

## GRADUATE APPLICATION ADVICE

### Preparation for Application to the Professional Master of Architecture (M.Arch. II or III) Program

Probably the most important thing in an application to the KU Professional M.Arch. II or M.Arch. III program is to fully reveal the evidence of the applicant's ability to think critically. To be critical is to be aware of, and make informed judgments about, the existing world. Criticism may be constructed as the difference between what is expected and what is found. At KU, we expect all of our applicants to be critical, to take the world as they find it, examine it, and make deductions and inductions about the world and their role in it. This has proven to be the most important indicator of success in the program. Here are some ways that we have found that students can prepare an application for The University of Kansas Professional Graduate Program in Architecture. Almost everybody who applies is enthusiastic in their interest in studying architecture. Many claim that this interest goes back to their childhood. Enthusiasm is not in short supply, but enthusiasm is not very useful for us in determining the ability of a student to both thrive in and survive this program. Consequently, we have put together a number of suggestions that a student might draw upon in preparing the application. These are only suggestions and are not required, but we think they offer the best possibility of covering a range of materials, the reporting of which will provide an indication of the student's depth and abilities to the selection committee. They involve a number of different areas.

#### 1. READ BOOKS ON ARCHITECTURE

Most students begin to develop their critical awareness in architecture when they begin to leave their personal and subjective reactions to one side and discover the opinions and criticism of others. Consequently, a student performs well in the eyes of the committee when he/she is able to show a range of opinions about architecture. It is therefore suggested that the student read at least three serious books on architecture. A student should not consider this an academic exercise, but instead should enjoy the texts. It is not always essential that the student work linearly through the text – sampling is often as good as linear reading when thinking about architecture. Many architecture books can be read in snatches, at times when a free moment is available.

#### 2. VISIT SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS

The study of architecture through photographs and drawings is evidence of an interest in architecture. However, a real appreciation of architecture can only occur through the experience of the building. Applicants are well advised to prepare themselves by visiting three significant buildings. We are defining significant buildings as buildings that have been designed by well-known architects, have been published in journals and books, have been acclaimed as fine examples of architectural construction, or have a heritage and significance which increases their architectural value.

A building visit would be enriched if the student were to do the following things. Spend time with the building. It is recommended that the student spend at least one hour there. Draw the building. A camera is a convenient way of recording a building but does not always prove to be a critical tool. Take notes. Note-taking is an important method of critically acknowledging one's reaction to the building. Liking or disliking is not a very useful reaction; it is much more useful to understand one's reaction to the building and then articulate why one likes or dislikes the building.

#### 3. DRAW!

One of the best preparations for a student wishing to go to a school of architecture is not technical drawing, nor the drafting of buildings, but the drawing of life form or still-life form. These drawings demand more eye/hand coordination, offer an appreciation of the third-dimension, increase observation skills, and thus are good

preparation for an applicant. Multiple media such as charcoal, watercolor, pencil, and pastels should be explored. Most local art centers and community colleges or universities offer life-drawing classes at the beginner stage. These are often scheduled for evenings. A student could prepare himself/herself well by attending one of these classes and keeping a portfolio of work. Computer graphics courses are also very useful, especially those that deal with well-known graphics applications.

#### **4. READ ARCHITECTURE JOURNALS**

Most architects receive basic information about other buildings through publications such as *Architect*, *Lotus International*, *Architectural Record*, *Japan Architect*, *Global Architecture*, *Architecture Review*, *Architecture Research Quarterly*, or *Design Studies*. It is useful for an applicant to spend a couple of hours per month perusing these journals, which are usually available in libraries or by subscription. One piece of advice: when perusing journals, always examine the photographs of the building in the context of the plan of that building and satisfy yourself that you know where the photographer was standing and the named functions of the spaces contained in the photograph (and those behind any doors in the photograph). Journals are no substitute for visiting an example of architecture, but they do allow for the sampling of a wide range of contemporary buildings.

#### **5. VISIT ARCHITECTURAL OFFICES**

An applicant can increase his/her understanding of an interest in architecture by visiting an architect's office. Most architects are willing to have a visitor drop by for a short visit (15 minutes), to show them the office, and to show them the work they are doing. This is especially true if an applicant calls and says that he or she has a career interest in architecture. The local American Institute of Architects (AIA) office may also be helpful. An applicant should consider calling ahead and arranging a visit and also having prepared questions for the architect. Knowing what an architect's office is like, what an architect does on a daily basis, is very useful information for a prospective applicant.

#### **6. PREPARE A PORTFOLIO**

Applicants are required to submit some evidence of their creativity. The most traditional form of that evidence is the portfolio containing a series of drawings, paintings, designs, photography, or other artwork in original or high-quality duplicated/reduced form that show evidence of the history of the person's creative activity. The range of work in the portfolio should be wide. A student could include artwork taken under direction or on their own, photographs that show their creative eye, maps and diagrams, and also written work that can reveal the student's power to think critically about the subject and reflect that thinking in the portfolio work. The portfolio is a significant part of the application procedure, and an applicant should fill the portfolio with a wide range of evidence of your creative work without redundant or repetitive material. The portfolio is limited to 10 megabytes (not zipped) in PDF format.

#### **7. VISIT THE SCHOOL**

It is critically important that an applicant visit the school. The School of Architecture, Design and Planning at The University of Kansas has the standard educational goal of preparing students for professional practice, but the particular character of the school will best be revealed through a school visit. This will allow a prospective student to look at the facilities, the student environment, the studio process, and examples of the design product of studio. An applicant's visit to the school will allow for a more focused response to the demands of the application procedure and allow for an increased ability to demonstrate that the applicant will thrive (that is grow and change) and survive (that is endure and benefit) in the professional program. To arrange a school visit, please call (785) 864-3167 or email [archku@ku.edu](mailto:archku@ku.edu) to make an appointment with Prof. Jae D. Chang, Assistant Chair for Graduate Studies.

#### **8. TAKE CARE OF PREREQUISITE COURSES**

We recommend the successful completion of College Physics (Physics 114 at KU) as preparation for the technical classes required in the degree. The physics course should be a four-hour course with a lab and should be completed with a grade of C or higher. This course should be completed before you begin the M.Arch. III curriculum.

Finally, please contact the School if you have any questions. Visit our website at <http://architecture.ku.edu/> for more information. We encourage you to submit an application and wish you well with your future plans.