

tomorrow's world will need product innovators, industrial specialists, strategic planners.

It's no longer enough to leave school with drawing and drafting skills, architectural and design knowledge, business and interpersonal skills – you need the expertise to function in a high-tech workplace while incorporating humanistic sensibilities.

**PERSPECTIVE: WHY DO INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENTS HAVE A HARD TIME CHOOSING A PROGRAM THAT WILL MEET LONG-TERM GOALS?**

**BARBARA ANDERSON:**

You'd be surprised how many students don't understand what interior design is. Some students only have a vague idea of what the profession offers.

We try to be as forthright with our prospective students as we can. All

# best in class

STUDENTS LOOKING FOR A TOP-QUALITY SCHOOL FIRST SHOULD CONSIDER WHAT A SUPERIOR EDUCATION REALLY ENTAILS.

BY ROSS FOTI

It all begins with a first-class education, but with so many accredited design schools, it's difficult to choose one when your future is on the line. After all, every program has its own unique strengths and weaknesses – you must decide which will make the difference to your career.

To help you sort through the crowded field, educators across the United States were asked what makes a best-in-class interior design program.

design education has a bit of a problem with lack of fit – what the student expects education to be like and what it really is like. We have to focus on some very basic concepts that students may not even realize are related to what they will be using in the real world.

**ANNA MARSHALL-BAKER:**

An interior design education really is about helping students understand how to think, learn and do. We

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Barbara G. Anderson

enable students to become informed citizens who are interested in their world. That way, when they enter the real world, through their experience, they can blossom into interior designers.

You shouldn't compromise the quality of your education. Ultimately, you have to decide what you want to do, where you want to be and find the resources to get there.

**FRANKLIN BECKER:**

Today's career path is not that clear-cut. Students often start in a design firm doing more traditional work, but because of the critical thinking skills design students bring to a situation, they end up in consulting firms or other firms that require these skills – from interior design to graphic design to entertainment to straight-forward business consulting. Design is a wide-open field in which students apply skills in a novel way. A design education, if done well, can open up opportunities.

**PERSPECTIVE: IDEALLY, WHAT CHARACTERISTICS SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN A SCHOOL'S FACULTY?**

**MARSHALL-BAKER:** Good teachers are contemporary, current and well-read with issues that involve the designed environment but also are involved with professional organizations. Through my involvement in the Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC), I get exposed to all sorts of things going on at other schools. Those connections at professional organizations are critically important.

**FRANK MORIGI:** Too many faculties are just getting

their degrees and then teaching. If we can get more people with professional experience to teach, the better a school is going to be.

**DENISE GUERIN:** An interior designer with a background in architecture or other allied professions brings a richness. Interior design is such an interdisciplinary profession that this kind of experience is invaluable.

But, most of all, a faculty must be dedicated to student learning, have the mandatory credentials and really want to teach. Educators must continue to develop the body of knowledge for the profession and continue to learn themselves.

**PERSPECTIVE: WHAT SHOULD STUDENTS LOOK FOR IN THE INTERIOR DESIGN CURRICULUM?**

**ANDERSON:** In academia, it's important to separate out succinct areas of study, but in design, you must integrate as much as possible. Any good program is going to have a student-learning focus in the choices they make. If your choices are always made on what will make the best student learning, you

critical eye

When it comes to interior design education, choosing the "best" program is entirely subjective. After all, a degree is only as good as your own efforts.

Each year, *DesignIntelligence* and Counsel House Research compile a list of the best U.S. schools and colleges for interior design based on the hiring experiences of leading firms. Respondents are asked to indicate which FIDER-accredited programs (in the past five years) produced graduates most prepared for professional practice.

1. University of Cincinnati
2. Pratt Institute
3. Kansas State University
4. Cornell University
5. University of Oregon
6. California College of the Arts
7. Arizona State University
8. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
9. Auburn University
10. Syracuse University

Source: *America's Best Architecture and Design Schools, 2004 Edition.*

can practically guarantee that students will learn what they need to know.

