

Value Proposition to Universities

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University design programs—architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, engineering, etc.—are increasingly engaged in various forms of “community” or “public interest design” (PID). PID pedagogy holds that students and community-, or business-groups produce new and useful knowledge that neither group could produce in isolation. Benefit is seen to be mutual. There is, however, no consistent or appropriate process in place to protect participating communities, students or universities from the unintended consequences of off-campus work.

Within university research communities in the United States there are Institution Review Boards, or IRBs, that are charged with the overview of “human subject research.” The IRB review process varies from campus to campus, but in general, IRB processes for human subject research are frequently not a good fit for PID, or “design research” projects. The goals, methods, scheduling and products of design research are quite different from human subject research employed in the social or medical sciences. At many universities IRBs do not review design research and at others faculty engaged in design research simply avoid IRB review. One result is that some universities and communities have been inadvertently harmed through the lack of clear standards for communication and conduct off campus. There are two possible remedies to the situation: (1) Universities with design programs could alter their IRB process for review of PID, or design research projects in an appropriate manner. Or, (2) Universities could adopt the existing SEED Evaluation metric as an external partner.

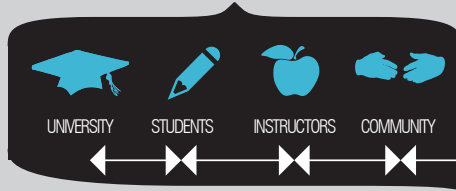
SEED, or the Social Economic Environmental Design Network, developed the SEED Evaluator 3.0 in 2011 as a common standard to guide, measure, evaluate and certify the social, economic and environmental impact of design projects. Each evaluation, conducted by SEED-trained evaluators, is context-dependent and based on five core principles. Making SEED certification the standard for university-based design research has the potential to preclude coursework that encourages unregulated or unauthorized construction projects. On the positive side, SEED certification could expedite approval for design research projects and thus allow for maximum time and flexibility for community engagement, research, design, and implementation.

SEED EVALUATOR AS IRB FOR PUBLIC INTEREST ARCHITECTURE STUDIOS

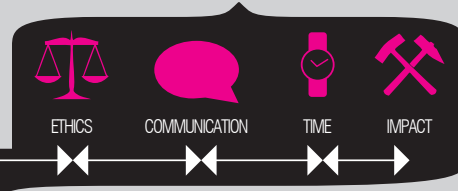
SEED : SOCIAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

"SEED MAINTAINS THE BELIEF THAT DESIGN CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUES THAT FACE COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS."

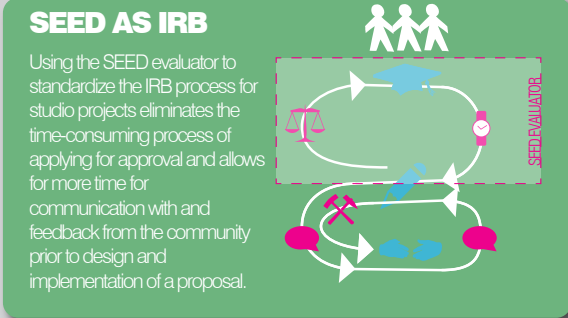
THE PLAYERS



THE ISSUES



THE PROCESS



SEED EVALUATOR



STAKEHOLDERS

PROPOSALS

"AN IRB IS A COMMITTEE THAT PERFORMS ETHICAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS"

IRB : INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD : ETHICS COMMITTEE