EXCHANGE
a Forum for Interior Design Education
FALL 2015
Where did the time go? For those of us on semesters we’re past the halfway point where our students face the intersection of time management and class projects and the reality that brings both good and bad results. In the spirit of the EXCHANGE theme on “risk” it is valuable to reflect on our own the experiences of the learning process. Last spring at the annual meeting in Fort Worth I spoke about how Interior Design Matters and how we as educators are a critical part of that puzzle. Our job is a mighty one for it is our charge to prepare the next workers and leaders of our very important profession. When we are ‘in the weeds’ we may forget that each of us are ensuring that our students have the technical and critical thinking skills to enter the profession ready, not just to work, but to excel. We are teaching our students to address complex issues, and we must encourage our students to not shy away from taking risks in their design and exploring these issues in innovative ways. This also means that as educators, we must not shy away from taking risks ourselves, broadening our own capacities in pedagogical approaches and in our scholarship. IDEC is here to support you.

Among the current happenings being created by member volunteers we have: new peer-reviewed additions to the Innovative Teaching Ideas manual; JID continues to provide a source for meaningful and informative research; the marvelous Pecha Kucha presentations from Fort Worth are now available online through the web site; our regional conferences have all concluded but each provided an intimate setting for scholarship and networking; and multiple committees are hard at work to shine a light on their area of focus. For the annual conference in Portland, the Teaching Academy is organizing a wonderful all-day workshop focused on teaching that will be a great experience for both new and seasoned professors. The scholarship collaborative is working to finalize a program of peer-reviewed presentations that are sure to be both excellent and informative. And, to enrich our experience in Portland, our conference committee is planning some exciting things for us. They are so proud of their great city and state and you are going to be conflicted about choosing things to do. You may want to come early or stay a day or two more. Look for postings about specifics in our weekly eNEWS.

IDEc’s resources are fueled by our strong volunteer-based membership. This keeps our efforts focused on the things that matter most to our members. This also provides our members an additional opportunity for professional development and growth. If you are new to IDEC, I encourage you to reach out to either your regional chair, or to me, and we will help you find a place to serve that is meaningful for you. If you are a seasoned member, I think you will find a new air of excitement that can provide new peers and ideas for your scholarship and your classroom. As you read through this issue of the Exchange I am sure that the articles will provide opportunities for reflection that you can bring with you on your path this year.

For the Board of Directors and myself, we send our most positive thoughts for the successful conclusion of this semester and year and we hope that you will all join us in Portland March 9-11.

Cynthia Mohr
IDEC President, 2015-2016
Anyone who has ever designed anything is well acquainted with the anxiety and worry that bringing projects into the world causes. This issue of IDEC EXCHANGE focuses on questions associated with risk. The topic of risk was developed with the associate editors, and rose to the top of our list of themes because we feel that this topic is crucial to engage as professionals, scholars, and educators. We all felt that the question of risk is one we continuously seek to address, and consider it to be fundamental to the practice of Interior Design and training of future Interior Designers.

Risk is most often associated with pushing boundaries, testing new ideas or proposing alternatives to status quo thinking. Generally, whether it is student work, scholarly research or professional practice, a collective aversion to the perils of proposing something new often drives design of all kinds toward well-worn conclusions. How can we simultaneously mitigate risk and test Interior Design as practice and pedagogy? Berthold Brecht has been attributed as saying “fail, fail again, fail better”, and it may very well be that opening ourselves up to failure is indeed a way to move from risk to opportunity. The works compiled in this issue all deal with this transformation from risk to opportunity in different ways. I hope that the issue sparks questions and provides glimpses into creative ways to both acknowledge and leverage risk in order to expand the relevancy and reach of Interior Design.

Thanks to our graphic designer Ryan Foster and Sarah Washburn from IDEC, our wonderful group of associate editors, IDEC President Elect, Migette Kaup and our current President, Cynthia Mohr for their continued support with this endeavor. Finally and most importantly, thanks to you, the IDEC Community, as we continue to provide and develop the IDEC Exchange as an increasingly critical forum to share your scholarship, teaching and service stories.

