

ACSA Candidate for At-Large Director Canada (3-year term)

Jason S. Johnson, University of Calgary

Candidate Statement

Schools of architecture are increasingly tasked with synthesizing a growing list of societal imperatives into their curriculums. This in many ways reflects the lack of attention the profession has given to understanding and communicating the ways in which design is more than a response to demands for functional resolution, spectacle, and bureaucratic checklists. The demand for increase in scope for architectural education is coming from all stakeholders, including students, faculty, the profession and the public. While the demands for action carry urgency, they do not come with the same clarity or direction that has informed the historical development of the architecture curriculum. This can create apprehension about the appropriate ways to respond, but at the same time, an opportunity for architectural education to evolve and innovate within this transitional moment.



Over the last 5 years at SAPL I have been working with colleagues to revamp our architecture curriculum in ways that allow us to be more responsive to issues that have not been measured by regulatory instruments (accreditation, licensure, building codes), but are critical informants to the design of public spaces across scales. While some of these issues are global in nature (design justice, climate emergency/resilience, rapid technological change, circular building economies etc.), others are highly localized to our context as a Canadian institution located on the traditional territories of the people of Treaty 7 and Metis Nation of Alberta Region 3. To help educate our students, the profession and ourselves on these issues and their influences on design, we have made space in our curriculum for seminars, workshops, external studio mentors and work integrated learning opportunities that develop skills-based training in these areas. This has included studios and courses focused on Indigenous placekeeping, neurodiversity, climate resilience, energy and material performance, machine learning/ai, accessibility and the law, the circular economy, leadership, design justice, community engagement and more in an applied research framework. We have created paid opportunities for instructors and knowledge keepers with the expertise to help lead the school in these learning opportunities.

Of course, we are not alone in these efforts. I am constantly encouraged by hearing about what schools throughout Canada and the United States are doing to respond to these issues and more. It is this diversity of approaches and shared commitment to a more expansive definition of the “architecture school” that makes ACSA such an important organization. Through it’s robust offering of programs, conferences and publications it has a critical role in enabling schools to pursue future focused change and innovation that practitioners and designers will need to address local and global challenges.

If elected to serve this community, I look forward to supporting the continued evolution of the discourse and actions ACSA has undertaken in the pursuit of an increasingly diverse set of architectural design educational models.

Jason S. Johnson

Biographical Statement

I am the Associate Dean Academic, Architecture, in the School of Architecture Landscape and Planning at the University of Calgary. He is a graduate of Ball State University (B.Arch 1998) and the Architectural Association's Design Research Lab (M.Arch 2004). I have been teaching architecture students in the subjects of design, digital media, fabrication and community engaged design/build for nearly 20 years.

My research is focused within the Laboratory for Integrative Design which I co-direct with Alicia Nahmad Vazquez, Guy Gardner and Joshua Taron. The lab focuses on the ways in which emerging and established digital production tools can engage with community based projects at various scales. This includes deploying our mobile robotics lab, small and large scale public space activation projects and most recently "aesthetic infrastructure" projects in downtown Calgary. Since the establishment of the lab I have been the primary investigator on more than \$1.5 million of grants supporting this work. This includes SSHRC, City of Calgary and industry funded collaborations.

I am committed to the architecture school as a place where collaboration between the academy, allied disciplines, local stakeholders and the profession can lead to the development of students as experts in the synthesis of varied toolsets and approaches. I led the process of integrating opportunities for this into a curriculum that is adaptable, responsive and focused on applied learning and research.

My past service commitments have included serving on the Canadian Architectural Certification Board, the Alberta Association of Architects, Future of Architecture Task Force and the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture.