

NewSchool of Architecture & Design, Fall Convocation

Introductory Remarks, President, Marvin J. Malecha

I hope the new academic year has started on the best of terms for all of you. Getting started on the right foot is very important. I could feel the optimism of our NewSchool family at the Fall Fest last Friday. Rest assured, if the new academic year has not started as it should have for you, there is help for you among faculty and staff. Your success as students is our first priority, you will find help from my office, student life, advising and the faculty members in your classes. Borrowing from the slogan of an American automobile company, from some years ago, your success as students is for us “JOB ONE.”

Joining me on stage this afternoon:

Professor **Kurt Hunker**, Acting Dean of the School of Architecture and Construction Management

Professor **Mike Stepner**, Chair of the Architecture Program

Len Zegarski, Special Assistant to the President for Enrollment and Assessment. (former Arc Chair)

Professor **Elena Pacenti**, Dean, School of Design

Professor **George Welch**, Chair of the Construction Management Program

Bruce Matthes, Director of the Division of Integrative Studies

Sheila Sullivan, Director of the Division of Student Affairs

Peter Soutowood, President, NewSchool Alumni Advisory Board

Christine Lampert, 2016 Distinguished Alumna

Sheila Sullivan joined us in July in the role of Director of the Division of Student Affairs. This new position was created to strengthen our commitment to student success. Sheila joins us from UC Santa Barbara where she was the Acting Executive Director of the Carsey-Wolf Center dedicated to research on creative practices. She has also served as both an Associate Dean and Program Director at the University of San Francisco, where she was responsible for undergraduate and graduate level student services. Prior to working at USF, she was a Vice Dean at the American Film Institute and served as a member of the senior leadership team and working closely with the Dean and department Chairs in all aspects of student support services, curriculum development, and accreditation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from UCLA in English Literature and is presently completing a Master of Arts from USF in Asia Pacific Studies. Sheila is a great addition to NewSchool. I look forward to what I know will be her many contributions.

Convocation Opening

In my role as President of the NewSchool of Architecture & Design it is my pleasure to open the 2016 Fall Convocation. This is an event that builds upon a tradition that was stopped some years ago. We renew it today with the optimism of the promise of a new academic year. The idea of an academic assembly has a rich tradition of lively discourse that extends through the centuries of life in the academy. Reflection and lively discourse characterize the very best educational communities. On this path we are all learners interchanging roles as teachers and students. It is an opportunity to gather together to reflect upon accomplishments, to question the greater aspirations of the community and to pause to consider what the following academic year has to offer. Today we will take full advantage of this opportunity to recognize student and

alumni accomplishment, to consider the state of NewSchool and reflect upon the work of a distinguished visiting speaker.

The State of NewSchool

It is expected that at a convocation gathering some time will be spent on the state of the School. Since my arrival in January we have undertaken an ambitious agenda. This effort has been guided by a diagram I refer to as the operational posture of NewSchool. This document maps out who we see ourselves to be as design learners and how we wish to be known as citizen architects and designers. It charts the path we follow from the pillars of a design education including professional preparation, environmental empathy, community engagement and international reach, while also articulating the affinity areas of the faculty clarifying specific scholarly pursuits from design and practice, design and strategy, design and environment to design and health. Through this path we have undertaken a realignment of our understanding of general education to recast it as integrative studies encouraging the engagement of a diverse group of faculty scholars with the design thinking traditions. We have conceived of the path of learning as a design life that is underpinned by design inquiry balancing the more traditional paths of scientific and humanistic inquiry. Because of this vital discussion underway within the faculty we have been able to determine the true differentiation of the NewSchool philosophy as a Human Centered Design approach. Through this assertion we declare that our sights are set upon the human experience in all that we do. It is the primary organizing thought that pins our efforts to a deeply held value for architecture and design. Our sights are further set upon the education of individuals who will be citizen architects and designers. Our School is a laboratory for the possibilities that exist for the future of our community. Design thinking centers the reflective posture of the creative individual who is keenly focused on the experience of those who will live, work and worship with the result of the efforts of architects and designers. This is the learned context of our School that establishes our thought leadership. It differentiates us among our design school peers. Because of this we must adhere to the understanding that our success is greatly determined by the assertion of others rather than our personal judgment. Such an understanding demands of us a gregarious approach to scholarship. To promote scholarship and the resultant discourse we are expected to seek the means to communicate the scholarship of students and faculty both through traditional means and by fully engaging with web and social media opportunities. I am suggesting that our efforts to collect and disseminate our scholarship be framed in a publication format under the title "The Design Mind."