**MARSHALL-BAKER:** A well-developed curriculum will begin in the first year with a studio emphasis on design fundamentals and history of interior design, architecture and art. Studio is really about engaging thought.

Also, competitions serve as a wonderful measure for programs to understand how the work their students are producing compares

with the work of students in other programs.

An internship, practicum, or a field or co-op experience is very important to interior design education, and the better programs will have that experience in some form.

**SUSAN KIRKMAN:** A good curriculum has to have the ability to change with changes in the industry. At the university level, you can only make minor changes every couple of years through a committee.

panelists

**BARBARA G. ANDERSON,** IIDA, Assistant Professor and Coordinator of Interior Design Program, Kansas State University, College of Human Ecology, Manhattan, Kan.

**FRANKLIN BECKER,** Ph.D., CoreNet, FIDER, IFMA, Professor and Chair of the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.

**DENISE GUERIN,** Ph.D., IIDA, ASID, FIDEC, Morse-Alumni Distinguished Professor of Design, Univ. of Minn., Department of Design, Housing and Apparel, Twin Cities Campus, St. Paul, Minn., and Coordinator of [www.InformeDesign.umn.edu](http://www.InformeDesign.umn.edu)

**SUSAN KIRKMAN,** IIDA, ASID, IDEC, NKBA, Vice President of Academics/Dean, Interior Design, Harrington College of Design, Chicago

**TOMMY LAMBETH,** Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Interior Architecture, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.

**ANNA MARSHALL-BAKER,** Ph.D., President of Interior Design Educators Council, Indianapolis, and Associate Professor of Interior Architecture, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, N.C.

**FRANK MORIGI,** ASID, Professor and Head, Interior Design, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.



Denise Guerin

A really good program has to be able to change with the industry, change with trends and put into practice classes that are needed for the times.

**PERSPECTIVE: BEYOND THEORY, WHAT DOES A TOP-NOTCH PROGRAM TEACH DESIGN STUDENTS?**

**MORIGI:** A good school should educate future designers as problem-solvers. Most schools are just training designers for entry-level positions rather than educating designers for the future problems.

**BECKER:** Students themselves are interested in skills development because that's tangible. But, ultimately, knowledge is shifting so quickly and problems are so complex that we find it's more important to coach students in thinking in different ways.

We require our students to make a lot of professional quality presentations and

reports. They have to think on their feet and convey their ideas to an audience in a variety of ways.

**GUERIN:** We want students who are critical thinkers, passionate about design and have a good work ethic, but if they don't come to us with that, we have to be good role models. We have to create critical thinkers. We have to come up with projects and assignments that require critical thinking. We can't just teach them solutions, we have to teach them to think.

**PERSPECTIVE: WHEN STUDENTS LOOK AT A COURSE SCHEDULE, WHAT CORE CLASSES OR AREAS OF FOCUS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR A WELL-ROUNDED EXPERIENCE?**

**MORIGI:** You should be looking for a professional degree with a liberal education. We seem to tend too much toward the degree part and not enough toward the humanities or social sciences. We're dealing with other people and how they relate to the city, each other and the room.

With a liberal education, you can create a humanistic approach, rather than just

a decorative, architectural or structural approach.

**BECKER:** Our students are integrated and embedded in a program that has world-class psychologists and behavior experts that all feed into and help students develop a broad-based education in design. They are able to think critically and see design in a broader context.

Our strong behavioral and organizational focus allows our students to bring a strong commitment to environmental design – in sustainable design but also in community issues for critical populations.

**GUERIN:** The human is the most important component of the problem and the solution. Unless we truly understand the human needs – psychological, physical and environmental – we will continue to design the wrong solutions.

**PERSPECTIVE: WHAT DO YOU SEE IN STUDENTS WHO ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL?**

**GUERIN:** I tell my students that I want them to be productive members of the profession at graduation.

How do interior design programs across the United States compare?

