

Architecture grads may soon upgrade degrees with retro 'master plan'

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Montana State University School of Architecture has a new twist on the phrase "master plan." It is hoping to alert about 1,500 architects who graduated from the school prior to 1998 that they may qualify for a retroactive master's degree with just a little effort.

The university has received permission from the Montana Board of Regents to award retroactive master's degrees to MSU School of Architecture graduates of 10 years ago or more who completed a five-year professional bachelor's degree in architecture. Those estimated 1,500 graduates essentially completed requirements for a master's degree before MSU started granting professional masters degrees in architecture in 1998.



An architectural model of a city stands in Cheever Hall, home to the MSU School of Architecture. (MSU photo by Kelly Gorham)

MSU School of Architecture officials said the action is far from a psychological bump. In fact, in some cases the retroactive degree will have far-reaching benefits.

"This will have tangible effects for many of our graduates," said John Brittingham, interim associate director of the school. "The diploma will carry more weight." He said in many cases some of the affected graduates have narrowly lost jobs in intensely competitive job bidding situations because they did not have a master's degree.

Brittingham said the change in degrees began in 1998 when MSU aligned with a new national standard and changed to award professional masters degrees for five years of work instead of bachelor's degrees for the same amount of education. Brittingham said the school has worked for several years with the university and the Montana Commissioner of Higher Education and Board of Regents to rectify the inequity of the degrees. The school received official permission this year when the Board of Regents approved its plan for the retroactive degree.

"With the support of Provost Dooley and President Gamble we are recognizing that our alumni have already reached an important educational milestone and we are now able to acknowledge it with the appropriate degree," said Susan Agre-Kippenhan, dean of the MSU College of Arts and Architecture.

Brittingham said the upgrade should be relatively simple. The candidates must complete a brief online course to be offered beginning this summer. Next June, the school will award the retroactive master's degrees at an all-school celebration.

Brittingham said the school has sent out information by mail to all graduates affected by the degree change for whom it has addresses. It has also sent out information to professional journals in hopes that it will reach all graduates who would like to upgrade their degrees.

To learn more about the MSU retroactive master's degree in architecture visit our website at www.arch.montana.edu.

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