Architecture Summer Career Workshop
College of Architecture and Environmental Design / Department of Architecture

The Workshop is an intensive four-week in-residence experience designed for high school students considering architecture as a course of study and a career as well as for developing a design portfolio. Students are presented an in-depth view of the study of and career in architecture through hands-on experience in studio exercises, projects and field trips. Activities cover design fundamentals (such as introducing light and shadow, space and sequence, texture, materiality and climate) as well as computer applications, structural engineering, and site and community planning. No previous experience with architecture, drafting or art is necessary. Exercises are lead by the Director, faculty of the College, and professional guests.

The Workshop was originated by Emeritus Professor James Bagnall (co-author of the acclaimed Universal Traveler) in 1981 as a way for students familiar with traditional academic settings to become aware of the learning possibilities of the more intuitive and exploratory visual-spatial lab/studio situations common for design study in professional education. This is design-as-search vs taught conventions, and differs dramatically from analytic, verbal-linguistic, and logical-mathematical skills that high schools typically concentrate on. Exercises developed over the years are borrowed from first, second, and on occasion, modified third year design assignments at the University.

Students are assigned workstations in design labs in groups of no more than 18 aided by graduate teaching assistants and use facilities in one of the largest schools of its kind in the world. Cal Poly's Architecture Department, which offers a fully accredited professional Bachelor of Architecture degree is proud of its national reputation and is committed to hands-on education.

The workshop helps students decision-making confidence related to difficult university and professional career options. As the cost of education escalates at educational institutions, it becomes increasingly important for students to make informed decisions regarding university studies. Career and college counseling is an integral part of the program.

Participating students live on campus in Cal Poly residence halls, where they become familiar with the dynamics of university life. Supervision is provided by six live-in counselors. Responsibility and social skills develop as long term friendships emerge.

A typical day begins (approx 9:00am) with an overview of the day’s assignment, frequently with images or supplemental text and a brief lecture in the College's Gallery. The projects are commenced within the labs with visitations by the Director, Design Coordinator and/or guests giving frequent criticism while under the direct supervision of a recent graduate as teaching assistant. As projects develop over the day students are free to consult with each other in their lab and adjacent labs in a collegial manner. At the end of each day’s session (approx 4:00) the projects are gathered for a review and discussion of what has been discovered through the day's investigations. This contributes to over 110 contact hours in the lab setting, during the workshop, exclusive of evening and weekend carry over of assignments.

Weekly there are evening lectures on the process of professional degree education through internship and registration, on alternative design careers (planning, structural engineering, landscape architecture, construction management, etc.) and testimonials from enrolled design students and professionals. A digital image portfolio is assembled of projects for each student.

More information is available on-line at: http://architecture.calpoly.edu/about/summer-career