A CORRIDOR FOR DESIGN, the South [Campus] also exists

At an urban design and at an architectural scale, the studio will tackle relevant design questions that are now on the table for the south side of our campus. It will focus at both the development of a ‘design corridor’ along a portion of the so-called Military Axis - from Funk Library to the Ikenberry Commons - and the design of a new facility to connect TBH and the Architecture building.

Furthermore, the studio aims at investigating what is timeless or specific of a contemporary public space and what are the challenges of designing today. Public spaces face stressful demands today, they are asked to be spaces for circulation and also places to stay, to be flexible and plural and yet build up a sense of community, to be universal and to have identity and be site-specific, to be functional and become places for people plus infrastructures for ecological remediation and adaptation, and, yet, they are claimed to be, nonetheless, beautiful. Design is no longer only about geometry, but about forces, time, and open processes. Open designs accept unpredictability in space and time instead of fixing forms, and focus on designing conditions (catalysts) to improve and activate people and places.

Project framework
With the development of the new Campus Master Plan underway, the pending construction of the new Design Center and additional projects under consideration - such as the extensions of Art & Design and Architecture - there is a momentum for rethinking/ re-designing this area. The Main Quad and the Engineering Quad are two strong identification markers on campus. The growing emphasis on design programs and facilities that will attract more students south is an opportunity to create a similarly compelling identity for an east-west axis. A vision beyond the individual architectural responses that develops a coherent design of open and built space, at an intermediate scale between the plan and the architectural definition, is needed.

On one hand, the development of this east-west axis has always been expressed as an important open space and has been a focus of the campus master plans since the early 1900’s. Although there have been various attempts through time to define the axis spatially, it has never been successfully organized.

On the other hand, one of the possible additions to the School of Architecture is meant to bridge the two buildings across the Military Axis. Bridge or underpass, knot or thoroughfare, the architecture that builds this connection has to contribute to the transformation of this secondary axis into a new centrality on campus.

In response, the studio will explore how to successfully integrate both ideas by designing a 21st century ‘Arts Quad’.

Course description
The studio will take the opportunity to design a building that connects both School of Architecture facilities while allowing the continuity of the open space, that establishes a conversation with the Design Center on the west end and engenders a meaningful and compelling architectural identity for the corridor. At the same time the students will design to transform this latent public space, a large void that lacks character, into a vital and visible place, more dynamic than the 150-year old Central Quad and with its own landscape identity.

The studio combines different disciplinary perspectives and proposes an innovative design approach bridging the plan and the project, an integration of architecture, landscape and urban design in terms of concepts, tools and scales. Where designing has to do with both the general and particular at the same time, with the abstraction of the site plan and the open space and architectural design definition.
Course content
The design process will go back and forth from the spatial strategy -in its larger scale formulation- to the detail -at an intermediate scale- of the architecture, designing the non-figural and the figural at the same time.

In teams of two the students will:
-look & map_ research + site analysis: personal cartography: creative and intentional morphological, material and atmospheric features of the site; perceptual study: visual study of the built and open space; ‘Nolly Plan’: open space+building’s ground floors, active and passive facades; program: outdoor activity for and beyond campus community (i.e. tailgating, art display, gathering space), building program; accessibility and mobility study: circulation modes (pedestrian, bicycle, vehicle access), flows and patterns in the corridor and the building.

The students will gain a UIUC campus-level perspective on campus master planning and capital development by contacting with campus officials and will also analyze precedents of national and international Campuses projects
-sift & select_ site planning/strategic design: built/open space general layout. Proposal of accessibility and architectural strategy related to the context and the landscape.

And individually they will:
-construe & construct_ project development: designing the architecture + designing the open space that results from the site design option and the in-between spaces.

Course goals
-to promote sensitivity to the urban and landscape dimensions of architecture
-to advance in today’s understanding and design of collective and public space
-to integrate a basic understanding of urbanism and landscape into the design methodology
-to highlight the social background and find meaning in architecture
-to develop a coherent structure of theoretical concepts, a critical capacity to diagnose problems and solutions and a professional culture in the managing of techniques/tools
-to explore designing methods at a wide range of scales