Cheers,
Clay Odom
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The Prefab Bathroom

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PROGRESSIVE PARTNERS
We have all heard aphorisms such as “high risk, high reward” or have thought to ourselves “that is a risky proposition.” The problems and projects that interior designers engage inherently involve risk. Big ideas and innovative proposals are fraught with personal, financial, and professional risk while insurance requirements, standards, and codes are designed to reduce risk. In pedagogy, “risk of failure” is often at the forefront of student concerns and embedded in pedagogical expectations for direction and feedback.

How might risk influence the types of projects as well as the design methods, pedagogies, tools, and processes that are proposed and developed both in practice and academia? How does the dialectic of risk aversion and risk taking influence work within these practices and academia, and how might a more open engagement with the potentials and perils of risk be used as drivers of disciplinary innovation? The risk that our solutions can cause harm is balanced by the optimistic, but no less risky, potential that our work will enliven, enhance, and expand humanity’s health, happiness, and social strength.

How is risk part of pedagogy? Learning to take design’s risks is a process of lifelong exploration. How do students learn in the university classroom and studio to deal with the risks they will face in the profession? How are students encouraged to engage risk or mitigate risk?

How is risk engaged through practice? What are innovative practices or business models that have been designed to engage risk productively? Interior designers are often presented with complex problems that will fundamentally influence how organizations operate, provide services, and interact with constituents, customers, or workers. The design decisions that are made in solving these problems carry long-term consequences. How are designers in contemporary practice using design processes either to assess and resolve these risks or to embrace and leverage them? What tools, research, and expertise does the next generation of designers need to develop to engage the peril and promise of risk?

The Fall 2015 IDEC Exchange invited submissions to critically engage with these questions of risk in learning, pedagogy, and design methodologies. In addition, we hoped to hear about projects and proposed engagements dealing with complex, risky problems; those with new, speculative, or advanced methods and process; or those that are exploring how the design interior environments promote, mitigate, or respond to risk.
GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD AT IDEC

The *Journal of Interior Design* is excited to offer the Graduate Student Research Award again at the 2016 Annual IDEC Conference. Both poster and paper presentations are eligible for this award, and no formal application is required. The top five graduate student submissions, as determined by the proposal reviewer scores, will be secretly evaluated by reviewers during the conference. The award recipient will be announced at the IDEC Awards banquet and will receive a cash prize of $300. Please inform your graduate students of this opportunity as it speaks to the value the academy places on their contribution to the conference discourse.

JID WELCOMES NEW ASSOCIATE EDITOR, MARILYN READ

Dr. Marilyn Read assumed the role of associate editor for the Journal of Interior Design in July. Marilyn holds a PhD in human behavior in the near environment. Currently she is an associate professor of interior design at Oregon State University. Prior to joining Oregon State University, she was an associate professor of interior design at Auburn University for eight years. Her research background and publishing experience will contribute to her mentoring role as associate editor. Marilyn has studied the interaction between human behavior and color, space, and form in the built environment. She is the author or coauthor of research that has been published in the Journal of Interior Design; Children, Youth, and Environments; Environment and Behavior; Journal of Adolescent Research; Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences; and Early Childhood Education Journal. Marilyn and her colleagues received the IDEC Special Projects Award for work with the design of children’s environments.
Each year the Journal of Interior Design publishes a special issue with papers devoted to a single theme or current issue. Recent past topics have been interior design history, collaboration, and sustainability. The 2016 special issue, to be published in September, is guest edited by Tasoulla Hadjiyanni, PhD, of the University of Minnesota. According to Dr. Hadjiyanni, the papers in this issue, Design + Culture: Charting New Directions for Interior Design Scholarship and Pedagogy, are intended to advance discourses around culture and solidify interior design’s contributions to questions about cultural aspect of place. The relationship between design and culture is increasingly important, and, as the Call for Papers stated, much remains to be explored before a coherent and holistic model for how the interior design discipline relates to culture can be developed. The Perspective will be by Dr. Ellen J. Pader, University of Massachusetts Amherst, an anthropologist who works with interiors.

Guest editing the 2017 special issue, which will have a healthcare focus, are Mardelle Shelpley, PhD, and Sheila Danko, MID, of Cornell University. The registration of interest deadline yielded a record number of intended submissions. This issue, Design for Healthcare: Nurturing a Systems View of Design Process and Product, is scheduled for publication in March 2017 with a possible second one in June 2017. Papers will focus on healthcare design research as it informs the design of appropriate healing environments and explores the myriad of forces shaping healthcare reform, as well as what these changes may mean for facilities and delivery systems.

