

College of Architecture hiring 16 professors as part of ongoing faculty reinvestment plan

As part of his ongoing initiative to elevate faculty, Texas A&M President Robert Gates announced plans in September 2003 for the university to hire 447 new tenured or tenure-track faculty over an eight-year period.

Charles H. Culp Energy efficiency specialist

Charles H. Culp, associate director of the Energy Systems Laboratory at the Texas Engineering Experiment Station is an expert in energy efficiency for high-performance buildings.

U.S. patents, Culp has over 25 years of academic and professional experience in engineering, research, teaching, and management.

As one of the principal investigators on the ESL team, Culp assists the state of Texas with a variety of initiatives related to Senate Bill 5, a sweeping legislation that in 2001 established new energy-efficiency measures for buildings aimed at reducing energy consumption and improving air quality.

Culp earned a doctorate in solid state physics from Iowa State University in 1975, with a minor in electrical engineering.

D. Kirk Hamilton Health facility design innovator

D. Kirk Hamilton, an acclaimed innovator in the field of health-care architecture, is an associate professor in the college of architecture.

Architects, Inc., a design firm headquartered in Houston, Texas.

As faculty fellow at A&M's Center for Health Systems and Design, Hamilton is interested in evidence-based design for health care; especially the relationship of facility design to measurable organizational performance.

He recently completed a master of science in organizational development from Pepperdine University and holds a bachelor of architecture from the University of Texas.

A prolific writer, he has published numerous articles on health-care design, evidence-based practice, and organizational performance.

Chanam Lee Researching healthy communities

Chanam Lee, an assistant professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, earned a master's degree in landscape architecture at Texas A&M University.

She recently completed a doctorate in urban design and planning at the University of Washington, where she also taught undergraduate courses in environmental planning.

Through her research and professional endeavors, Lee seeks to identify the primary attributes of healthy,

activity-friendly communities." She employs a broad, interdisciplinary approach, focusing on ways the form and design of the built environment influence, and are influenced, by its inhabitants.

Her doctoral dissertation concentrated on the use, form, and design aspects of the built environment as it relates to walking and physical activity for health and transportation purposes.

In a related project, Lee evaluated the "walkability and bikeability" of selected communities and helped develop evidence-based environmental audit instruments for assessing "walkability."

She holds a bachelor in landscape architecture from Kyungpook National University in Korea and has a Certificate in Health System's and Design from Texas A&M.

Vinod Srinivasan 3-D modeling expert

Vinod Srinivasan, a specialist in 3-D modeling for visualization and recent graduate of A&M's doctoral program in architecture, recently joined the Master of Science in Visualization Sciences faculty.

Srinivasan's doctoral dissertation, "Modeling High-Genus Surfaces," dealt with algorithms and tools for easy modeling of objects with a large number of holes and handles.

Srinivasan's work has been featured at the annual AMC-SIGGRAPH conferences and his research has been published and widely presented in peer-reviewed venues around the world.

He recently received funding to develop a digital model of the D-Day landing site at Pointe du Hoc on France's Normandy coast.

For his research initiatives during the 2003-04 academic year, Srinivasan earned the George W. Kunze Prize, presented annually by the Texas A&M Office of Graduate Studies to a graduate student who has excelled in scholarship and service.

College ranks 3rd in awarding of professional degrees to Hispanics

The Texas A&M College of Architecture ranks third, nationally, in the awarding of professional degrees in architecture to Hispanics, according to an article appearing in the May 2004 issue of "Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education."

The College of Architecture's success in attracting and retaining Hispanic students can be attributed, in part, to its "personal touch," suggests Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, the college's associate dean for outreach.

"I believe the key to our success in this area can be found in the individual relationship that our faculty establishes with each student, and in the fact that

"We are a big school that has not lost its personal touch. For Hispanic students that is a critical issue."

— Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, associate dean for outreach

we have achieved a critical mass of Latin American students who provide a robust peer support system within our student population," Vasquez de Velasco said.

As coordinator of the Las Americas Digital Research Network, Vasquez de Velasco has substantially contributed to the college's outreach into Latin America. Headquartered in the College of Architecture, the network facilitates communication between many of the top design schools in the western hemisphere.

Texas A&M construction science team drafts new home building and performance standards for state of Texas

The Texas Residential Construction Commission on Jan. 12 adopted a set of standards that will — for the first time in Texas — detail how the components of a newly built home should perform under warranty.

