

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
THE BUILDING ARTS

# Student Handbook

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## **Welcome to the American College of the Building Arts!**

Welcome to ACBA! You have selected a college that is unique in the United States, and probably in the world. As a student here, you will have a college experience unlike any other, centered upon the opportunity to become a, college-educated artisan specializing in one of the traditional building arts: Masonry, Architectural Stonework, Timber Framing, Plastering, Carpentry, or Forged Architectural Ironwork. In addition to developing your craft under the tutelage of a master in your area of specialization, you will earn a college education in the Liberal Arts that is uniquely customized to complement and support your artistic interest. Among the unique aspects of studying at ACBA are the Student Guild and the required Internships.

### *Student Guild*

Unlike many colleges and universities, student government at ACBA is not simply a campus wide vote. Every student is automatically a voting member of their craft's guild. Many decisions that affect only one specialization or one shop are decided at the guild level. Decisions affecting all students are discussed in the Student Council. Each guild elects a representative to the council ensuring equal representation for each area of specialization regardless of how many students are enrolled in that craft.

### *Internships and Student Responsibility*

All degree-seeking ACBA students complete craft-related internships that help them expand their skills and gain valuable real-world experience. Most internships last from eight to ten weeks and take place in June and July, and students are often paid for the work they do. Full-time four-year students are required to complete three internships in order to graduate. The internships vary by area of specialization. It is important for every student to understand that it is the student's responsibility to take the initiative to work with faculty in arranging suitable internships to complete their program.

## **Student Orientation and Academic Advisement**

The first year of college is often the most difficult; it involves many changes and challenges. Each incoming student at ACBA will participate in a two-part orientation program formulated to ease this transition and provide the student with the information critical to his or her success. The first part of orientation is completed prior to the start of classes and overviews the Student Handbook, the Catalog and, through those documents, pertinent information that first-year students initially need. When classes begin these students attend the required Building Arts Foundation course, which continues to provide orientation materials and guidance to all first semester freshmen.

Students are assigned an academic adviser and are required to meet with the advisor at least once prior to the midterm exam period of their first semester. More meetings between students and their advisor are strongly encouraged in both formal and informal settings, with a goal of at least one meaningful dialogue each semester. A mandatory meeting is held if a student is failing any course at mid-term, goes on academic probation, or exhibits any behavior leading to disciplinary concerns.

Optimally, a natural outgrowth of the intense workshop-based studies (two full days per week for over three years) in the area of craft specialization is a close working relationship between each student and the

corresponding craft faculty. Ongoing consultation with this professor is strongly encouraged and may provide students with a key source of advisement from the professor who best knows their work and interests.

Finally, the fact that all students take small-sized classes with each full-time general education faculty member throughout their first two years, as well as additional classes with adjunct faculty, facilitates each student finding one or more professors with whom he or she feels comfortable and from whom they can get academic advice, guidance, and mentoring in a safe environment. The many opportunities for students to develop close professional relationships with faculty is one of the great benefits of the small size of the college and the low (~5:1) student-to-faculty ratio.

Students should not hesitate to request a meeting with any of their professors to discuss problems they are having in or out of school. Students may also request a session with a professional counselor through the office of the Registrar. Such sessions are confidential and do not impact a student's academic standing in any way.

## **Library**

The ACBA Library is an essential part of the instructional life at the American College of the Building Arts. The library is located on the second floor of the Old Charleston Jail. The library has an excellent collection of curriculum related books, and a growing list of other print, audio/visual, and electronic resources. The library is committed to providing student/faculty and curriculum targeted information services at ACBA.

Computerized library services include Internet accessible terminals, an Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) and wireless Internet access.

The library has a professional librarian on staff, as posted above, to help students with their research needs. In addition to individual reference and research assistance, the library offers assistance in library research methods to various classes and offers library orientation sessions.

Other services include access to collections of books, periodicals, newspapers, DVDs/videos, and equipment; interlibrary loan borrowing privileges; photocopier and scanner use.