The IDEC External Service Task Force was established in late May 2014 with its main purpose being to “to examine present activity within IDEC that constitutes external service”.

The intent for 2015-2016 IDEC External Service task force is to explore ways on how best to engage members and orient them to suitable and meaningful involvement. This task force will examine how to promote the benefits of providing service to the community using the skills of interior design and making this public to our scholarly audience and to the broader community.

Lorella Di Cintio, from Ryerson University is the Chair of the IDEC External Service Task Force and has prepared the foundational work for this task force.

Dr. Di Cintio would like to welcome two new members to the team:

Kimberly Burke, University of Cincinnati
Alana Pulay, Oklahoma State University

Thank you to all applicants who applied and congratulations to Kimberly Burke and Alana Pulay.
‘The Prefab Bathroom’ (McFarland & Co, Inc. Publishers) - a collaboration between Deborah Schneiderman (Associate Professor, Interior Design, Pratt Institute), and artist/architect Bishakh Som- is a book length archicomic - Graphic novel style Architectural History - that examines 20th and 21st century design history through the lens of the prefabricated bathroom. The archicomic format is an innovative and ideal medium to simultaneously communicate scholarly design history, through extended captions, and storytelling and anecdotes, in speech balloons within the inhabited illustrations. Schneideraman’s earlier work, ‘Inside Prefab’ introduced aspects of this topic. Scheiderman expanded on the development of the project in interview stating that, “only a fraction of the research from Inside Prefab: The Ready-Made Interior was included in the history chapter and the additional bathroom research became the basis for this Graphic novel style history. The illustrated format allows for the depiction of inhabited interior space rather than the traditional uninhabited canonical photographs typical to design history books. As such it makes an ideal case for a discussion of the archicomic a design teaching tool. The archicomic format is an
ideal medium to simultaneously communicate scholarly design history, through extended captions, and storytelling and anecdotes, in speech balloons within the inhabited illustrations.”

In our interview, Schneiderman goes on to describe the impetus behind the innovative style of the book. She believes that, education is at a critical juncture, generation Y students, criticized for short attention spans caused by media saturated environments, present unique challenges to educators. Research has demonstrated that student learning is positively impacted by the incorporation of visual elements and the graphic novel format has been a successful teaching tool in academic settings, suggesting that the format will translate well to Interior Design education. Additionally, the potential effectiveness of graphic novels in the teaching of design history is aligned with the ideas inherent in media richness theory, which proposes an enhanced recall when visual elements are integrated into text. Graphic novels. ‘The Prefab Bathroom,’ because of its graphic novel format, is a new typology of texts for Interior Design and, Schneiderman believes, is a useful medium to aid in the learning and education of Interior Design students.

RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT STUDENT LEARNING IS POSITIVELY IMPACTED BY THE INCORPORATION OF VISUAL ELEMENTS AND THE GRAPHIC NOVEL FORMAT HAS BEEN A SUCCESSFUL TEACHING TOOL IN ACADEMIC SETTINGS, SUGGESTING THAT THE FORMAT WILL TRANSLATE WELL TO INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION.
A student recently framed her quandary about studying interior design to me with this statement: “I want to do something that matters.” The statement carried the heavy implication that interior design does not matter. The student looked at me and waited for a response. She wanted a neat, clean reassurance about why interior design mattered. Instead, I spoke about the many ways she could take her degree and work to improve the lives of others. We talked about the difference between a ‘safe’ route versus the route through life that would fulfill her ambition. The goal she has for her life involves risk.

As the student and I talked about her future career, I referred her to Jill Pable’s research and design work focusing on social justice and interiors. Pable’s studies on the impact of shelter spaces on residents raise important questions about how interior designers design for everyone. And, her work provides a powerful counterpoint to the most prominent representations of interior design in television and the home improvement industry.

My student and I talked about the value of well-designed spaces for everyone, even if ‘design’ was not available to everyone. The student recognized the lack of thoughtful, supportive, and healthy design in her world. We discussed the many ways that an interior design career might lead her to improve the lives of everyday people in living environments, in health care settings, and in the business spaces we use regularly. She left my office dissatisfied with the uncertainty of not knowing whether she was “doing something that matters,” but interested in learning more about the design research that is propelling contemporary practice.

