

# Spatial Pedagogy

*A History of the University of Tennessee's College of Architecture and Design*

An independent study by Elizabeth Cagle, B.Arch, class of 2013  
In coordination with Professor and Former Dean Marleen Kay Davis. Conducted Fall 2011.

Front cover: Unidentified students in an Estabrook Hall studio, 1960s. Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.  
Back cover: Unidentified student at an Art + Architecture Building desk, 1980s. Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.

## Author's Note

After three years as an undergraduate in the University of Tennessee's College of Architecture and Design (CoAD), I realized a lack of understanding of our heritage among current students. Most students, although appreciative of the Art + Architecture Building (A+A), did not realize the importance of it and its predecessor, Estabrook Hall, to the history and culture of our College. Nor could most students identify crucial differences between our curriculum and that of other schools in the region. I know I could not. Most students, like their predecessors, came to UT because it was in-state. Little did we realize that we were entering a program rich in social, academic, and spatial heritage. This catalog and the exhibition that it accompanies are the result of my curiosity regarding my heritage as a CoAD student. I spent one semester researching under the supervision of Professor Marleen Kay Davis, focusing on the contribution of spaces to the heritage of the College. There is ample opportunity for younger students to further this research in order to compile a complete history of the College.

This study could not have been completed without the support of my advisor, Professor and Former Dean Marleen Kay Davis, as well as Advisory Committee Members Dr. Steven Dandaneau and Dr. Avigail Sachs. I would like to offer a huge thank you to all the alumni and faculty who took time to speak with me, especially Mr. Doug McCarty and Mr. Bill Lacy. I would also like to thank my year-mates for listening with interest when I discussed the history of our building, and for helping me conduct "research" late at night. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family, Billy, Julie, and Matthew Cagle, for believing in me and for listening to me speak architecture-ese, even when you did not understand what I was saying.



Studio in Estabrook Hall.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.

There are many features that make the University of Tennessee's College of Architecture + Design stand out: world-class faculty; inquisitive, engaged students; and a well-rounded curriculum, among others. While each of these factors have had a part in the making of CoAD, some of the most important contributors have been spaces: Estabrook Hall and the Art + Architecture Building, homes to CoAD since its founding as the New School of Architecture in 1965.<sup>1</sup> The spaces within these buildings have played a major role in shaping the culture, both social and academic, of the College. It is the academic and social culture of the College that makes CoAD special. The combination of many factors, mainly including buildings and curriculum, created and continues to create both social and academic cultures in the College; the history of this synthesis is our spatial and pedagogical heritage.

The architecture school at UT has always been confident. In 1965, a young Bill Lacy was hired as founding Dean by the University to create a school of architecture. The school was set to begin accepting students the following year, leaving one full academic year to hire faculty, find a suitable facility, and create a curriculum. After hiring the first faculty member, Fred Grieger, Lacy and Grieger decided they could begin enrolling students that year by filling the curriculum with classes UT already offered, such as art classes and various engineering disciplines. This was not so much a hasty, piecemeal solution as an intentional decision to develop the architect as generalist. Topics emphasized include art, engineering (structures and building systems), and architectural

and art history.<sup>2</sup> There were no design studios in the first year; studio was to start in the second year. Elements of the first curriculum remain today in CoAD's strong core of courses that fall alongside studio, such as a three-semester architectural history and theory sequence, and classes in structural engineering and environmental control systems. The semester-long Integrations studio is another descendant of the historical interplay of design and technology within our curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "About the College," University of Tennessee College of Architecture + Design, Accessed 3 Feb. 2012, [www.arch.utk.edu/College/index.shtml](http://www.arch.utk.edu/College/index.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> Marleen Kay Davis, personal interview by author, Sept. 16, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



From left: unidentified student, Professor Fred Grieger, Founding Dean Bill Lacy.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



First class.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.

