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The Young Preservationist: Findings from the First Undergraduate Historic Preservation Education Symposium

Undergraduate historic preservation programs graduate almost as many students every year as do graduate programs. Nonetheless, little attention has been paid to the preservationists entering the profession with bachelor's degrees. The First Undergraduate Historic Preservation Education Symposium was held in June 2010 at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, to provide a forum to discuss the issues specific to undergraduate preservation education, in particular relating to pedagogy, curriculum, and placement. Who are these students? What are their strengths and weaknesses? How are the seven programs offering bachelor's degrees similar and different in their approach to preservation? How do students transition to graduate programs and preservation-related careers? The symposium brought together faculty from across the country to discuss these issues. Findings of the symposium point to a largely homogeneous undergraduate student body experiencing hurdles in connecting with associate and master's level programs. Even accounting for a wide variation in approaches to historic preservation across the programs, important commonalities are present, pointing to directions for future growth.

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The Young Preservationist: Findings from the First Undergraduate Historic Preservation Education Symposium

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There are many programs teaching historic preservation in America, the vast majority of them at the graduate level. Of the more than fifty programs in historic preservation and associated fields nationwide, seven provide bachelors degrees. These seven programs were the focus of the First Undergraduate Historic Preservation Education Symposium, held at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in June 2010. Before the symposium, faculty had never met to discuss their undergraduate approaches. Three major themes drove the conversation – pedagogy, curriculum, and placement – leading to a status baseline and directions for future symposiums. This paper reports on the findings of the symposium, which showed that even with the variety of institutions, locales, and student populations, the goals of the programs are remarkably similar, as are the issues faced.

Although undergraduate programs are not numerous, some tend to have significantly larger enrollments than their graduate counterparts, which generally attract fewer than a dozen students in each year. There were 491 undergraduate historic preservation majors in 2010, pointing to an average of approximately 500 every year. According to the National Council for Preservation Education (NCPE) website, graduate programs in historic preservation have 781 students enrolled; even accepting this high estimate, the seven undergraduate programs graduate about two-thirds as many students as the two dozen graduate programs. Therefore, understanding the particular issues in teaching historic preservation to undergraduates is of particular interest: at least two in five preservation professionals will have likely been educated in an undergraduate preservation program.¹

Who are these students? How and what are they taught? What are the emerging issues in teaching this population? The results of the symposium are interesting not just for educators of undergraduates, but also for the academics, researchers, and practitioners who will interact with them throughout their preservation careers.

PROFESSIONAL VS. LIBERAL ARTS APPROACH TO PRESERVATION EDUCATION

The origins of preservation education are clearly rooted in an effort to produce professionals with credentials to support their expertise (Tomlan 1994.) The professional ideal, to a certain extent, remains true today, even though the centrality of architecture in preservation education has declined in favor of a multidisciplinary approach. Visser, in his special report, emphasizes the need for preservationists hoping for employment to demonstrate “strong professional abilities and technical skills” (Visser 2009). This has been discussed by others, as well (Benson and Klein 2008; Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler 2009; Woodcock 2009).

However, this goal can conflict with the liberal arts approach of many undergraduate institutions. The liberal arts ideal, as defined by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2011), involves “a general education curriculum that provides broad learning in multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study in a major” and emphasizes “social responsibility,” as well as skills. In other words, this approach emphasizes ethics, context, and a balanced, wide-ranging education instead of the narrower professional focus. Living up

to the liberal arts ideal while continuing to provide technical skills and experience is challenging, as multiple participants lamented.

The origins of historic preservation as a movement based in advocacy and documentation is also of interest. As one symposium attendee phrased it: “Is historic preservation a movement or a profession? As it becomes more professional, does it become less of a movement?” Another participant noted: “The market is now coalescing around what preservation is... a lot of that is driven by public policy, a lot of it is driven by private capital...so [there are] certain expectations in the marketplace that I think are putting pressure on preservation to become a profession.” It is tempting to focus on the professional aspects of preservation. This is important in undergraduate education, but preservation as a movement must also be engaged with ethical considerations.

Particularly because of technological innovations, “there are some disparities in terms of where people are finding jobs versus what they are being taught.” In order to provide professional-level education, “in-the-field, on-the-ground” training is crucial and cannot be replaced. Yet in an undergraduate environment with high enrollment and limited facilities, this is difficult to accomplish. Ironically, maintaining student-teacher ratios can be particularly challenging in popular programs.

