

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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29 April 2011

Dear Ms. Jumper:

In its meeting of 21 April, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the University of the District of Columbia's Van Ness Campus draft master plan and a concept design for a new student center. The Commission approved both submissions with the following comments.

The Commission members emphasized the general campus planning principle that the siting and design of buildings should support the clarity and strength of open spaces—a quality that is evident in the existing campus design—and expressed concern that this principle is not being applied adequately to the new proposals. They cited the awkward triangular-shaped space that would remain between Building 39 and the new student center—proposed to serve as a rain garden—and recommended further study to improve the character of this area.

The Commission members supported the proposed location of the student center at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Van Ness Street and noted its potential to become an iconic structure for the University and community, improving the definition of the university's entrance. They acknowledged that the large exterior staircase would serve as the main portal into the campus and suggested that the features of the entrance plaza could become more significant and bolder in design. However, they commented that the large single opening of the student center's south elevation would be too bold a gesture and out of character with the other facades; they recommended further development of this elevation to be more consistent with the overall building and with the single-story spaces of the interior.

The Commission appreciates the development of the master plan in conjunction with the proposed new construction and looks forward to seeing the next phase of both projects. As always, the staff is available to assist you with the next submissions.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Barbara Jumper
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cc: Douglas McCoach, RTKL
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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 11-02 A

EXHIBIT NO. 21