In 1958, the Cold War peaked, Sputnik triumphed, “aerospace” was coined and Elvis joined the Army. And a 20-year-old transfer from Wartburg College enrolled in aeronautical engineering at Iowa State. His name was Mark C. Engelbrecht.

“It was almost your patriotic duty to take up engineering,” Engelbrecht said with a chuckle. “We were all agog over Sputnik, and we knew the Russians were coming!”

It didn’t take long for the visual language of his roommates’ architecture projects to seduce him away from the numerical language of rocket science. He found it “natural to migrate” to architecture.

Fifty years later, Engelbrecht is putting on the brakes in his journey through design education at Iowa State. An instructor years before the College of Design was created in 1978, he has served as dean for half its life. In June, he will step down.

‘C’ is for community

There’s a good chance that Engelbrecht’s middle initial stands for community, because community is the center of his career as educator and architect.

During his 15-year tenure as dean of the college, Engelbrecht helped transform a “collection of refugees” into a community. He wove community-based projects into studio instruction, strengthening the fabric of the college. He established college roots in two Iowa communities, with outreach centers in Perry and Sioux City. He developed an Iowa State design community in Rome, the only fully licensed study-abroad program in the Iowa regents’ system.

And when he talks about architecture, he’s very clear: “You can’t understand architecture, if you don’t understand it as a response to a community need.”

Engelbrecht came of age as an architect in the turbulent 1960s when urban renewal often wiped out entire neighborhoods. He earned his master of architecture degree at Columbia University, New York City, in 1964, just before tensions between the university and its neighbors erupted. The conflict was rooted in the university’s plan to construct a gym in Harlem’s Morningside Park, with no access to the community.

Similar tensions flared around the country, even in Des Moines, where Engelbrecht returned in 1964 to practice architecture. Construction of I-235 wiped out the African-American business district.

“Resentment was mounting, and it was related to Columbia and the idea that we [architects] can put our temples anywhere we want,” he recalled.

Building a career

Engelbrecht was a principal in four Des Moines architecture firms between 1966 and 1979.
An Architect of Design Education

(continued from cover)

From 1979 to 2000, he was principal in Engelbrecht & Griffin, P.C., Des Moines and Newburyport, Mass. The firm, largely focusing on various comprehensive environments for seniors, designed and constructed in 26 states. Nine projects won National Association of Homebuilders’ top awards.

Engelbrecht designed Northcrest Retirement Community in Ames; The Barbican, an 11-story residential tower on Grand Avenue in Des Moines; and the West Bank building on 22nd Street in West Des Moines. He is best known for the University of Northern Iowa’s Maucker Union, which earned national honors when it was built in 1968. In 2000, it was named one of Iowa’s top 50 buildings of the 20th century.

Although built underground, Maucker’s design was not a response to an energy crisis, still years away. It responded to a community need.

“It actually came out of the whole idea of public life and community,” he explained. “Originally the union was to be built in the middle of a green, an important pre-existing communal space on campus.”

By submerging the building—a radical idea at the time—Engelbrecht and his partners preserved the open space while accommodating the activities of a student union.

Heeding the call
Engelbrecht began his teaching career as an ISU lecturer in architecture in 1969. He continued to teach as a visiting, temporary or adjunct faculty member until 1984, when he became a professor. In 1994, he was named dean.

The teaching progression was as natural as his migration from engineering to architecture. He came from a family of educators: Engelbrecht’s grandfather founded Wartburg College, and his father was vice president there after serving as superintendent of schools in Nevada and principal in Belmond. His mother taught sixth grade.

“I have positive childhood associations about educators,” he said. “Teachers always had boundless respect, particularly in this state. It’s a calling that people actually prize.”

When Engelbrecht (and his firm’s partners) started teaching an architecture studio 40 years ago, it was considered “outrageously radical” here. But it has become a tradition within the college, particularly in architecture, to have faculty come from practice.