Over the last few years, all of the undergraduate programs have made conscious efforts to provide professional-level education. For instance, emphasis is on a project-based approach, particularly for upperclassmen, rather than on writing a long paper.

Internships are strongly encouraged, if not required. At the same time, many faculty members mentioned their efforts at integrating advocacy, ethics, and local involvement in teaching, so as to keep the “movement” aspect of preservation in the curriculum.

The issue of standardization is also relevant. One participant questioned: “What are we really telling people our graduates have when they get a degree in preservation? What are the programs like? Who studies there? More importantly, what issues are common among the programs?” As the symposium made clear, certain issues – how to balance breadth and depth, how to place students in graduate programs and jobs – are shared by all preservation faculty.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

The seven institutions granting bachelor's degrees in historic preservation have wildly different characteristics. Table 1 shows program enrollment, ranging from six students to more than 150. The great variation in enrollment is almost identical to that of undergraduate planning programs (Dalton and Hankins 1993). This points to the variability of acceptable educational environments for “professionally-oriented” programs like urban planning and preservation. Enrollment also depends, in part, on links with associated fields. For instance, the largest program, at the College of Charleston, is in preservation planning rather than historic preservation. Faculty at the symposium surmised that this accounted for its comparatively high enrollment.

Table 1. Undergraduate historic preservation programs

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Degree Granted</i>	<i>Number of Majors</i>
College of Charleston	Charleston, SC	BA	150
Roger Williams University	Bristol, RI	BS	50
Salve Regina University	Newport, RI	BA	30
Savannah College of Art & Design	Savannah, GA	BFA-HP	55
Southeast Missouri State University	Cape Girardeau, MO	BS	70
University of Mary Washington	Fredericksburg, VA	BA	130
Ursuline College	Pepper Pike, OH	BA	6

Source: UHPES Symposium and conversations with program directors, 2010.



Fig 1: Geographic distribution of four-year degree-conferring historic preservation programs (Illustration by author).

Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of the programs with concentration in the East, in line with other levels of preservation education and of preservation efforts overall. Coordination with other levels of preservation education also varies with each institution. As shown in Table 2, no program offers the undergraduate major only. Instead, all programs offer some form of graduate degree, minor(s), or certificate(s), or all of the above. This means that all programs not only serve undergraduates majoring in historic preservation but also a substantial number of other undergraduates and/or graduates. In some cases, as in Ursuline, graduate students outnumber undergraduates. In other cases, such as at Mary Washington, only a related minor is available (museum studies), and it is substantially smaller than the major.

Faculty members also reflect the differences among the programs. Unlike graduate programs in historic preservation, there tend to be three to five full-time faculty in the undergraduate programs. They come from a variety of specialties and experiences, enriching the education provided for the students with wide-ranging points of view. Symposium participants noted that faculty coming from an anthropological background, which is quite common, tend to focus on liberal arts, which is attractive to female students. In contrast, faculty from urban planning backgrounds tend to emphasize practical skills and, according to anecdotal findings, often attract more male students.

Like their graduate counterparts, the undergraduate programs rely heavily on adjuncts to teach introductory and specialty courses outside permanent faculty expertise. Professionals serving as adjuncts are a necessity and a great resource. That said, curriculum continuity and coherence must be maintained. Faculty from two institutions noted that adjuncts have been used to teach elective courses but also as potential starting-points for new specializations within the major. This allows for the experimental widening of the curriculum without committing to a permanent faculty line before student interest can be ascertained.

The introductory course in undergraduate programs is not standard. Most programs have some form of "Introduction to Historic Preservation," but others have an architectural history survey in that position. These approaches point to different strategies for attracting

Table 2. Related graduate program and minor(s)/certificate(s)

	College of Charleston	Roger Williams	Salve Regina	SCAD	SEMO	Mary Washington	Ursuline College
HP Minor	+	+	+	+			+
Cultural Landscapes Minor				+			
Museum Studies Minor						+	
HP Master's Degree	+*	+		+	+		+
HP Graduate Certificate				+			

* Joint degree with Clemson University.

