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**The David Niland
Endowment
School of Architecture
and Interior Design
College of Design,
Architecture, Art,
and Planning
University of Cincinnati**

**Celebrating
a legacy of excellence
in architecture**

An open letter from SAID faculty,
former students and friends of
David Niland:



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In September 2010, the School of Architecture and Interior Design lost perhaps its most influential figure in David Niland, an educator and practitioner who inspired thousands of lives through more than four decades of unparalleled instruction. Soon after his passing, the school was flooded with condolences, heartwarming memories and personal reflections on what David meant to the many friends, students and faculty members he impacted. While each note focused on different parts of David's legacy, a number of universal themes emerged from these moving tributes: his gregarious nature, his use of unconventional words to describe ornamentation and his command of language.

To say that David was one of a kind is an understatement. And though it is a difficult reality to face, there is no one person who can replace what David brought to SAID: his pedigree, his extensive knowledge base, and most importantly, his dedication to working with students on senior designs.

After conversations with former students, faculty and friends, we are honoring David's contributions to the school and its students in a meaningful way. It is our desire to provide his family and friends with a special "birthday present" to David, a tribute that honors his enormous contributions to the field of architecture and SAID, while also enhancing educational opportunities for current and future students:

The David Niland Endowment.

- David was a singular gatekeeper. From first-year students to seniors, he literally impacted each person who came through the program.
- He was a distinguished practitioner, whose influence can be found in generations of architects and their works around the globe.
- He possessed a great love of architecture, a love of teaching and an extensive knowledge of architectural history and theory.
- Exposure to multiple perspectives was a trademark of his teaching style. He had his own way of seeing the world, with his own ideas about architecture, but he valued other approaches and styles, as long as they could be defended.
- David enjoyed, even thrived on, debate. He felt the exchange of ideas added value to the final product.
- David was an inspiring educator, with a keen understanding of aesthetic principles.

**and lastly...
to David Niland...**

**for who he was...
who he is...
and who he always will be...**

**a mentor...
a teacher...
and a friend...**

**with sincere regret at his
loss...
and sincerest joy in his life...**

An excerpt from the poem,
Niland, composed by
Drew Kartinger, '82.

So many words come to mind when attempting to describe what many of us felt after hearing the news of his passing. As a small tribute to David, we include a number of testimonials that best describe the impact he had on others.

We all know how important, even transformational, one-on-one time spent with David was toward improving designs and learning practices that didn't always translate through traditional modes of instruction. We envision the eminent design critic program bringing some of the world's most inspiring and successful professors and practitioners to SAID, where they will teach, hold informal lectures, and critique the work of our students, just as David did for so many years.

UC's architecture program consistently ranks in the nation's top ten because of our commitment to design excellence and to a well-rounded educational experience.

The eminent design critic program, made possible through the David Niland Endowment, will reinforce our reputation among co-op partners, as they will see firsthand that our students have been exposed to the latest trends in design from around the globe.

The eminent design critic program will also bolster recruitment of the most distinguished graduate students and keep SAID ahead of other institutions that are working to develop similar programs.

The eminent design critic program will carry a name synonymous with design excellence and serve as an eternal reminder of SAID's proud heritage. It will also ensure that the central tenets of David Niland's educational style, aesthetics and design criticism of high order, remain a part of the school.

Thanks to a generous gift, we will establish the David Niland Endowment on the occasion of his birthday in April.

We hope we can count on you for your support.

Sincerely,
Family, friends and former students
of David Niland



"As you might imagine, it is difficult for me to describe someone I have always considered bigger than life. There is no one I looked up to more than David."

My first formal introduction to David Niland was senior thesis 1971. He had a reputation that struck fear into the hearts of most students. "I will call you Mr. Senhauser and you, in turn, will refer to me as Mr. Niland." It didn't take long to realize that David was a brilliant critic and strategist. He suffered no fools. Our class was quite large for the program, and the Car Barns studio could only accommodate about half the class working there. During the last three months of thesis, David was a tireless circuit rider. He posted a sign-up sheet for critiques and visited you at your apartment or wherever you were working. He didn't play favorites. He simply dedicated himself to anyone who took architecture seriously.

Anyone who knew him knows he was a singular voice amid public cynicism and decaying values, whose life's purpose was to articulate the constructed environment. It is rare when

someone becomes synonymous with an organization: the architecture program's senior studio, the city's Urban Design Review Board, the university's Design Review Committee. No discussion about Cincinnati's or the university's architecture is credible without recognition of his contributions to the critical discourse that led to these projects.

As a critic, dressed in his signature khakis, blue shirt, rep-striped tie, David developed his personae as thespian and entertainer, "singing" his observations in a sort of poetic rhythm. He coined this colorful non-architectural language of innies, outies, whoop-d-dos, zoots and woo-woos, utilizing these terms to deflate the flawed logic of some inept, formal manipulation. His blue eyes would twinkle with sarcasm and wit as he delighted in this intellectual dance.

I admire him as a purist design thinker - an insightful, intuitive, exacting, thoughtful, generous, selfless, incisive, unwavering, witty, gifted and beloved friend."

*John Senhauser, DAAP '71,
John Senhauser Architects*

The David Niland Endowment will memorialize one of DAAP's most influential professors, while championing the values he preached in architecture and architectural education.

Specifically, the David Niland Endowment will provide the resources necessary to create an eminent **design critic program**, an essential component of 21st-century design education.

"David always said it like it was. This is a trait that I very much admired in him. His intelligence, quick wit and forthrightness will of course be missed. However, it is his exceptional warmth we will miss most of all."

*Michael Graves, DAAP '58,
Michael Graves & Associates*

"David was very passionate about the art of debate and committed to what he saw as the forces of architecture. In a way, (it was) his religion. He appreciated this same sense of commitment in others and expected, if not demanded, a need for excellence in how someone viewed architecture. It is what made him a great teacher. And yet, David had the ability to be compassionate, exhibiting love for humanity. I think David appreciated that everyone had a little different take on his religion, a passion for architecture."

*Erik Sueberkrop, DAAP '72,
Chairman and Principal,
STUDIOS Architecture*

"I will never forget Professor Niland and know he helped shape me into the architect that I am today. It still makes me laugh when I remember our times together."

Sharon Nicholson, DAAP '01

"David's memory is alive in all of us who had the pleasure of knowing this outstanding person, co-worker, partner and civic leader. His encouragement to me that I could receive a Fulbright stipend changed my life and gave it a special direction. That now flows to my son Donny, who is at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad and loves it."

*Donald Stevens, DAAP '60, Principal,
BBT Architects, Inc.*