

Entrepreneurship Is Leadership Redefining Professional Practice

2026 AIA/ACSA Practice + Leadership Award

Required Course | 3 Credits | M.Arch | Fall Semester, Final Year of -5 year M.arch Program|

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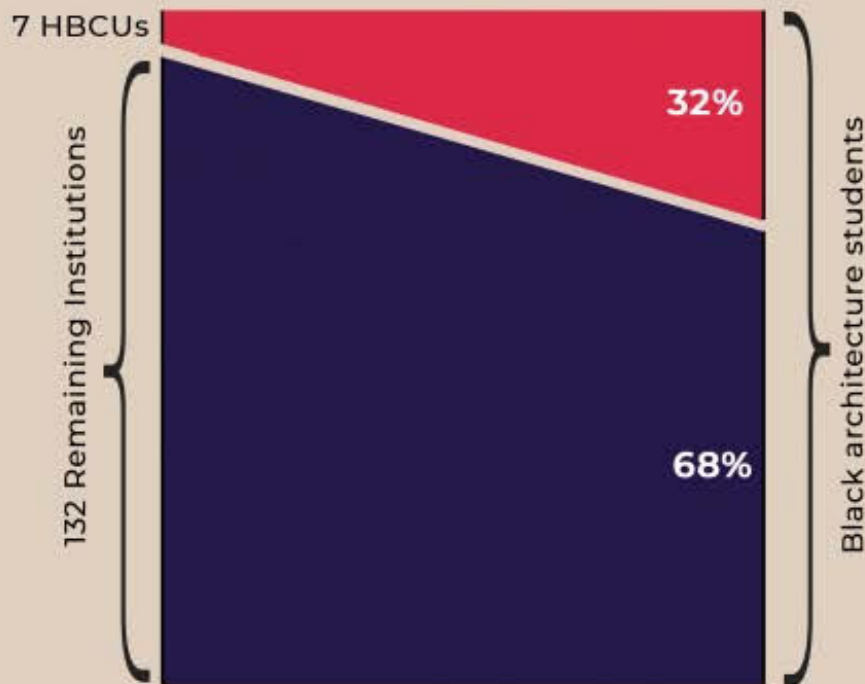


Why: Context & Leadership

The Importance of Practice at an HBCU

HCBUs make up only 5% of the NAAB-accredited schools but enroll 32% of the Black student population in accredited and pre-professional programs achieving a higher graduation rate. In addition to her teaching, Professor Maloo wins in getting the resources for the students' numbers of diverse emerging professionals entering the profession and pursuing the path of licensure. Professor Maloo's commitment to strengthening architectural education at leading HCBU, Howard University, is part of a much-needed transformation of our profession. HBCU enrollment is the most prominent pipeline for fostering successful new Black architects. According to an ACSA study, one out of every three Black architecture students attends an HBCU. Maloo's leadership for the last decade at HU empowers her student's confidence and professional resilience. Maloo teaches students of the African Diaspora and students of color from all over the world, including the United States, Africa, Europe, Nepal, United Arab, and Southeast Asia. Her contributions include successfully graduating students, and her global students return to contribute to their countries.

Black student representation at HCBUs.