NOTE: Some institutions also offer other preservation-related minors that are not housed in their preservation department/program. Sources: UHPES Symposium, program websites.

students and raise different issues. For instance, if architectural history is tackled first, students have a basic vocabulary. However, by the time they reach upper-level courses, that information is both distant and oversimplified. In contrast, teaching architectural history later in the curriculum involves more dedicated students (since they are presumably majors at this point) and better information retention in upper-class years. However, this means that a central aspect of preservation and the related language is missing early on. Programs have chosen to resolve this ever-present chicken-and-egg problem in different ways, most choosing to offer a general introduction to historic preservation as the first course. In some cases (at the Savannah College of Art and Design and Roger Williams, for example), the architectural history course is tackled from outside the program, divorcing it from early requirements.

WHO IS THE UNDERGRADUATE PRESERVATION MAJOR?

The short answer is female, white, and middle-class. No overarching quantitative research has been conducted about this, but informal observation on the part of faculty confirms this in every institution. For instance, the Savannah College of Art and Design reports that, on average, 65 to 75 percent of their historic preservation students are female, while Salve Regina University students are 89 percent female and “virtually all white.” Beyond such a vague description, very little is known. There was general agreement that students choose undergraduate institutions based on the qualities and reputation of the school as a whole, while the rarity of the preservation major means that a large minority choose a school specifically for that program. This is true for college-age students and even more so for students who start or return to undergraduate education later in life.

Symposium faculty felt that many more students are attracted to historic preservation and choose to become majors after they start college. The majority, unsurprisingly, have a deep interest in history, but this does not necessarily translate to proficiency, as noted

by one participant: “Maybe we have our blinders on and we’re hoping well these kids are interested in preservation so they must be history geeks and they must know all this... and the absence of historical knowledge never fails to shock me in some way.” It was noted that beyond a general interest in historic preservation, students do not necessarily have the same focus or skills. For instance, many are interested (and in some cases, talented) in the arts, while others are much more attracted to the technical skills associated with historic preservation, like Geographic Information Systems or economics.

Educators were dismayed that regardless of their aptitudes and inclinations historic preservation students share a dependency on the internet and a lack of familiarity with print resources and research methods. This is, perhaps, surprising for students who wish to pursue careers in historic preservation. Imparting effective familiarity with archival research is a challenging and ever-present task.

Faculty felt that the basic proficiency in writing varies wildly in incoming majors; graduate programs face this issue as well, but it may be inferred from their undergraduate degrees that graduate students are proficient in writing. In contrast, undergraduates do not necessarily have the writing or research skills expected of college students. Undergraduate historic preservation faculty must therefore adapt their courses to elevate the skills of the less-advanced students while keeping advanced students interested. While teachers have struggled with this challenge as long as there has been teaching, this task can be particularly difficult for faculty who are used to teaching graduate students, as most preservation professors are.

Furthermore, preservation writing is a complex task that requires more than sound grammar and composition skills, as clearly illustrated by the following comments from the symposium: “The communicating back and the writing is a particular kind of writing. National Register nominations section 7 descriptions take a certain talent, a little paragraph of an architectural description to communicate something in a useful fashion. It’s not like writing a paper.” “It’s a specialized skill. I think writing is key. I don’t think everyone can be a great writer but everyone can be an effective writer. I

think presentation, too, is an incredibly important skill because no matter what you do in preservation, being able to communicate clearly and effectively is really important.”

MAJOR ISSUES IN UNDERGRADUATE PRESERVATION EDUCATION

The tension between the professional approach, always a major focus in preservation education, and the liberal arts approach, central to many undergraduate institutions, has historically been a challenge. Beyond this issue, however, are other contradictory priorities and hurdles. Major issues include balancing breadth and depth in the curriculum, providing continuity to students as they progress from undergraduates to graduates, and student placement.

Balancing Breadth and Depth in the Curriculum

Historic preservation is a multidisciplinary field. The education of preservationists originated in architecture, at the master’s level, and eventually spread to other disciplines (Tomlan 1994). Preservation can now include architectural history, archaeology, museum studies,

geography, public policy, urban studies and planning, law, material culture, anthropology, conservation, folklore, etc. Undergraduate preservation programs generally have more full-time faculty representing more fields, since they enroll more students than graduate programs. Therefore, it is common for undergraduate preservation programs to have dedicated faculty not only for architectural history, preservation, and conservation, but also museum studies, urban planning, folklore, and archaeology (Table 3).

Furthermore, there is a difficult balance to be reached in terms of the viability of student learning. Attendees noted that most programs require a variety of sub-disciplines to be included in the curriculum, but a large contingent of students will feel strongly that some of these sub-fields are not relevant. For instance, all symposium participants seem to have heard a variant of “I’m not going to be a planner (or archaeologist, or museum administrator, etc.) so why do I need to take this class?” On the other hand, this complaint also translates as intense interest from students in fields that may seem beyond core preservation competencies (e.g.: training in oral history interviews.)

