I. Summary of Team Findings

1. Team Comments & Visit Summary

The team found the Master of Architecture program at the University of Florida to be a vibrant learning environment with energetic students and a dedicated faculty and staff. Alumni are engaged in the program through sponsorships and participation in studio critiques. Their pride in the school is evidenced by their willingness to hire interns and graduates. Engagement by local architects has been instrumental in the establishment of the Citylab–Orlando.

The program's strengths include the following:

The Faculty:
- Dedicated to teaching and to students
- Accomplished faculty that exhibit diverse abilities in their work and professional practice

The Students:
- Advanced ability in the digital presentation of architecture
- Diverse and energetic student body

The School:
- Devotion to a rich design curriculum, including sophisticated design and technology investigations
- Provides outstanding regional and international off-campus learning opportunities for the entire student body
- Recognizes the unique contribution of contemporary architecture to Florida culture

The College:
- Strong support from the dean
- Support from, and willingness to collaborate with, the other schools in the college

The School of Architecture has been affected by the economy in Florida during the past five years. In spite of significant budget cuts and a reduction in the number of students, the school has been able to deliver a high-caliber program. Entrepreneurial actions, such as the establishment of the Citylab–Orlando, have strengthened the connection with local professionals and provided needed revenue to the program. However, an unresolved budget deficit provides a cause of concern for the program.

The curriculum focuses on contemporary urban issues and sustainability and explores design solutions within a larger planning context. Students engage with clients and the public through real-world design problems, set throughout Florida. They develop sophisticated analyses of urban conditions, develop frameworks for meaningful planning solutions, and then create sophisticated building solutions within that framework. Students work collaboratively with allied students to broaden and enrich their learning opportunities.

Students' technical proficiencies are enhanced through a rich curriculum of materials, structures, and environmental coursework, taught by an accomplished faculty.

A rich program of foreign study provides wonderful opportunities for students in Italy, Mexico, South America, and China. Supplemental means of support exist to help students participate in these programs.
Facilities have been significantly improved since the last accreditation visit. However, some issues with building systems remain to be resolved. Significant investment has been made in additional plotters located in studio spaces and additional workshop equipment.

Physical facilities challenges still remaining include an oversubscribed computer lab, studio spaces with inadequate temperature control and air handling in the off hours.

This program of collaboration, design and technical excellence, and community involvement has managed to provide a first-rate architecture education to U of F students despite funding cuts and a difficult economy.

2. Conditions Not Met

1.2.4 Financial Resources

3. Causes of Concern

A. Long-Range Planning
The university's lack of an updated strategic plan and inability to financially plan presents difficulties for the school's subsequent ability to create its own short- and long-term planning.

B. Financial Resources
Despite the school's entrepreneurial initiatives, the presented budget summary shows an operating deficit for the current academic year. In the absence of plans that address this shortfall, as well as the budget scenarios for the short- and long-term, there is concern regarding the financial stability of the school.

C. Governance: Student Participation
The student body in the school is vibrant, committed, and interested in the quality and well-being of their school. Although there are several organizations in place and in formation in the school (e.g., the Studio Culture Committee, Architrave, Alpha Rho Chi, AIAS), there is an absence of student participation in the larger administration of the school. The Studio Culture Committee, for example, has capacity for greater involvement in the life of the school. The school is encouraged to explore opportunities for inclusion of students within its framework of administration.

4. Progress Since the Previous Site Visit (2007)

2004 Condition 8, Physical Resources:
The accredited degree program must provide the physical resources appropriate for a professional degree program in architecture, including design studio space for the exclusive use of each student in a studio class; lecture and seminar space to accommodate both didactic and interactive learning; office space for the exclusive use of each full-time faculty member; and related instructional support space. The facilities must also be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and applicable building codes.

Previous Team Report (2007):
The 2001 Visiting Team Report reads as follows and is included in this report because all of the comments remain valid today:

'The 1996 NAAB Visiting Team noted, 'The space for the program continues to be inadequate.' In the five years since that visit the changes made have been primarily accommodated increased computer usage. While this is important, nothing has happened to provide for less-crowded studios and classrooms. The Architecture
Building looks and acts its age as a structure designed and built in 1979 to house a different and much smaller program. The result is serious overcrowding in the studios and lack of important spaces. There is no space for juried student presentations or for the necessary critiques of student work; many of these are conducted outside in the courtyard with the drawings pinned onto the external walls of the building. At other times space normally used for other activities is pressed into use, resulting in less-than-satisfactory results for both architecture and the other activities.

- Equipment is of variable quality. The studios are furnished with student desks that are old and broken (drawing surfaces on some desks have large gaps where the surface has been cut away). The facilities have an insufficient number of output devices (particularly plotters) needed by architecture students; what is now needed are expensive (and thus shared) peripherals and access to software, rather than a phalanx of terminals.

- Other supporting space is marginal. The wood shop is much too small for the number of students and the resulting demand for shop time in a program that relies heavily on model building to teach three-dimensional understanding.