SCHOOL	STUDENTS/GRADUATING SENIORS	CORE CURRICULUM/ FOCUS OF STUDY	STRENGTHS	FACILITIES	FACULTY	COMPETITIONS	PLACEMENT RATE
<b>CORNELL UNIVERSITY, ITHACA, N.Y.</b>	75/18	Sustainable design, history of design, leadership and computer-aided design (CAD), design for special populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>World-class research and graduate studies</li> <li>Students work with the public and industry to solve real problems before they graduate</li> </ul>	Dedicated CAD lab, wood shop, library, interior design resource center	Seven full time	HALO Lighting Design, Hans Creeks Portfolio, Dupont Antron, American Woodworking Design	75-80%
<b>HARRINGTON COLLEGE OF DESIGN, CHICAGO</b>	1,400/265	Interior design process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sequential curriculum based on the NCIDQ exam and FIDER standards and guidelines</li> <li>New custom teaching laboratory</li> <li>Extensive 3,500-square-foot design library and 1,000-square-foot resource atelier</li> </ul>	24 classrooms, design studios, multiuse rooms, five CAD labs, gallery space, design atelier with computers	11 full time, 130 adjuncts	Marshall Fields interior design, Institute of Store Planners, IDEC, Southern Accents	95%
<b>KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY, MANHATTAN, KAN.</b>	135/20	Environment and behavior; professionalism in interior design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated design curriculum</li> <li>Focus on communication and business skills</li> </ul>	Three dedicated studios, computer teaching and learning laboratory, universal design laboratory, exhibit space, resource room	Six full time	Kravet and House and Garden, IDEC International, Interzine, Midwest IDEC, National Center for Seniors' Housing Research	82%
<b>UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, ST. PAUL, MINN.</b>	450/30-40	Design based on a human-needs approach to problem solving; programming and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience gained through multiple internships and job opportunities</li> <li>Mix of faculty and experienced students</li> <li>Balanced program that emphasizes design, theory and research</li> </ul>	CAD facilities, lighting lab, space lab, many foundation courses and studios within department, resource library	Three full time, Two part time, several adjunct and graduate associates	IDEC, IIDA/Green Interiors, Design on the Edge	90%
<b>UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO, GREENSBORO, N.C.</b>	200/35-40	Combination of interior design, architecture and industrial design in terms of holistic environment and craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitions — in last four years, students have won prizes in 22 design competitions, including eight first prizes.</li> <li>Integrated study-abroad program</li> </ul>	Digital studio with 24 Macintosh-based work stations, prototype shop, Center for Design Innovation	10 full time, Eight adjunct part time	Design on the Edge, IDEC, ACSA, ADAC, EmFest, Kravet, FormZ, IIDA, Aging in Place, Sustainable Housing, Eco-Friendly Furniture	80%
<b>SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY, SYRACUSE, N.Y.</b>	100/25	Professional approach to creative problem solving; humanistic, contract-oriented interface with other disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programming and concept demonstration; how to attack a job in detail with specifics</li> <li>Reality-based, three-dimensional work in industrial design</li> </ul>	Shops for three-dimensional project development, dedicated classrooms and desks, dedicated studio for each class	Four full time, eight adjunct per semester	ASID Foundation/ Yale R. Burge Competition, Dupont Antron Student Design, Halo National Lighting Design Competition	60%

But my concern is that they are leaders of the profession in 10 to 15 years. I want them to be the change-makers. Part of the role of a good program is to promote professional leadership.

**BECKER:** We're educating students who will go into the field and serve clients and employers effectively. But we also want to shape the profession for which we're preparing those students.

