

# THE DESIGN CHARRETTE: AN INNOVATIVE TEACHING STRATEGY

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In this presentation, a Housing and Design educator who has successfully planned and participated in design Charrettes, will describe the advantages and disadvantages of using this versatile experiential teaching technique. Audience members will then participate in planning a model Charrette experience that might be used in their individual teaching situations.

The term, "Charrette" (derived from the French word, "Cart"), refers to a quick design project. Many years ago architectural students in Europe completed design projects in their rooms. At the end of the term, projects were collected and taken to the University. As the cart approached, the call would come, "Charrette, Charrette!," or the cart is coming! Some students could even be seen in the cart adding last-minute touches to their projects. In current terminology, "Charrette," has come to mean a short-term design project.

The audience will hear about five different design Charrettes that successfully involved housing and interior design students, potential or actual clients, and design and social service professionals in team activity. These included:

- \* A regional design competition in which teams of students planned adaptive reuse of a historic structure in a University community. The design activity took place inside the structure.

- \* A two-day event - Grant funding enabled the sponsoring school to bring in speakers for a day-long Friday Seminar program and to compensate judges and facilitators for the Saturday Charrette. "Universal Design" and "Adaptive Reuse" were Charrette themes.

- \* A two-day event in which grant funding also paid speaker expenses. The theme was "Socially Responsible Design." Design teams composed of students and professional designers and design educators from a three-state area prepared design boards showing ways in which local Crisis and Referral Centers could convert a recently purchased residence into an accessible facility that met the goals of the Center. This Charrette provided the active community involvement that is increasingly being encouraged by Colleges and Universities throughout the country. Idea boards developed by the student teams were later used in a fund-raising activity by the center.

- \* This two-day Seminar/Charrette was held at a retirement community about thirty miles from the sponsoring University. The theme was, "Health Care Design for an Alzheimer's Population." Vendor sponsorship of several design professionals contributed to the success of this event. The Charrette experience involved design of several interior spaces in an Alzheimer's ward and a "Healing" garden at the retirement

community. Several landscape architects were involved in both the Seminar and Design Charrette.

To help students successfully participate in team activity is one of the most important (and difficult) goals of Housing and Interior Design education. Concerns about fairness of work loads, grading policies, etc., tend to complicate this learning goal. A major advantage of the Design Charrette is that it provides positive opportunities for team work, both in planning and participation in the Charrette experience. The opportunity to work with students from other design programs, as well as users, and design professionals, are additional positive learning experiences provided by the Charrette.

In this presentation, participants will be provided with information on the advantages and the few disadvantages of the Charrette as an interdisciplinary, experiential teaching, and learning experience. The presentation, followed by an actual Charrette planning activity, will enable participants to learn a teaching technique that will help them better prepare design students for the work environments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.