Northland Community and Technical College
Architectural Technology and Design
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
May 25, 2000

Members Present: Vern Cleveland, Mark Sundet, Beth Sundet, Bob Huser, Kevin Kovash, Ranona Noyes, Rod Lahren and Kim Philipp

Members Absent: None

The meeting was called to order at the Ground Round Restaurant in Fargo, ND at 4:00 pm.

Minutes of May 30, 1999 meeting were approved as written.

Kim reviewed the information that Tom Quinn and the Architecture Department put together for the Computer Modeling and Animation Program. The board was informed about the recommendations that JoAnn Simser from MNSCU made. Concerns were expressed about the suggestion of changing the name to Architectural Computer Modeling and Animation. They don't want to prevent people from taking the classes, as modeling and animation is used in many disciplines. The board was assured that as this program progresses, we have the option of making a program modification to change the name. After some discussion the name change was approved. There were no other objections to any of the suggestions made by JoAnn Simser.

Kevin Kovash recommended that the department contact Montana State University in Havre, Montana. They have started teaching some modeling and animation courses and could be a good source of support.

Bob Huser stated that this is a very sought after skill in the Minneapolis area. Starting pay can be $20/hr. and quickly increase to $60,000/year. Kevin stated that at TMI Systems and Design Corporation, in Dickinson, ND, computer modelers start at approximately $14 to $15/hr.

Beth Sundet told us about the opportunities available in self employment, mentioning Power House Imaging in Fargo.

We discussed concerns about getting a late start on advertising - Vern suggested that besides all the regular avenues of advertising, we contact previous graduates of our program - employers may pay for them to come back to school. He also feels that administration, both local and state need to understand that this is a pilot program and may not be profitable initially - funding should be provided.

Kevin Kovash had Brian Reiter from TMI, who does their computer modeling for them, review our proposal and syllabi. He gave us a copy of the emailed response he received from Brian, which follows:

" Kevin -
I have read through the proposed course descriptions and have just a few overall comments, specifically regarding the 3D MAX and VIZ courses.

In my experience I have found that the most important concepts in creating photo-realistic renderings using 3D Studio MAX are in the Materials Editor and the Lighting components. Since the course pre-requisites include training in Architecture I think it is safe to assume the students will have a grasp of 3D visualization. 3D Studio is designed to make creation of 3D objects pretty straight forward and any student that meets the pre-requisites will quickly catch on. I would estimate that they would be creating fairly complex objects within the first week. However, if the materials are not created properly and real world lighting is not applied, the most complete and complex models will fall flat and appear computer generated.

My comments would be that the Materials Editor and Lighting should not be squeezed in at the end, time permitted. They should instead be the major elements explored. Based on the course goals I do not see any emphasis on these important parts. (I think that the students from Havre missed out on this as well. Their projects are fantastic models, but poor lighting and marginal materials left the final output far from photo-realistic.)

My other comment would be that not a lot of time should be spent on the specifics of 3D Studio. As with any software, there are many other similar products, each with it's own set of unique buttons and components. What the students need to understand is the concept of modeling and how to break down each part into it's simplest geometry. They need to realize that there are varying levels of detail and each has it's own application based on the task at hand.

These sound like fascinating classes I wish I could have taken in my course work. I would be more than willing to offer any support I can to Northland as they enter these new courses. I have submitted samples of my work to Dr. Scott MacKenzie which he has used as class projects to re-produce; I extend the same offer to Northland."

Kevin stated that he would like to step down from the Advisory Board and that Brian might take his place.

The board gave us their overwhelming blessing on adding this program to our curriculum as a third year option.

Rod discussed the concerns our department has regarding "drafter stigma". How do we improve our image and our program so that architectural firms understand that our program and graduates are unique and not "pencil pushers" or "copy drafters"?

The board recommended that we send out a questionnaire to past students and also their

employers to determine what they think of their education and actual capabilities on the job. It was suggested that we discuss this with the Public Relations Department and/or Sales & Marketing, and Business Departments, they could possibly help us to develop the questionnaire and possibly promotional information for prospective employers about the uniqueness of our students. Use the questionnaire to determine what the strengths and weaknesses are.

It was also suggested that we give a 20 min. or so presentation on our program and the uniqueness of our students to the American Institute of Architects members at one of their meetings.

The board will make more recommendations regarding new advisory members.

The board also stated that they appreciate meeting in Fargo, since 3 members are located in Fargo and the other 2 must travel from Dickinson and Minneapolis. They would like to continue meeting there.

Meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm.