

University College Dublin's Ambitious Plan



UCD Turns to an Invited Competition to Solve a Complex Design Issue

A designer of hospitals once remarked that a full vacant floor should be added to every new hospital facility to accommodate the rapid changes in the technical demands of the industry. Although on a different scale, the same might now be said of architecture programs at universities, as the addition of everything connected with computer technology—i.e., computer 3D modeling—has led to changes in instruction and curricula in academic architecture programs. Providing empty space in a new building without a true purpose would run into problems with the people controlling the purse strings, as they want to see the justification for every square foot of programmed space. But the recognition of this factor was foremost in the minds of the client and many of the competitors in the Future Campus UCD competition in Dublin.

While some left space for future expansion, others revealed less emphasis for flexibility in their approach to the challenge pre-

sented by the *Center for Creative Design* near the campus entrance—and this included the winner. The emphasis on an arrival feature was clear from the competition brief:

"The brief to competitors was to draw up an urban design vision that foregrounds a highly-visible and welcoming entrance precinct, and create a concept design for a charismatic yet integrated new 8,000 sqm building – the Centre for Creative Design – that expresses the University's creativity. The Future Campus project is intended to create a stronger physical presence and identity for the University within Dublin, and raise the profile of UCD nationally and internationally."

The purpose of the competition was to expand and update a rather nondescript area with an arrival feature for campus expansion, with strong emphasis given to site planning.

The appearance of an "arrival experience," both symbolically and

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Winning Entry

Steven Holl Architects

New York, NY
with Kavanagh Tuite Architects,
Brightspot Strategy, Arup,
HarrisonStevens and Transsolar

LEFT, ABOVE
Entrance Foyer

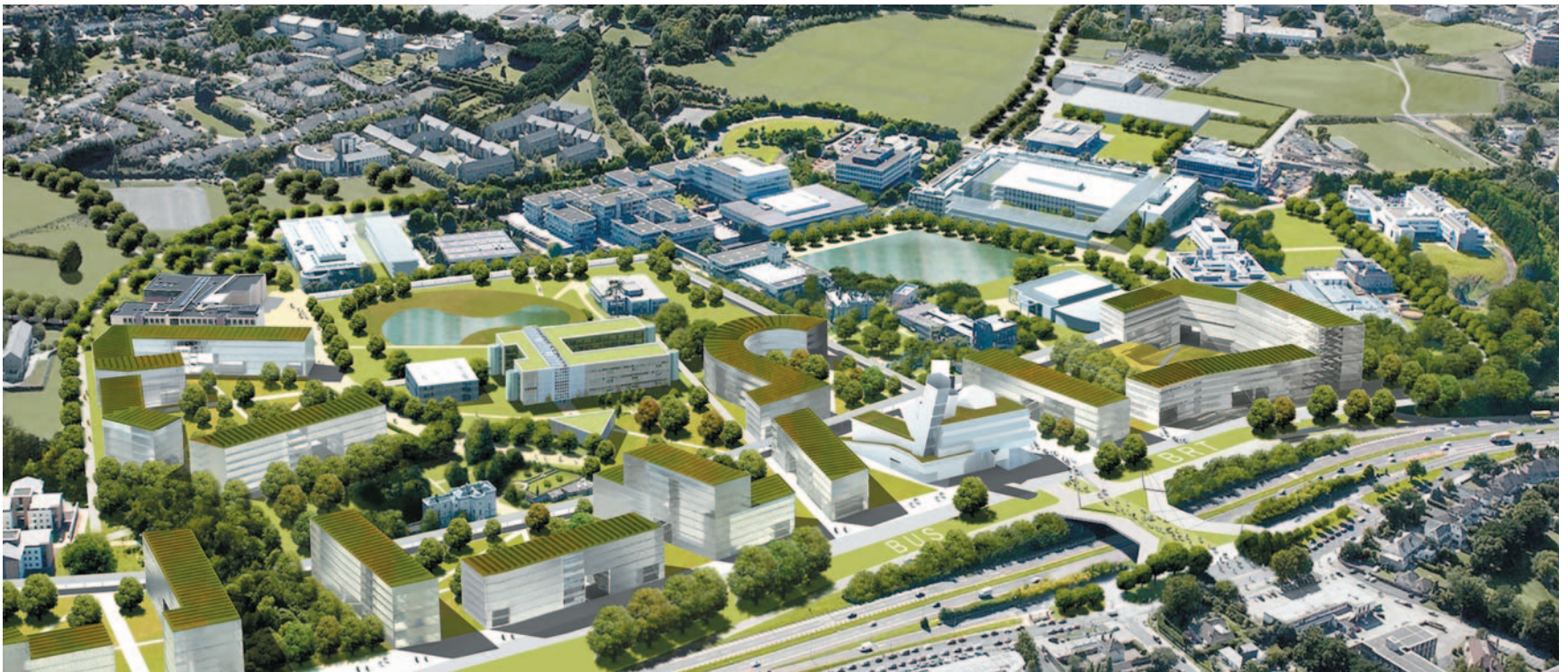
LEFT, BELOW
Aerial view of site

OPPOSITE PAGE

View to the Centre for Creative Design
as arrival campus feature



Entrance Foyer





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spatially, was to provide the campus with a high-visibility landmark to deal with the current "underwhelming experience." The selection of the six high-profile finalists for this invited competition was also a certain signal that this building was to be anything but traditional in character. Thus, the competitors did not have to consider the possibility of a local jury insisting on "context" as a primary guideline for architectural expression—although context curiously did enter the discussion.

The Interdisciplinary Issue

As has often been the case with the programming of recent academic facilities throughout the world, interdisciplinary contact between different majors was also in the forefront here. Thus we see many of these designs locating architecture and engineering programs on the same floor. An exception here was the winner, who located engineering on the bottom two floors of the building, with architecture on above floors.

Studios for recent architecture programs at numerous universities have been located on

one, large level, often at grade—promoting interaction between students at different levels as well as faculty. This includes recent U.S. schools of Architecture, i.e., Florida International University, Ohio State University, Kent State University, University of New Mexico, etc. The logic of making a major arrival statement with a significant building in this case suggests a multi-story building with limited square footage at each level. Thus, many of these competitors could be seen following the high-rise formula—resulting in more fragmentation in the organization of the teaching areas.

The competition was organized under the supervision of Malcolm Reading Consultants, London. Ninety plus firms submitted qualifications in the RfQ process, which resulted in the shortlisting of the six finalists. They were:

- Diller Scofidio + Renfro, New York
- John Ronan Architects, Chicago
- O'Donnell + Tuomey, Dublin
- Steven Holl Architects, New York
- Studio Libeskind, New York
- UNStudio, Amsterdam

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Winning Entry

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Architects, Brightspot
Strategy, Arup,
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Transsolar

ABOVE

View to the Centre for Creative
Design from campus interior

OPPOSITE PAGE, ABOVE

View from traffic artery

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW

Competition board with campus
plan