“We really prize this, although it’s not uniformly accepted across campus,” Engelbrecht said.

At the same time, Engelbrecht and his colleagues introduced community-based projects in the studios.

“We’ve always had a focus on working within our context and our local community,” he said.

“A basic challenge has been to persuade my colleagues in science and technology that designers and artists have a lot of value to offer. They should look at our capabilities and not at our pedigrees,” he said.

“We think differently, holistically. In the sciences, scholarship and research are about finding a trench and going as deeply into it as possible. In design, you think about where that trench is, how it relates to other trenches and to the whole context,” he explained.

Putting on the brakes
Engelbrecht remembers most of his students and their projects. And he recalls the specific moments when he felt that a student had been changed by something he said, or vice versa.

Another great joy: Seeing the college mature “from a collection of refugees who hadn’t quite found a good fit in their own classical homelands” (applied art in human sciences, landscape architecture in agriculture and architecture in engineering).

“I still remember as a student, feeling like everyone in engineering looked at us architects like we had three eyes because we wouldn’t strap our slide rules to our belts like they did,” he recalled.

“I’m never certain if this college was set up because it was visionary—as it’s turned out—or if it was a way to get all the weird people into the same box off in the corner of the campus” he laughed.

“My job as dean has been to center this college, to get us out of the suburbs. We can’t do it physically, but we can do it through the quality of our programs and the issue of sustainability—which we understand, teach and worry about every day,” he said.

But Engelbrecht’s journey hasn’t ended. He will continue fund raising and will teach two classes in Rome next spring.

“I’ve made almost a lifetime investment in this place and I want to keep involved,” he said. “It’s difficult for me to imagine walking out of my office every day and not running into this youthful energy. We’re all in a funny way addicted to that, and I’m not quite ready to give it up.”
PRActIcIng IntERIOR dESIgn In SERVIcE tO thE cOMMUnIty

MARIYLIN HANSEN, FASID

“Pro bono work is a great thing to participate in because in addition to serving those who need assistance, which is the primary purpose, you are able to prove your ability and bring in new clients.”

Marilyn (Schooley) Hansen’s interest in community involvement can be traced to her undergraduate years at Iowa State. Hansen was an active member of Beacons, a group that served as ambassadors for the university. “If people came into town and needed help getting around, well, it just seemed normal to want to help out,” she said.

These days, Hansen—a fellow of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) and founder/owner of The Designers Furniture Gallery in Omaha, Neb.—is so involved in community projects that she spends a small fraction of her time at her own store. She is a master multitasker, sketching designs for a client and answering employees’ questions while completing a telephone interview for this newsletter story.

Originally from Spencer, Hansen received a bachelor of science degree in applied art, with a major in interior design, from Iowa State in 1969. After an internship in Sioux Falls, S.D., she moved to Omaha in 1970 and worked for several years as the director of interior design at the J. L. Brandeis and Sons department store.

In that era, few outside of higher education understood the use for a degree that focused on interior design, she said. “I came to [Omaha] when there was not a huge awareness of interior design, and it seemed that people thought of us as decorators, and the idea that you could do this as a profession was a new concept,” Hansen said. “Even my parents didn’t understand what the business was about and how it affects people’s lives and how important it is to helping us live in a better environment.”

In 1980, Brandeis announced that the store would be closing. “I had a six-week-old child and $3,000 in savings,” Hansen said. “I bought samples and desks from the store and started my own business.”

Since then, Hansen has made it an ongoing goal to increase awareness of and appreciation for the interior design profession. She strongly advocates that Nebraska require interior designers to be certified. Her firm employs four interior designers with four-year degrees who are all working on their NCIDQ (National Council for Interior Design Qualification) certifications.

Hansen also continues to raise awareness with her extensive service to the community, and as a consultant for her local news station.

Through her nearly 40-year involvement with historic preservation and restoration groups, Hansen has helped to restore several buildings that are on the National Register or are applying for this recognition. She directed the restoration of the Nebraska Governor’s Residence from 1994 to 1998.