There have always been off-campus components involved in shaping the UT architecture student. Study abroad always found its way into the curriculum, even long before it was structured into the standard curriculum in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Statewide off-campus design and design-build programs are part of our heritage, as well. UT Living Light Solar Decathlon house and the experimental New Norris house are just the most recent beneficiaries of this heritage. In the past, UT's CoAD had ties with design centers in Memphis and Chattanooga, as well as Knoxville and Nashville, and students have participated in design-build projects, including designing a project for the 1982 Knoxville World's Fair.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>University of Tennessee School of Architecture, Faculty notebook (including faculty meeting minutes), 1982-1983.



UT President Andy Holt at the Sparta, Tennessee urban planning project review.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Construction on experimental housing in Knoxville (Alcoa Highway).  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.

Despite the emphasis UT has always placed on the architect as generalist, design has always been of primary importance. Dean Lacy considered everything as an opportunity for design, beginning with the furnishing of his office, which was the first thing students saw upon entering the building. In the 1970s, students could choose from one of several “tracks,” such as historic preservation, design, and construction or management. The tracks were eventually abandoned because they distracted from design. Today, studio design courses begin in the first semester of first year, and form the backbone of CoAD curriculum.

Despite a strong curriculum, the history of the architecture school at UT is, at its essence, wrapped up in its spaces. At its founding in 1965, the first dean, Bill Lacy (who went on to be the Executive Director of the Pritzker Prize jury),<sup>6</sup> chose Estabrook Hall, then in use by the College of Engineering, as the home for the new School of Architecture. The building was a shared space with art studios throughout the School of Architecture’s tenure there. Estabrook, centered around a sunny atrium, brought architecture, art, and engineering students together into a unique multi-disciplinary community.

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<sup>6</sup> Bill Lacy, “Power Player: The Many Lives of Bill Lacy,” interview by Robert Ivey, FAIA, Architectural Record, accessed Oct. 2011, <http://archrecord.construction.com/features/interviews/0801lacy/0801lacy-1.asp>.



Dean Lacy's office, furnished by Herman Miller.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Entry to Estabrook Hall.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Estabrook Hall.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.

The culture of the school benefited from the design of Estabrook from the very beginning. As students in the 1960s were very concerned with the Vietnam War and the possibility of being drafted should their grades fall, there was always a political tension among the student body.<sup>7</sup> The architecture students were generally less socially conservative than their engineering counterparts, and their young faculty encouraged them to be socially and politically active.<sup>8</sup> Students were itching for a cause to get behind. Social gatherings were encouraged by the light-filled atrium. This is where the entire school gathered together to see Louis Kahn lecture, while his work was on display in the floor below. The main stairs for Estabrook were at either end of the atrium, and chance encounters occurred there all the time. The idea of “events” and “happenings” ran rampant among the student body,<sup>9</sup> and one of the outcomes of this was TAAST, The Annual Architecture Spring Thing, known today, after the addition of Interior Design and Landscape Architecture degree programs, as the The Annual All-College Spring Thing

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<sup>7</sup>Robert French (alumnus and faculty), personal interview by author, 26 Jan. 2012.

<sup>8</sup>Gary Everton (1976 alumnus), personal interview by author, 14 Oct. 2011.

<sup>9</sup>Marleen Kay Davis, personal interview by author, 16 Sept. 2011.



Louis Kahn visiting the Estabrook atrium. Max Robinson is pictured in the background, 1970s. Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.



Students gathered in Estabrook atrium during Louis Kahn's visit.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.



Setting for a happening, Estabrook Hall, 1970s.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.

Despite students' social activism, the school has reflected the overall trend among architects to be a white man's profession. Although there were a few women in each of the early graduating classes, it was never more than a handful until much more recently. The first African-American student was not accepted until a few years after the founding of the School.<sup>10</sup> Even today, minorities are under-represented in the College. Despite the lag in the profession to push for diversity, students in the early days were appreciative of having women around, and bucked against such discriminatory University policies as a curfew for women (but not for men) that made late-night work in studio next to impossible for female students.<sup>11</sup>

By the late 1970s, the School of Architecture was overflowing Estabrook Hall. Tennessee students finally had an in-state option to pursue architecture and a young and charismatic faculty had proved to be a huge draw. Students had studio space in Alumni Gym (now the Alumni Memorial Building), Melrose Hall, Temple Court, and South Stadium Hall, among other locations across the campus. Lectures were held in McClung Museum Auditorium and various engineering buildings. Despite everything Estabrook had given the School of Architecture, it was time to move to a bigger space, which, like Estabrook, would include space for the art department. The program for the new Art + Architecture Building (A+A) encompassed both the School of Architecture and the entire Art Department, creating a home for students of both disciplines.

