once told me, “I hire UNLV grads because I know I’m getting someone who is a dedicated designer and engaged with the community...They work in the profession, they volunteer; they’re so much more than just students.”

As Las Vegas recovers from the ailments of the last recession, we are being looked to as the future decision-makers for this young, but burgeoning metropolis. From hospitality design, to master planning historic rural neighborhoods, to redevelopment of the Maryland corridor, UNLV students find themselves at the collision point of a maturing, exciting community and a rapidly changing world.

The dedication and involvement of the student body has also been recognized at a national level. In particular, this year has been a milestone for the UNLV Chapter of the American Institute of Architecture Students. At the FORUM Conference in Austin, Texas, the chapter accepted the National Chapter Honor Award, marking the first time UNLV has ever received the highest distinction an AIAS chapter can receive. For his leadership and dedication, Past-President Dominic Armendariz was given the Honorable Mention for the Chapter President Honor Award. I added a design award, bringing UNLV’s total honor awards to three—the most for any school.

Dominic was also elected the next Director of the West Quadrant, becoming the third UNLV student to serve on the National Board of Directors. Dominic plans to use his position to grow the AIAS, reaching out to high schools and community colleges in the region. As President-Elect, Destanee Cook prepares to take the reins of a nationally-recognized chapter. Her team will look to create new and innovative ways to enhance the students’ experience at the School of Architecture.

Life as an architecture student at UNLV is about creating opportunities. By taking an active role in our education, we customize our journey to fit our passions. This can come in the form of involvement in our student organizations, community outreach, or internships—to name a few. Ultimately, this is what each of us brings to the table. It is not simply a diploma, but a summation of scholastic, practical, and personal experiences that shape who we are, and will be, as designers and leaders of tomorrow.