Memo

Date: March 22, 2018

To: Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning Faculty, Staff, Students, and Members of External Advisory Boards

From: Dr. Jorge A. Vanegas, Dean, College of Architecture

Subject: Announcement of Appointment of Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

Howdy. As you are all aware, since the beginning of the 2017-2018 academic year, we conducted external search to identify the best candidate for the position of Head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (LAUP) in the College of Architecture (CARC) at Texas A&M University (TAMU), in full compliance with TAMU’s University Rule 12.99.99.M6 on Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Department Heads.

The Search Advisory Committee (SAC), composed of a Chair, Chris Novosad, Assistant Dean for Finance and Administration CARC, and five LAUP faculty members – Dr. Phillip Berke, Dr. Robert Brown, Dr. Chang-Shan Huang, Dr. Chanam Lee, and Dr. Walter Peacock, who were elected by the eligible voting members of the LAUP faculty. In addition, I appointed four other members to the committee, one from each department in the college – Dr. Kunhee Choi (COSC), Russell Reid (LAUP), Dr. Carol LaFayette (VIZA), and Dr. Wei Yan (ARCH), who was later replaced by Alejandro Borges. According to the university rules, the only voting members in the SAC were the five elected and the four appointed faculty members. In addition, to ensure that the voice of the students was heard in the committee, the SAC invited three students to contribute to the overall search process in a non-voting role: one undergraduate, one graduate, and one doctoral students. Furthermore, to ensure that the voice of the industry was heard in the committee, members of the three External Advisory Boards were invited to participate in the interview process for the finalists who were invited for on-campus interviews.
The SAC did an excellent job in identifying a pool of highly qualified candidates, with 25 applications received. The SAC shortlisted six applicants for reference checks and feedback from faculty members, and submitted the names of three candidates to certify the pool. These applicants were subsequently invited for on-campus interviews. Based on the feedback collected during the interviews, and through the secure electronic polling site, two of the candidates were deemed viable as potential Department Heads for LAUP, and their names were submitted to me as the official recommendation of the search committee.

Following the University rules in place, after I reviewed each candidate’s credentials and accomplishments, personally interviewed each one, carefully reviewed all the feedback received, and consulted with the Dean of Faculties, I made the decision to make an offer to Dr. Shannon Van Zandt to serve as the next Department Head of LAUP. This decision, which has just been approved today by the Provost, Dr. Carol Fierke, was based not only on the impeccable credentials and excellent accomplishments of Dr. Van Zandt as a well-rounded scholar, but also, her outstanding performance as Interim Department Head of LAUP since Fall 2016. I am pleased to inform you all that she has accepted the offer, effective 9/01/2018. I am enclosing a short biographical sketch of Dr. Van Zandt’s scholarly accomplishments.

So, I hope that you will all join me in thanking the members of the SAC for conducting an outstanding search, and especially, in congratulating Dr. Van Zandt on her appointment. From a College perspective, we are looking forward to working with her to continue to lead, strengthen, and enhance LAUP in its journey and current trajectory to the highest levels of excellence in learning/teaching within the Department’s undergraduate and graduate programs, in research/creative work/scholarship across all tenured, tenured-track, and other ranks, and in engagement with practice and industry, particularly with the three external advisory boards for the programs in Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning, and Land and Property Development, and also, through outreach and service, not only within CARC, but also across TAMU, at state, national, and international levels.
Dr. Shannon Van Zandt
Professor, Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning

Dr. Shannon Van Zandt joined the faculty of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (LAUP) in the College of Architecture (CARC) at Texas A&M University (TAMU) in 2005 as an assistant professor, and subsequently, in 2011, she was granted tenure and promoted to the rank of Associate Professor. Subsequently, in 2016, she was promoted to the rank of Full Professor. She currently holds the Nicole and Kevin Youngblood Professorship in Residential Land Development. Dr. Van Zandt earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from CARC at TAMU, graduating with a Bachelor of Environmental Design (summa cum laude) from the Department of Architecture (ARCH) in 1993, and with a Master of Urban Planning from LAUP 1997. Subsequently, in 2004, she received a Doctor of Philosophy degree from the Department of City & Regional Planning University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Dr. Van Zandt has maintained an active research agenda, having been PI- or Co-PI on external grants totaling more than $3 million (highly significant in the social sciences) from funders including the National Science Foundation, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Department of Housing & Urban Development. Her research (1) addresses environmental justice and social equity issues in urban planning, with an emphasis on housing policy and environmental hazards; (2) examines affordable housing programs and their effects on low-income households, and focuses on a major gap in knowledge involving the influences of federal, state and local housing policies on the sustainability of low-income homeownership; and (3) expands her past work on low-income housing to address correlations between post-disaster housing recovery and socio-economic status of households, seeking to analyze and understand fundamental sources of inequality in home ownership and in recovery from disaster events. Her research, education, and service activities have contributed directly to the Center for Housing and Urban Development (CHUD), the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center (HRRC), the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), the Texas Target Communities Program (TTCP), and the Colonias Program (COLN), which serve the State of Texas, the Nation, and beyond.

Dr. Van Zandt has authored or co-authored one book and more than 45 journal articles, book chapters, professional papers and technical reports. Her work has been cited more than 1000 times and is included in essential texts within her discipline. Despite her high levels of scholarly productivity, she has been an active mentor to graduate and professional students, having served on over 140 graduate student committees, including 40 outside her own department. Her grants have funded approximately 50 students as field researchers or research assistants, and she has published journal articles or books with 8 different students. Furthermore, she has made the time to mentor junior faculty, particularly female, as well as minority and international students, as they struggle with professional development, work-life balance, and overcoming biases in the academy.

Overall, Dr. Van Zandt has achieved to date an outstanding level of scholarly accomplishment, displaying excellence and high levels of productivity in research, creative work, and scholarship, in learning and teaching, and in service to the Department, the College, the University, and her discipline at national and international levels. More specifically, she has performed admirably in significant administrative assignments in LAUP and CARC, serving as Assistant Department Head; as Coordinator of the Master of Urban Planning program; as Interim Department Head since 2016; and as Director of the College’s Center for Housing & Urban Development (CHUD). She is highly valued by the faculty and students in LAUP, by colleagues at other academic institutions and organizations, and by colleagues in practice. I believe that Dr. Van Zandt has established a solid foundation or knowledge and experience to provide visionary leadership for LAUP, with high levels of future promise and potential for continued excellence and impact, particularly as she continues to focus, grow, and evolve her skills and abilities as an administrator, researcher, and educator. Dr. Van Zandt is a wonderful colleague, a proven model of collegiality, and a tremendous asset of great value and benefit to the student body, the faculty, and the staff.