



CANDIDATE for SECOND VICE PRESIDENT (4-year term)

Michael Zaretsky, University of Oregon

Candidate Statement

There are many paths into academia; mine was through practice. Like others in architecture education, the transition into academia left me feeling somewhat lost. Having worked as an architect and project manager I was excited to teach, but I did not understand much of academic research, scholarship, or academic service. I found my community at ACSA conferences. As some tenured at three institutions, head of the department of architecture and interim director of the School of Architecture and Environment at the University of Oregon, the ACSA has been integral to my professional development. The organization has been an ongoing source of support, offering consistent intellectual and professional opportunities for growth. At this point in my career it would be an honor to work with ACSA leadership and stakeholders to collaboratively advance and shape the future of architectural education and research.

I **practiced architecture** in Copenhagen, San Francisco, and Seattle but I came to realize my passion was in **public interest design (PID)** – partnering with communities that would not typically have access to design to co-create meaningful places together. I had always had a passion for architecture, but I left practice for academia because I believed that I could best advocate for public interest design within academia. I have worked with hundreds of students on community-engaged design projects involving communities from rural Tanzania, to Cincinnati (Ohio), to Arlington (Texas). This work has been recognized with ACSA and NCARB awards.

I founded and directed the MetroLAB Community Design/Build program at the University of Cincinnati (2011-18) before moving into other **administrative positions** at the University of Cincinnati (UC), the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), and currently, at the University of Oregon (UO). At every step, ACSA has been part of my professional journey, providing ongoing networking, support, and inspiration.

I am thrilled to see the priorities in ACSA's updated strategic plan because they align with priorities that I believe all architectural programs must address:

Increasing pathways and addressing racial equity in architectural education are imperative moving forward. Many faculty and students enter communities that are not diverse, equitable or welcoming. Having worked at four institutions across the US, with very different issues and approaches to DEI, I have extensive experience with the many challenges faced by faculty and students from underrepresented backgrounds. Through partnerships and innovation, we have expanded pathways to architecture and created initiatives to increase diversity and address inequities amongst faculty and students.

As Director of MetroLAB, we were able to bring our predominantly-suburban students into underrepresented communities to work directly with local community members on built projects that were beloved by their communities. While Associate Dean at UC, we partnered with local companies to implement pathways to successfully recruit and support diverse students entering design. While at UTA, I saw how teaching in a Hispanic-serving institution with a high percentage of first-generation students introduced new approaches to community-engaged design. At UO, I have seen the incredible impact our Spatial Justice Fellows (spatialjustice.uoregon.edu) have on what we teach, how we teach, and who we teach. Our curriculum is more diverse, we have more diverse faculty, and larger numbers of diverse students are applying to our graduate program.

Alert to this privileged position I occupy as a result of being a white male, I am sensitive and attentive to challenging asymmetrical relations of power as these operate throughout academia and the communities in which I live. As a leader in academia, I am tremendously grateful to the many friends, colleagues, and mentors from diverse backgrounds who are willing to openly and honestly provide advice from different perspectives. Advancing diversity, embracing equality, and working collaboratively involves a commitment to a critically self-reflexive approach to leadership: to advocate for a just and welcoming society by listening and learning from others.

I chose the University of Oregon for architecture school because of its focus on environmental design. Through my career, I have remained committed to all forms of sustainability; a commitment I share with ACSA's strategic priority to **sharpen the organization's focus on climate action**. The climate emergency is an international crisis that requires radical, collaborative, cross-disciplinary action to create meaningful change. The ACSA must be at the forefront in discussions with architecture educators on how an education in architecture prepares students to put design to work to respond to the climate emergency with a strong ethical compass.

The reasons why students today choose to study architecture has changed from what it was a decade ago. The pandemic, climate change, political crises, and houselessness are very much front and center on students minds. How architecture education works today will necessarily be different to what it was in the past and from what it will be in the future and the ACSA is central to discussions about what architecture education and research can become.





CANDIDATE for SECOND VICE PRESIDENT (4-year term)

Michael Zaretsky, University of Oregon

Biography

I, Michael Zaretsky, AIA am a California-licensed Architect (since 2003) with seven years of full-time practice in the US and Denmark. I have extensive experience in local and international, community-engaged, academic design/build projects. I am an associate professor, head of the department of [architecture](#), and interim director of the [School of Architecture and Environment](#) (SAE) in the [College of Design](#) at the [University of Oregon](#). I have nearly two decades of full-time experience in academia.

I received a Bachelor of Arts in art history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Once I realized I was going to study architecture, I participated in the Syracuse University Pre-Architecture program in Florence, Italy. I also chose to focus on construction before going to architecture school. Prior to launching Michael Zaretsky Design/Build (1991-94) I apprenticed at Stonewood Design in North Carolina and Dovetail Design/Build in Seattle. I then came to UO from 1994-98 to study in the Master of Architecture program for its focus on sustainability and design/build.

Following graduation, I traveled Europe for three months before joining Juul & Frost Arkitekten in Copenhagen, Denmark in fall 1998. I worked there through winter 2000 before returning to the US for a position at Esherick, Homsey, Dodge and Davis (EHDD) Architects in San Francisco (2000-04). Having experience in construction and architectural practice, I realized that I could best achieve my goals within academia. I've held academic positions at the Savannah College of Art and Design (2004-06), the University of Cincinnati (UC, 2006-18), the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA, 2018-21), and the University of Oregon (UO, 2021+). I was tenured in architecture at UC and UO and tenured in Civil Engineering at UTA.

My **research and scholarship** is focused on culturally and environmentally responsive design in projects that stress the importance of community engagement with under-represented groups as integral to the design process. I have worked on several public interest design projects with local and international communities. My scholarship includes *Precedents in Zero-Energy Design: Architecture and Passive Design in the 2007 Solar Decathlon* (Routledge Press, 2009) and *New Directions in Sustainable Design*, co-edited with Dr. Adrian Parr (Routledge Press, 2010). My work is included in the 2018 book *The Public Interest Design Education Guidebook* edited by Bell and Abendroth. I've had articles published in several architectural journals and have presented on sustainability, and humanitarian and public interest design. I'm currently writing *Design Beyond Borders: International Design/Build Community Engagement* - a book that explores how practitioners, non-profit organizations, and academic programs working on local and international design/build projects engage the communities in which they work in they are working. Additionally, I am Director of Design for the **Roche Health Center in rural Tanzania**, a project of Village Life Outreach Project. Roche Health Center (RHC) is the first-ever permanent health care facility in this Tanzanian, Lake Victoria region. The center opened April 1, 2011 and has grown to 7 buildings. RHC provides health care to as many as 20,000 villagers. The design of the RHC won the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) Collaborative Practice Award in 2011 and the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) Award for Creative Integration of Practice and Education in the Academy in 2011.

While at UC, I created and directed the **MetroLAB Community Design/Build** program (2011-18). MetroLAB partnered with non-profit agencies in Cincinnati and their community stakeholders to produce innovative, research-informed, community-inspired spaces. Over seven years, eight UC faculty developed 14 projects with 12 community and non-profit groups. We brought in over 136k in funding for these projects.

I have had success raising financial support for MetroLAB, sponsored studios, grants and other initiatives at the institutions where I have worked. Funding has included sponsorships for MetroLAB, sponsorships for sponsored studios at UC, and grant funding a NSF conference at UTA (as co-PI) among other grants.

Following MetroLAB, I transitioned into **administrative roles** serving as the associate dean of faculty affairs and curriculum in the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP) at UC; director of architectural engineering in the College of Engineering at UTA; and, my current roles include head of architecture and interim director of SAE at UO.