"I believe the commission chose us to create the standards because A&M has a reputation for having the largest and most comprehensive construction science department in the state," said Joe Horlen, assistant professor of construction science and co-principal investigator for the project, which was funded by a \$45,000 grant from the commission.

The TRCC is a relatively new state agency created by the 78th Legislature to provide a neutral dispute resolution process for Texas homeowners and the residential construction industry.

"These landmark standards are key to the Texas Residential Construction Commission's goal for all home buyers in our state to be satisfied, confident homeowners," said Stephen Thomas, executive director of the commission.

"The relationship between the construction science department and the TRCC has been mutually beneficial and it appears that it will continue for some time," Horlen said.

"I believe these standards will give homeowners a sense of security, that their biggest lifetime investment is protected by regulations intended to address, if not preempt, problems typically seen in residential construction."

— Debra Ellis, lecturer, co-principal investigator

A&M team examined existing guidelines, including those established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the International Residential Code.

"This has been a great opportunity for the Department of Construction Science to showcase its relevance, expertise and dedication to the construction industry," said Debra Ellis, a department lecturer who served with Horlen as co-principal investigator on the A&M residential standards team.

"The rules on warranties and building and performance standards will apply to home builders and remodelers who do interior renovations exceeding \$20,000 or that change the size of the home's living space and will be effective for construction that begins after June 1, 2005.

"The memorial, he said, "requires visitors to invest themselves in it completely." George Rogers, co-chairman of the Bonfire Memorial committee, also spoke at the event, noting, "The Bonfire Memorial helps us understand how the darkest day in Aggie History has become one of our most extraordinary moments."

"The Bonfire Memorial is a story of innovation and leadership, teamwork and commitment, dedication to excellence and the Aggie community ... in short, it is like the Aggie Spirit itself."

Architecture professor Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, the Texas A&M College of Architecture's new associate dean for outreach, is working to expand international programs for students and faculty and to develop new continuing education and distance learning initiatives.

More than symbol, it's an experience...



Bonfire Memorial designed to elicit viewer participation

The construction of the Aggie Bonfire Memorial was more than just the creation of an object — it was the creation of a shared experience, said Robert L. Shemwell '82, lead architect of the design team responsible for the memorial.

"This is one of the very unique things about this memorial — it requires active participation. You inhabit it. It doesn't become complete without you there," said Shemwell, a principal with the San Antonio-based Overland Partners, Inc., during a program, "The Story of the Bonfire Memorial," held at Rudder Auditorium the eve of the memorial's Nov. 18, 2004 dedication.

The multimedia presentation provided insight into the process of designing and building the memorial, including the evolution of the design concept, various unique design and construction innovations and the symbolic elements of the memorial.

Comprised of three main elements — Tradition Plaza, History Walk and Spirit Ring — the Bonfire Memorial honors the lives and dedication of the 12 Aggies killed and the 27 injured in the tragic collapse of the 1999 Bonfire.

The memorial could not have reached its full potential without the participation of the families of the lost Aggies, the designer explained. The families, he continued, were the key to putting a lot of power and authority in the design by allowing themselves to be vulnerable



Freshman environmental design major Jamie Lynn Hand, and the other 11 Aggies who perished in the Nov. 18, 1999 Bonfire collapse are commemorated in bronze portraits adorning the portal walls of the new Bonfire Memorial.



More information, including details on the Nov. 18, 2004 Bonfire Memorial dedication and links to the Bonfire Memorial Web site can be found in the online edition of archone.

http://archone.tamu.edu

complete stories and more pictures online

archone.tamu.edu



Editor's note: The articles and news briefs about the Texas A&M College of Architecture appearing in this publication are but a small sample of the stories and photos available online at:

http://archone.tamu.edu

Another Peterson Prize



The recent historic documentation of the former home of Sam Houston's widow, Margaret, earned second place honors in the 2004 Charles E. Peterson Prize competition.

'Legacy of a Seer'

Charles Gordone, the late playwright, A&M professor and proponent of racial unity, was honored at an October 2004 Stark Gallery exhibit featuring 12 portraits by architecture professor Robert Schiffhauer and a sculpture by professor emeritus John Walker.

