2014 ARIDO WARDS: Gala Dinner and Winners

The annual gala dinner to announce the winners of the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario (ARIDO) Awards recognizes excellence, innovation and creativity in interior design. This year for the first time, the gala dinner was a standalone event detached from IIDEX. Calgary-based MartensGroup won top honors for the second year running.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 3...

NYSID Announces First Online 24-Credit Interior Design Certificate Program

More students across the country are choosing to forgo the classic college experience, or part of it, in favor of satellite schools and online programs that enable them to live and attend school from home, and pursue course loads that are more accommodating to part- or full-time jobs. In a demonstration of support for students learning online, the New York School of Interior Design (NYSID) announced at the beginning of September its first 24-credit Basic Interior Design (BID) Online Certificate, a comprehensive online introduction to the field of interior design.

FULL STORY ON PAGE 8...

Concurrents - Environmental Psychology: Not Too Much, Not Too Little, Moderate Visual Complexity is Just Right

Most humans are more focused on what they see than what they smell, hear, taste or touch; we tend to be a visually oriented species. Since we're vision-centric, it's important that the spaces we're in have just the right amount of visual complexity – not too much, not too little. So, what does a space that's moderately complex visually look like?

FULL STORY ON PAGE 13...

CITED:
“KNOWING OTHERS IS INTELLIGENCE; KNOWING YOURSELF IS TRUE WISDOM. MASTERING OTHERS IS STRENGTH; MASTERING YOURSELF IS TRUE POWER. IF YOU REALIZE THAT YOU HAVE ENOUGH, YOU ARE TRULY RICH.”
—LAO TZU, TAO TE CHING
The past decade has seen increased financial constraints and demands on students, causing them to rethink how best to pursue their higher education goals. More and more students across the country are choosing to forgo the classic college experience, or part of it, in favor of satellite schools and online programs that enable them to live and attend school from home, and pursue course loads that are more accommodating to full-time or part-time jobs. It isn’t breaking news that technological advances have made online learning increasingly common.

But it’s up to each industry’s top schools to set the bar for the strength of its online programs. As the interior design industry changes, so too must the way by which people are educated in the field.

The New York School of Interior Design (NYSID) announced at the beginning of September a Basic Interior Design (BID) Online Certificate, a 24-credit program that...
a&d provides a comprehensive introduction to the field of interior design. NYSID’s first online stand-alone certificate is a demonstration of the school’s effort to support the concept of online learning and provide potential students with flexible options.

In its Design Intelligence (DI) 2014 report of “America’s Best Architecture & Design Schools,” (www.di.net/articles/americas-best-interior-design-schools-2014), the Design Futures Council ranked NYSID number seven in the nation for undergraduate programs and number five in graduate programs. NYSID first introduced select online courses in the fall of 2013 through its Institute for Continuing & Professional Studies (ICPS), and so the 24-credit certificate is an expansion of the current offerings.

The school attests that the BID online program provides the same rigorous education offered through the onsite BID certificate. NYSID instructors teach each BID online course to mirror the curriculum and learning goals of the onsite course. Coursework includes active discussions with fellow students and the instructor, however the most obvious benefit to students comes in the form of greater flexibility. With recorded lectures and demonstrations, assignments and handouts available 24/7, students can study on their own time and at their own pace.

The Basic Interior Design (BID) certificate consists of 10 courses, which make up the foundation of the College’s undergraduate degree programs: Historical Styles I, Basic Drafting, Color for Interiors, English...

If a student decides to pursue a degree, they can apply credits earned from the BID directly to one of NYSID’s undergraduate degree programs, such as the Associate of Applied Science, Bachelor of Fine Art or Bachelor of Art. The certificate program, while not a degree, has been accredited by the New York State Department of Education as well as the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), so there is also potential for other schools to accept the certificate as credit toward an associate’s or bachelor’s degree.

I spoke with Ellen Fisher, the school’s Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the College, about the rationale behind and specifics of online learning, NYSID-style.

