

SAE State of the School Address

These are the notes used by Liska Chan, head of the School of Architecture & Environment, during the March 8 State of the School Address.

This was the first such address for the new academic community, which brings together the departments and programs of architecture, landscape architecture, interior architecture and historic preservation.

This has been an important year, largely defined by the school's effort to create critical ongoing collaborations during a period of transition and change.

As you will see, the school head was able to illustrate the positive potential of the new school and highlighted many areas of early accomplishment. Also discussed were her perceptions and responses to the observations of others regarding some of the immediate challenges facing the school.

In preparing this speech, Chan was aware that the remarks about process and collegiality in Architecture were going to be difficult to hear, but she took the approach that it is much better to share honestly what she has observed and what it means, with a goal of being a partner in changing the dynamic and ultimately moving it in a positive direction.

As the head of school, Liska Chan is fully invested in the success of all the constituent departments and programs, but she also has a responsibility not to overlook problematic issues and actions.

Happy international women's day!

Ellis F. Lawrence founded the School of Architecture and Allied Arts in 1914, and was Dean for nearly 32 years. "HARMONY IN DIVERSITY" was a favorite phrase of Lawrence, and it shaped his goals in life and work. Lawrence said (and I quote): "to bring harmony out of this most complex and involved civilization of ours, is certainly the outstanding challenge of this generation." Harmony in Diversity.

Lawrence established the school of Architecture and Allied Arts as an experiment in art education. While working as Dean for those 32 years, by all accounts, he was constantly tinkering with the school with an eye to make it fit his vision and aspirations. Interdisciplinarity and collaboration were central to Lawrence's ambition. Remembering--and valuing--Lawrence's commitment to interdisciplinarity and collaboration will continue to guide us through changing times and a new College structure.

All of us here are the stewards of the School of Architecture & Environment. **Inclusion** is a basic **precept** of interdisciplinarity and collaboration: our core values **demand** that we can **only** do this well if we do it together with everyone's participation. What is it we can do on **our** watch?

Since the switch to the College of Design from AAA, **our** charge - that is faculty, leadership and staff of the School of Architecture & Environment - our collective charge

has been to take the reigns and make this school our own. We **have** been given the lead. This has been disorienting and confusing at times. How the hell do we take our first steps? We have been given the lead—we are responsible for the future of SAE—but we need to agree on a vision. Collaboratively. But before we **form** a vision we need to **understand each other**. Before we understand each other we need **to know** each other. Right now, we are still only learning each other's names. We are holding the reigns in one hand, and we are taking care of daily business with the other. But **we** are not **yet** acquainted enough to go on a long journey together.

Inclusion takes time. Dialog takes time. Learning takes time. Sharing takes time.

Teamwork takes time. **Inclusion** takes time.

This year, we've established a foundation for the social structure and culture of our school. We are actively engaged in this through forming relationships - person to person, unit to unit, team to team. We're shaping a foundation of trust and growing commitments to kindness and respect among the faculty and staff. As we move into the next academic year—our second as SAE-- those relationships will continue to flourish through synergies, problem solving, and getting through small decisions together - basically building trust in increments. In my estimation, the third year of the school is the ideal time for us to begin to vision together who we want to be as a unit. That feels so slow, but we need to leave **room** for this change.

Harmony in diversity. I don't know how Ellis Lawrence actually applied his motto, but to me Harmony in Diversity is **born** from learning about each other, and **grows** with **understanding** each other and having **compassion** for one another. And, finally, harmony in diversity is achieved through **trust**. Without trust, there is no harmony. Trust takes time. Trust takes patience.

Right now we have a major problem with trust. In mid-February a number of architecture faculty voted in a straw poll about forming an independent school of Architecture with its own dean. It's not entirely clear to me what is happening with this now, but I continue to hear about thoughts and concerns connected to it, as it apparently continues to move forward as an idea.

The faculty do have a right to explore this option. **I** have some serious concerns about this current movement, however, particular in terms of its collateral effects:

Intentionally or not, this movement threatens our school, and impacts every one of us in it. To summarize my assessment of it I will say this: It is harming our reputation within the University. It is stalling some of, and impacts all of, the progress we are making. It is taking emotional energy away from building this place and putting energy into tearing it down. Moreover, some individuals in the department of Architecture (this includes some NTTF, some TTF, junior faculty, and leaders) have been excluded from these discussions—discussions that aspire to abolish the very School in which these individuals work!