Class Acts

Who's doin' what? Catch up with your old College of Architecture classmates online by reading the Spring 2005 former student roundup.



The Campus Remembered

"We are here in recognition of the essential function of space and structure in achieving greatness" — Robert Gates, Texas A&M President

Noting that the buildings at Texas A&M University have shaped the institution's history and will shape its future, Texas A&M President Robert M. Gates formally accepted the designations of 16 buildings throughout campus that have been determined culturally and architecturally significant as part of "The Campus Remembered" project.

College expands outreach initiatives

Architecture professor Guillermo Vasquez de Velasco, the Texas A&M College of Architecture's new associate dean for outreach, is working to expand international programs for students and faculty and to develop new continuing education and distance learning initiatives.

archone.

SPRING 2005

COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE @ TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

"archone," a newsletter serving the College of Architecture at Texas A&M University, highlights news and feature stories posted in detail online at http://archone.tamu.edu.

Readers may sign-up online to receive regular story updates via e-mail. http://archweb.tamu.edu/College/news/subscribe.htm

Address changes, photos, news and comments should be e-mailed to newsletter@archone.tamu.edu.



Bonfire Memorial dedicated

With the sun breaking free from heavy, gray clouds shortly before the start of ceremonies, more than 50,000 Aggies and Texas A&M supporters joined together at the site of the tragic 1999 Bonfire collapse to mark the Nov. 18, 2004 dedication of the newly constructed Aggie Bonfire Memorial, five years to the day of the accident in which 12 Aggies were killed and 27 more injured.

The construction of the Aggie Bonfire Memorial was more than just the creation of an object — it was the creation of a shared experience, said Robert L. Shemwell '82, lead architect of the memorial design team and principal with the San Antonio-based Overland Partners, Inc.

More details inside and online.

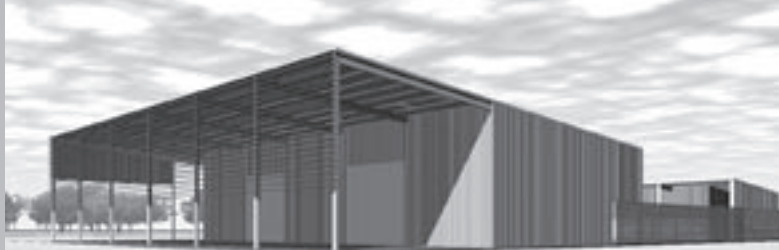
UPCOMING EVENTS:

- 2005 HRIL Symposium
6th Annual Historic Preservation Symposium set for Feb. 19, 2005
Distinguished Lecture
March 8, 2005 lecture to examine historic resource documentation
100 Years of Aggie architecture
April 2nd Open House launches college's centennial celebration

Details online at http://archone.tamu.edu

SUSTAINING CHINA: College forges partnership with Tsinghua University

More details inside and online.



Plans are quickly taking shape for the construction of a new \$850,000 facility at the "Architecture Ranch" — the College of Architecture's new 16-acre prototype research facility located at Texas A&M's Riverside Campus.



Forster Ndubisi: new head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning.

Head Start

Interdisciplinary background guides Ndubisi's leadership of Department of Landscape Architecture & Urban Planning

At the end of his first semester as head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at Texas A&M University, Forster Ndubisi (en-doo-bee-see) received two e-mails underscoring his primary reason for accepting the College of Architecture post last fall. Two graduate students from his department, the e-mails informed him, had recently earned highly competitive honors — one, a \$7,500 fellowship from the Hideo Sasaki Foundation, and the other, a \$20,000 dissertation grant from Active Living Research, a program sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

"Awards on this caliber reflect the quality of our faculty, as well as the quality of our students," noted Ndubisi, who previously served seven years as professor and director of the Interdisciplinary Design Institute at Washington State University - Spokane. "It takes good faculty to get these kinds of results, even if you have good students." According to Ndubisi, the Texas A&M College of Architecture boasts an extraordinary faculty who together reflect the complexity and depth of the built environment disciplines. As a result, he said, the college offers a rich, multifaceted environment, and his new department, with five degree programs serving four distinct disciplines — landscape architecture, urban planning, land development, and urban and regional science — "is almost like a college by itself."