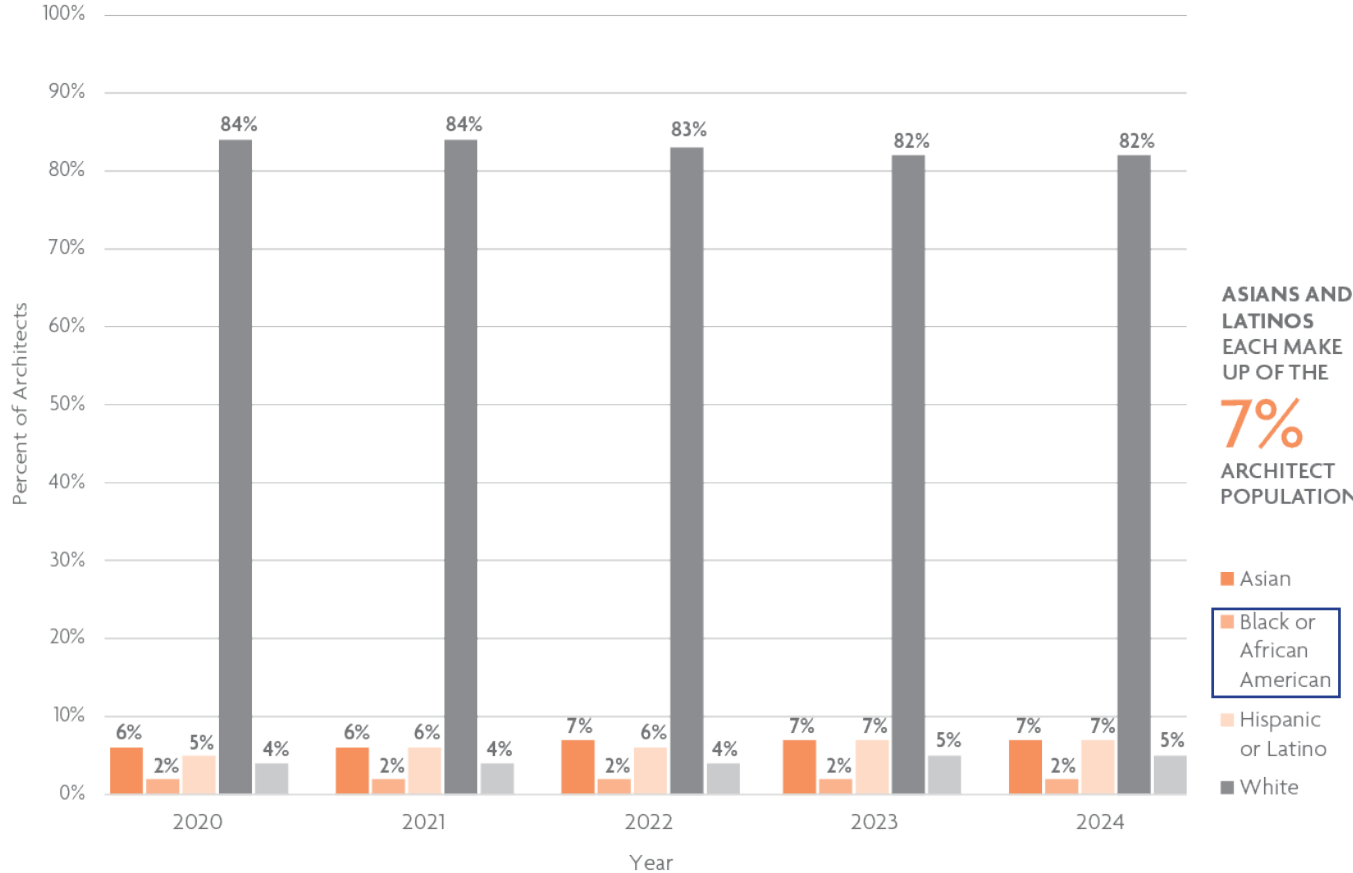


60%
OF ARCHITECTS
ARE WHITE MEN



1%
OF ARCHITECTS ARE
BLACK WOMEN

NCARB by the Numbers of Ethnicity and Gender



“Of the top 15 prestigious occupations, architects came in tenth place if ranked by the percent of Black workforce in the profession. Just like the statistics across the academy, these data beg the questions “Who is architecture serving?” and “Who is represented?”

- Kendall A. Nicholson
Ed.D., Assoc. AIA, NOMA, LEED GA
ACSA Director of Research and Information

Professor Nea Maloo opens strategic pathways through extraordinary opportunities for students in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) grow their growing leadership in the profession. She offers students a potent combination of educational programs and life experiences that fosters self-awareness, resilience, and leadership while teaching technical and integrated design skills. Beyond proficient teaching and mentoring, Maloo prepares and encourages students’ participation with extraordinary success in competitive international programs, such as the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Decathlon competition. Under her leadership, Howard University (HU) competed in its first Solar Decathlon, winning the Director’s Award, and secured the coveted endorsement from the U.S. Department of Energy’s Zero Energy Design Designation for the HU Department of Architecture. These experiences fortify the confidence, technical growth, and professional agility of the students under her charge.