The ACBA library and computer lab at 21 Magazine Street are staffed by a librarian Monday through Thursday, 11:30AM – 3:30PM. The librarian is also available for library consultation by phone (404-518-7390) from 9:00AM to 5:00PM, Monday through Friday and by email anytime at [boycej@buildingartscollege.us](mailto:boycej@buildingartscollege.us). Student assistants are available in the library and lab some nights. ACBA students may access the library catalog and other online resources remotely 24/7.

## **Classes and Grades**

### *Attendance and Tardiness*

Students are expected to attend each scheduled class and to arrive on time. Absences and tardiness will become a part of the student's record. **Specific requirements may be set by each instructor as outlined in the course syllabus.** Absences due to illness, jury duty, death of an immediate family member, court summons, religious

observances or required military duty are generally regarded as excused. Students have an obligation to inform their course instructors as soon as possible of the days on which they will be absent. A student may be dropped from any course in which the number of his/her absences exceeds 25 percent of the total number of classes in the semester. A student dropped from a course for excessive absences will receive a grade of "FA" in the course. An "FA" is the equivalent of an "F" for GPA computation purposes.

### *Makeup Work*

A student has the option to make up work from a class if he/she has fallen behind as a result of an excused absence. Students are responsible for all materials presented during their absences. Faculty may assign a temporary grade of incomplete ("I") to a student when illness, necessary absence, or other reasons beyond the control of the student prevent completion of course requirements by the end of the semester. This grade may not be given as a substitute for a failing grade. If the unfinished work is not completed within the time frame allowed by the faculty member, the grade will convert to an "F". **No time frame will be longer than 60 days!**

### *Grades*

The evaluation of a student's work is presented in two forms: a written statement and a letter grade. Instructors write a brief summary describing and analyzing the performance in a particular course and assign a letter grade. Grade point average (GPA) is calculated by multiplying the credits of each course by the grade points and totaling the points earned for all courses and dividing the total points by the total number of credits.

The equivalent grade-point score of each letter grade is as follows:

A	4.00
A-	3.70
B+	3.30
B	3.00
B-	2.70
C+	2.30
C	2.00
C-	1.70
D+	1.30
D	1.00
F	0.00 Failure
I	Incomplete
AU	Audit
FA	Failure due to absences
S	Satisfactory - used only for internships
U	Unsatisfactory - used only for internships
W	Withdrawal
XF	Failure due to dismissal

"I" Incomplete: a temporary grade the instructor may give to a student when illness, necessary absences other reasons beyond the control of the student prevent completion required by the end of the semester. This grade may not be given as a substitute for a failing grade. A grade of "I" must be removed by the instructor who issued it or by the Department Chairperson. If the unfinished work is not completed in the time frame given by the instructor,

the grade shall be converted to an “F” (failure). The time frame will be no longer than 60 days. Students who receive an incomplete grade in a course should not reregister for the course in order to remove the “I”.

“AU” Audit: a student registers for and attends classes regularly without being held responsible for the work required for credit. A student who registers for a course in this way is not eligible to sit for examinations, earns no credit hours for the registration, and pays per class tuition costs. The designation “AU” appears on the transcript if the student attends at least three-fourths of the class sessions and gives evidence to the course instructor that class participation has been satisfactory.

“FA” Failure due to absence: this grade is given to students who fail a course due to absences that exceed 25% of the class, rather than due to low scores.

“W” Withdrawal: withdrawing from a course. A “W” appears on the transcript for each class withdrawn. A “W” does not affect grade point averages. Students must withdraw before the published drop-date of the semester to receive a “W”.

“XF” Failure due to dismissal: this grade is given to students dismissed from the college and may or may not accurately reflect their grade in the course prior to dismissal.

### *Satisfactory Academic Standing, Progress, and Probation*

The curriculum at the American College of the Building Arts constitutes a very intensive program. All early courses form the foundation for later courses and many later courses cannot be completed without knowledge gained at lower levels. For this reason, students are required to make satisfactory academic progress in order to remain enrolled at ACBA.