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<sup>10</sup>Robert French (alumnus and faculty), personal interview by author, 26 Jan. 2012.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.



Dean Lacy with the first African-American architecture student.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Alumni Gym Studio, 1970s.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.

McCarty Bullock Holsaple (now McCarty Holsaple McCarty) won the statewide competition, with a prestigious jury, including Bertram Berenson, Gerald McCue, and George Anselvicius,<sup>12</sup> to design a new building for the school. Young alumnus Doug McCarty led the project. His vision was to take the community-building elements of Estabrook Hall, such as the atrium and monumental stairs, and incorporate them into a new space for the School of Architecture. He also incorporated some details directly from Estabrook for memory's sake, such as the eleven-foot front door with the vertical grab bar and the red color of the quarry tile on the floor of the atrium.<sup>13</sup> The School of Architecture and the Art Department began classes in this building in 1982.<sup>14</sup>

One feature he purposely rejected in the design of the A+A was the separation between faculty and students.<sup>15</sup> In Estabrook, some professors were known to purposely hide from their students for days. In the A+A, faculty offices are mixed together with studio spaces on either side of the “street” or atrium. This enhances the community feel of the A+A, and provides chance encounters as opportunities for collaboration.

The buildings and curriculum of CoAD have both played an important role in the culture of the school, and have in turn affected one another. For example, McCarty designed the A+A as a teaching tool. The building contains wonderful examples of various spatial conditions, while the exposed systems provide instruction in how a building goes together. Today, first-year

faculty lead each class in diagramming the spatial conditions of the A+A, while third- and fourth-year students study the way mechanical systems feed through the building.

The final crucial similarity between Estabrook and the A+A is the feeling they give students of being at home. Because students are able to understand their buildings deeply, they are able to occupy them fully, even to the point of feeling ownership of all parts of a building. One example of the freedom students feel in the buildings is their willingness to build or acquire their own studio furnishings. Another example is the roof of Estabrook, or “pebble beach,” as it was known to students, where they would trespass late at night for a breath of fresh air, and sometimes illicit activities, as well. Current students have been known to trespass on the roof of the A+A, too, with information on how to access it passed down from class to class like a family secret. It is the spatial conditions, purposely created by both designer and users, such as the atriums, roofs, and studios, balconies, café space, and workshops, that form a home for UT's architecture students.