Additionally, Hansen and her employees donate their design services to help raise funds for local nonprofit organizations, such as the Omaha Community Playhouse, the Omaha Children’s Museum, the Henry Doorly Zoo, the YWCA, and different schools.

Every year The Designers participates in the ASID Designer Showhouse, which benefits a variety of Omaha nonprofits. “I’ve been doing these projects for so long, I almost forgot that we do them for free!” Hansen said, chuckling.

“Pro bono work is a great thing to participate in because in addition to serving those who need assistance, which is the primary purpose, you are able to prove your ability and bring in new clients,” she said.

For another project, Hansen’s team completely furnished a $3 million mansion as a showhouse, and used original art from local artists in the design. The proceeds from the show went to Angels Among Us, which supports families of children who have cancer.

Knowing that one of the best ways to enhance the interior design profession is to help educate the next generation of designers, Hansen has offered internships to ISU students for 35 years, and has hired Iowa State graduates to work for her firm.

Staying connected in her community and with her alma mater is a source of pride and a contributor to her success.
DESIGNING A THERAPEUTIC SPACE FOR ALZHEIMER’S PATIENTS

MEMORY CARE GARDEN

Belkacemi called the class “Breathe Studio.”

“Breathe seemed like the right word because this type of garden is about stepping away from the hustle and bustle and allowing yourself time to breathe and take in the therapeutic benefits of the garden,” she said. “And in Alzheimer’s disease, the last thing your brain forgets to do is breathe.”

Last fall, she met with Presbyterian Village administrators, who liked her idea and proposed to raise $8,000 for the project. When the class started in January, students created a questionnaire and design checklist for staff. The answers helped guide their choices for various landscape elements and memory triggers.

The concept of memory care gardens started in the 1980s, Belkacemi explained.

“You can sometimes connect with a person in the late stages of Alzheimer’s by using something from their childhood as a memory trigger—a song or porch swing, for example,” she said. “And because the gardens keep patients more active, they help produce positive responses in the patients.”

For the garden design, students carefully chose each element to elicit soothing memories of childhood in a German farming community in Iowa—from a clothesline and hand pump to corn plants and lilacs.

The students created two functional areas within their plan for the 36-foot-by-52-foot space (which includes the 8-foot-wide circular sidewalk). One area is a viewing garden, the other a working yard.

The viewing garden—which will be planted with flowers such as hydrangea, lilacs and hollyhocks that are common in rural Iowa communities—has a front porch area with a shade trellis system, a glider and movable chairs.

The working yard features a garden shed with tools and plastic watering cans, a wheelchair-accessible planting box, a working hand pump and a clothesline. This area will have fruits and berries as well as a vegetable garden.

Under the building’s portico, students crafted a transitional zone with benches and shade where patients can don gardening hats and gloves while adjusting their eyes to the brighter outdoor light. And, by taking advantage of a hillside and planting weeping plants (weeping willow, spirea and forsythia), they can create an enclosed space for the entire garden.

Presbyterian Village staff have been involved in the design throughout the process.

During the weekend of April 18, Belkacemi worked with Ackley volunteers and FFA students to prepare the garden space by amending the clay soil—digging it up, loosening it to create air space, and mixing in mulch and compost. During the weekends of April 25 and May 2, students from the class planted the garden and installed the trellis, shed and other elements.

The students—most are landscape architecture majors—say they’ve learned things in the Breathe Studio not covered in other studios. They’ve gained hands-on construction experience—from preparing construction documents to building garden structures. They’ve also learned more about specific plants.

“Not only are we learning more about plant material, we’re learning in a human-garden sense,” said Mary Bumgardner, St. Paul, Minn. “You really have to think of the significance of a plant’s memory triggers, the edible qualities, the safety issues. It’s been very interesting.”

