

Path from Practitioner to Professor

Executive Summary

A Sustaining Interior Design Education White Paper
developed for the

Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC)

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*A white paper is to educate, create dialogue,
and lead to a future position of an organization.*

Purpose:

The purpose of this white paper was to examine pathways for interior design practitioners to become interior design educators and identify credentials that would provide them opportunities for success in the academy.

Major Recommendations:

The team examined higher education accreditation bodies' current standards, regulations, or guidelines related to faculty credentials and the broader context of higher education. We conclude that these bodies call for faculty credentials that the interior design profession can meet and recommend three steps be taken. A future model is suggested where a choice of paths leads practitioners to teaching positions at various points in their careers.

(1) IDEC should lead a discussion among academics and administrators to build consensus on desirable practice and academic credential criteria for various types of faculty positions (tenure/non tenure, part-time, and full time); develop this into a set of guidelines; and disseminate them for comment to all accreditation agencies and institutions offering interior design degrees.

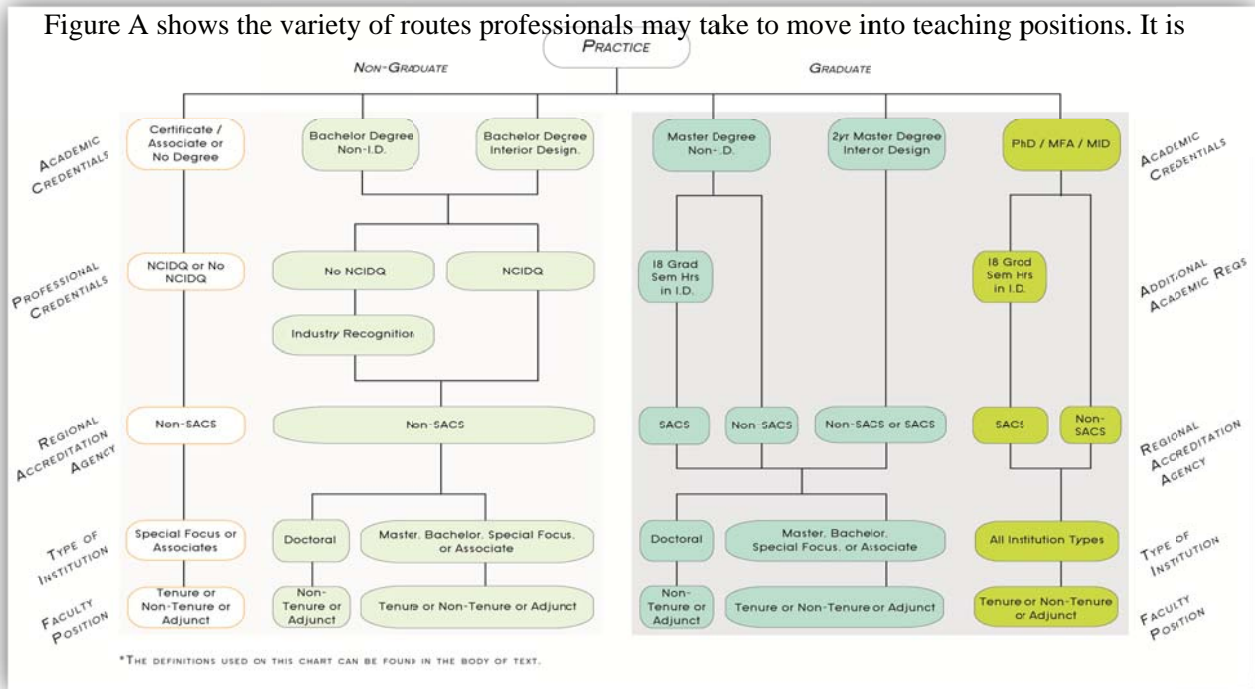
(2) IDEC should ask professional organizations to promote graduate education to its members as a career path and to advocate to interior design employers that they appropriately compensate employees who hold graduate degrees in interior design.

(3) Interior design should request the Department of Education to update documents to reflect current definitions of the field as a profession. By so doing, interior design takes on a specific meaning in the larger context; it continues efforts to explain practice as scholarship thus assisting those coming into education from practice; and it shares factual clarity to the options that are known for those seeking routes to graduate education and teaching positions.

(4) We suggest a model (see Figure A) that shows two paths combining practice and education as essential credentials for teaching. Each path incorporates the minimum requirements to become a National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) certificate holder (e.g., undergraduate degree with 60 semester hours in interior design and 3520 hours of interior design practice). The model suggests that an individual can practice and become an

NCIDQ certificate holder before or after earning a Master’s degree. (Note: the model differentiates the Masters as a minimum of 18 credits leading to a PhD level or as a terminal Masters). With these two credentials (Masters and NCIDQ); an interior design practitioner can teach and practice. Teaching and practicing at this level should be combined with scholarship experience (i.e., research or creative production) for those preparing for the PhD level of education and continued teaching.

