

Rhonda Gilmore

Web Bio

Information

Biography

Biographical Statement

As a design educator, I believe in balancing critical inquiry with skill development: teaching students how to use their intellect and utilize their skills to problem-solve for a design-hungry world is both challenging and immensely rewarding. This combination of left brain / right brain functions known as the design process improves the human condition and I view my role as a guide for students as they endeavor to learn from those problems that require and even plead for a designed response.

Teaching

Teaching and Advising Statement

Balancing skill development for professional practice with inspiring, innovative design thinking brings my role as educator into focus. To encourage students to value their personal investment in their design education, each course I teach incorporates increasingly independent learning opportunities. There's also an emphasis on communication: building confidence in sketching and visual skills, teaching effective, empathic listening techniques, oral presentation organization, and business basics such as contractual agreements and multi-tasking in project management.

Advising and mentoring both undergraduates and teaching assistants brings meaning to my work: I strive to combine my previous business experience with my years as a design educator to provide realistic yet hopeful advice about how to navigate both academic realities and future employment settings. A considerable amount of time is devoted to strategizing the job search process and portfolio reviews.

The commitment I feel to my students is demonstrated in both my teaching and advising: in 2014, one of my students, Hannah Zaluski, received a Merrill Presidential Scholars Award, honoring both her achievements and the educators that had an impact on her educational experience at Cornell. I was very honored to accept this recognition from both Hannah and Cornell University.

Professional

Current Professional Activities

- Member - National Council for Preservation Education
- Member - National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Member - Preservation League of New York

Coordinator, DEA LightLAB

Academic Coordinator, PURSUIT : DEA's Career Fair

Organizing our Department's first recruitment event for our students was a success: 10 firms came to campus to present their work and interview prospective applicants.

Over 14 students received internship offers during the event and 5 students were offered full-time positions. We intend to continue PURSUIT in 2015.

Research

Extension

Education

Education

- M.A. 1994 - Cornell University Interior Design
- B.S. 1982 - University of Cincinnati Architecture, Art and Planning
- NCIDQ Interior Design Licensing Exam Passed - 1988
- LEED Associate Professional Passed - 2009
- LEED Commercial Interiors Certificate - Passed 2013

Courses

Courses Taught

DEA 1100 - Design Generation[s]

The momentum of this program is beginning to take hold, as we had more students apply / accepted than any previous year. While this year's group was larger (26) we were still able to deliver cogent content in an engaging manner and each student was very enthusiastic about design when they left at the end of the three weeks.

Our curriculum is constantly being updated for relevancy and we keep the students engaged on so many levels that it is a rewarding endeavor for both the instructors and the students. Activities included building debris huts in a Cornell forest, visiting 3 LEED certified buildings on campus including a tour of Milstein Hall by Rem Koolhaas, and design exercises which addressed social issues relevant to college campus life.

The primary project this year was lighting design: each student explored

materials (used in lighting production), created mock-ups of their preliminary design solutions, then built full-scale models of actual light fixtures. Learning how to market and convey their design intentions came next with the graphic design portion of the project, where the students designed the branding message and documented the design process of their light fixtures. Every student then designed and constructed the appropriate packaging for their light fixtures. The final result of all this design activity was an exhibit, designed and installed by the students, showcasing their projects and providing them an opportunity to reflect on their three-week immersion in DEA and Cornell. We used DEA's Gallery space to display their work and this space was filled with parents on Commencement Day, bringing many of the students' families to see their children's work and meet DEA faculty, and tour our facilities.

We saw four of our Design Generation[s] students come to DEA as freshman this year: such a rewarding indication of the effectiveness of this summer program.

DEA 2202 - Design Studio IV

Expanding the academic and professional opportunities of second year interior design students, this course combines both skill development and creative problem-solving in the following projects:

- health care design / collaborative innovations
- lighting design for health care settings

The health care use for this year's studio was an oncology facility. Using an existing building for context and documentation opportunities, the students created a healing environment for patients using out-patient facilities for their chemo treatments.

Lighting design for health care environments was the next issue for this studio: each student created a lighting solution for their oncology facility, consisting of RCP's, lighting legends, and layouts.