The department's programs, he said, "provide a good mix," complementing his background in ecology, planning, landscape architecture and interdisciplinary collaboration. Prior to his job at WSU-Spokane, for nine years Ndubisi had a joint appointment at the University of Georgia. He taught at the School of Environmental Design, where he was tenured in 1992; and he served as city and regional planner for the Institute of Community and Area Development, where he conducted applied research and provided consultation services in design and growth management for Georgia communities.

In 1982, Ndubisi earned a master's degree in landscape architecture from University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada. He completed his doctoral studies in regional planning and resource development in 1987 at the University of Waterloo, also in Ontario. With its academic diversity, A&M's landscape architecture and urban planning department also facilitates Ndubisi's desire to foster communication between design disciplines through collaborative projects and interdisciplinary teaching and research — a passion that has fueled his career. "One person can no longer do everything," he said. "We have to acknowledge this and work collaboratively with others to solve problems — the whole is created from smaller parts."

A native of Nigeria, Ndubisi is the son of two schoolteachers who instilled in him a zeal for learning that paid off early on when he finished high school at the age of 16. His father, who earned a doctorate in education from Columbia University, also served as chairman of the education commission for the state of Anambra, in Nigeria. Sadly, he died on the same day that Ndubisi interviewed for the department head position at A&M. Ndubisi first became interested in human relationships with the built and natural environments as a young man, during family trips to Europe. "It occurred to me that there was a substantial difference in the quality of the built environment between Nigeria and England," he recalled. "In Lagos, there was environmental degradation, disorganization and inadequate infrastructure and land use policies — basically, the carrying capacity of the environment was exceeded."

While completing his undergraduate studies in ecology and zoology at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, he found a course catalogue outlining the master's program in landscape architecture at Guelph University in Ontario, Canada. "It mentioned the ability to creatively weave knowledge from the arts and sciences in addressing design and planning issues, and an intense desire to enhance the quality of people's lives in the built and natural environments," Ndubisi recalled. "The field seemed to cement all of the things that I wanted to do."

It was while studying at Guelph that Ndubisi observed a problem with cultural bias that ultimately laid the foundation for his graduate studies in culture-informed design and planning. "There are certain assumptions about design principles that are, in reality, culturally dependent," he explained. "That was what got me interested in the link between culture and design, and the design and planning implications of these differences." Cultural bias was evident in a rural outreach project Ndubisi worked on while at Guelph for the Ojibwa Indians in Northern Ontario. The project involved the development of a new Ojibwa community. A firm from Toronto had drawn up what many considered a fabulous design, but the Ojibwa rejected the plan. "It was turned down, in part, because it violated many aspects of their way of life," he explained. "In a sub-

division, you divide the lots and assign specific functions for each space. That violated the Ojibwa's sense of space. Traditionally, they were a hunting and trapping society used to expanses of space." Working closely with the Ojibwa, Ndubisi developed a solution that addressed these cultural issues. "You have to embrace the culture and use it as a basis of design," he explained, "so that the place created is lodged in their sense of time and place."

The Ojibwa project formed the basis of Ndubisi's master's thesis, the first in landscape architecture to earn distinction at Guelph. It also earned a Merit Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects. Additionally, Ndubisi's research in cross-cultural design established a participatory theme that would later inform Ndubisi's doctoral work and ultimately echo throughout his career in his research, teaching and management style. His initial success with the Ojibwa precipitated a number of consulting jobs on culture-informed design projects throughout Ontario, which in turn helped fund his doctoral studies in planning at the University of Waterloo.

As a doctoral student, Ndubisi's focus switched from design to cross-cultural planning. He theorized that there were differences and similarities of consequence in the value orientation of American Indian communities, and those of the consultants who worked with them. Again, Ndubisi's dissertation, "Variations in Value Orientations: Implications for Guiding Community Decision Behavior in Cross-Cultural Settings," was the first doctoral work to earn distinction at Waterloo's School of Urban and Regional Planning.

After earning his doctorate, Ndubisi accepted a dual appointment at the University of Georgia where, in the School of Environmental Design, he taught courses in environmental analysis and led studios in urban design, planning, landscape architecture and community design. At the same time, he worked with the university's Institute of Community and Area Development (ICAD), a program that helps Georgia communities anticipate and plan for growth. "The position offered everything I was looking for," he said, "an opportunity to teach, research and consult."

