New Faculty, Unique Method Key To Architects’ Training

By DOUG HARLAN

Rice’s Department of Architecture has undergone a facelift since last spring, when it was placed on academic probation by the accreditation board of the American Institute of Architects.

Three new faculty members are responsible for many of the changes. William W. Caudill and Bill Lacy have joined the faculty from the highly regarded Houston architectural firm of Caudill, Ridell, and Scott.

MR. CAUDILL, principal partner of the firm, has been appointed Department Chairman. He is the William Ward Watkin Professor of Architecture.

Mr. Lacy, the firm’s head designer, is the new assistant chairman.

The other new addition to the faculty is Professor Paul Grillo, who came to Rice from Notre Dame. Mr. Grillo, a dynamic personality in the architectural field, is author of the recently-published book, “What Is Design?”

Besides these additions, the department plays host each month to visiting lecturers in all aspects of architecture.

With its faculty now settled, the department has established a number of new programs this year. The preceptorship program, discussed in last week’s Thresher, enables senior and 5th-year students of architecture to study and live with outstanding architects of the Southwest.

The Rice alumni architects have been very active and helpful in forming the alumni critic program, by which the student may take his project to the office of a Rice alum for 3 or 4 hours of helpful criticism. Students reportedly have found the program helpful.

“Architecture,” a new departmental magazine to be published six times this year, tells of activities and concepts at Rice. It is sent to other schools, practicing architects, and friends of the department.

There are hopes of eventually setting up a construction workshop area, a model testing lab, a larger architectural library and lab, and private discussion areas.

Curriculum changes will primarily involve increased research and strengthening of the graduate program.

No definite answer could be given to the question of regaining accreditation, except that the department looks for it to be soon.

The problems involved in teaching architecture are enormous. Concepts are constantly changing, technology is forever advancing, no two opinions of “what is beautiful” coincide. The faculty members are trying to meet this challenge by capitalizing on Rice’s uniqueness—its size and the caliber of its students. Such plans as the preceptorship program couldn’t be realized in a large school.

Rice is unique in its method of teaching architecture; it uses an “integrated subject-matter program.” This consists of team teaching in which the various aspects of an architectural education—theory, philosophy, design, communication, structures, and practice—are interwoven for a more complete understanding.

An integral part of this concept is a good, broad education in all subjects. This educational concept is aimed at turning out thinking young architects; though it uses group methods, it is aimed at the individual student.

In his opening speech given to the students and faculty of the Department of Architecture, Professor Caudill presented these aims and his hopes for the department. He cited the worldwide responsibilities of the profession and the excitement of meeting such a challenge in the present state of architecture.

He said: “I would like nothing better than to see Rice University become a fountainhead for fresh thinking and new architectural concepts that will make the world better.”