INNOVATION 2014

Working with Prof. Rana Zadeh's class, DEA 6550, students were asked to innovate for 21st century health care facilities. This year's project was for Brigham & Women's Hospital in Boston, MA. This project came to us from Elizabeth O'Brien Oshama, one of our former students who works for Roz Cama of CAMA Associates, healthcare design firm. Students selected specific issues for further research / innovation and created design recommendations for several areas / systems within Brigham & Women's. Issues included nursing support in the ER, encouraging use of anti-bacterial cleaners, wayfinding, among other issues. Findings and design solutions were organized into a booklet which was distributed to CAMA, the client.

DEA 3030 - Introduction to Materials, Finishes, and Furnishings

After the study of interior materials' characteristics and capabilities, the course moves onto the sustainable approach to the selection and specification of "green" interior materials. LEED criteria are connected to the study of creating sustainable interiors with an emphasis on earning points for design decisions. Field trips

expose the students to "materials in action" and provide examples of use/maintenance issues. Skills such as life cycle costing and writing green specifications are incorporated in the course, as are group work/presentations on current sustainable material options for the built environment. A new assignment focused on the study and familiarity with one material from three categories: grown, oil-based, mined from a new book by Chris Lefteri called Materials for Design. Each student selected a material from one category and compiled information ranging from where the material is sourced, how it is used and its advantages and disadvantages. A poster was the culminating deliverable for this MyMaterial assignment, which was displayed in the DEA Gallery.

Course Evaluation: 4.48 of 5

DEA 3050 - Construction Documents and Detailing

Putting construction documents in context involves the study of archival drawings in the Kroch Rare and Manuscript Collection. Students analyze drawings from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and then transition to the study of construction document production in the last 3 centuries. Exercises address the organizational structure of a set of documents for construction and include the creation of a series of drawings: floor plans, furniture floor plans, reflected ceiling plans, interior elevations, etc. for the design of a teleconferencing space here in the College of Human Ecology. Students visit several teleconference installations on campus and actually participate in a teleconference to better design an environment that supports virtual meetings. The class also visits the Cornell Millshop to learn more about the millwork capabilities of this group of craftsmen producing products for the Cornell community.

Course Evaluation: 4.53 of 5

DEA 4401 - Design Studio VII

This adaptive re-use / preservation studio serves as the only comprehensive studio experience for students in the interior design option / DEA. Students learn the benefits of historic preservation relevant to sustainable design, are introduced to the LEED system, and study an existing historic structure to use as the context for their interior design solutions.

The Wilson Building, Syracuse, NY was the site for this studio project. After a site visit to the building which was in the final stages of renovation, each student selected a use for this 7 story, 1901 structure situated in downtown Syracuse near the former site of the Erie Canal. The schematic design critique was conducted in the actual building: the client installed tackable wall surfaces so the students could present their work to professionals from the Syracuse architecture and design community. Students completed all phases of the project and created boutique hotels, art gallery/cafes, restaurants, retail venues and a variety of uses for this 49,000 sq. ft. structure.

Course Evaluation: 4.83 of 5

Websites

Administration

Administrative Responsibilities

DEA LightLAB:

Coordinated the implementation of Ateilier Ten's design solutions for this lighting experimentation space for DEA. Also worked with two lighting manufacturers to obtain donations of luminaires for this new facility. Worked with lighting representative to install donated light fixtures in Room 4250. Lab is now operational and will be used as a teaching tool for a new course in 2015 : DEA 2750 Lighting Design

DEA Advisor:

Worked with 9 students in the spring and fall of 2014 as an advisor on course selection, professional practice strategies, and other pertinent student issues

Materials Fair:

Worked with the DEA student chapter of ASID in creating and coordinating our first materials fair. In conjunction with my course, DEA 3030 Interior Materials and Sustainable Elements, over 25 vendors came to MVR Hall and presented their current products to DEA students and members of my course, increasing attendance by 40 students. Continuing this tradition in 2015 will help to establish a stronger connection between acadmic learning goals and professional practice.

PURSUIT 2014 : DEA Recruiting Event

Created DEA career fair for both graduate and undergraduate students. Working with the College of Human Ecology Career Services group, we brought 10 architecture and design firms to MVR Hall to present information about their work, attend a faculty luncheon, and interview our students. The event was a success: we established a working relationship with the firms, our students received offers of employment, and we changed the culture of our department, demonstrating to our students a solid commitment to the professional practice.

Publications