NCARB by the Numbers

What: Innovation in Education

Professional Practice at Howard University

The Professional Practice course is a cornerstone of architectural education, blending theory with practical application through readings, workshops, discussions, and role-playing exercises. Its goal is to prepare students not only for licensure but also for leadership practice. Uniquely interdisciplinary, it integrates law, finance, ethics, management, and design, grounded in AIA, NCARB, and state standards. The course reframes architecture as both design stewardship and business innovation. Students prepare to act as guardians of public trust while pioneering new delivery models, sustainable strategies, and collaborative practice. This balance positions graduates as visionary leaders who align artistry, ethics, and entrepreneurship.

Core Areas of Study

The curriculum spans nine essential areas:

- History of professionalism
- Ethics and professional conduct
- Licensing and internship development
- Firm identity, organization, and legal structure
- Financial management and delivery approaches
- Documentation, liability, and intellectual property
- AIA contract documents
- Construction administration and risk management



Entrepreneurial Approach

The course instills an entrepreneurial mindset, guiding students to develop business plans for sustainable practices, define a firm's identity as a reflection of its vision and values, and conduct market analysis to anticipate client needs and industry trends. The course equips graduates to strike a balance between creativity and business acumen, as well as strategic foresight.

Cultural Agency and Business Literacy

Architecture is both a cultural act and a commercial enterprise. Students learn to serve as cultural agents who shape spaces with social responsibility, while mastering contracts, finance, and project delivery. This dual emphasis ensures practices that are both ethical and financially sound, as well as socially impactful.



Arthur Logan
2016
Jr. Architect of the Capitol

“Professor Maloo instilled in me that architecture was hard work, and to become an architect, I must live and breathe the culture”



How: Pedagogy, Mentorship & Collaboration

Course Overview

The Professional Practice course prepares students for the complexities of architectural practice by integrating business acumen, ethical responsibility, and leadership skills with the creative design process. It highlights the architect's dual role as cultural steward and entrepreneurial innovator, equipping graduates to navigate challenges while serving the public interest. Through simulations, reflective learning, professional engagement, and applied projects, students gain knowledge and confidence for licensure, ethical practice, and leadership in a rapidly evolving profession.

Course Outcomes

- **Integrate Business Practices** – Apply efficient and creative business strategies to support and enhance the design and build process.
- **Demonstrate Social Responsibility** – Articulate and uphold the role of the architect in serving the public interest, promoting health and safety.
- **Collaborate Across Professions** – Engage effectively with clients, consultants, and the industry through professional conduct and interdisciplinary teamwork.
- **Communication** – Make informed decisions, evaluate risks, and communicate ideas clearly and persuasively in professional contexts.
- **Prepare for Professional Advancement** – Demonstrate readiness for post-graduation opportunities, including licensure, employment, and leadership.

Professional Field Trip



Course Objectives

- **Experiential Learning**

The course adopts an experiential learning model, simulating the creation and operation of architectural practice. Students develop business plans with financial forecasts, design firm branding and digital identity, engage in mock client negotiations, and prepare "Professional Trading Cards" to communicate personal branding, ethics, and service values. Mentorship from practicing professionals bridges academic exercises with real-world expectations.

- **Reflective Learning**

Through weekly reflections, peer critiques, and project milestones, students assess their leadership style, business ethics, and professional goals. A pre-course survey establishes baseline knowledge, while a post-course reflection tracks growth in confidence, self-awareness, and readiness for practice.

- **Professional Engagement**

The course is enriched through practitioner critiques, alumni involvement, and industry partnerships, ensuring students receive authentic feedback from leaders in the field. Collaborations extend the classroom into practice, offering insight into firm strategy, design management, and leadership challenges.