During his nine years as city and regional planner for the institute, Ndubisi participated with his students on a number of projects significant to Georgia communities. His growing interest in participatory planning and multidisciplinary problem solving led him in 1997 to accept the directorship of the newly established Interdisciplinary Design Institute at Washington State University - Spokane. The institute was created to foster collaborative learning, research and community service projects involving the four built environment disciplines taught at

"One person can no longer do everything. We have to acknowledge this and work collaboratively with others to solve problems — the whole is created from smaller parts."

Architecture Foundation Board and the American Society of Landscape Architects, where he has served on numerous support committees. His energy level is evidenced in his prolific scholarly output. In addition to numerous articles, papers and book chapters, Ndubisi has authored or co-authored three books. His latest, and perhaps most important book, "Ecological Planning: A Historical and Comparative Account," published in 2002 by Johns Hopkins University Press, has been widely acclaimed for its refreshing and innovative approach to the topics of land use planning and landscape architecture. Ndubisi's work on ecological planning earned the only Honorary Award in Research presented in 1999 by the American Society of Landscape Architects. In 2003, his book earned the Certificate of Merit Award from the ASLA's Washington Chapter. "The author's goals are on target, for no other book sets the ideas of landscape planning into a set of developing concepts within a historical context," writes Sally Schuman of Duke University in her review of Ndubisi's book. "There are few books on landscape planning in general and none to my knowledge that attempt both a complete overview and a comparative analysis. Ndubisi's approach is sound in every way. This book is long overdue."

Ndubisi's highly acclaimed book, combined with his stellar career and high visibility in a variety of professional organizations has made him a much sought after faculty member. When he accepted the department head position at Texas A&M last summer, he was a semi-finalist for three different dean-level posts. The A&M position was especially appealing, Ndubisi said, because of the university's national reputation as a major research institute. Additionally, the A&M job put him at the helm of an urban planning program, a discipline that was missing from the line-up at the Interdisciplinary Design Institute. His first semester as head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning has been a busy one, focused primarily on developing short- and long-term plans. On the marker board in his office, is a diagram with three overlapping circles representing the disciplines comprising his department. The space where the circles intersect, he said, represent areas of commonality between the disciplines. This, he said, is the area that he hopes to expand. "I am very excited, Ndubisi added, "about the opportunity we have to build on the department's diversity, and the strength and quality of our faculty and students. I want to maximize our competitiveness and position us as sustained leaders in all of our programs."

Sustaining China

Texas A&M College of Architecture collaborating with China's Tsinghua University to promote healthy cities



The Oriental Pearl Tower in Pudong Park as seen from the Huangpu River in Lujiazui, Shanghai.



The Auditorium, located at the heart of the oldest area of Tsinghua University's Beijing campus and completed in 1920, is patterned after the University of Virginia's Rotunda, designed by Thomas Jefferson.

The faculty at Texas A&M's College of Architecture have a great deal in common with their academic counterparts at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China — especially their desire to positively transform beleaguered urban environments, and to design and construct modern, healthy cities with promising, sustainable futures.

Building on this common ground, the two institutions recently entered into a collaborative agreement aimed at advancing mutually beneficial educational and research initiatives in the areas of sustainability and health-care architecture. "Because the world has become totally interdependent, China's challenges become challenges for the rest of us," Regan continued in his opening remarks at the event which was attended by Chinese government leaders, design professionals and faculty from Tsinghua and Texas A&M universities. "We welcome the opportunity to share our knowledge with you and to begin a dialogue and working relationship as you undertake, with imagination and commitment, the formidable task of transforming your cities from their historic

building into modern healthy communities." Joining Regan at the Beijing event, and a related tour of Chinese cities that included Shenzhen and Shanghai, was a delegation of College of Architecture faculty who also presented at the conference. The gathering, originally slated for the previous summer, was postponed by a nationwide outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, or SARS. According to the conference organizer, Chang-Shan Huang, associate professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at Texas A&M, the epidemic, while unfortunate,

went far to raise awareness of the importance of many of the topics, like health-care architecture, that were eventually explored at last summer's conference. The event also attracted a great deal of attention from the Chinese news media which reported on the proceedings in newspapers and on television newscasts. Additionally, details of the conference were featured in a special edition of the Chinese magazine, Healthy Communities, the third co-sponsor of the event. "The faculty presentations were very well received," said Huang. "The conference," he added, "was the largest ever sponsored by Tsinghua's Architecture Design & Research Institute and it at-