A few days later, I read Mary Ann Beecher’s essay on the politics of interiors in the recent Blackwell Handbook of Interior Design (2015). Beecher’s argument is that design is inherently political; design changes how we view the world. She uses the example of early design and extension education programs out of Cornell University that improved the kitchen spaces used by women across New York (and beyond). The process of studying and improving the kitchens simultaneously changed the women’s perspective. This idea seems
so simple, but also risky. Designing good spaces for everyone has the potential to not just improve their lives, but transform what their lives are.

These are two examples of work “that matters”—and each involved the risk of daring to think about a situation in a different way.

At Kansas State, students in our studios regularly work with clients in the local community to understand the potential for their spaces. In spring 2015, a group of students in my fourth-year studio met with residents of a nearby small town to talk about rehabilitating an abandoned school building. The students quickly realized that the interior of the school was tied to the community’s sense of place and many residents’ memories. They also recognized that what they proposed for the ‘inside’ of the school would really be for the ‘inside’ of the community. Their meetings with residents, conversations asking questions, and presentation of ideas were creating something new and very meaningful to the residents. The students started the project thinking it was about an old building and realized their ideas were taken seriously as possible versions of the community’s future. As they realized the risk of failure—and the implications of failure—the students redoubled their efforts to help the town.

To the student who stopped by my office to ponder doing something meaningful: We need people who take the risk of asking questions, looking at problems in a different way, and challenging the status quo. I like to think that this way of thinking starts with raising a hand and asking a question in class. These are small, but important risks that matter.

THE RISK OF NOT KNOWING OURSELVES
SUBMITTED BY: SARAH URQUHART, ASSOCIATE EDITOR, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF INTERIOR DESIGN, DEPARTMENT OF ART & DESIGN, CAINE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

At its core, design education exists to move novice designers along a continuum of design expertise, toward entry level practice, and eventually to full expertise after years of experience in the field. The studio model, is shared across design disciplines (Green & Bonollo, 2003) and characterizes the primary method by which design novices are inculcated into their future disciplines. Although non-studio courses exist in design curriculums, as Gross and Do (1997, p.2) note, studio is “king” and is the primary place where the “act of designing is learned and practiced.” At the heart of the studio learning environment is the sole design expert who guides the learning process.

However, is it possible that this classic means of design education might be limiting our ability to adapt to the future? Reliance on an expert to guide learning in any area relies on two assumptions: 1) experts are able to accurately recall and articulate their decision making processes, and 2) novices can process information in the same way as the expert. This brief article argues that current approaches to guidance in design education studios limit learning potential because they are constrained by the “black box” of expert design cognition.

Research on expertise tells us that experts have extensive cognitive knowledge structures (schema), which expand their working memory capacity and allow them to solve problems quickly and with little effort compared to novices. While these expertise aspects are beneficial, faculty experts do need to be able to do what they teach, there is also a downside.
Unlike novice schema, expert schema are composed primarily of tacit knowledge (Feldon, 2007). When Pye (1960, p.7) stated that “the essential nature of the [design] activity seems not to be understood except by designer, and they have not formulated what they know,” he was not entirely accurate. It is not that the designers have not formulated what they know, rather it is that they know it so well, they can no longer say how they do it. The design research literature reports a near complete inability of design experts to explain their processes, and the design process in general has been characterized as largely implicit (van Dooren, Boschuizen, van Merriënboer, Aselbergs & van Dorst, 2013).

This pervasive inability of experts to explicate the steps of their design process is of particular concern for design education. Self-report accuracy has been studied in detail since the late 1970’s. The general finding is that without elicitation assistance, as much as 70% of information may be automatic and inaccessible to experts (Feldon, 2007a). Furthermore, reviews of instruction based on unguided expert self-report indicate that this practice significantly limits the acquisition of new skills because a significant number of the steps in the skill processes are skipped (Feldon, 2007b). If design education proceeds with the assumption that students will figure out what they need to along the way, we run the risk that students might graduate without the requisite cognitive skills needed to excel (van Dooren, et al, 2013).

Could it be that by not knowing ourselves, we as members of the design education and design research community are taking the greatest risk of all? It is imperative that we reach past disciplinary borders to build strong instructional practices based not only on design, but also what is known about effective learning.