I further object to the tone of this movement. I honestly do not see how any concerns are going to be resolved with the independence movement or under the divisive tone it sets. The brinksmanship it creates, whether intentional or not, creates a climate of fear. I have heard accounts of, and seen first-hand, that faculty members in architecture feel intimidated and silenced either through exclusion and/or hostility. I am talking about eye-rolling and other gestures of dismissal in faculty meetings, communications that imply that someone who isn't with the movement "lacks courage"...snide comments behind people's back --I've seen colleagues attempt to undermine other faculty members who stick their necks out and ask for clarity, explanation, and a voice for the less dominant voices in the room. I've seen gender discrimination. Let me be clear: the hostile work environment in Architecture is totally unacceptable.

This kind of behavior has NO PLACE HERE.

In my role as a faculty member in the department of landscape architecture for the past 17 years, I have been consistently treated with respect, trust, kindness and compassion. This is true even when I make mistakes, go against the grain, or disagree with my colleagues. Yet in my short time in **this** role I have seen some faculty members gas-lighting other faculty, some faculty members using abusive language, yelling profanities and making snide comments in faculty meetings. I have seen attempts to undermine others in the form

of rumors, half-truths, and baseless claims. Again, this kind of behavior has NO PLACE in the School of Architecture and Environment. Regardless of what the argument is, what the conversation is, this behavior - this **bullying** - has NO PLACE in a professional environment. Period.

These are my own views and, in case it's not clear, I do feel passionately about this. I believe that the current way of doing things in Architecture - regardless of the concerns - is deeply harmful to the reputation of Architecture as a whole, not to mention the whole SAE. Who does this unacceptable behavior impact the most? The staff and faculty who are here for the long haul; people who are early career and do not have the comfort of tenure; people who depend on this place for their livelihood. We are all members of the same team. And we **must** work **together**.

Over the last three weeks every faculty member I have spoken to in Architecture has had a slightly different take on this movement. **Most troubling** is that there are many who disagree with it, but feel powerless to stand up! People in this room feel silenced and **intimidated**. And not just now: many have told me they have felt intimidated for years. That has to end. Accountability is crucial.

I believe the collateral damage of the movement for an autonomous architecture school will undermine recruitment, retention of students, faculty and staff in SAE. It is all at risk. I think the social capital of Architecture is being spent in a way that is reckless on a movement that has little chance of being successful. And the repercussions will harm

ALL of us. To me, it feels wildly irresponsible and selfish for a group of tenured faculty to put so many others at risk. The goal is not even clear.

The majority of us want to be a part of the School of Architecture & Environment and we want the School to continue to be home to Architecture, Interior Architecture, Historic Preservation and Landscape Architecture. We DO have potential to be a top of the line School of Design. We have 4 highly regarded units with incredible potential and already robust research and teaching reputations. But we will NEVER be a top school if the efforts to build it are undermined from the beginning. We have only begun to build our base. If we now chip away at the base everything built on top of it crumbles.

Our hard work to make this place is being undermined.

To those of you who share my concerns, I ask that you ask questions, learn more about what is going on, and speak up, share your feelings. If you want to make SAE work, then you need to **act**. You need to make your voice heard. **I** can't do that for you. I can support you, and make sure we are all treated fairly. I can work for justice and accountability on your behalf. But **you** need to speak up. There is no time to lose.

I'd like to turn now to remind you of the **good** news: to call out the many things that are going **right** in SAE. Let's name our successes, big and small:

The good news is that we are pulling together in the SAE office, within the SAE leadership team, and among faculty across SAE. We are pulling together to keep this

ship afloat and moving in the right direction. Nancy, Bart, Linda, Julie, Brook, Jim and many, many others are working the extra hours to make this work, to think about ways we can best serve our community. But our work is being undermined by a movement toward independence. If we worked together to address solutions, engage in civil discourse, we could get so much farther. It could be empowering. It could bring us all together toward a common goal without undermining what has already been built. **Please**, let's try it that way.