tracted a record number of Chinese government officials, including the vice minister of construction and many of his associates." The Healthy Cities in China Conference was the first of many such exchanges called for in the new collaborative agreement between the two universities. Other areas of cooperation include a faculty exchange program, joint research and publication initiatives, and design team partnerships on projects maximizing the strengths of both institutions. The agreement specifically outlines five areas for collaboration: evidence-based design methodology, landscape architecture, the planning

and design of healthy cities and communities, health-care architecture and critical regionalism in architecture and landscape architecture. According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency's World Fact Book Web site, the economic output of China has more than quadrupled since economic reforms were initiated in 1978 by former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. "Measured on a purchasing power parity basis," the Web site says, "China in 2003 stood as the second-largest economy in the world after the United States." This unprecedented growth has not been without consequence. At an international conference examining U.S. China relations held last year at Texas A&M University, a roundtable discussion on sustainable community planning, design and construction identified challenges facing China in these fields. It was this conversation that identified potential areas for collaboration that were later adopted in the agreement between the College of Architecture at Texas A&M and the Architecture Design & Research Institute at Tsinghua University.

According to a white paper summarizing the roundtable discussion, "the pressures inherent in accommodating such rapid urbanization raise concerns over [China's] long-term sustainability and pose substantial challenges in infrastructure and transportation planning, affordable housing, engineering and construction standards and management, appropriate community design and social and economic equity issues." As Regan reported in his opening statements in Beijing, the College of Architecture at Texas A&M is uniquely suited to tackle many of these pressing

concerns. "We are able to research and analyze the impact and future of growth in key areas, such as population growth, increased urbanization, industrialization and balanced economic growth, quality of life, and environmental challenges — all areas of current concern to China," said the dean. In orchestrating the healthy cities conference, Huang called upon faculty whose research reflected the broad range of topics related to sustainable urbanization and health-care architecture: • **George Mann**, the Ronald L. Skaggs professor of Health Facilities Design, discussed the architecture-for-health program at the College of Architecture, one of the top two programs of its kind in the United States; • **Don Sweeney**, associate professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, made a presentation on the history and concepts of healthy city/healthy communities movements in North American and Europe; • **Roger Ulrich**, professor of architecture and director of a pre-recorded video his research on the health impacts of urban nature; • **Ron Skaggs**, an adjunct professor of architecture and CEO of HKS, one of the leading design and construction firms in the United States, discussed current trends in and the future of health-care facility design in the United States; • **Chang-Shan Huang's** presentation focused on the evidence-based de-

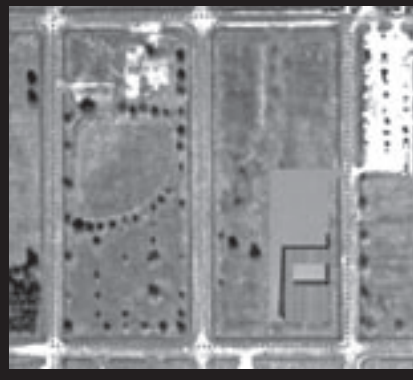


Members of the College of Architecture delegation who traveled to China last summer — Lillian Woo, Dean Thomas Regan and professors George Mann, Ronald Skaggs and Chang-Shan Huang — examine architectural models of a residential development in Shenzhen, China.

sign approach to healthy communities, using recent projects in the U.S. and China as examples; • **Atef Sharkawy**, a professor and coordinator of the of the Master of Science in Land Development program in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, presented case studies demonstrating the economic rewards inherent in designing and building healthy communities; • **Jody Naderi**, an assistant professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, showed how well designed pedestrian environments can enhance spiritual and mental health; and • **George Rogers**, a professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, discussed sustainable decision processes related to planning healthy communities. At the conclusion of the Beijing conference, the A&M delegation agreed that continued Sino-U.S. collaboration in the areas of sustainable community planning, design, and construction promises to benefit both countries by enhancing academic research and education and better informing governmental policy-making.

ARCHITECTURE RANCH

Prototype research facility to help Aggies invent the future



This aerial view of the college's 16-acre site at Texas A&M's Riverside Campus shows the footprint, on the bottom, right, of the proposed multiuse facility. The treelined border of the existing baseball diamond is also clearly visible on the left.