References
TRY, TRY AGAIN: IMPROV, RISK AND THE DESIGN PROCESS
SUBMITTED BY: ROBERTO VENTURA, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR DESIGN VCUARTS

At first glance, improvisational comedy and interior design appear to be quite different, but the improv process provides a number of insights that designers might find useful. Improvisers create in real-time by generating specific, unique responses in reaction to partners and situations. Because each response is unrehearsed, the risk and rate of failure is high. The weight risk holds is significant; however, in order to improvise, allowing for this failure is key for the performer if she is to be successful.

In the studio, risk can result in paralysis. However, risk is inherent in any true innovation in design, because designers, even when bolstered with ample research, often engage in novel practices or applications with diverse users in unique situations. Risk is a necessary sidekick for creative success.

Given the nature of design exploration, educators should look to develop students who can embrace risk and who are willing to allow for failure. Since risk-taking and the acceptance of potential failures are neither necessarily intuitive nor palatable—anecdotally evidenced by the number of self-professed “perfectionists” in design—students may benefit from directed instruction aimed at developing healthy outlooks towards

FALL, THEN FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO ON THE WAY DOWN.
- DEL CLOSE, IMPROVISATIONAL INSTRUCTOR, AUTHOR, AND MENTOR.
failure. Because improvisation relies so heavily on risk-taking and failure, designers who learn the basics of improv might, in turn, apply them to a more innovative design process.

A senior level interior design studio studied how improv principles might inform their design process as they developed an hypothetical performance space for a local improvisational comedy troupe. Students began by studying principles of improvisation: play; saying “yes;” “yes, and;” creating rules; and, most importantly, the acceptance of failure. They then practiced these principles in an improvisational workshop led by two founders of a local improv company.

“RISK IS A NECESSARY SIDEKICK FOR CREATIVE SUCCESS.”

Subsequent studio classes began with exercises reinforcing important improv principles. These activities then formed the foundation for quick charrettes focused on generating multiple, quick conceptual parts, increasing the probability that many schemes would be rejected, but minimizing the risk of failure by lessening the “preciousness” of any one particular idea. In improv, when a scene sputters, the performers simply “wipe” the scene, and begin again. The charrettes operated in a similar spirit.

Once students began design development, their traditional methods—bubble diagrams, sketching, modeling, and space planning—were disrupted by additional improv experiments that emphasized fusing three-dimensional concept studies with the pragmatics of organizing interior space. A hallmark of improv is the introduction of unprepared dialogue or story lines. Good improvisers introduce this information as the logical—even if occasionally absurd—extension of the previous action. Much in the same way, reintroducing initial conceptual work in the context of space planning, for example, certainly disrupted students, but did so within their established theoretical frameworks.

Initiating each studio with improv exercises enabled students to practice, retain and explain principles with good clarity. The charrettes provided the students with a strict, but low stakes, framework within which they could risk developing conceptual work based on improv principles at a brisk pace that had relevance to the studio project. After some initial hesitation, students embraced the introductory improv exercises, and, most importantly, they discovered that going out on a ledge was not so scary after all.
Risks Define Design
SUBMITTED BY: REBEKAH RADTKE, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF INTERIORS, COLLEGE OF DESIGN, UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

Risk taking requires adaptability, critical thinking, and optimism. These core values are also fundamental to the practice of interior design. By infusing risks in teaching and learning, the profession expands its boundaries and allows students to gain these skills while in school. Travelling 300 km outside of Sao Paulo to a rural village to complete a community driven design project involved risks. Risks of letting the community members down, risks that the students will not understand the implications of design in a global context, risks that the work is too much on the periphery of interior design. These were risks that the study abroad experience to Brazil offered at the University of Kentucky had to not only address, but embrace to be a successful program.

Over the course of three weeks, students travelled to Igarai, Brazil to collaborate with a community and create a design solution to address the needs of a local school. Like all community-engaged projects, international community design projects take a substantial amount of planning; yet, they rarely go according to plan. Alterations and schedule changes taught students to be adaptable. By building a project on site, students were challenged to be flexible, find materials, and be innovative. They developed critical thinking skills by working with community members to design and build a project in a short time frame. Being able to face risks built confidence in students and allowed them embrace failure and to understand how to overcome it. Because of the risks involved, students took the work seriously. They were able to see the impact of their design and understand its implications to a broader community.

