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Unique post-professional doctoral degree targets practicing architects, planners and landscape architects

The new Doctor of Design program at the University of Calgary helps established professionals elevate their practice and increase their impact.

Calgary, AB – The School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) at the University of Calgary is launching the first doctoral program in Canada that’s specifically focused on practicing architects, planners, and landscape architects.

The Doctor of Design (DDes) provides a platform for established practitioners to leverage their existing expertise into new areas of innovation.

Dr. John L. Brown, SAPL Dean, explains, “The climate crisis, social inequality, and the digital revolution of smart cities, computational design, and robotic fabrication are rewriting the way cities are being designed, built, and operated. This creates enormous opportunities for architects, planners, and landscape architects to expand their practice, increase their value to clients, and make a bigger and more positive impact in the world. Mid-career professionals have the experience to identify and capitalize on these opportunities but often need a framework to help bring these ideas to life. Our new DDes program is a place for motivated professionals to develop their particular response to these opportunities and get them ‘project-ready’ for integration into practice.”

DDes graduates will use the knowledge generated through their research to open up new areas of innovation, create competitive advantages, and more clearly articulate their value proposition to clients and the broader public. The Doctor of Design also provides an appropriate terminal academic credential for design-professionals interested in applying for post-secondary teaching positions.

The DDes is very different from traditional PhD programs because the research is practice-focused and design-based, with students developing a work-integrated research program centered around a unique enquiry emerging from their experience and insights in practice. Students remain fully engaged in their working life while pursuing a research program in an intense and rigorous format that is distinct from, but parallel to, their professional work.

Three required courses offered in a blended distance-learning format help guide students through the early stages of their research. Twice a year, all DDes students gather for a four-day research symposium to present the progress of their research work in a ‘studio-crit’ format and receive feedback from their supervisors, fellow students, and a cohort of invited critics. In between symposia, students work remotely with their supervisors to continue developing their projects. The degree is completed with a written thesis document, gallery exhibition, and public defense conducted during one of the research symposia.

“We designed the DDes to specifically accommodate the needs of active professionals who want to explore a particular innovation or practice insight that can elevate their practice to a new level,” says Brown. “The structure of the program allows students from around the world to complete the degree while remaining embedded in their

professional offices. The semi-annual symposia, held in Calgary over long weekends in the spring and fall, are important and exciting opportunities for students to share their work and learn from each other.”

Canada’s first doctoral degree for practicing architects, planners, and landscape architects, a Doctor of Design, is open to mid-career professionals with at least five years of work experience. Applications are now being accepted for Fall 2020 program start; deadline for applications is February 1, 2020. Applicants are encouraged to apply early. Significant professional experience will be considered in lieu of a graduate academic degree.

Program details and admissions information can be found at sapl.ucalgary.ca/ddes

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About the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape

The School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape (SAPL) offers undergraduate and professional graduate studies in architecture, planning and landscape architecture, as well as research degrees and post-professional programs. SAPL School delivers a distinctly different design school experience that combines a rich, interdisciplinary design-based philosophy with an entrepreneurial mindset and a deep commitment to working with industry stakeholders, community leaders, at local, national, and international levels to address some of society’s biggest challenges in new, creative ways. SAPL recently opened a pilot satellite research hub in downtown Calgary called the City Building Design Lab.

Find out more at sapl.ucalgary.ca and follow @ucalgarysapl on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

About the University of Calgary

The University of Calgary is a global intellectual hub located in Canada’s most enterprising city. In our spirited, high-quality learning environment, students thrive in programs made rich by research, hands-on experiences and entrepreneurial thinking. Our strategy drives us to be recognized as one of Canada’s top five research universities, engaging the communities we both serve and lead. This strategy is called *Eyes High*, inspired by the university's Gaelic motto, which translates as 'I will lift up my eyes.' For more information, visit ucalgary.ca/eyeshigh.

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