“Who is our student? This is something we’ve thought deeply about and are continuing to think about moving forward. We don’t think we, or our potential students, need to be limited by geographical location. We want to give people from around the country and the world the opportunity to get their education from NYSID, and we work hard to communicate the character of our school through all of the courses. We want to make this a possibility for people who have any number of other obligations in their lives.”

Ms. Fisher confirmed that the 10 courses included in the online certificate program comprise the foundation of all of the school’s design programs. While students can complete all of the readings, videos and assignments wherever and whenever they choose, they are required to participate frequently during the week through a discussion board.

“Through this discussion board, a truly rich dialogue develops between classmates about things each of them presents to the class,” said Ms. Fisher. “They tell each other what they think about their work and offer suggestions, just as much as, if not more than, in the traditional classroom.”

Also noteworthy at NYSID is the lack of required portfolio in the admissions process. At NYSID, the first four required courses students take – Historical Styles I, Basic Drafting, Color for Interiors and Visual Concepts – constitute their portfolio, should they want to apply for a degree program.

“No other school makes it easy to begin learning about and doing design. People who love design and have the talent may be sitting at a desk in some other occupation, so they won’t have a traditional portfolio full of work. We are open to looking all types of work. If they have an eye, a spark, talent, then we can train them to be successful.”

While no one is suggesting (at least not yet) that streamlined beginner certificate programs such as this one are intended to eventually evolve into full online bachelor’s degree programs, the inclusion of online certificates that fold nicely into traditional degrees could prove to set some top schools apart from others that do not. If this is indeed the direction education is moving in the future, more than just one school needs to get onboard.

On its website, the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), which Design Intelligence (DI) ranked number one in both undergraduate and graduate interior design programs in the nation, says that it offers eLearning in a handful of its degrees, although not for interior design. A quick scan of the websites of the Pratt Institute, Parsons, the New School for Design, and the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), all ranked as top institutions by Design Intelligence (DI), yielded little information regarding online programs. The interior design program at University of Cincinnati’s School of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP), which Design Intelligence ranks number four in the nation in undergraduate programs, makes available a
few online offerings, such as art history and graduate program work.

Camille Mosquera-Laib, a UC interior design student and current fall intern at IA Interior Architects, told me that while she understands the conveniences of online learning, whether it’s saving time or money or both, she believes the field of design could be very difficult to grasp through an online education.

“How are you introduced to the collaborative part of this field when everything is centered around completing assignments online? At UC, we’ve learned how to talk to people. Our first year included two major collaboration projects.”

Ms. Fisher stressed that the NYSID online program directors have created as many real-life, collaborative experiences for its online students as possible. Aside from the interactive discussion board, students in the BID online program are required to work collaboratively on one large project for their Design Process course. Projects and assignments also mirror the onsite program as closely as possible. In the textiles unit, for example, students are asked to go out and find samples of particular fabrics or specific weaves.

“We’ve also gone to great lengths to create videos that step in for the field trip component of the traditional classroom. For example, we created a one-hour video of one of our textile teachers visiting a studio workroom to show exactly how a chair is upholstered. Our students are seeing designers and craftsmen at work in all types of settings.”

Ms. Fisher also notes the advantages of learning to source in your own geographical region. An online student in Kansas, for example, will have a much different sourcing landscape from which to pull than a student in Hong Kong or Germany.

“It helps you develop your own network of local resources available to you, which is a valuable experience when you begin to work in whatever region you’re located in.”

At a minimum, news of efforts such as these shows growing interest in eliminating barriers to attending interior design school. The challenge of ensuring the physical and visual value of experiencing something firsthand in the practice and instruction of design remains. But removing the inconveniences of time and money gives options to talented individuals of all circumstances. The industry may very well come to appreciate when those future designers move the profession forward.

For more information regarding NYSID’s BID online program, visit http://www.nysid.edu/studyonline.

In the required videos that all NYSID online students watch, NYSID teachers and staff often visit studio workrooms and other locations to show how something is done in the field.