

ACE PROJECT NATIONAL FORUM: “DESIGNING CLIMATE-READY EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF PROFESSIONALS” hosted by the Waterloo Climate Institute, February 2-5, 2025

INTEGRATING CLIMATE ADAPTATION INTO ARCHITECTURE EDUCATION: KEY TAKEAWAYS

Held on Tuesday, February 3rd from 1:30am to 3pm EST

SESSION DESCRIPTION:

The session Integrating Climate Adaptation in Architecture Education explored emerging trends, best practices, and key resources for advancing climate adaptation within architecture education in Canada. Guest speakers Élène Levasseur (Architecture Without Borders Québec), Jaliya Fonseka (University of Waterloo School of Architecture), and Lisa Landrum (Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture and Toronto Metropolitan University) launched a dynamic discussion on current university initiatives, gaps and opportunities for improvement, and encouraged participants to share examples of climate education from architecture and related programs across the country. The session was attended by about 45 people including a mix of educators (architecture and other disciplines) and practitioners.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THIS SESSION:

In bullet form, main ideas shared, recommendations, challenges, strategies for teaching, competencies etc. Whatever comes up.

- Building resilience involves multiple scales beyond just the building itself; must consider interconnected systems: water, energy, food, transport, and material circulation
- Students should define and qualify what they mean by resilience or adaptation: Who is it useful for? What is the usage? What are the boundaries? What is the timeframe?
- Critical thinking needed about building codes and regulations that may limit adaptation capacity or encourage maladaptation
- Teaching framework: building capacity through embodied practices (rhythm exercises, bringing self into climate work), proximity and community engagement (real clients create profound responsibility), and resilience through making and craft (technical skills are essential foundations)

- Working with real clients removes feeling of distance and makes students feel their work has impact; partnerships with community organizations engage students with real sustainability challenges
- Stories and emotional connection are key pedagogical tools; storytelling matters for overcoming cynicism when students feel overwhelmed by climate challenges
- Love and humility as competencies: Thich Nhat Hanh's "Ten Love Letters to the Earth" frames climate work as deepening relationship of love to the planet; need for humility in understanding what communities were like before human intervention
- Reversing the classroom—letting students lead discussions and share their concerns empowers agency, though instructor may "lose control of the narrative"
- Architecture accreditation criteria have a role to play in integrating climate adaptation into curriculum. Currently the 2023 ARB and UIA documents are more explicit about climate action competencies than Canada's 2017 CACB conditions.
- Developing coursework that moves beyond climate data to meaningfully engage students, helping them find agency and purpose both within their work and in their lives beyond the classroom

RESOURCES SHARED DURING THIS SESSION:

- [ARB Competency Outcomes for Architects](#)
- [Architecture Sans Frontières Québec \(ASFQ\) — Resilience resources hub](#)
- [Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture \(ACSA\) climate change curriculum prize](#)
- [ASFQ: "Dwellings & Flooding" \(English resource PDF\)](#)
- [CACB Conditions and Terms for Accreditation](#)
- [Climate Atlas of Canada](#)
- [International Union of Architects: Charter for Architectural Education](#)
- ASFQ : ["Living with Water / Cohabiter avec l'eau" Project](#)
- [Mario Cucinella — The Future is a Journey to the Past](#)
- [Thich Nhat Hanh — Ten Love Letters to the Earth](#)
- [Toronto Metropolitan University's SCIT Hub \(Smart Campus Integration and Testing Hub\)](#)
- [University of Toronto's GRIT Lab \(Green Roof Innovation Testing Laboratory\)](#)
- Royal Roads Resilience by Design Lab's [Climate Action Competency Framework \(v2\)](#) for professionals
- Waterloo Climate Institute: [Integrating climate change into architecture programs: ACE curriculum brief.](#)
- Waterloo Climate Institute: [The status of climate change education in Canadian accounting, architecture, planning and engineering programs \(2025\)](#)

For more information, please contact the Waterloo Climate Institute:

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