Our focus on the operational posture of the School has also led us to consider our organizational structure. I have directed the implementation of a structure that creates two schools, the School of Architecture and Construction Management and the School of Design. Each school will have a dean and program chairs related to specific courses of study. Presently Professor Kurt Hunker is serving as the acting dean of the School of Architecture and Construction Management and Professor Elena Pacenti is serving as the dean of the School of Design. A search has just begun to fill the deanship of architecture and construction management. Along with this organizational change there has been a considerable reconfiguration of the design offerings. We have clarified our design offerings by organizing the study of design into product, media, interior architecture and design and design studies. In order to accomplish this clarification, I ended the relationship with the media Design School in New Zealand. While we will maintain the opportunities for student and faculty exchange, we were simply not on the same curricular wavelength. We were spread too thin and the quality of our offerings did not match our aspirations. I have also directed that we investigate new master

degree options in both schools. Similarly, I have also asked for a reconsideration of how we perceive general education. Working with Bruce Matthes, we have directed our efforts toward Integrative studies to support the notion that general education in a design school is an opportunity for inter and cross disciplinary study making what was known as general education more relevant to critical and creative thought.

As we consider the operational posture of NewSchool as a shared journey among learners at every stage of their lives, so we must then invest in the area of the School known as student affairs. We have done so beginning with the appointment of Sheila Sullivan and continuing with ambitious programs already underway. Five foundational precepts have been identified for the Division of Student Affairs; continuing engagement, timely support, operational effectiveness, health and wellness and career development. These precepts are reflected in an ambitious series of initiatives.

- The establishment of the **Center for Academic and Student Success** will provide programs and services to enhance the learning experience for all students at NewSchool.
- **The Red Folder Initiative** creates a physical and electronic folder distributed to faculty and staff to help them recognize the symptoms of students who may be in distress and direct them to appropriate campus or community resources.
- **The Commitment to Service program** will encourage students to address community needs. Recognizing and honoring volunteers sets a standard for service, encourages a commitment to civic participation and inspires others to make service a central part of their lives. Students who reach a designated number of hours logged and approved will receive a Commitment to Service cord to wear at the commencement ceremony.
- **The Green by Design Initiative** builds on the academic pillar of sustainability emphasizing the desire to limit our collective impact on the earth and also take a leadership position in promoting sustainability practices. This includes; work towards completing a sustainability audit for the campus, promoting programs and encouraging a conscious use of resources at NewSchool, including the management of environmental systems and even the elimination of the use of paper cups. (last year we used 60,000 paper cups!)
- **A Graduate Student Council** is being established to address the special needs of a growing part of our population.
- **The Project Lead Initiative** will charge the Office of Student Life to offer a variety of leadership development opportunities designed to help students to identify and develop their leadership skills.
- **A Faculty Advising Initiative** is being undertaken to foster greater interaction between students and faculty to assess progress toward degree options and to mentor students as the transition to practice looms. A peer advising program will complement faculty advising and bring senior and new students together.

- **The Writing Initiative** is intended to recognize that that writing, and particularly writing in one's discipline, not only needs to be learned and practiced, but that it can also be a tool to learning and processing other information.

And finally,

- **An initiative to Increase International Student Focus** intends to foster the awareness of the value of our multicultural student body, faculty and staff through activities and events.

As I have mentioned, this is an ambitious list, However, I am confident that each of these initiatives will improve the life and spirit of our campus community.

Also, the architecture faculty must be congratulated. The Bachelor and Master of Architecture programs have been recognized with eight year terms of accreditation. But we cannot rest. We have begun the preparations for a WASC (Officially known as the Western Senior College and University Commission) regional reaffirmation process. This kind of recognition is important to us. Len Zegarski in his new role as Special Assistant to the President for Enrollment and Assessment has undertaken the leadership of this very important responsibility. He is joined by Gloria Torres who will be responsible for the operations of the WASC visit process.

What I hope you are seeing through my description of the state of the School is a revitalized NewSchool energy. One that looks to potential, drives discourse and therefore design leadership and provides safe harbor for the most creative spirit. If we are truly to realize the aspiration to be known by human centered design, then we must be so.