Students are required to maintain a 2.0 average GPA. Any student with an average below the minimum will be placed on Academic Probation. The student will meet with his or her professors and may also meet with the Registrar or with other faculty to plan a strategy for improving their grades.

Any student whose average does not improve after one full semester will be subject to dismissal from the college.

In addition to maintaining the appropriate GPA, students must keep their Institutional Portfolio up to date on an annual basis. To advance to the next year-level standing (for example, sophomore to junior) the student must submit to the faculty the portion that reflects the work performed during the current year-level in a final form that it is ready to be incorporated directly into their Institutional Portfolio.

### *Academic Honors*

Students who achieve a grade-point average of 4.0 on work completed during one semester are placed on the *President’s List* for that semester. Students who achieve a grade point ratio of at least 3.5 but less than 4.0 for work completed during one semester are placed on the *Dean’s List* for that semester.

## **Graduation Requirements**

A cumulative grade point average of 2.0 is required for graduation. Candidates for ACBA's associate's degree must finish all required coursework for their major and successfully complete one eight-week summer internship to be eligible for graduation. Upon meeting all requirements for graduation, an Associate of Applied Science Degree in the Building Arts will be awarded.

Candidates for ACBA's baccalaureate degree must finish all coursework and successfully complete three eight-week summer internships. The program chair will facilitate internships. An internship lasts for a minimum of eight weeks and is offered during the summer. Upon meeting all requirements for graduation, a Bachelors of Applied Science Degree in the Building Arts will be awarded.

## **Academic Freedom, Integrity and Responsibility**

### *Academic Freedom*

The American College of the Building Arts believes in the principle of Academic Freedom. Essentially this gives faculty the right to freely discuss topics related to their courses within the classroom. Students should feel encouraged to speak their minds on the topics under discussion and should respect the rights of fellow students to do the same. Students will not be penalized for expression of their ideas in this regard, provided that civility and respectfulness are maintained.

### *Academy Integrity and Honor Code*

The ACBA Honor Code is a critical part of our academic environment in which freedom of expression with civility is necessary for developing critical thinking, excellence in artisanship, and personal beliefs and openness and safety are essential for everyone's success.

The pursuit of knowledge in an academic community brings students and faculty together in an association of shared rights and responsibilities requiring all participants to follow the principle of Academic Integrity. "Academic Integrity is a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect and Responsibility. From these values flow principles of behavior that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action." (Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity, 1999, Center for Academic Integrity; [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org))

*ACBA Honor Code: Members of the ACBA community shall adhere to the principle of Academic Integrity. They shall express opinions with civility and with consideration for the opinions of others, respect intellectual and creative property and resources and promote the importance of the honor code in all their interactions for the benefit of the learning community. They will be honest, trustworthy, fair, respectful and responsible for their actions. They will refrain from lying, cheating, plagiarizing, stealing, violating another person's property or person, committing an act of violence or facilitating an Honor Code violation by another person. Each student and faculty member must take responsibility for addressing the Honor Code and Academic Integrity with members of the community who violate these standards.*

### *Honor Code Violations and Grounds for Dismissal*

Assignments, projects and tests for any given course are designed to facilitate learning or demonstrate that learning has taken place. Any attempt to short circuit this process in order to avoid work or obtain a higher grade or any other significant violation of the Honor Code is unethical, violates the principle of Academic Integrity, and may lead to dismissal from the College.

