When students enter an architecture program, they normally bring with them expectations of what they hope to learn. These are some of the questions that dwell in the minds of many incoming students:

1. What is architecture? Does architecture play an inherent role in human engagement with the world, or is architecture simply defined as whatever today’s star architects do?

2. What is the accumulated knowledge base — i.e. books, articles, oral tradition, and built examples — that defines the discipline of architecture? Which individual teacher or course of instruction is more likely to teach me what is most relevant to becoming an architect?

3. Which parts of this body of knowledge do I need to master to prepare myself to be a good architect? What indeed are the qualities of a good architect?

4. What are the characteristics of a good space? How is it created? How far can an architect go in exploring design and innovation, without losing the positive properties of good space?

5. Who are the real architectural champions and leaders of today and the recent past? Whom should I seek to emulate as representing the highest ideals in our discipline? Who has brought significance to architecture among all other human endeavors, and thus serves as true inspiration to students?

6. How do I choose from among differing points of view? Are there any established criteria for judging what is good or bad architecture? Why is it that many buildings that are praised as being great architecture don’t instantly appeal to me? Is contemporary architecture meant to be an acquired taste or an exclusive pretense?
7. Can I learn from the architecture of the past and the architecture I have experienced in my own culture? Why are the only architectural examples I see today limited to what is featured in the glossy magazines for and by professional western architects?

8. What methods, materials and systems are required to construct a building adapted to human needs and sensibilities? Is the industrial material palette — preferred by most famous contemporary architects — mandated by modernist design, and does its prevalence suggest that it is somehow best for architecture? Are there any moral or historical reasons for this preference? Should what is best for architects not also reflect what is best for human beings?

9. What is the long-term role and responsibility of an architect, as seen in terms of a building’s effects on its immediate and global environment, its inhabitants, and their social organization?

10. If I can learn to draw well, does that mean that I also design well? Is there an essential relationship between drawing and design, or has computer-aided design entirely replaced drawing by hand?

What is disconcerting is that these questions, for the most part, go unanswered and remain with many architecture students beyond their university experience. Worse, when answers are given, they are often less than honest, serving principally to promote certain styles, ideologies, or individuals. This misleads students into adopting a set of false principles and values. Current pedagogical models seldom concern themselves with educational imperatives that speak to the nature of the above questions. Given these circumstances, we believe that drastic measures are needed for reforming architectural education.