"We do not seek to imitate nature, but rather to find and employ the principles she uses.”

Buckminster Fuller

Premise: We live in a rapidly changing world – a changing environment, a changing society, with many challenges to face. But we also live at a time when we are discovering many new and better ways to live in harmony with the environment, especially around the key concerns of food, transportation, and shelter. Many of these new ways are also aiding in discovering new ways of living in harmony with each other, both in the broader community and in new forms of family. Yet, even today, places to learn about these new ideas are often few and far between, or narrowly specialized in one realm or another, while broader community access to this knowledge base remains greatly lacking. In meeting the challenges ahead, access to localized knowledge and education about ecological responsiveness, resiliency and adaptability will be vital.

Project: This studio’s project will be the design of an ecologically-sustainable-living education and incubator center in Eugene, that will provide both long-term resident programs and short-term community programs and resources, on the topics of ecologically-responsible building, urban food production and alternative transportation. In addition, it will serve as a research/maker space and demonstration facility, providing hands-on exploration in those same areas. It will provide both short-term housing for visiting teachers, as well as medium-term housing in a co-op setting for students, staff and interns. The program will also include extensive outdoor spaces including greenhouses, demonstration building and garden spaces and community gathering spaces. The facility and its programs are intended to combine the best of programs such as Ecosa Institute, Taliesin, Yestermorrow, Rural Studio, Center for Regenerative Studies, and Center for Maximum Potential Bldg. Systems.

Priorities: As underpinning to our design work, we will consider the architectural aspects and precedents of ecological design conceptual frameworks such as Biophilia, Permaculture, Ecorevelatory Design, Systems Thinking, Emergent Design, and Ecomorphogenesis. With that base, we will also explore ways to synergistically integrate, and make architecturally expressive, various ecological design strategies such as bioclimatic design principles, active renewable energy systems, as well as water-efficiency and water reclamation systems, in built environments designed to use alternative, environmental building systems and materials, while endeavoring to make meaningful architectural expression arise from each. As a reference for ecological design, we will be using the AIA COTE “Framework for Design Excellence” (previously known as the “Top Ten Measures for Sustainability”).

Process: Students will work in teams for research and analysis, and as individuals (or optional teams of two) on design solutions for the education center. The primary focus will be on how architectural expression and building systems co-evolve in synergy with place, people and program, in creating an armature for educating the students and community about sustainable building, urban agriculture and alternative transportation. Toward that end, the studio will include inventory and analysis of ecologies; strategies for development of conceptual solutions arising from synergies of people, place, program with those ecologies; which then will culminate in a design solution employing ecologically-conscious site strategies, building structures and envelopes; and passive and active concepts, techniques and systems for energy-, water-, and materials-efficiency. Designs will also be conceptually developed, assessed with the AIA COTE Framework for Design Excellence, to allow for possible entry into the 2024 “AIA COTE Top-Ten Competition for Students”.

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