

get quality job placement from a college education. With expectations of job placement comes job security, and with job security comes reflection on satisfaction and the lifestyle the job will afford. Interior design education must allow students to develop skill and competency that can lead directly to marketability. Parents must be convinced that interior design is not a luxury, but a valued service. Even without an introduction to design in the K–12 years, students’ parents expect that design programs will lead to jobs. Interior design programs which require “co-op” experience, some as much as six months, assure parents of their child’s future employability. Other programs offer the option of working for credit and experience before entering the work world after graduation. Working and gaining practical experience during school tremendously matures studio skills, assists students in discerning their direction after graduation, and advances their schoolwork so that they can build a better portfolio. Travel programs, an integral component of most architecture programs, are important for interior architecture students as well; as the market expands into the global workplace, parents and students need to understand diversity as integral to the “multiverse” view of the world. More interior design programs are developing study trips to other countries or allying with architecture travel programs; exposure to different cultures broadens designers’ understanding and sensibilities about global diversity. Experience with diverse ethnic and cultural communities broadens students’ experience with differing rituals, traditions, and points of view. Universal design principles are informed by regional design issues. Parents are often unaware of the full range of possibilities afforded by a degree in interiors. Career options need to be strongly communicated in academic promotional literature, and strong connections need to be established with alumni.

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### WHAT THE PROFESSION EXPECTS

The IIDA/E-Lab study found that the public had distinct needs but only a “limited perspective” of how an interior designer could answer to the furnishing, finishes, and equipment (FFE) needs of a project, and no real perspective on how the design professional could address the overall scope of a project. The public believes that business aspects of projects—scheduling,

The IIDA/E-Lab study

time, budget, and trades coordination—belong to architects or construction managers. The public’s shallow perception of the skills, abilities, and arena of expertise of the interior designer is not consonant with new definitions of interiority. Design professionals must help the public understand design through education and events, not only through the work of individuals and firms. Collaboration among educational institutions, the profession, and the industry is needed. The business service provided by interiors professionals is of value. If aesthetic improvements alone are deemed a subjective luxury, designers need to implement more critical activities in the business aspects of their practice. Collaborative design methods such as the inscriptive practices, user programming, interactive design, community involvement, and ethnographic research are all methods which embed shared and reconceived knowledge into reconceptualization of activities and answered physicality. The study reports that when interior designers address client needs directly, they will address the problem of limiting perceptions. It follows that interior design needs to be a sustainable practice, one that provides services that are understood as integrally embedded and necessary to the quality of life. A sustainable practice implies a “green practice,” but also a deeper relevance and involvement with user needs and human-scale involvement in the built environment. The practice of interior design can answer to these needs.

The public has the perception that firms are emerging that combine programming, design, and user-centered research in the global marketplace. These firms build valued service by continually conducting multiclient research, which results in leading-edge thinking that directly serves design. It also keeps clients informed and challenged. Such firms practice in a broad range of traditional disciplines: graphic design, furniture, interiors, smart building design, and urban design. Such a firm is DEGW International, located in eight different countries. DEGW emphasizes user research parallel with design practice. Frank Duffy, chairman of DEGW, says, “We try to understand why people want things and what they want and what the trends are.” Investigations lead to ideation and ideation leads to invention. “Our strength, our reputation, our ideas come from these research projects.”<sup>32</sup> DEGW hosts in-house training sessions to connect research ideas with practice, as well as regular multiclient roundtables. This type of firm is sought as a programming interface between clients and other project collaborators by contributing user-centered research as a strength. Such practices seek designers whose experience is cross-disciplinary and who are equipped to bring