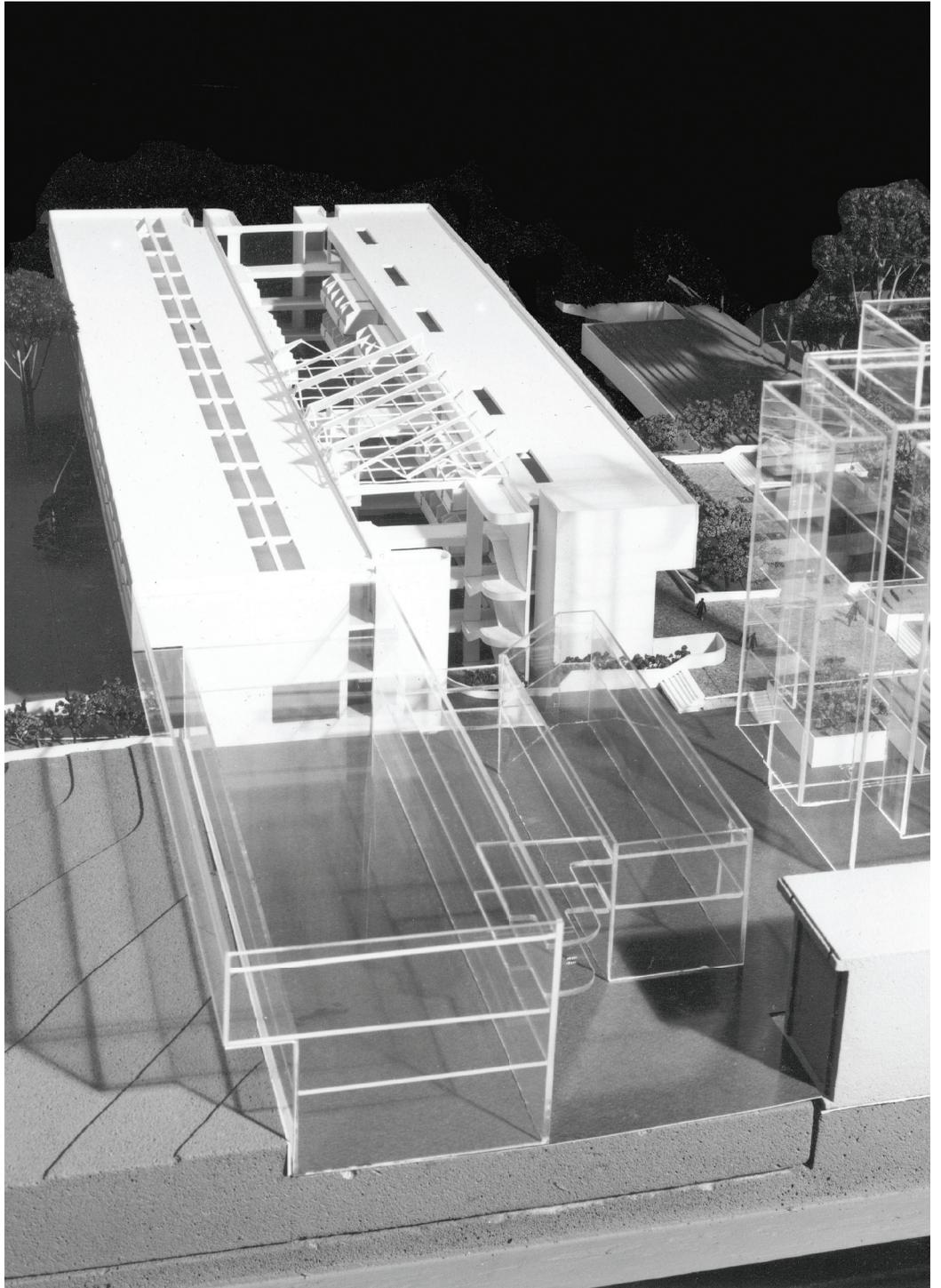
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<sup>12</sup> University of Tennessee School of Architecture, Faculty notebook (including faculty meeting minutes), 1981-1982.

<sup>13</sup> Doug McCarty, personal interview by author, 25 Oct. 2011.

<sup>14</sup> UT School of Architecture, Faculty notebook, 1981-1982.

<sup>15</sup> Doug McCarty, personal interview by author, 25 Oct. 2011.



Competition Model.  
Image courtesy of Diane Fox.