Faculty must discover ways to offer as many wide-ranging courses as possible, while guaranteeing core knowledge for every graduate. Student resistance can be considerable in some cases. Furthermore, as

Table 3. Number of courses offered in each discipline (Required courses in parentheses)

	<i>College of Charleston</i>	<i>Roger Williams</i>	<i>Salve Regina</i>	<i>SCAD</i>	<i>Missouri State</i>	<i>Mary Washington</i>	<i>Ursuline College</i>
Architectural History	7 (2)	4 (4)	2 (1)	3	5 (1)	3 (1)	4 (4)
Design	2	0	0	5 (2)	0	0	0
Documentation	1	1 (1)	2 (2)	2 (2)	3	2 (2)	3 (3)
Archaeology	2	0	5 (1)	0	6	4 (1)	0
Museum Studies	0	1 (1)	0	0	2 (1)	3 (1)	0
Planning	8 (3)	2 (2)	1	1	1	3 (2)	1 (1)
Law	1	1 (1)	0	1 (1)	1 (1)	1	1 (1)
Conservation	0	2 (1)	0	0	0	1	1 (1)
Administration	1 (1)	3 (2)	3 (3)	7 (2)	8 (3)	4 (1)	4 (4)
Technologies	1	0	0	6 (1)	2	3	2 (2)
Fieldwork	2 (2)	3 (2)	5 (1)	2 (1)	4 (3)	2 (1)	1 (1)
Landscapes	1	0	1	1	0	1	0
Folklore	0	0	0	0	2 (1)	2 (1)	0
Culture & History	19	4 (4)	2 (1)	1	12 (3)	1 (1)	0

Source: Program websites.

emphasized in the symposium, most preservation-related topics are “stand-alone majors... [such as architecture, planning, museum studies.] What you end up with if you’re not careful, is trying to teach a full planning curriculum, a full architectural history curriculum, a full museum studies curriculum.” On the other hand, “we’re becoming increasingly specialized. One of our greatest strengths is the multi-trans-disciplinary approach that mirrors the great communities we seek to preserve. How can undergraduate programs in liberal arts colleges further this approach while providing students with a foundation for advanced study and practice?” All of the participants in the symposium remarked on this tension between offering a wide range of topics and spreading the faculty too thin or imparting only surface knowledge. One participant noted: “I see exposure coming at the undergraduate level and proficiency coming at the graduate level.” Faculty observed that while proficiency in some core skills is a goal of undergraduate education (for instance, documenting historic buildings), students interested in developing skills beyond this core (for instance, urban design of historic downtowns) are directed toward graduate programs.

Archaeology provides a good example of the tension between breadth and depth in undergraduate historic preservation departments. Traditionally affiliated with anthropology departments or as a stand-alone unit, archaeology is also sometimes integrated into historic preservation departments. As discussed in the symposium, all undergraduate departments adopt an archaeological approach in some of their courses. For instance, dendrochronology is discussed in architectural history and/or documentation courses. However, differences among the departments are striking.

The majority of undergraduate historic preservation departments do not offer archaeology classes, limiting themselves to “a day” on the topic. Some schools have separate archaeology or anthropology departments. Two departments (Salve Regina and Mary Washington) have an archaeology course requirement for all majors, as both schools have professionally-trained archaeologists on the permanent faculty. One participant noted that archaeology in his program is integrated “in the core and we use it as a way to

grab whatever talented students and steer them into historic preservation.” In contrast, another mentioned that if the archaeology focus “is anthropological or classical,” his students were not interested. As a result, the archaeology minor in the program has remained outside the core courses.

Relationship with Other Levels of Preservation Education

In the early years of the formalization of preservation education, the focus was on training graduate students for preservation administration. In fact, there were at least some efforts to discourage education at other levels: undergraduates were singled out for lack of “mature commitment to the field” (Melnick and Wagner 1979). By now, however, historic preservation is taught – and encouraged – at all education levels, from high school (and increasingly even younger) to associate, bachelor, and master levels. The state of Colorado, for example, has emphasized coordination between high school and associate programs in educating a larger population. Although there are no preservation doctoral programs in the United States at this time, related fields provide doctorates that focus on historic preservation. As emphasized by educators, researchers, and professionals, preservation efforts benefit from a more holistic approach, where students are taught from an early age and from multiple points of view (Tomlan 1994; Hole 2009; Woodcock 2009).

