

Resonance and Public Engagement: Social Justice-Themed Architectural History Courses, Research, and Publications

The vast majority of programs where architectural history is taught offer some form of introductory architectural history course or set of courses with broad temporal and geographic scope and with content that includes global/non-Eurocentric traditions. In general, enrollment in these courses is trending slightly upward.

There is a notable gap between what institutions and faculty reported about architectural history course offerings with social justice themes and what students reported about taking such courses. This suggests the existence of a significant generational difference in perception about what constitutes a social justice-related architectural history course.

About the SAH Data Project

The SAH Data Project is the first national, in-depth study designed to assess the health of the field of architectural history, which includes the history of architecture, landscape design, urbanism, and other fields related to the designed and built environment. Results from the project are summarized in the 264-page print and PDF book titled, *Architectural History in the United States: Findings and Trends in Higher Education*.

The primary data collection tools for this project were three online surveys that were developed over the course of a year in an iterative process and in consultation with SAH leadership, a dedicated Advisory Committee, SAH Affiliate Groups, students, faculty, and a wide variety of individuals with an interest in the field. The surveys were directed toward students, faculty, and institutions of higher education in the United States and collected data about five indicators of health in the field. The surveys were open from February to August 2020 and had 819 respondents who provided thousands of points of data.



This brochure presents key findings from the research and surveys, which are summarized in five sections:

- Architectural History Student Enrollment, Institutional Support, and Student Debt Load
- Equity Concerns and Barriers to Access: The Architectural History Pre-College Pipeline
- Creating and Sharing Knowledge: Architectural History Expertise
- The Architectural History Professoriate and the Tenure-Track Job Market
- Resonance and Public Engagement: Social Justice-Themed Architectural History Courses, Research, and Publications

The summary findings in this brochure are a high-level view of the results. Visit sah.org/data-project for the detailed report, *Architectural History in the United States: Findings and Trends in Higher Education*, which includes analysis by gender, age, race, and other key demographics and are summarized in both written form and data visualizations. Also included is a contextual essay placing the SAH Data Project in a long history of reflection on the state of the field, a description of the data collection methodology, and details about how the SAH Data Project came into being.

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SAH Data Project Report

Architectural History in the United States: *Findings and Trends in Higher Education*

*Key Findings on the
State of the Field*

Architectural History Student Enrollment, Institutional Support, and Student Debt Load

- Architectural history enrollment and degree completion trends over the past decade are very mixed. General education enrollments and completed doctoral degrees have increased while completion of architectural history-related undergraduate and master's degrees are down.
- Current doctoral students reported incurring less student debt before enrolling in their doctoral programs than current master's degree students expect to incur during their studies.
- Across all institution types, the ten-year enrollment trends for students who self-identify as women are down and for students who self-identify with at least one non-white U.S. Census racial/ethnic demographic group are effectively flat.

Equity Concerns and Barriers to Access: The Architectural History Pre-College Pipeline

- Almost none of the faculty and student survey respondents reported encountering architectural history in a meaningful way through K-12 curricular or extracurricular educational experiences.
- First-generation college students and some people who identify with at least one non-white U.S. Census racial/ethnic demographic group reported comparatively low rates of encountering architectural history in a meaningful way before college.
- Three-quarters of faculty and students reported that they had had some type of meaningful encounter with architectural history before college and that the most common "pipeline" encounter type for both groups by far was touring buildings, historical societies, and museums.
- Almost everyone said they had taken their first architectural history-focused college course as an undergraduate rather than as a graduate student. This clear alignment across multiple generations of architectural history pre-college experiences suggests a positive correlation between firsthand experience with historic architecture pre-college and subsequent disciplinary interest.

Creating and Sharing Knowledge: Architectural History Expertise

- Data gathered directly from faculty and students, as well as from completed doctoral dissertations and published books, revealed no consistent patterns in the geographical, chronological, or thematic focus of architectural history scholarship. While over half of dissertations and books focus on either North America or Western Europe, faculty and students reported research interests involving a broader geographic scope.

The Architectural History Professoriate and the Tenure-Track Job Market

- Data regarding the number of faculty teaching architectural history, both per institution and relative to faculty's non-architectural history peers, indicate a slight increase from 2009 to 2019 in most cases.
- During this same period, the percentage of architectural history faculty who identify as women has seen a noticeable increase, and the percentage of architectural history faculty who identify with at least one non-white U.S. Census racial/ethnic demographic group has increased slightly.
- Students who plan to earn an architectural history-related graduate degree reported much lower interest in tenure-track teaching as an ideal career when compared to people who are currently enrolled as graduate students.