Plans are quickly taking shape for the construction of a new \$850,000 facility at the "Architecture Ranch" — the College of Architecture's new 16-acre prototype research facility located at Texas A&M's Riverside Campus. Preliminary designs for the new building, drawn by architecture professor Taeg Nishimoto and based on input from college faculty, call for a multiuse structure incorporating classroom and studio facilities, as well as high-tech wood and metal shops and a voluminous indoor-outdoor area that can facilitate large-scale building projects. The building will be situated on the southeast corner of the site. The college plans to use the ranch as a testing ground for college research initiatives and to support student projects in construction, design, planning, landscape architecture and art. The

proposed facility and its potential for advancing knowledge have generated a great deal of enthusiasm throughout the college, says Tom Regan, dean of the College of Architecture, and one of the project's chief proponents. "For many years, faculty in A&M's College of Agriculture have developed new strategies in their research laboratories for improving plants and animals, and then tested these new ideas on experimental farms," Regan said. "Likewise, in our research studios and laboratories, College of Architecture faculty are developing advanced strategies for design, construction, and building-use. Now our new Built-Environment Research Facility — also known as the Architecture Ranch — will give our faculty and students, in collaboration with the professions and industries, the opportunity to construct full-size exper-

imental prototypes and to test emerging concepts," Regan continued. "This new facility will significantly advance our planning, design, and construction research, and it will encourage research and teaching opportunities for our faculty and students that few colleges of architecture enjoy." In Nishimoto's preliminary design, the ranch's metal-fabricated building is articulated into two parts, separated by a 6,000-square-foot grass-covered courtyard. The smaller 3,000-square-foot section, housing classrooms and offices, will be located north of the courtyard. The larger structure, tentatively sized at 10,000 square feet and located south of the courtyard, will accommodate the wood and metal shops, an open construction area and a second-floor mezzanine, all liberally bathed in natural light from a row of north-facing windows and sky lights. The ranch's covered area showscases student activities and what we're about. Adding to the structure's iconic character is a fence that runs parallel along the eastern side of the structure. The fence, Nishimoto said, gives the building a ranch-like look and feel, while separating the courtyard from the road. "The louvers and fence are the elements that make the building unique," Nishimoto said. The grass-covered courtyard nestled between the two sections, will be open to the west and fenced on the east. It separates the "clean" space that includes classrooms, labs and studios, from the "dirty" space that includes the shops and construction bays.

The design process also embraced the charrette teams' desire to use the ranch for activities not readily facilitated at the Langford Architecture Center on main campus. For instance, the building provides wide open covered space that can facilitate a variety of activities, such as construction projects, that wouldn't be possible on the main campus. "Visitors approaching the building from the Riverside Campus' main entrance will see students working, build-

ing and constructing," he said. "The covered area showcases student activities and what we're about." Adding to the structure's iconic character is a fence that runs parallel along the eastern side of the structure. The fence, Nishimoto said, gives the building a ranch-like look and feel, while separating the courtyard from the road. "The louvers and fence are the elements that make the building unique," Nishimoto said. The grass-covered courtyard nestled between the two sections, will be open to the west and fenced on the east. It separates the "clean" space that includes classrooms, labs and studios, from the "dirty" space that includes the shops and construction bays.

"The courtyard is an area for students and faculty to come together, to collaborate on designs and projects and criticize each other's work," Nishimoto explained. "Students will literally be sweating away together out there and their collaborations, in this case, will be rewarded with a tangible product." Nishimoto stressed that his design is still in the preliminary stages and thus subject to the modifications and budget constraints usually encountered in the building process. A design-build contract will be negotiated through Texas A&M's Physical Plant Department, and Nishimoto will serve as the college's representative on the project.

"This facility will significantly advance our research and encourage opportunities that few colleges of architecture enjoy."

— J. Thomas Regan, dean

"The ranch concept is really quite extraordinary," Nishimoto said. "Many architecture schools have embraced the transition to a virtual world where, with the latest digital technology, almost anything can be visualized. Our ranch will expand this development into the tangible realm, allowing us the ability to actually construct and test many of these ideas." Because of the College of Architecture's unique composition, with programs in architecture, planning, landscape architecture and construction science, it is uniquely suited for the sort of multidisciplinary collaboration that the ranch is designed to facilitate.