Examples of actions that may be cause for dismissal include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating: using unauthorized notes, study aids or information on an examination; allowing another person to do one's work and submitting that work under one's own name; submitting identical or similar papers for credit in more than one course without prior permission from the course instructors.
- Plagiarism: submitting materials that in part or whole is not entirely one's own work without crediting the source.
- Lying/Fabrication: falsifying, knowingly misrepresenting or inventing any information
- Obtaining an Unfair Advantage: (a) stealing, reproducing, circulating or otherwise gaining access to examination materials prior to the time authorized by the instructor; (b) stealing, destroying, defacing or concealing library materials with the purpose of depriving others of their use; (c) unauthorized collaborating on an assignment; (d) retaining, possessing, using or circulating previously given examinations materials where those materials clearly indicate that they are to be returned to the instructor at the conclusion of the examination; (e) intentionally obstructing or interfering with another student's work; or (f) otherwise undertaking any activity with the purpose of creating or obtaining an unfair academic advantage over other student's work.
- Stealing: taking any object, work or idea without permission from the rightful owner.
- Violence: harming, attempting to harm or threatening to harm another person.
- Falsification of Records and Official Documents: altering documents affecting academic records, forging signatures and authorization or falsifying information on an official academic document, grade report, letter of permission, petition, add/drop form, ID card or any other official college document.
- Aiding and Abetting Others in Undermining the Honor Code: (a) providing materials, information or other assistance to another person with knowledge that such aid could be used in any of the violations stated above or (b) providing false information in connection with any inquiry regarding academic integrity.

The American College of the Building Arts expects all members of the college community to faithfully uphold to the Honor Code, including the principle of Academic Integrity. Committing actions that violate this, such as those listed above, will be grounds for dismissal from the College.

### *Citizenship in the Community*

A student is also a citizen. Not only are students members of the ACBA community, they are also members of the Charleston community.

In many ways, Charleston, South Carolina is a college town. Over 25,000 students live in the region and they attend a half-dozen different schools. This means that the city has much to offer a college student including a wide range of part-time employment, housing and research facilities.

Students are encouraged to become actively involved in the life of Charleston and much coursework and research is actually designed to help do this, but students should remember when they are off campus, they are still students at the American College of the Building Arts. As a new school, we are still developing our reputation. It is important for students to help ensure that reputation becomes a good one by creating a positive image of the college in the wider world.

## **Health and Safety Policies**

### *Workshop Safety*

Safety is always paramount in activities at the College; nowhere is this more important than in the craft workshops where massive bulky items such as framing timbers, sharp objects such as chisels and saws, searing hot objects such as iron from the forge and the forge itself machines with rapidly moving parts, etc., are everywhere. Individual professors will provide a list of rules and considerations for safety for each particular shop, but...

#### THE FOLLOWING GENERAL RULES APPLY TO ALL SHOPS:

The following are **NOT PERMITTED** in the workshops: rings, jewelry, hooded sweatshirts, loose-fitting clothing, pants with cuffs, shorts, skirts, tank tops.

The following are **REQUIRED** in the workshops: safety glasses (ANSI approved), ear protection, boots or shoes with steel toes (ANSI approved), respiratory protections.

All injuries at the College or on College sponsored events must be reported immediately or at the earliest possible time in the event of an emergency. A detailed report to the Directors of Operations and Finance must be filed within two days of the injury.

### *Smoking Policy*

Smoking is permitted on College property **ONLY in designated outdoor areas**, where disposal containers are provided for cigarette butts and other tobacco waste. Cigarette butts or other tobacco waste shall be disposed of in approved containers. Smoking is not permitted inside any College facility.

### *Drug-free Policy*

The College maintains a drug-free facility in compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1989. The College considers its students and employees to be its most valuable assets. We realize that members of the College community are not immune to the problems in our society associated with drug and alcohol abuse. We strongly encourage anyone who is abusing alcohol or drugs to seek professional assistance and address their issue before it becomes a more serious problem and a danger to others in the college community.

## Alcohol and Illicit Drug Health Risks

- a. Alcohol/substance abuse is evidenced by a lack of self-control which results in an individual harming or potentially harming himself or others, or an individual disrupting the mission of the College.
- b. Alcohol and illicit drugs are toxic substances that affect the mind, body, and spirit.
- c. Drug Abuse is dangerous and can lead to death. An overdose can cause psychosis, convulsions, coma, and death. Continuous use of drugs can lead to organic damage, mental illness, and malnutrition. It increases the risk of AIDS, hepatitis, and other diseases related to injectable drugs. Drug abuse can cause accidents resulting from foolish risks, “panic attacks,” and acting irrationally.