**PERSPECTIVE: WITH TECHNOLOGY CHANGING SO QUICKLY, HOW CAN A BEST-IN-CLASS PROGRAM INTEGRATE RELEVANT, PRACTICAL SKILLS?**

**KIRKMAN:** The program must embrace industry standards and be on the leading edge of that. Just providing computer-aided design experience is not enough. You need to be into all the bells and whistles that are conversant with the industry. The more



Susan Kirkman

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DICK FLETCHER

interactive, the better. This is the point-and-click generation, and you have to be that way or you'll lose them.

**ANDERSON:** Technology is a problem. If you teach *continued on page 22*

## a good fit

With so many good interior design programs available, finding the right school can be an educational experience in itself. The more you know about the interior design profession and your own career objectives, the easier your school search will be, according to Holly Mattson, FIDER Director of Accreditation. She recommends a systematic approach to picking a program:

- 1. VISIT FIDER'S WEB SITE (WWW.FIDER.ORG).** The group provides quality assurance for an array of programs listed on the site. Accredited schools must demonstrate liberal arts components, complete an in-depth self-analysis, and undergo a review in which a team of FIDER site visitors (practitioners and educators) looks at the program, student work and skill sets to determine if the institution provides the requirements students need to practice.
- 2. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OTHER EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES** available online and through interior design associations. For example, IIDA and ASID both have Web sites and staff that can provide information on choosing a good design school.
- 3. LOOK AT NCIDQ'S INFORMATION FOR EXAM REQUIREMENTS,** especially if you want to obtain certification after graduation.
- 4. EXAMINE STATE REGULATORY AND LICENSING REQUIREMENTS,** which show how your choices will affect your ability to practice. Regulations exist in many states, so you must learn the specific requirements for your practice area.
- 5. VISIT SCHOOLS AND TALK WITH FACULTY.** Look at the students' competition performance rates.
- 6. FIND MENTORS IN DESIGN FIRMS THAT REFLECT YOUR GOALS.** Ask interior design practitioners about schools based on their success and quality.

students to be highly conversant with the current technology, they'll only be competent at the time they leave. You have to teach them to be lifelong learners.

**TOMMY LAMBETH:** It's about using your hands, eyes, brains and heart. Direct experience with making things. Our entire first semester is focused on making things. Not making models or images, but making the actual things. Through working with a variety of materials, students make or craft a variety of products or artifacts that have some relation to human use or basic design.

**PERSPECTIVE: WHAT DO YOU FEEL ARE THE COURSES THAT WILL EMERGE AS IMPORTANT TO THE PRACTITIONERS OF THE FUTURE?**

**GUERIN:** Intergenerational or multigenerational design. The emphasis on healthcare will continue, especially for the elderly. This is a wellness approach, not a disease approach – the need to understand human behavior better so design solutions can improve performance, satisfaction, health and welfare.

**BECKER:** Interior design now is focusing on more fundamental issues in how to use the built environment to promote health and productivity. It's gone beyond aesthetics toward a more fundamental challenge.

Sustainable design has gone from a fringe activity to center court. In every aspect, it's pervading students' and corporations' thinking. They are asking for it. It's changing how we think of materials and their social impact.

**KIRKMAN:** We just put in our mission statement that we're going to teach design responsibility. This is a growing trend with architects – taking a close look at social responsibility and how and where you build so you don't create harm.

**MARSHALL-BAKER:** Cradle-to-cradle design – looking beyond the issues of green design and sustainability. Whatever you pull out of the planet for whatever purpose, whenever its usefulness is over, it disintegrates back into the form it came from. It's important to think about how our culture has to



Anna Marshall-Baker

change and the role we can play in that change. We have to think of humans as stewards of the Earth.

**MORIGI:** Ecological and sustainable design, but also programs that have to do with the built environment. Furniture is a good open area – there's an opportunity for universities and manufacturers to collaborate and upgrade products for the real world.

**LAMBETH:** There will be a focus on the interface with technology and new material exploration and development. The space program has produced so many new materials that have been integrated into popular culture over the years. Lighting, computers and technology are increasing so quickly that designers need to think about how to integrate them into the workplace and homes. 📺