Figure A. Pathways from Practice to Education



divided with the left side half showing the path to teaching for those who have a Bachelor degree in interior design, a lower level of design education, or non-interior design education. The right side half of the chart describes the path for those with graduate degrees.

Background:

1. What led to the White Paper?

The White Paper is a response to the goal of the Sustaining Interior Design Education [SIDE/Kimball Office Work Group (KOWG) 2008] report “to promote interior design education by developing ways for practitioners to reach students via classroom teaching and other learning opportunities.” An objective was “credentials for several types of interior design education positions be identified and developed via an IDEC White Paper.” This supports the idea that different types of institutions (e.g., teaching, research, combination) have different roles for their faculty members, therefore, credentials may differ based on the institutional mission. The White Paper Task Force was convened under the direction of Crystal D. Weaver in 2009 and completed the research and analysis, and authored the White Paper in 2010.

2. *What process did the committee use to arrive at the recommendations?*

The task force examined a chain of command of educational regulatory agencies and institutional classifications using the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (1973). Specifically, institutional accreditation criteria from regional accreditation bodies such as the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools were analyzed for their faculty credential requirements.

Interior Design programs are found in doctoral granting universities, master's colleges and universities, baccalaureate colleges, associate colleges (associate degree level or where bachelor's degrees account for less than 10% of all undergraduate degrees), in special focus institutions (schools of art, music, and design), and tribal colleges.

Interior Design programs can be accredited by the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) or the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) or have an institutional accreditation. CIDA- or NASAD-accredited programs follow their standards which, in turn, require accreditation from a higher education institutional accrediting body as mentioned above.

To evaluate accrediting bodies' required credentials, Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), regional accreditation agency documents, and the Department of Education official definitions of interior design were examined. Of regional accreditation bodies, the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) were determined to be more specific than others regarding credential description. In addition, hiring guidelines of 28 academic institutions (across types such as private, public), tenure and promotion guidelines from four of these, and additional interior design faculty position announcements open at the time were collected and examined. A comparative content analysis was conducted.

3. *What credentials are sought?*

Most institutions support a range of credentials for their faculty and consider varied experiences. However, as noted in the following example of one accrediting body's view, the highest earned degree is important. An excerpt from one body's accreditation standard is an example of credential consideration:

The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness and capacity including an appreciation of undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching and other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying, documenting the qualification of its faculty. (Commission on Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2008, p. 28)

3.a. What are highest earned degree in discipline?

The task force notes “in no documents was ‘terminal’ degree used.” However, conventions show that in Interior Design, the PhD is the highest degree for research scholarship intent and inquiry and the MFA/MID/MArch represent terminal Masters Degrees with studio-creative scholarship intent and inquiry. It should be noted, however, that the MS and MA are also considered terminal by some institutions if augmented by extensive practice experience. The conclusion of the task force further suggests that it is up to the institution to determine the Interior Design program needs and develop the faculty position based on those needs, i.e., does the program need more research scholarship (PhD faculty credential) or more practice-based scholarship (master’s plus experience faculty credential).

3.b. What does combination of credentials mean?

The committee found that academic degree (both undergraduate and graduate), professional practice and related work experience, a combination of degree and experience, and professional licensure/certifications (NCIDQ certificate holder, licensure in the jurisdiction) are common faculty credentials reviewed. Honors, awards, and documented excellence in teaching are viewed as appropriate additional credentials. For example, CIDA-accredited programs expect studio faculty to have NCIDQ credentials, as well as appropriate academic degrees. (To be an NCIDQ certificate holder, one must have practice experience and passed the NCIDQ exam in addition to an appropriate degree.)

3.c. Within academic settings, what are types of positions and issues that impact practitioners’ paths to becoming an educator?

Currently there are many paths from practice to teaching. Types of positions and faculty expectations show a range of academic and professional credentials required and are based on an institution’s mission and accreditation status. Accreditation (institutional and program) appears to impact hiring practice.

- (a) General faculty position categories are: part-time (adjunct) and full-time positions as well as tenure/tenure track and non-tenure positions.
- (b) Types of institutions are: associate degree and special focus, bachelor’s degree, masters, and doctoral institutions.

From the institution’s perspective, a faculty hire must fulfill expectations of a position as defined by the program’s needs and the institutional accreditation body’s credential requirements. Generally, an academic degree of PhD or terminal Master’s and additional professional/academic credentials are most robust for faculty position hires. Credentials of associate degrees and experience documented by holding the NCIDQ certificate were found in non-accredited programs of an Associate degree or Special focus type institution. There are exceptions at all levels, but it appears that a special case must be made, whether at the associate degree or PhD-granting institutions.