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Bridging the Gap Between Interior Design Education and Entry-Level Job Expectations

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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATION
AND ENTRY-LEVEL JOB EXPECTATIONS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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This study was designed to uncover whether or not interior design graduates are entering the workforce with the proper skill-set and knowledge base that practitioners find most desirable. It has been over twenty years (Baker & Sondhi, 1989) since a study of this kind has been conducted. Results of this study were compared to current educational practices as well as to interior design's main accrediting body, the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). In understanding interior design's constant pursuit for accurate public perception, this study's theoretical position was based on the concepts of professionalism and what it means to obtain and secure professionalism in any field. Through conducting this study, the researcher hoped to enable interior design graduates to be more adequately prepared for their careers and also have employers feel confident that they are hiring employees who are equipped in solving complex interior design problems.

The survey used for this study used elements of a survey designed by Baker (1989), and included topics from current 2011 CIDA standards, as well as categories not covered in CIDA guidelines. Participants included higher level interior designers and architects from the Top 200 interior design firms across the United States. Potential participants were sent an e-mail with a link that guided them to a Qualtrics survey. Sixty two participants, representing thirty five of the top 200 companies, completed the questionnaire. Statistical results indicated that the knowledge

and skill areas included in the survey instrument were considered highly sought by design professionals. Personal attributes and areas of professionalism were also rated favorably.

It can be inferred by the results of this study that entry-level employees are entering the workforce with many of the knowledge and skill areas that practitioners are seeking. The significant findings from the knowledge, skill and professional areas provided an interesting insight into what practitioners value and can be useful information for interior design educators as they prepare students for their professional careers.