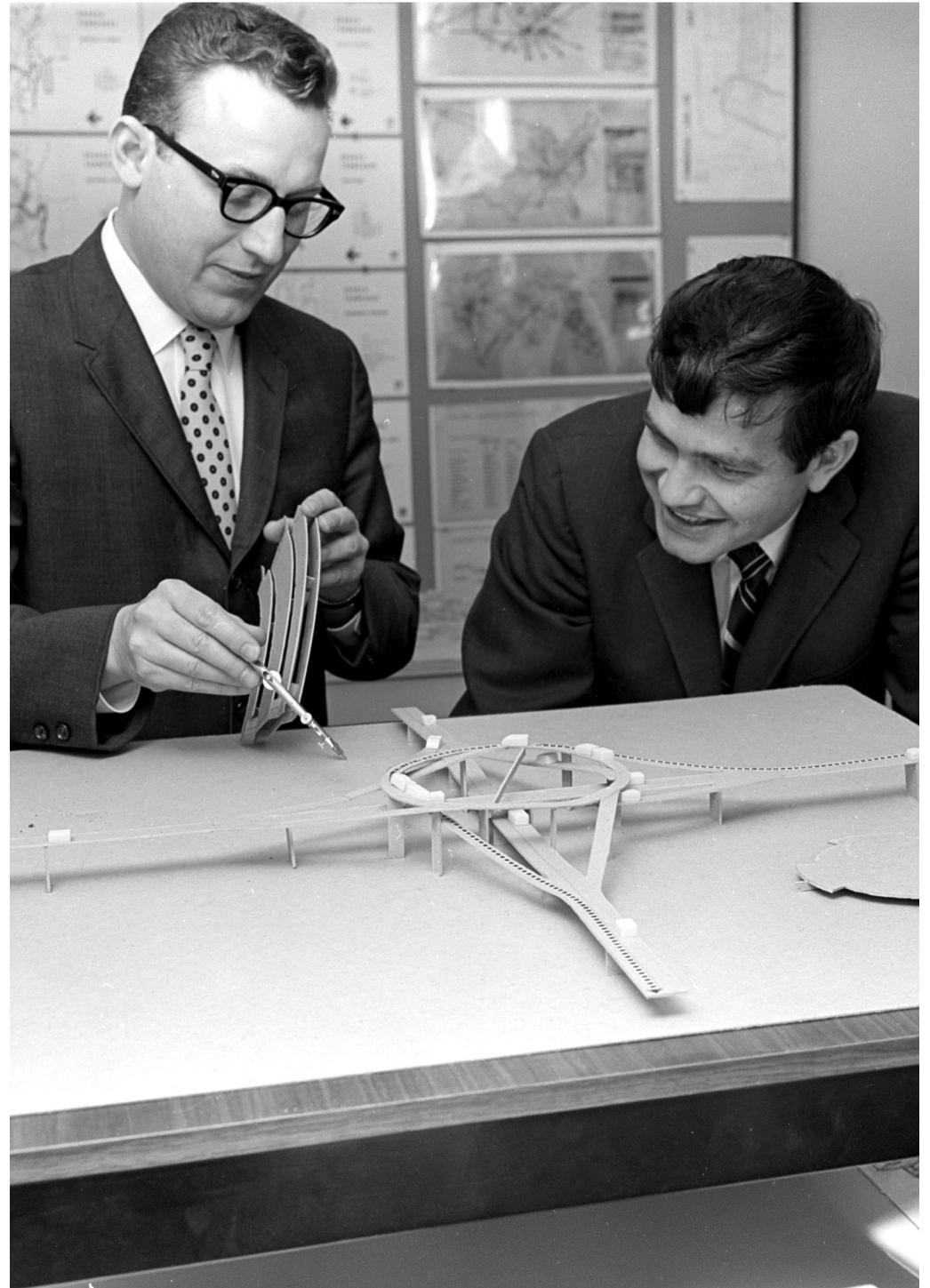


Impromptu collaboration on the central stair of the Art + Architecture Building.  
Image courtesy of Diane Fox.

The University of Tennessee's College of Architecture + Design is unique in its combination of inputs, such as curriculum and buildings, that affect one another, as well as the academic and social lives of faculty and students. This synthesis of cultures, our collective pedagogical heritage, is the key factor of the CoAD experience. Students and alumni need to remember this heritage, for it defines both our history and our future as a College.



Professor Fred Grieger and a student move a model while Dean Lacy looks on, late 1960s.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Professor Fred Grieger and Dean Bill Lacy look at an infrastructure model, late 1960s.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Some of the original faculty.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb  
and Estabrook alumni.