As discussed in the section above on workshop safety, ACBA members often are involved in projects that carry substantial risk and for which safety is of great importance. To minimize the health risks to all students and employees and to prevent drug or alcohol abuse from adversely affecting performance and safety, the College has developed this substance abuse policy:

*The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance while on College premises or during the conduct of College business is prohibited and will result in immediate dismissal. Law enforcement authorities will be notified of the facts and circumstances concerning any illegal activity.*

## *Weapons Policy*

No person may carry a concealed or unconcealed weapon on College property; violation of this policy may cause for expulsion. A weapon is any object, the principal purpose of which is the infliction of personal injury. Tools used in the ordinary course of class or special project activities are generally not regarded as weapons, but a tool may be considered a weapon if intended to inflict personal injury. Any person who carries a weapon shall be asked to remove the said article and store it safely or shall be asked to leave the site. Faculty members have the authority to deal with any minor weapons issues affecting their classes. This authority includes the authority to determine whether any given object should be regarded as a weapon within the meaning of this policy.

## **Additional Policies**

### *Student Work*

All student work including portfolios, drawings, trade work and written work is the property of the college and will be retained or returned to the student at the discretion of the college.

### *Readmission*

Students who voluntarily withdraw from ACBA or are dismissed for academic deficiency must apply for readmission in order to reenroll. Students who voluntarily withdraw from ACBA while in good standing with a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above will be granted readmission with approval from the College Dean. Students who have been dismissed from ACBA for academic or disciplinary reasons may not apply for readmission for one calendar year. A student who has been dismissed from ACBA for academic deficiency and who has completed the required suspension period will be considered for readmission provided that he/she submits proof

that conditions for academic success are favorable. The student must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or above. The student must meet any other requirements set forth by the College Dean for reenrollment to ACBA.

### *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) -- Privacy Policy*

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. - 1232g; 34CFR Part 99) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student educational records. FERPA provides students with the right to inspect and review their educational records, limit disclosure of information from their records, and seek to have the records amended by filing a complaint with the US Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the college to comply with the requirements of FERPA.

In accordance with FERPA, ACBA student records will not be made available to others except where permitted by law or upon written request of the student (or parent or guardian when the student is less than 18 years of age). ACBA classifies certain items of a student records as “directory information”, including name, address, telephone number, email address, date and place of birth, curriculum and major field of study, dates of attendance, enrollment status (full/part time), degrees awarded/received, and most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student. This information may be released to any third party at the discretion of the College. Students (or parents or guardians when a student is less than 18 years of age) may request within 30 days of enrollment that the school not disclose “directory information”.

Upon written request, any current or former student may inspect his/her education records and may request a hearing to challenge any information deemed to be misleading or inaccurate. More information on FERPA may be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/gud/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

### *Grievance Policy*

If a student feels that he or she is not being treated fairly by the College, the faculty or their fellow students, that individual has a right to file a grievance with the College. The first step in the grievance process is to try to resolve the problem on the lowest level possible before involving the entire school. For example, if a student is having a problem with a professor, the two of them should try to work it out on a one to one basis. The next step would be to contact the Dean and try to resolve the problem through the school’s administration. If there is still no resolution between the Dean, student and professor, then the issue can be taken to the College President for final decision. Any student still dissatisfied may file complaint with the State Commission of Higher Education, in Columbia, South Carolina.

## **Closing Thoughts**

The American College of the Building Arts offers a unique educational environment for both students and faculty. One of the chief advantages of the college is its small size. This creates a genuine sense of community and easy access by students to faculty or staff.

Students should not hesitate to contact faculty or staff about any issue whatsoever. It is the goal of the American College of the Building Arts to graduate students who embody the best traditions of education in a building craft and of liberal education. If there are problems, we want to know about them as soon as possible. Your input is vital to helping ACBA achieve its goals and contributing to the growth and success of the College and its community.