- **Applied Practice and Competitions**

The impact extends well beyond the classroom. Students apply their skills in competitions, internships, and professional opportunities, with several securing positions through exposure to visiting architects and firms. Signature collaborations – including the Solar Decathlon – allow students to apply business and practice knowledge to large-scale, interdisciplinary, real-world projects, reinforcing both academic growth and career readiness.

Professional Field Trip



Experimental Learning

Pre-Professional Practice Survey

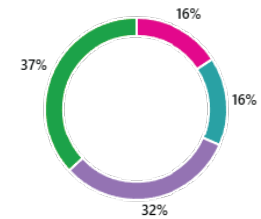
At the beginning of the semester students have the opportunity to provide their prior knowledge of professional practice through the use of a preliminary survey in order to get an idea of what they understand about the profession of architecture. The diagrams that you see on the following pages outline the questions that were asked in the survey as well as the students responses to them.



Students Collaborating

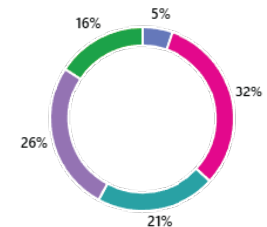
How well do you understand the key elements of a firm's business plan?

- Extremely well
- Somewhat well
- Neutral
- Somewhat not well
- Extremely not well



How well do you understand the basis for planning regulations?

- Extremely well
- Somewhat well
- Neutral
- Somewhat not well
- Extremely not well



Almost 50% of student have not exposed to any type of business plan prior to the class.

Experiential Learning

Reflective Learning

Developing a Business

Logotype

Logotype Variations

Primary Typeface

SHUTTLEBLOCK BOLD
 ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
 abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
 0123456789

At AD&M, we believe design is the beginning of how people see, feel, and inhabit the world.

AD&M
 design starts here

The Creation of Adam
 Michelangelo
 Painted c. 1508-1512

AD&M

Throughout the semester, students are faced with the task of creating a business along with two to three partners. Through the utilization of a mock firm, students learn the business side of architecture and how to not only start up their own businesses but how to market their company to ensure longevity. This is important as over the years there has been a downtrend in Black-owned firms with the projection being 200 out of every 200,000 during the 1900s to now being 100 in every 200,00 in current times.

Scene 3 Studios

Experiential Learning

"Adding Color to the World's greatest Stories"

- HOUSE OF DYE

- Firm Name:** HOUSE OF DYE
- Slogan:** Adding Color to the World's greatest Stories
- Founders:** Dana Goodridge, Yasmine Raji, Elizabeth Robele
- Specialties:** Museum Design, Exhibition Design, Retail & Hospitality