Community activated work is risky, but inspires us to rethink what it means to be a interior designer and how our work can impact a broader audience. This creates a sense of optimism in the work- that interior design matters and positively impacts the world around us. Because of the element of failure, we can push our practice, the profession, and ourselves in academia. These varying degrees of risks are why we design and teach design.
Wicked problems are too messy and complicated for early designers to deal with. At least that’s what we thought until we realized that wicked problems have immense consequences... and they are all around us! Design problems, by definition, are subjectively vague with no right or wrong answer, i.e. “wicked.” In our research, we have discovered two types of initial approaches students go through to overcome the fear of complex ‘wicked’ problems. This is not a new cognitive theory, or earth-shattering psychological revelation but merely an observation by us, the authors, over a ten year time span. The two problem solving directions are explorative and investigative. Explore and investigate are synonyms in English grammar; however, if we trace their Latin etymology we find slight differences between the two terms. ‘Explore’ connotes an action instigated by the operative agent whereas ‘investigate’ infers a reaction in which the agent follows a definitive path or procedure.

In the world of crime fiction these two attitudes can be characterized by Dashiell Hammett’s Sam Spade (explorative) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes (investigative). Sam Spade explains his method in The Maltese Falcon, “My way of learning is to heave a wild and unpredictable monkey-wrench into the machinery.” Sherlock Holmes method is data collection personified. His meticulous powers of fact finding inevitably lead to solving the crime. We believe that both, i.e. to heave a monkey-wrench or collect all the data before starting, are necessary approaches for embracing risk.

A. Explorative processes fit better to situations that reward autonomy, risk taking, and latitude for creative freedom.
B. Investigative processes fit better to situations that require greater definition, procedural development, and creative competency.

Each of these approaches help explain how designers navigate uncertainty. For studio instruction, the following ideas show how ‘exploration’ and ‘investigation’ can be utilized to navigate wicked problems:

Students Must Experience Wicked Problems.
Wicked problems force students to adapt proper tools and proficiencies into a coherent understanding which leads to utilizing a strategy to resolve higher-level, complex problems. What we have learned from wicked problems is to take risks and try out different solutions.

Freedom Is Critical For Intellectual Growth.
Creativity is not a specialization that can be learnt solely by saying to students “Be creative!” Becoming a creative problem solver involves freedom and emancipation from the behavioral notion of pleasing the professor. Levels of curricular freedom must be tempered with the maturity and ability of each class, as well as individual students themselves.
Adaptive Teaching/Learning Is More Than Grading Projects.
Adaptive teaching is a flexible, student-centered pedagogy. Adaptive learning is not about reaching specific learning objectives or providing outcomes by demonstrating a predetermined set of skills. This can be viewed as ‘cognitive recycling.’ What we want is ‘cognitive upcycling’ which forces the student to consider the consequences of the design act from different viewpoints. This means using multiple assessment methods in order to see beyond project outcomes to determine if the student “got it.”

Telling students to embrace risk is not enough. Experiencing explorative and investigative design processes will increase cognitive coping skills that can be utilized to manage the riskiness of any ‘wicked’ problem. As the teacher innovatively adapts the curriculum to the setting, students will begin to adapt their abilities to the complexities and consequences of interior design.

Risks in Community-Based Pedagogy and Practice
Submitted by: Travis Hicks, Assistant Professor
Department of Interior Design, UNC Greensboro
Director, Center for Community-Engaged Design

The Department of Interior Architecture at UNC Greensboro has committed itself to initiatives in historic preservation, sustainability, computer-aided and hands-on making, product and furniture design, and community-engaged design. As the director of the Center for Community-Engaged Design (CC-ED) - the department’s formal commitment to the latter initiative - I am keenly aware of risks associated with community-based pedagogy and practice.

Faculty Risks
Faculty, particularly tenure-track faculty, risk pursuing work in the community that can be regarded by some as lacking scholarly rigor. Some in the academy do not value Ernest Boyer’s scholarship of engagement or the scholarship of application in the same way they value the scholarship of discovery. Engaged faculty risk having others devalue their scholarship as “service,” not as “research.”

Failure to complete a project or to meet project goals is also a risk for faculty. For community-based work that is mutually beneficial and reciprocal, there is often no way to predict all the twists and turns that the project will take, potentially failing to meet its goals. While this failure is perfectly acceptable in the world of community engagement, such a process proves risky in the context of academia in which safe, predictable outcomes are encouraged.

Student Risks
Students who engage in community-based learning share in some of the potential unknowns or failures of faculty-driven projects. Students who seek neat and tidy projects where the end results are predictable might struggle with community-based projects. Students who are used to learning “to the test” can be frustrated by the fickle nature of community engagement.

There is an additional risk that students will not fully understand community members as experts and as potential co-educators. With this patronizing attitude students perceive community-engaged work as “serving others less fortunate” and can potentially ruin a partnership that faculty and community members have worked hard to forge.

Community Risks
Community members who venture into relationships and projects with faculty and students risk exposing themselves to the unknown, wasting their time with uncoordinated academic exercises, and becoming disappointed with – or disillusioned by - amateurish student work or irrelevant research. Community members and organizations can also risk political and community discontent when town-gown partnerships go sour or reveal information that is damaging to the community.

Mitigating Risks
Faculty can minimize risk by studying their tenure and promotion guidelines, understanding how community-based scholarship is rewarded on campus, and knowing how other community-engaged scholars have framed this scholarship. Emerging community-engaged interior design scholars are generating a growing body of literature. By becoming familiar with best practices through literature and case study reviews, faculty and students alike can rise
above the risk to find relevance and life-changing teaching and learning opportunities. Additionally, open and frank discussions with community partners can minimize the gap between expectations and the reality of community-based work.

With a strong foundation of mutual benefit, therefore, university and community alike will reap the rewards of community-engaged pedagogy and practice. Ultimately my rewards outweigh the risks. Those rewards include finding new avenues for research and scholarship; finding meaning and relevance for my work beyond a small group of academics; addressing issues that are key to the success and growth of the community; forging connections with a variety of disciplines and scholars; and seeing others shine in unexpected ways as co-learners and co-educators in the community.
THE RISK OF GRADUATE SCHOOL FROM A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

SUBMITTED BY: CATHERINE FRENCH, UNC GREENSBORO: MFA CANDIDATE, INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE + HISTORIC PRESERVATION
EMILY MILLER, UNC GREENSBORO: MFA CANDIDATE, INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE + HISTORIC PRESERVATION,

Faculty often forget what it is like to be a graduate student, to experience the thrill of teaching for the first time and the corresponding fear of bombing, all while attempting to understand research, which often feels like a foreign language. Two current graduate students, Emily Miller and Catherine French, from the MFA program in Interior Architecture at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) reflect upon their decision to continue their formal education and the risk associated with their decision. Miller is in her first semester whereas French is in her final semester of the MFA program. What follows is an interpretation of risk from the voice of an often unheard population.

Perspective from the First Semester:
Attending graduate school is risky especially when it is out of state. How will I adjust to a new environment and will I be able to afford it? Financial risk is a huge factor in the decision, as I already have loans from my undergraduate degree. Making the decision to move out of state, leaving family and friends behind is daunting. That is what graduate school, in my opinion is about, taking the risk on willingly in order to challenge myself and to be better. Making the decision to attend graduate school was the easy part, once you get to there, there are so many other decisions that have to be made. Selecting a chair, a committee, and a topic I want to research for two plus years...

One of the first things I learned from my initial semester I have learned so much at my time at UNCG is without failure students cannot evolve from is already known, therefore, limiting the ability to further their futures.

Perspective from the Final Semester:
I have spent several years in this program growing exponentially. I have had a lot of life changes during my time here: got married, had a baby, moved to a new city- all while continuing to commute as a full-time student with GTA responsibilities. The idea of failing faster has been a key theme during my time here at UNCG. In order to advance my designs and my research, I have had to learn how to get started quickly and without judgement - throw out a bunch of ideas, and then move through a culling process quickly. This is challenging, especially when collaborating with professors and practitioners.

But I have realized that these feelings and experiences have been a great resource to pull from this semester as I teach first year studio. Our first year studio at UNCG is all about teaching students the process of design. How do you start? How do you fail? How do you fail faster? How do you deal with the uncomfortable feeling of failure? Risk requires accepting the prospect of failure. But without this risk, there is no reward. I’ve learned to embrace this as a graduate student. Looking forward, my biggest fear is ‘has it all been worth the risk’? I believe that, yes, it has. Andwherever I go in life I just need to remember to fail faster.
First year Interior Design and Architecture student work from The University of Texas School of Architecture. Through material explorations, students learn that failure followed by remaking (or iteration) is part of the process of design.