

October 10, 2024

Aloha NAAB,

Over the past year, I participated in four sessions convened by NAAB, six small group discussions with ACSA members, two virtual ACSA business meetings, ACSA board discussions, an in-person plenary workshop at an ACSA Annual Meeting, and many one-on-ones focused on recent NAAB funding proposals. In every conversation, my goal has been to fully understand the point of view of each school. This letter captures the consistent themes and concerns that were expressed.

Accreditation is important. It remains a critical tool for advocacy, assessment, and continual improvement of architectural education.

Rising costs are a burden. Schools are facing a significant workload increase under the 2020 Conditions and Procedures, coupled with proposed NAAB fee hikes—some as high as 400%— without contributions from AIA and NCARB. The double burden is unsustainable.

Equity is our commitment. These rising costs disproportionately affect under-resourced schools, students, and faculty, widening the gap between financially strong and more vulnerable institutions. This could have serious impacts on students and faculty most in need of critical school resources and professional support. We need a model that ensures that no institution is unfairly disadvantaged.

Streamlining is overdue. Since 2017, schools have continued to ask for streamlined accreditation processes and do not believe the current process reflects this. They are noting cumbersome and redundant processes in the current assessment approach, with growing concerns over increasing workload and costs.

Shared responsibility strengthens our profession and discipline. A shared accreditation model with schools, students, the profession, and the licensing organization makes us distinctly collaborative and strengthens all sides when questions about trust, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and quality in the profession arise. Regardless of whether schools pay NAAB directly, schools want a collective voice.

In light of these concerns, we request NAAB work with collateral organizations to collaboratively address these crucial issues. Below are school leaders who confirm that these themes reflect their thoughts, wishes, and concerns.

Mahalo,

Cathi Ho Schar, FAIA, ACSA President