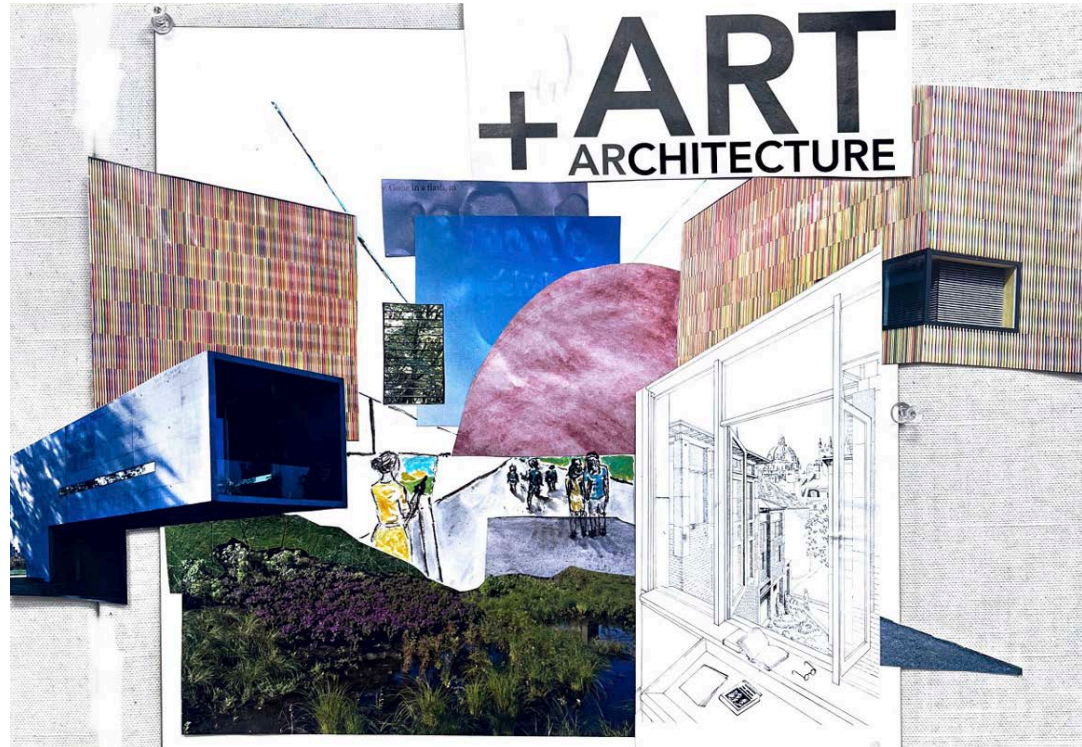


House of Dye

Applied Practice & Competitions

Goals

After students created their business, required to create a ten year plan their outlined not only their personal goals but the goals for the next five and 10 years of their professional life to begin thinking about life outside of academia. As this course sits within the final year of the five years M.Arch program it is important that student begin to think about their future and where they see themselves.



Goals Collage

Experiential Learning

Reflective Learning

Branding



Marketing Brochure
Mission, vision, and core values



AD & M

design starts here



About Us

AD&M is a collaborative interior design studio founded by Alyssa Watts, Dylan Wimberly, and Marcus Ezidore. Our name is both an acronym of our partnership and a play on "Adam," the first human, symbolizing origin, materiality, and the shared experience of being of the earth.

As an interiors practice, we design spaces that are immersive, human-centered, and narratively rich.

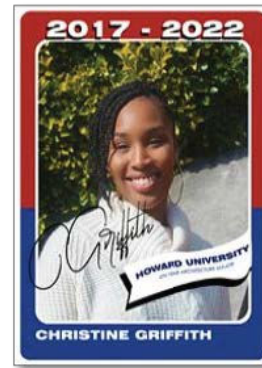
Our work spans luxury retail, entertainment, and experiential environments, where design becomes more than backdrop it becomes the story itself. We craft interiors that invite connection, spark wonder, and leave lasting impressions.

At AD&M, we believe design is the beginning of how people see, feel, and inhabit the world.



Firm Brochure

Both firm brochures and professional trading cards were created by teams and individuals in order to showcase the core values, mission statement, visions and capabilities of each student and their respective firms. This allowed students to utilize the full breath of their skills that they have accumulated throughout their five years at Howard University and creativity to display how that can use branding in order to shape their self image not only to themselves but in the field of architecture.



Professional Trading Cards

Experiential Learning

Applied Practice & Competitions

Elevator Pitch

Once students have concluded the branding portion of the class, they must create a 2-3 minute elevator pitch to promote their business. As marketing a business increases the reach of potential clients and contractors it is important for students to know how to market their business in order to maintain a steady work flow.



