Research Proposal

CCCAP Annual Conference
June 23, 2018
Research and Development ATE Project: Identifying the Socio-economic Barriers to Increasing the Built Environment Entry-level Workforce

Problem Statement:
Professionals in the built environment encompass multiple STEM disciplines involved in the design, construction, operation, and decommissioning of structures throughout the world. From entry-level, middle-skilled positions to fully licensed architects, these professions are traditionally held by white males, many who are retiring in record numbers or are near retirement. The demand for built environment professionals will grow significantly over the next ten years, and the sector will have difficulties securing the labor force it needs if it does not broaden its workforce to include traditionally underrepresented populations in built environment educational programs. This research project will identify barriers that are keeping the profession from diversifying and attracting women and minorities into entry-level, middle-skilled built environment professions.

Research Questions and Process:
- What are the common socioeconomic barriers to entering, persisting, and completing introductory built environment education programs in the United States? Conversely, what encouragement/supports are available?
- What are the demographics of those facing these barriers or experiencing encouragement?
- How and when do barriers and supports impact students’ career decisions and educational pursuits?

This research will be built upon preliminary research conducted in March 2018 which documented postsecondary students’ educational pathways, gathered data about socio-economic barriers and how they affected student decisions.

To collect more comprehensive data and information concerning this issue, surveys will be developed and administered to secondary students and teachers, as well as post-secondary students and faculty, to determine the types and frequency of information they receive about the profession and barriers/encouragement faced entering the profession. In addition, incumbent workers in the profession will also be asked to document the educational paths they took to enter the built environment profession and describe any barriers or encouragement they encountered. Although the study will be short-term, a mechanism for longitudinal data gathering will be explored.

Intellectual Merit of this Study:
There has been little research in this area to date. By identifying the barriers and support encountered by students of various ages and backgrounds, this study will contribute to the body of knowledge that educational and professional systems can build upon to diversify and strengthen the country’s built environment workforce.

Broader Impacts of this Study:
This research will provide a comprehensive review of socio-economic barriers and supports that keep students from entering or completing built environment educational programs, from elementary schools through postsecondary institutions. The results of the study will provide data and information for the development of strategies to strengthen pathways into the profession for underrepresented populations.

Survey Participants:
- Secondary school students and faculty in urban, rural, and suburban areas of the country
- Postsecondary students and faculty, including community colleges and four-year universities
- Incumbent workers in built environment professions

Four-Year Institution Research Partners:
- Coalition of Community College Architecture Programs and its member institutions
- Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture and its member institutions

Industry Partners:
- National Council of Architectural Registration Boards
- National Architectural Accreditation Board
- American Institute of Architects

www.sinclair.edu