- The jammed studios do allow the School to provide dedicated desks for students in the second year, when students share desks with two other students in studio spaces that accommodate three studios. First-year students rotate twelve (12) sections through a single room.

- It is disappointing that there has been no comprehensive planning for meeting the space and equipment requirements of the School. While the University undoubtedly has many demands for improved and additional space, a continued lack of planning almost guarantees that the architecture program will never have improvements in space. The team urges the School to collaborate with its College and University in identifying its needs for improved space and equipment and to develop plans for meeting these needs. Further inaction will make a barely tolerable situation worse.

An initial School of Architecture space needs assessment identified a requirement for 168,000 square feet of space, in lieu of the 47,000 square feet presently available for use. The 2003 completion of new space for the building construction programs of the college, along with minor interventions in the existing building have provided limited stop-gap measures; however, the fact remains that the program has insufficient space—hot desks in first-year studio, inadequate shop facilities, insufficient office space to accommodate open staff positions, as well as a facility that encourages poor student work habits. (Having to work at all hours of the night, if one wants to work in studio or lack of learning from colleagues if one works at home.) Safety concerns result from students having to traverse across campus at all hours; as well as an absence of windows in most studio doors to view out before leaving the studio late at night. (See 2007 visiting team causes of concern.)

2009 Focus Evaluation Team Review:
The School of Architecture has 58,000 sf of dedicated space including recently added space in the Fine Arts Building C (FAC), studio space in Vicenza, Italy, the Florida Community Design Center and Urban Studio in Gainesville, and the Citylab—Orlando. The space available for use has been increased by 11,000 sf since 2004.

The program provides dedicated studio space to all students beyond the first year. The first year studio is open to all students within the university, and typically enrolls 250 to 300 students in the first year of the program. These students are taking general design studios that do not focus solely on architecture, but include landscape architecture, planning and other design studies. Shared studio space is made available to first year students to work in the building outside of their scheduled studio time. Approximately 150 students move to the second year of the program.
Following the second year, students are admitted to the degree program following a competitive pin-up process. The School is investigating options to maintain the large first year cohort, while limiting entry to the second year to those students with the best chances of achieving entry into the third year.

Off-campus studios have been added in Orlando and Gainesville allowing a shift in space utilization away from the campus and providing a positive connection with two Florida communities.

The School has recently added a 3D output studio, which came on-line for the Fall 2009 Semester. Equipment includes two laser cutters, rapid prototyping machines and a CNC machine. Wood shop equipment has been added, including a table saw and three band saws. The new CNC machine will remove some demand from the wood shop. The University now allows a material equipment fee, which has provided funding for the School to afford new equipment.

A new critique space has been developed within the building, and the school takes advantage of climate to use several outdoor pinup areas.

Improvements have been made to toilet room facilities and entrances to enhance the accessibility of the building.

A number of studies have been completed or are in process on the condition of existing facilities and the potential for expansion to meet current and future needs. Two potentially serious issues have surfaced with the existing facilities in the past two years; brick cracking is evident, and a spalling issue has been identified at the beam/slab structural connections. The brick cracking issue has been studied, and the concrete spalling condition is to be studied by a consultant this Fall. The School continues to "press for facility renovation to capture quality space, while also pressing the advantages of a new building for the School". They have been successful in securing a position on the University of Florida Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan (10 year PECO List) with $60 million in targeted funds over three years beginning in 2016.

It is critical that the School continue to push for building improvements and new facilities to provide the appropriate learning environments for the program.

2013 Visiting Team Assessment: While significant improvements have been made to the school's physical resources, and the condition, Physical Resources, is found to have been met (see: 1.2.3 Physical Resources, pgs. 11–12), some concern remains regarding the air quality in studios in the off-hours. The school is encouraged to work with the university to ensure provision of adequate air circulation in the school during off-hours. In addition, oversubscribed computer resources can be improved through an exploration of alternative means of providing necessary software to students and other measures to reduce peak demands on the computer labs and equipment.

2004 Condition 10, Financial Resources: An accredited degree program must have access to sufficient institutional support and financial resources to meet its needs and be comparable in scope to those available to meet the needs of other professional programs within the institution.

Previous Team Report (2007): The architecture program, begun in 1925, is the oldest and the largest architectural program in the state, as well as the largest of five programs in the College of Design, Construction and Planning. The college's programs are closely related and include architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, building construction, and urban and regional planning.
Based upon the required data provided to the 2007 visiting team, the School of Architecture is not comparable to other professional programs within the University of Florida. The School of Architecture’s expenditure per student is $4,990. In comparison, the next lowest amount comes from the School of Pharmacy ($6,490), and the highest amount from the School of Law ($12,755).

2013 Visiting Team Assessment: This condition remains unmet and is a cause for concern. Details regarding these concerns are located in this VTR in sections I.3.B (page 2) and I.2.4 Financial Resources (page 12).