Northstar

<https://youtu.be/OrlcSqZBK1M>



FKB Design

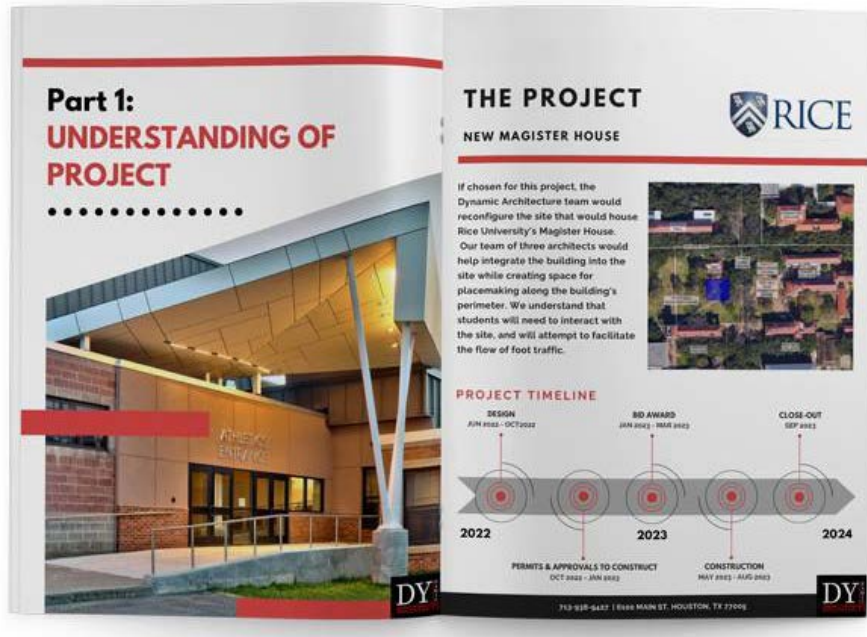
<https://youtu.be/ZgtSo8PerHg>

Elevator Pitch

Experiential Learning

Reflective Learning

Business Plan



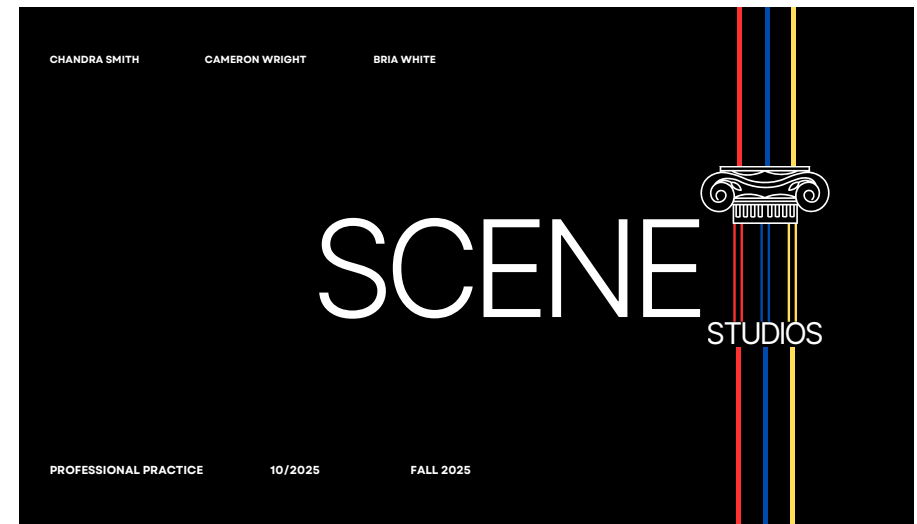
Business Pitch

For the final, students must create a business pitch and presentation that combines prior assignments including market analysis, elevator pitch, branding, start up cost and financial plan to be presented in front of jurors in a mock meeting in order to secure funding for their business. Through this final presentation students are able to see how a meeting with a bank would potentially be handled if they were to start their own business allowing for an easy transition outside of the academic space with the intent to encourage them to increase the numbers of Black-owned businesses within the architecture field.

Experiential Learning



Business Pitch



Applied Practice & Competitions



Reflective Learning

Ethics

In addition to building codes, students required to read and have an understanding of the AIA code of ethics. This is achieved through a range of prompts that are distributed among the groups for them to answer. With the rise of AI within the field of architecture this year students had the opportunity to think about the ethic and unethical nature of AI and how it could potentially impact the field.



Experiential Learning

Group 7 Debate Write-Up: Ethics Case 5 - The New Data Center Proposal

Manda Hamilton, Sierra Espinoza, Tierney Franklin

Opening Statement

We will accept this commission to design a 500,000 sq. ft. data center on the outskirts of a mid-sized U.S. city, but we do not do so blindly. We see this as a moral and professional obligation to set a new standard for responsible architecture, rather than an act of compliance. In accepting this commission, we acknowledge that we have the power to control how responsibly this data center is designed. Data centers are often criticized for high energy and water use. If we decline, the project will likely move forward and be accepted by a different architect anyway, but with less accountability. The company will likely still build, perhaps with less regard for community or sustainability.