The service project at the core of the Breathe Studio attracted the students to the class, according to Angela Roberson, a senior from Mesa, Ariz.

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“One thing I found appealing that has become more engaging during the class was the idea that we’re helping and what we’re doing is going to make a difference in some way. We’re taking an active role; I think that’s kind of cool,” she said.
It was one of those serendipitous conference moments last summer when an off-hand comment by Henrietta Mann, president of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College (CATC) in Oklahoma, to Lynn Paxson, ISU associate professor of architecture, led to a unique collaborative project between our two schools.

CATC, which opened in 2006, is hosted on the campus of Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU), Weatherford. The goal of CATC’s leadership is to develop the college into an autonomous, accredited institution with its own buildings and campus.

When she learned from Mann that CATC was at an early stage of development, Paxson proposed that students from Iowa State could help the young college explore both what it needed and desired before its board members met with professional architects and planners. The result was a multidisciplinary studio class this spring in which ISU students created proposals for the future of CATC.

Paxson, who has taught a number of service-learning studios with Native Nations, had the students spend the first weeks of the semester researching the history, culture and current governance of the Cheyenne and Arapaho, and becoming familiar with traditional and contemporary Native American architecture, land use and planning.

They then traveled to Oklahoma in February for an intensive three-day visit with tribal members, during which they toured the space the tribal college uses on the SWOSU campus in Weatherford, the Washita Battle-Field National Historic Site, and the former Indian boarding school at Colony, as well as a number of potential sites for the new CATC campus.

“That trip was crucial because the students learned first hand about many important facets of the Cheyenne and Arapaho cultures,” Paxson said. “They learned about sacred space, and realized that not only did Native Americans not disappear, but they have maintained a strong connection to the land and their traditions.”

Several students chose to take this studio because it involved working on a real project for real people. Meeting tribal leaders, visiting their communities and hearing their stories first hand, all helped students better understand for whom they were designing and the impact their designs could have.

“It was really important for me to go there and meet with them face to face,” said Sarah Sandor, an architecture graduate student from Northfield, Minn. “I found it very moving to hear [Mann] and the others talk about their hopes and dreams, and what this tribal college means for their people. I didn’t know how to design for them until I met them.”

Students developed proposals for new tribal college sites, including two short-term rehabilitations of existing buildings in Weatherford (for more immediate occupation) and three possible long-term campus sites in Clinton, Colony and Weatherford.

Because the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribal College hopes to be self-sustaining and “off the grid,” students were encouraged to incorporate alternative energy ideas (passive solar, geothermal and wind), and on-site control of water and waste systems.

In keeping with the tribes’ circular symbol of life and the quadrants created by lines through the semi-cardinal directions, many students designed building entrances that face east, as is customary for the Cheyenne and Arapaho. They also located certain activities to correspond to the quadrants’ meanings, such as a daycare center in the “childhood” quadrant and a basketball/recreation area in the section that represents youth.

Knowing that many CATC students have spouses and children, ISU students designed housing options to accommodate families. Some projects included apartments to house elders who serve as guest instructors, acknowledging the importance of intergenerational connections in the Cheyenne and Arapaho culture.

They also looked at traditional crops harvested by the Cheyenne and Arapaho people, such as prairie turnips and ground nuts, and how these might be used to increase the college’s sustainability—to provide food for students, a modest income from sales, and a valuable teaching tool, all within the campus landscape.

At the final review, CATC board members were connected via videoconference and Mann attended in person, to allow for interaction between students, Design College faculty members, local practitioners and clients.

“I don’t have the same kind of eye as you, as designers. My eye comes from culture,” Mann said. “I want to thank the students for adhering to Cheyenne-Arapaho ways. [CATC] is our cultural sanctuary... where knowledge is stored and passed on. I am so grateful you have adhered to culture yet used your own inspiration.”