Preservation has long struggled with its identity and its professional status. This has been discussed at length in other publications, beginning with the Whitehill Report (Committee on Professional and Public Education for Historic Preservation 1968). However, as is made clear by the long lists of programs on NCPE’s *Guide to Academic Programs in Historic Preservation* (National Council for Preservation Education 2010), historic preservation education is, in fact, now well-established and respected. Less well known, however, is how the different levels of education relate. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards (National Park Service 1983) emphasize the value of advanced degrees, particularly for leadership positions, making them all but a

necessity for advancement in the preservation field. Therefore, guiding students in where to go once they have completed their undergraduate degree is of great import. From a wider perspective, the desire to produce preservation professionals able to navigate the different aspects of the job and effectively communicate with different actors in the profession is all but universal. With that in mind, the relationship between undergraduate education and other levels of preservation education, in particular in terms of trades education and master's level education, was an important symposium topic.

The Trades

The importance of hands-on trades education has been repeatedly emphasized (for example, Woodcock 2009). However, the disconnect between the trades and the more managerial and theoretical aspects of historic preservation is still considerable. Some have bemoaned this and suggested solutions (Herbert 2002; Hole 2009; Ogle 2009), including increased respect for the trades and the importance of two-year associate programs to impart traditional skills to the tradesmen and women who will complete the physical preservation work. Community colleges offering trades training have proliferated in recent years, and unlike four-year programs, they exist throughout the country, including in western states like Colorado and California (NCPE 2010). Those educated in the trades and in four-year and master's programs have, however, remained markedly different. According to the faculty at the symposium, trade students are often male and older and are more likely to be minority students. For instance, Lamar Community College in Colorado enrolls 50 percent Hispanic students, almost all male. As discussed above, the typical preservation student at the bachelor's and master's level is female. While the idea of training a preservationist able to navigate both trades and more theoretical and planning-level tasks has been popular, symposium attendees noted that examples of students bridging the gap have been few and far-between.

Symposium participants, like other preservation professionals and researchers, were enthusiastic about joining the trades to more theoretical, policy,

and management-level preservation, but realistic about the challenges, including the stigma associated with two-year degrees (Herbert 2002). Furthermore, there is yet little (if any) coordination between associate and bachelor's and master's preservation programs.

Graduate Programs

Some undergraduates go on to graduate preservation programs, mainly because they realize that a graduate degree is often necessary for advancement. Indeed, Visser (2009) found that two-thirds of preservation positions required or preferred candidates with graduate degrees. One symposium participant mentioned that most students should think about getting a graduate degree, unless they want to continually teach their bosses to do their job. Few students decide to pursue postgraduate education in historic preservation; participants in the symposium agreed that this is often problematic.

While graduate programs certainly will delve deeper in theory and require more proficiency and understanding, symposium participants agreed that they do not cover substantially different ground from the undergraduate programs. Because the majority of students enrolling in graduate programs do not have pre-existing historic preservation skills and knowledge, this state of affairs is not surprising. The inadvertent consequence is that students going from an undergraduate historic preservation program to a graduate one will generally be completing a "victory lap" rather than meaningfully deepening their knowledge: "We have graduates that go to grad school and they say, 'What? It's just like undergrad!' And it's not good. And you scratch your head and on one hand they're giving us great fodder for our website about how well they're prepared, but on the other hand this tremendously expensive M.A. or M.S. is becoming a vocational certification in a way, it's just something that they kind of coast through."

There is the chance for some students to go in a different direction, become leaders in the field, and take advantage of their preexisting knowledge. Faculty felt that this is, by necessity, student-led: only motivated students will improve their work. Nonetheless, this points to one possible direction for graduate programs

in the future: to encourage students already well-versed in preservation to go beyond basic proficiency and become leaders and specialists. Perhaps this could be done with assistantships or fellowships. Some graduate programs do respond to students with pre-existing knowledge. The University of Georgia, for instance, offers a one-year "Accelerated Program" especially for students holding an undergraduate historic preservation degree (University of Georgia 2010).