Our role is not to shy away from complex projects, but to engage critically and thoughtfully. By leading the design, we can embed sustainability at its core. We have the ability to turn what could have been a liability into a model for responsible infrastructure. While data centers are problematic, they are currently a necessity that keeps our current technological systems functioning and efficient; until we as a society develop an overtly less parasitic method to replace data centers, we must take the initiative to make them more holistic and less problematic pieces of architecture so that they might work with communities instead of against them.

In the AIA Code of Ethics, Canon I states that:

“Members should maintain and advance their knowledge of the art and science of architecture...contribute to its growth, thoughtfully consider the social and environmental impact of their professional activities, and exercise learned and uncompromised professional judgement...”

- We would not be contributing to the growth of architecture by shying away from a project that has the capacity to challenge its current state.

Ethics Assignment

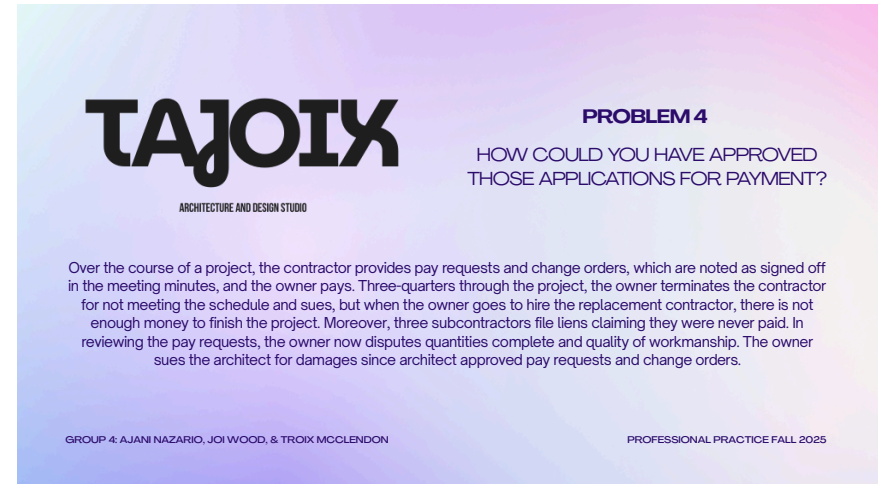
Reflective Learning

Legal

In order to have an understanding of the responsibilities of an architect outside of design, the course walks students through different scenarios alongside a lawyer so that students know the legal side of architecture.

"The students that I met in Professor Maloo's class will be well prepared to enter the profession with an understanding of the business and legal aspects of the practice"

Robert F. Herrmann, Principal, Offit Kurman
 Chair of the New York Construction Law Practice



Legal Presentations

Professional Engagement

Reflective Learning

Professional Engagement

Networking with Professionals

While taking the course, a wide range of professionals both apart of the field of architecture and those apart of adjacent professions interacted with students allowing for an interdisciplinary experience similar to that of the field throughout the semester.



Robert F. Herrmann, Principal, Offit Kurman
Chair of the New York Construction Law Practice

"One of the most visually beautiful and polished. Clear ideas about how project count would grow over time."



Edward Dunson

"Concept: A focus on transformation of existing buildings and dilapidate structures--a huge opportunity!"



Cindi Kato

"Best time with you class and your students"



Sindu Meier, Robert Herrmann, Cindi Kato, Jon Baker, Corey Clayborne, Jeff Luker, Lauren Marks, Eric Marks, Bradford Grant, Sophie, Lakisha Woods

Experiential Learning

Professional Engagement

Applied Practice & Competitions

As a result of taking the professional practice course, students have the courage to explore different areas of architecture such as competitions. For the past four years, through Nea Maloo's leadership Howard University has competed in the annual international Solar Decathlon competition hosted by the U.S. Department of Energy. This competition focuses on innovative methods to create a net-zero building. Every year students have had the opportunity to join interdisciplinary teams that attempt to solve real world problem. Through team Retroboomin', Howard had recieved third place in the retrofit residential housing division.