First review of the School of Architecture. From left, Dean Bill Lacy and Professor Fred Grieger.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



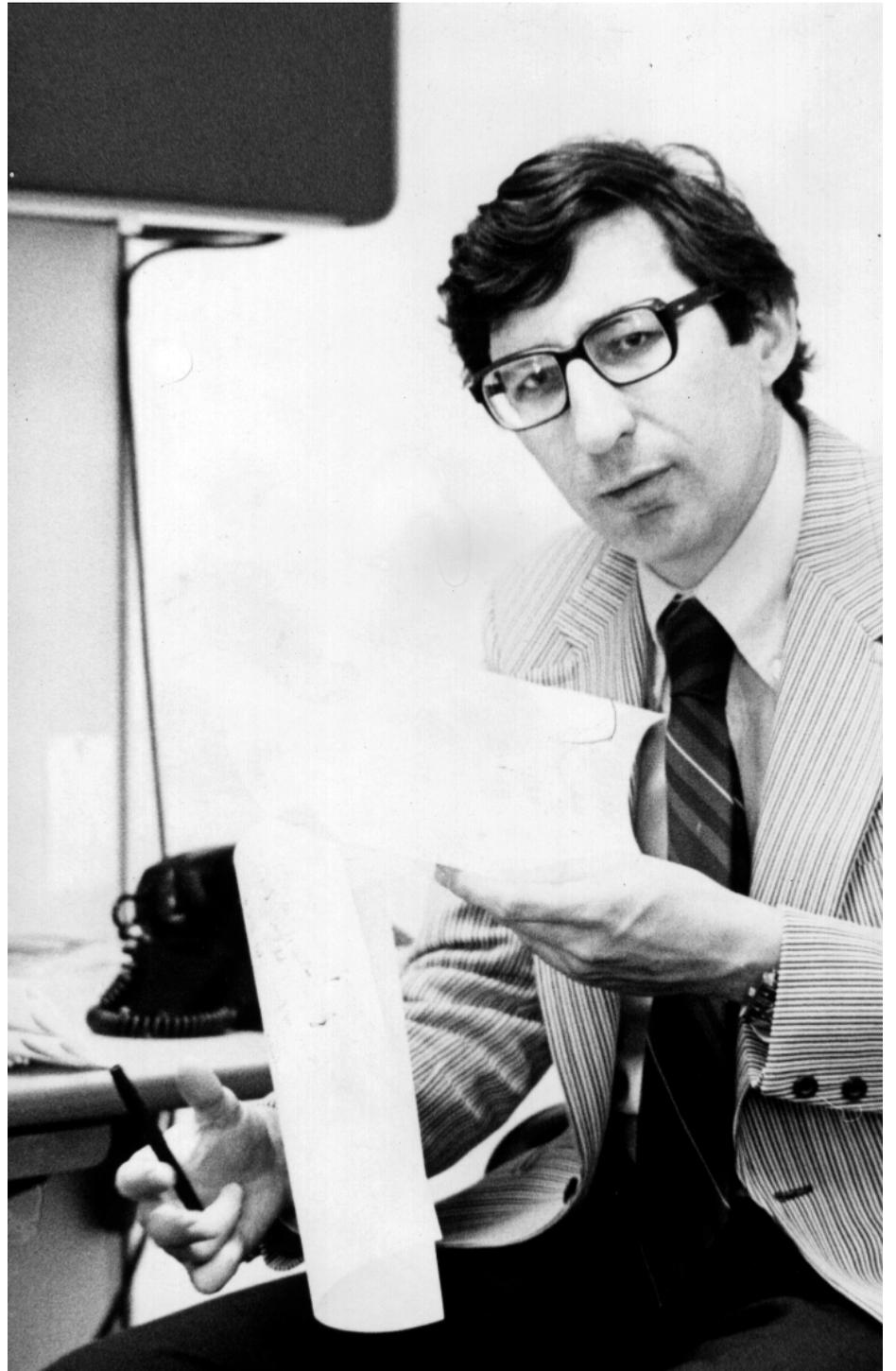
Review in the atrium of Estabrook Hall. Robert French at far left.  
Image courtesy of UT Photo Services.



Studio in Estabrook Hall.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook Alumni.



Studio in Estabrook Hall, 1970s.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.



Professor Bill Shell.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.



Estabrook studio, 1970s.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.



First TAAST, 1971.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook Alumni.



TAAST, 1970s.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.



Class picture, 1973.  
Image courtesy of Mitch McNabb and Estabrook alumni.

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