

Diversity by Design

By Kevin Fritz

This UCF teacher puts retirement on hold to help revamp architecture's path.

John M. Maudlin-Jeronimo, FAIA, had done his part—or so it seemed. The architect had worked for the planning departments in Miami Beach and Miramar, Florida, and Annapolis, Maryland. He spent 16 years as an association executive and another 12 as an associate dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Maryland. The magical age of retirement had finally arrived.

“I had a balloon mortgage on my home and was ready to sell,” he explains. “And my eldest child had one semester left in college. I was set to retire.”

In January 2010, that all changed. His dreams of relaxing and recreating at will were soon displaced

to be a part of that change. For too long, architecture was for the elite few.”

Entering his first full year as program director, he started in January 2011 halfway through the school year, he is excited about the prospects. Enrollment in the new program is 50 percent female and 40 percent Hispanic. He has recruited some of the best in the business to join **Thomas McPeck**, Ph.D., the first faculty member hired for the program last fall. McPeck came to UCF from Southern Illinois University where he had developed a Master’s in Architecture program.

McPeck and Maudlin-Jeronimo both admit they must also create a unique approach to educating would-be architects. The mass layoffs in the industry during the Great Recession gives them pause to examine what aspects of the curriculum need to be revamped for the profession to survive.

“John brings us a great deal of expertise in what we are doing here,” says McPeck.

Expertise indeed. While serving as executive director of the National Architectural Accrediting Board, Maudlin-Jeronimo provided advice and counsel on the development of more than 30 new schools and programs in architecture in the United States. He was also the consultant responsible for creating an architectural accreditation system in Canada. During his career, he has served as Chairman of the Board of the Center for Quality Assurance in International Education and was a founding board member of the Global Alliance for Transnational Education. He holds a Bachelor’s in Architecture (1976) and a Master’s in Urban Design (1979) from the University of Miami.

For starters, Maudlin-Jeronimo is making sure the curriculum, which is based on the architecture program at the University of Florida, incorporates an integrated learning experience for students, combining classroom hours with studio hours, much like the grand old days of apprenticeships. He is teaching one of the studio sessions this semester.

So, for now, retirement will have to wait. The betterment of an industry and society comes first. **L**



COURTESY OF MAUDLIN-JERONIMO

John M. Maudlin-Jeronimo is back in the office as director for UCF's new architecture program.

by a deep-seated realization of unfinished business when the University of Central Florida (UCF) called to ask if he would consider becoming the director of its newly formed architecture program, of which Valencia Community College (VCC) is the main feeder of students. Students take two years of architecture classes at VCC to receive an associate’s degree, before earning their Bachelor of Design in architecture at UCF Valencia West.

Maudlin-Jeronimo viewed this as the opportunity he had been seeking for years to finally bring diversity to the profession of architecture.

“Diversity in higher education resides in community colleges,” he explains, noting that to this day four-year schools do not have a large enough base of diverse students to facilitate a change in the industry of architecture. “Coming here to UCF is allowing me

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