I have been given a few ideas for steps toward pulling together including locating concrete concerns that we can address together:

The first is **Professional education** and tensions between academia and professional training - around research and what counts as scholarship. Let's explore what distinguishes a professional degree program - LA , like Architecture is a professional degree path. This is something we share. We have a responsibility to create a culture that is not only supportive of academics but also of professional requirements. Moving forward, let's pursue this in more detail.

A seat at the table. I understand the displeasure of feeling underrepresented at the table at the college level. Even though the School Head's primary role is to represent all departments and programs, I do understand the frustration in Architecture of not having your own profession represented there. I do not take this personally. Can we please talk more about that? Is there a way we can make that happen?

Lastly, let's talk about **Communication** at and within the school. Let's work on this together. In many ways, communication may be at the heart of many of our problems, especially as so much change is going on.

The other good news is that we have an extraordinary team of people working on pulling us together. Starting with The SAE staff, absolutely critical agents in this endeavor. Holly, Julie, Torre, Lydia, Jay and Jessica in Eugene, plus Sara and Lisa in Portland, are the most dedicated core group of staff I have ever worked with. They are completely devoted to making this school run. Their collaborative efforts have given rise to many successes including:

Successful hiring of 5 new staff members since June

Holly has almost completed admissions for 12 different degree programs with roughly 1000 applications total. She's also been key to formation of a welcoming office, a friendly place with laughter and compassion guiding our ship. Holly sent a message around today from recently admitted masters student: *I also just want to express my gratitude towards everyone from SAE. Every email I've received so far has been extremely kind, personable, and helpful. It has been, by far, the most pleasant experience out of all of the programs I've applied to.* Torre, who with her constant kindness and enthusiasm, works at the front desk, supports the whole office, writes the weekly SAE newsletter, and generally makes us look good. She wrote to me this week, "I am truly honored and proud of being a part of such an inclusive and supportive team. There is no limit to all that I have learned in the past 7 months, and look forward to many more opportunities to learn and grow, with help from of all my wonderful colleagues."

Kim, has her hands full with academic scheduling for all units - no small task - studio preferencing for all programs, editing blogs, and liasoning with the College Commucations office.

Since Jay Kenton arrived in September he has made over 600 SAE students aware of their academic requirements and developed plans with them to achieve those requirements. Jay with Kim has collaborated with advisors across the College on a new strategic advising plan, to holistically meet students' needs throughout their lifecycle here. Already, he's reduced inconsistencies in students' academic plans with the Registrar's Office. He's brought a new level of visibility to graduate students' professional focus options, and he's led recruiting events and overseen admissions for UG students in Architecture.

Jessica Wu, our new Manager of Graduate Recruiting is working on several projects to create a foundation for her role. She's deep in the middle of devising recruiting strategies unique to each of our 4 SAE programs and 2 campuses.

Lydia, as always, is creating a welcoming first impression for SAE students, faculty, and staff by managing the front desk.

She has Assisted in hiring, onboarding, contracts and stipends ..

She Ensures all reimbursements, honorariums, travel, and invoices are processed in a timely manner for faculty and all of our visitors. She manages GE process for all departments and Provide information about and assist with room reservations, office

supplies, parking, catering, travel, print cards, Tandberg, policies, procedures, keys, and more.

In Portland Sara and Lisa are doing a yeoman's job - doing what I described above but for Portland programs - It's been a HUGE heavy lift getting those programs together while also trying to stay connected to Lawrence Hall.

Last but not least, Julie Gray has hired most of and retained all of this AMAZING staff during this wild ride called the first year of the School of Architecture & Environment. She leads this group with love and a mind sharper than a tack. Her love for this school is fierce and it shows. Julie, as the Business Operations Manager is also our financial steward, helping department Heads to manage their accounts and plan for next year by providing whatever information is needed.

SAE Leadership

The SAE Leadership team (Heads and Directors and our Business Operations manager) has been active in the formation of a few SAE committees including a Communications Planning Committee, an SAE Recruitment Committee, an outgrowth of the SAE Summer Academy Working group. I understand that lectures committees of Architecture and Landscape Architecture have been discussing a plan for a joint SA&E 2018-19 lecture series. Bart and Nancy and others have been working on ways we can merge certain courses or curricular areas for future proposal to faculty. We have also briefly discussed the idea of a board of advisors for the School; professionals who can keep the work we do in the academy closely tied to our respective professions. Beyond initiatives, though

Most importantly, I think, this team of Department and Program Heads and Directors has grown to trust each other where we can freely share ideas, argue about concerns and come out from every other Monday meeting smiling and supportive of each other.

