

**Session 3- Education - November 17, 2011**

Our third session explored the educational system as it relates to architecture and design. We discussed several different programs, emerging trends and trades along with high school programs with an alliance to future collegiate programs.

**Architecture in Higher Education**

We began the day at the Kansas City Art Institute to meet with Dean John Gaunt from the University of Kansas School of Architecture, Design and Planning. We discussed the current state of architecture in higher education along the hopes for the future. Dean Gaunt discussed his beliefs that students should be educated to think critically, to plan intelligently, to design creatively and to build efficiently. While some professionals look for software experienced students, Dean Gaunt believes this “holistic thinking” will produce not only well-rounded future professionals but will enhance the profession itself. He encourages students to interact with other majors such as industrial designers, graphic designers and artists. Several of the students are partaking in the Health and Wellness studio which in an internship overseas with some of the top European design firms or in the Studio 804 which allows students the opportunity to design and construct projects. These opportunities have also allowed students to seek full-time positions after graduation. Unfortunately, the current trend is finding recent graduates finding full-time positions overseas. Hopefully, as our economy slowly turns around we’ll see more opportunities for these young professionals back in the United States.

**KC STEM Alliance**

Our next stop was at AECOM’s office to meet with Ann Zimmerman of KC STEM Alliance. KC STEM Alliance is an exciting new collaborative initiative in Kansas City, focused on inspiring more young people to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math. Ann spoke to us on the background of STEM Alliance in Kansas City along with its two signature programs- Project Lead the Way and FIRST Robotics. Project Lead the Way is a school-based pre-engineering program in local area middle and high schools. Its comprehensive curriculum emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, innovation and real-world problem solving. The hands-on, project-based program engages students on multiple levels, exposes them to areas of study like engineering technology, civil engineering and bio-medical science, and provides them with a foundation for college and career success in STEM related fields. FIRST Robotics is national program that partners locally with companies and schools to create challenging after school activities that give students ages 9-18 an exciting platform for discovering career opportunities in STEM. The robotics-based competitions including FIRST Robotics Competition, FIRST Lego League and FIRST Tech Challenge offer the technology leaders of tomorrow a chance to show off their skills, imagination and gracious professionalism. More than 12,000 students are served by programs like PLTW and FIRST across the metropolitan area. The vision of the KC STEM Alliance is to see that a diverse, innovative and sustainable workforce becomes a reality. Working with educators, non-profits and industry partners and professionals, the Alliance will target limited resources where they are most needed, strengthen STEM programs like Project Lead the Way and FIRST Robotics, and serve as a vital source of information and research.



**Pillars would like to thank the following individuals.**

**Please click on the links below to find out more information.**

Dean John Gaunt- (University of Kansas School of Architecture, Design and Planning)

<http://www.sadp.ku.edu>

Ann Zimmerman- (KC Stem Alliance)

<http://kcstem.org>

Elise Martini and Tiffany Moore- (Builder’s Association of Kansas City)

<http://www.buildersassociation.org>

Airick West- (President-Kansas City-Missouri School Board)

<http://www2.kcmsd.net>

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***Skilled Trade Industry***

Next we traveled to the Builder's Association of Kansas City for a facility tour. We met with Elise Martini, a carpenter, and Tiffany Moore, the Professional Development Manager. Elise and Tiffany led us through the carpenters programs at the center. It was interesting to know that the Builder's Association is the largest multi-trade training center in the country. The programs offered at the center include: Iron Works, Finished Carpentry, Door and Hardware Modules, Confined Space Areas, OSHA Training, Floor Layers, Wall Systems, Glazers, and Painting. When you come to the Association, you are considered an Apprentice, until you become 100% certified and then you are considered a Journeyman. A Journeyman is certified to practice anywhere in the field. The best thing about the program is that it is offered free. To be admitted in the center, you have to have a company or contractor that will employ you when you get into the training program, a copy of your birth certificate and high school diploma/GED. If you are an individual that lacks money for post secondary education, the Builder's Association is the perfect alternative.

***The Future Generations***

Our last stop for the day was a meeting at the Plaza Branch Library to have a conversation with Airick West. Airick is the President of the Kansas City Missouri Board. The meeting exposed us to how much the future of young scholars is in jeopardy. Due to a lack of mentors for the youth and the lack of community involvement, students have lost faith in adults. Now we must all try to rebuild trust, and mentor relationships for these young scholars. The initial information that was sought out was to find out if there were any programs in place within the district to expose students to careers in architecture, construction, and engineering. We found out that technology is a problem, because there are no courses in the curriculum to promote those fields. Airick expressed his idea of creating a rebranded vocational technology academy. A 4 year high school designed to expose students to other fields in design and technology. He is currently working on a proposal to make this idea a reality. Also he organized a community outreach called "Opportunity Knocks", where he and other volunteers knocked on over 6,000 doors in Kansas City to get volunteers signed up to help mentor the youth. Through that effort they were able to get 3,000 volunteers who invested in the youth of that district. If it was anything that we took from this meeting, it was the students are not the problem, neither is the district, it's the lack of community involvement. When we all do our part, then the students will start to strive for excellence.