Read more about the project at www.design.iastate.edu/stories.php?ARTICLEID=281.
A first-time visitor to the United States is naturally going to take a lot of photographs. But most of the shots that Ping Zhang snapped during her recent extended stay in Ames focused on College of Design student projects. She took hundreds of them.

“The students kept asking, ‘Why are you taking so many pictures?’” Zhang said, smiling. “I wanted to observe their work and have sent many pictures back to China to show my students. They are very interested in learning more about design teaching here.”

And for good reason. Under a significant new agreement between the College of Design and China’s Lanzhou Jiaotong University (LZJTU) School of Architecture and Urban Planning, many of Zhang’s students will have the opportunity to earn degrees from Iowa State.

Zhang, a lecturer in architecture at LZJTU, and her colleague, Jingfen Guo, a LZJTU teaching assistant, visited the College of Design during the spring semester. They were here to learn the college’s core curriculum, which is a key component of the new agreement, and to soak up as much American design culture as they could. Zhang and Guo will take their experiences back to China to help prepare students who hope to study design at ISU.

The agreement currently involves 10 LZJTU student cohorts. Each group will study for two years at LZJTU. During their sopho-

more year, they will learn the College of Design’s core curriculum. A member of the ISU design faculty will go to China to help teach the core.

All freshmen who plan to study design at Iowa State must take the Core Design Program, which includes a design studio, a drawing course and a design culture course.

“This is a very big deal for both programs,” said design dean Mark Engelbrecht. “LZJTU is a young university, and right now no school in China is doing this core curriculum instruction. It will be a different way of thinking for them. In our design culture course, for example, we teach students to think about design in a more holistic way. We might look at design from the perspective of a rodeo or NASCAR, for example.”

After their sophomore year, the cohorts will be invited to apply to study at Iowa State. The tentative plan is to enroll five students in 2010. The students can major in architecture, landscape architecture or community and regional planning. They will study at Iowa State for three to four years, depending on their major. Upon successful completion of their studies, the LZJTU students will earn degrees from both schools.

LZJTU was founded in 1958 as a railroad school. That area of expertise helped forge a longstanding agreement between the university and Iowa State’s civil engineering department. In fact, a visit by a group of LZJTU officials to the College of Engineering in 2008 was the starting point for the design program agreement.

“The president of LZJTU was here with the dean of their school of architecture, and he just fell in love with our place,” Engelbrecht said. “He wanted to send students here to study architecture.”

The agreement holds major benefits for both parties.

ISU architecture professor Chiu-Shui Chan, who is coordinating the agreement, said exposing Chinese and American students to each other’s design cultures will be one of its biggest impacts.

“Bringing in a group of students from that environment to this environment will broaden our thinking,” Chan said. “There are big differences in design thinking in China. Chinese students, for example, have very sophisticated training in pencil drawing. They learn two-dimensional drawing first and three-dimensional comes later. Here we start with three-dimensional.”

Students also will be able to share perspectives on sustainable design, Chan said. There is strong interest in green design in China, as demonstrated during the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. Many facilities built for the event, for example, incorporated solar power and systems for recycling water.

“We want to mix it up with as many cultures of the world as possible, and China is clearly an important player,” Engelbrecht said. “This represents a wonderful opportunity to have alumni in that part of the world, and to have our faculty develop connections over there.”

LZJTU is in Lanzhou, the capital of northwestern China’s Gansu Province. It’s situated between Tibet to the southwest and the Gobi Desert to the north.

The People’s Republic of China wants to develop western China more to ease congestion around Beijing, the capital city. The agreement with LZJTU could open the doors to ISU design faculty being involved in projects in the Lanzhou area.
IN BRIEF

NCARB GRAND PRIZE
The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards has recognized an innovative ISU architecture course with a $25,000 cash award. The Bridge Studio, taught by lecturer Nadia Anderson, won the 2009 NCARB Grand Prize for Creative Integration of Practice and Education in the Academy. Since fall 2007, 50 students from architecture, landscape architecture and interior design have participated in the class.