There are too many to list here, but other successes I think are worth highlighting today are

Our faculty and students continue to make strides and impact the world with diverse array of work. First, in HP they are working on universal design, National Park Service projects, transportation hubs, historical urban districts, The Watzek House and the Shire, African American history in Portland's Albina neighborhood.

The inaugural Sustainable Cities and Landscapes Conference was held in Portland last September, attended by 120 participants from around the Pacific Rim. The core of the conference was the collaborative efforts of 10 working groups - led by 6 SAE faculty members and two others from PPPM --

The Urbanism Next Conference was held this week, and by all accounts was a great success.

In Landscape architecture faculty achievements just this year have ranged from one earning a PhD to a dozen publications including books and articles, meanwhile half the tenure related faculty are basically brand new and working furiously on research ranging from human waste disposal to the influence of Dan Kiley and minimalism on our field,

from the potential of urban agriculture to urban microclimates to the role of creative practice as scholarship in landscape architecture. All that and they roll out 2 professional accredited degree programs and 1 PhD program.

In Architecture, The Jeffrey Cook Trust is working with the UO Foundation on a generous gift to support projects involving collaboration with the artist Michael Singer. Nico Larco and his team have received \$1M in funding from President Schill's office to help support Urbanism Next.

KevinVDW, Jessica Green, Charlie Brown and Siobhan Rockcastle's Institute for Health in the Built Environment just launched with an industry consortium.

Don Corner, Alison Kwok and Jan Fillinger's Passive House Details book published.

Alison Kwok's new edition of the Green Building Handbook was recently released.

Judith Sheine received a three term GE Tallwood Design Institute internship from the UO Provost with matching OSU funding for an internship at the OSU College of Forestry.

And we are pleased to announce that a new career instructor, [REDACTED] will join us Fall 2018 from [REDACTED].

In student news, StanDD (Students advancing diversity in design) most recently had a week of *equity-related events focused on the theme "Confronting Complacency"*. We have students here on Fulbrights, an EPA Star Grant, National Park Service Support..and more.

For the first time in its 24-year history, HOPES will be running an event in Portland this spring...a panel on 4/15 based on the theme of “Design, Resilient Infrastructures and Urban Futures.

The Student ASLA recognized self-care week with shared affirmations and random acts of kindness around the building, and

UO Portland Arch 2017 grad Ben Feicht won a fellowship to work at Snohetta.

2017 PhD grad Gem Kayatekin received an Honorable Mention Award from the ARCC for his Dissertation.

And Three teams from Howard Davis’ terminal studio have made the first cut in the international “Place and Displacement” competition.

Oh - and - the bathrooms on the 3rd floor that used to be horrible waits for women are now gender inclusive! For anyone who pees sitting down and also happens to work on the 3rd floor, this is HUGE and very meaningful.

Obviously, I cannot adequately list the sheer number of successes in this first 7 months of the School of Architecture and Environment. So instead, I think I will conclude this thing.

Inclusion. What I’ve outlined today belongs to all of us. These are our successes, our challenges. We are in this boat all together. An individual colleague’s problems are our problems, individual’s successes are our successes. The same goes for the College. Art’s success is **our** success, History of Art and Architecture’s success is **our** success. PPPM’s

success is ours, too. The success of the whole College of Design is extremely important to the University, to the students, to our alumni. The architect Larry Bruton, some of you might not know, a 1967 UO graduate, honorary member of the dean's advisory council and former partner at ZGF Architects in Portland said of the College of Design structure, "This new model will at once give greater identity, flexibility, funding and philanthropy opportunities to each of the schools and components within the college while preserving the historic cross-disciplinary enrichment which is created by this amalgam of programs unique to the University of Oregon"

We have a responsibility to steer this amalgam of programs together. We all are on the same voyage. We all need to decide together where we are going, how many sails we need to reach that goal, and we need to work together to do it. Times of struggle are a time to learn. This is **not** a time to detach, isolate, or separate. Rather, it is a time to learn together what we can create together: *Harmony in Diversity*.