As a result of the lack of coordination with most graduate historic preservation programs, all faculty members participating in the symposium found that they recommend master's degrees in allied fields rather than preservation: this allows the students to deepen their knowledge and skills in a specific area of preservation. Since preservation is such a large interdisciplinary umbrella, this seems to make sense, and anecdotal evidence from alumni shows that it works. For instance, alumni finding careers as museum administrators or urban planners abound.

Student Placement

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching undergraduate preservation students is that so many of them build their careers in preservation-related fields. All preservation faculty have run into graduates at professional conferences in museum studies, planning, history, etc. There is no overarching mechanism to keep track of graduates, but each individual department reports very active, involved alumni who go on to distinguished careers in the field.

Advising students on their next steps and guiding them toward beneficial placement is a challenge for all. One participant brought up the importance of knowing the "points of compromise": "The more preservationists who work in architectural firms, and work with developers, and work with the Department of Defense, and for Department of Transportation, and introduce that sensibility, I think it's really important. And someone's gotta make money." That said, some faculty are also not shy in discussing difficult job experiences to let students know that missteps do happen, especially in a field with such wide-ranging opportunities.

In addition to frequent conversations with students regarding their professional futures, all preservation departments organize career sessions to encourage students to discuss options with alumni and other professionals, as well department newsletters and websites spotlighting alumni. Students are also directed to the many preservation career sites, including a new one aimed at young preservationists (histpres.com, established in 2010), and one maintained by an undergraduate program (Mary Washington). The career advice often continues long after students have graduated, which points to a very positive relationship between alumni and faculty. While not all alumni continue in the preservation field, the postcards and e-mails from those who do are a welcome – and frequent – sight.

Current Direction

In the interest of finding whether there are substantive differences in the overall goals of preservation programs, the symposium included a breakout session asking two groups the same question: What do we want our graduates to know? Outcomes were remarkably similar: first, they clearly show that undergraduate preservation faculty are on the same page, even though they come from different fields and teach in different environments; second, the goals outlined in the breakouts can inform curriculum changes in the future.

Symposium participants felt graduates' core knowledge should include:

- How to read the cultural landscape. This goes beyond merely being able to understand a building to both the built and natural environment. Particularly important is understanding the context of a cultural landscape.
- How to speak to the various audiences with which preservationists interact. This includes politicians, clients, laypeople, engineers, tradespeople, and others involved in preservation activities. Preservationists must be able to educate others, particularly since preservation is still misunderstood among the general public.

- How to learn and, in turn, teach. While this may seem a trite “learning to fish” point, it is actually of paramount importance in the preservation field. Technologies are perpetually changing. Therefore, being able to adapt to new situations and to educate others is crucial for an effective preservationist.

Undoubtedly, these goals are largely the same as those of graduate programs, but the thresholds of success, as well as the ways in which these goals are attained, are quite different. Where an undergraduate is expected to follow directions, a graduate might be expected to work with less guidance. The metaphor of the buffet surfaced throughout the conversation. Comparatively few skills were considered staples – the potatoes and pasta. In contrast, there were many optional buffet items, related to the satellite fields of archaeology and folklore, for instance.

UNDERGRADUATE PRESERVATION EDUCATION INTO THE FUTURE

Preservation education has been taught to undergraduates for more than thirty years. All professionals in the field have worked alongside alumni of the seven undergraduate programs. It is therefore surprising that no formal discussion of teaching preservation to undergraduates has taken place over those decades. Preservation educators meet perhaps once a year at the National Trust conference, but there they are distracted by the myriad events. There is little – if any – time to discuss the particulars of teaching. The Undergraduate Historic Preservation Education Symposium, for the first time, brought together faculty for the express purpose of discussing curriculum, pedagogy, and placement. Perhaps the best outcome of this meeting was that it created a sense of community: faculty learned that others face the same challenges and pose the same questions. Unsurprisingly, it turns out that teaching preservation is complicated, with competing interests and an ever-elusive balance of professional versus critical and depth versus breadth.

Beyond this forming of community, some themes emerged from the discussions at the symposium, namely the current lack of coordination between the different levels of preservation education (with the caveat that the situation is improving), the importance of tailoring education to the audience at hand, and the challenge of preparing students for the real world while supporting their enthusiasm and idealism. It is notable that a second symposium is already in the works, with interest in more to come. Undergraduate faculty feel that an ongoing conversation is called for and that more can be learned to improve our teaching and our students’ experiences.

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ENDNOTES

1. In fact, the numbers are likely higher, as a significant minority of students who received undergraduate degrees in historic preservation go on to master’s degrees in the same field.

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