Read more at www.public.iastate.edu/~nscentral/news/2009/apr/architecture.shtml

HOSPITALITY DESIGN AWARDS
Three Iowa State senior interior design students took top honors in the fifth annual Hospitality Design Awards competition sponsored by Hospitality Design magazine. Michael Goodsmith of Cedar Rapids won first place in the student category with his conceptual designs for a sustainable nightclub. A concept for an upscale hotel and spa by Anna Anderson, Waukee, and Jennifer Irey, Davenport, was a finalist. Projects will be published in the May/June issue of Hospitality Design.

Read more at www.public.iastate.edu/~nscentral/news/2009/may/design.shtml

SOLAR DECATHLON
When ISU’s Interlock House is displayed on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in October, it will be decked out with furniture, lamps, bird feeders and ceramics created by students in three College of Design classes.

During the past semester, the Iowa State team competing in the U.S. Department of Energy’s 2009 Solar Decathlon collaborated with students in Mark Chidister’s furniture studio, Ingrid Liligren’s advanced ceramics studio and the File-to-Fabrication class taught by Mikesch Muecke and Pete Goché.

The result is a collection of one-of-a-kind pieces designed specifically for the compact 800-square-foot solar house.

Read more at www.public.iastate.edu/~nscentral/news/2009/may/decathlon.shtml

RICO-GUTIERREZ TO LEAD COLLEGE OF DESIGN
Following a national search, Luis F. Rico-Gutierrez, associate dean of the College of Fine Arts and David Lewis Director of the Remaking Cities Institute at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) in Pittsburgh, will become dean of the ISU College of Design effective July 1.

He succeeds Mark Engelbrecht, who will step down June 30 after serving as dean since 1994. Rico-Gutierrez has been associate dean of CMU’s College of Fine Arts since 2001. From 2001 to 2006, he also was chair of the steering committee for the Studio for Creative Inquiry, a multidisciplinary arts research center within the college. From 2001 to 2004, Rico-Gutierrez served as associate head of the School of Architecture at Carnegie Mellon, where he has been on the faculty since 1996.

Rico-Gutierrez’s research includes the use of information technology in the design process and grassroots participatory practice in urban design. He chairs the innovation and new directions task force of the International Council of Fine Arts Deans.

“I feel privileged to become the next dean of the ISU College of Design, takes part in final reviews with faculty and students in May. He will join the architecture faculty in mid-June and assume the deanship on July 1. Photo by Heather Sauer.

Rico-Gutierrez to Lead College of Design

“‘I truly believe that these are, in essence, design problems,” said Rico-Gutierrez. “Yes, they must be informed by fundamental science, but the implementation will be up to the ingenuity of designers and artists. Our processes are inclusive, informed by many different disciplines and by the experiences of users (individuals or communities).

“It is not very common to have under ‘one roof” the array of disciplines that Iowa State has in the College of Design,” he continued. “They cover the whole continuum of human interaction with the environment.

“I know the ingredients are here to play a central role in providing solutions to our biggest challenges. The time is right to nurture partnerships and relations inside and outside the college to make sure that we generate knowledge around these issues, and, as or more important, to train a new generation of designers/leaders that will help communities around the world in their search for brighter futures,” he said.

Look for an in-depth interview with our new dean in a future issue of this newsletter.
The College of Design will kick off the coming academic year on August 24 with a gala celebration to include dedication of the King Pavilion, presentation of the 2009 Christian Petersen Design Award, and a lecture by David Revere McFadden, guest curator for the “30 and Beyond” alumni exhibition.

Festivities are scheduled to begin with McFadden's lecture at 5 p.m., and will conclude with a reception and tours of the exhibition and pavilion.

More information will be forthcoming, in the monthly Designotes e-blast and posted on our website at [www.design.iastate.edu/30/index.php](http://www.design.iastate.edu/30/index.php) as well as other communications. Make plans now to join us for this exciting night of events!