Shatonia Presley

"It was interesting to learn how to navigate and condense all of our ideas into a final project"



El Adon Bey

"I learned new sustainable and energy saving strategies and how to work on a design team to produce a multifaceted project"



Etana Sesay

"I learned what all get into decarbonization and the positive impact such movement has on the future"



Daphne Arko-Dadzie

"I learnt so much about what needs to go in a building envelope to help conserve energy in a real context"



Team Retroboomin'

Reflective Learning

Applied Practice & Competitions

Impact: Student, Institutional & Professional Outcomes

The Next Generation

Media Links

Book Chapter: [Building Decarbonization | 7 | Theory to Practice | Nea Maloo | Taylor](#)

Exhibition: <https://youtu.be/EkgCVv3QCxk>

Propel Unit: Life Cycle of Firm, [Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Enterprise Video Platform](#)



SELECTED AWARDS RECEIVED

- 2021 Professional Practice Scholar, NCARB
- 2021 Pro-Practice Roundtable Focus EDI, NCARB
- 2021 Pro-Practices Session NCARB Licensing Advisor Summit
- 2020 Virtual Ethics, NCARB, Innovative Teaching
- 2019 Sho-Ping Chin Women's Leadership, Summit Grant
- 2018 Featured Teacher 2 -CETLA (Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Assessment) Invited Speaker

NOTABLE STUDENTS AWARDS

- 2022 Dean Bailey, Gensler's "Rising Black Designers Scholarship + Design Challenge"
- 2021 Natasha Graves, Desiree Cooper ARE Scholarship
- 2021 Autum Tomland, Crew Internship
- 2020 Natasha Graves, AIA Licensed Architect
- 30% Increase in students acquiring Leed AP professional licensure before graduates

NEW INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- AIA HBCU internship
- Walt Disney Imagineering Program Participant
- Grunley Construction
- Gensler
- Quinn Evans



Nea Maloo's work and mentorship impacts the professional lives of current and future generations of students across the country, Professor Nea Maloo's innovations and collaborations in architectural education **drive student success and institutional sustainability** toward a more engaged, relevant and impactful profession.



Dean Bailey
2022
Walt Disney Imagineering Show Set
Design Intern

“Learning to pay attention to the way buildings are constructed, and the sustainable practices surrounding that process has adjusted many of my priorities and practices”



Natasha Graves, AIA
2018
Preconstruction Manager
John Moriarty & Associates

“Professor Maloo has an extreme dedication to her university community always advocating for the advancement of resources and opportunities for her students”

Moving Forward

Howard & Beyond

Future of Practice

The intersection of education and entrepreneurship will shape the future of architectural practice. To foster this, architectural education must cultivate adaptive thinkers who not only respond to emerging challenges but also create new models of practice that expand access to design services and confront systemic inequities. Leadership must therefore be embedded as a foundational principle in architectural education, ensuring that students are prepared to guide practice in and for diverse communities. Taken together, these elements prepare architects not only for professional success but also for transformative leadership—one that reimagines the social contract of design and advances a more equitable future for architecture.

Scalability

The redefined professional practice builds on the concept of business as agency and presents a model that can be replicated across any NAAB-accredited curriculum. By demonstrating that practice education can transcend the technicalities of contracts and liability, this approach prioritizes entrepreneurial empowerment, equity, and community leadership as essential to architectural formation. Other schools of architecture can adapt this model by embedding business literacy, cultural awareness, and mentorship into their pedagogy. In doing so, they prepare graduates not merely to participate within existing business structures but to establish new practices, reshape institutions, and diversify the profession, thereby advancing a more inclusive and resilient future for architecture.



**QUINN
EVANS**

Jeffrey Luker, AIA
Principal
Quinn Evans

“In her professional practice class, Nea assembles students, academic peers, and practicing professionals. Ideas swirl, and together we enjoy a collaborative synergy. Her class inspires confidence in our collective ability to create a net-positive future.”