Value Proposition to Universities

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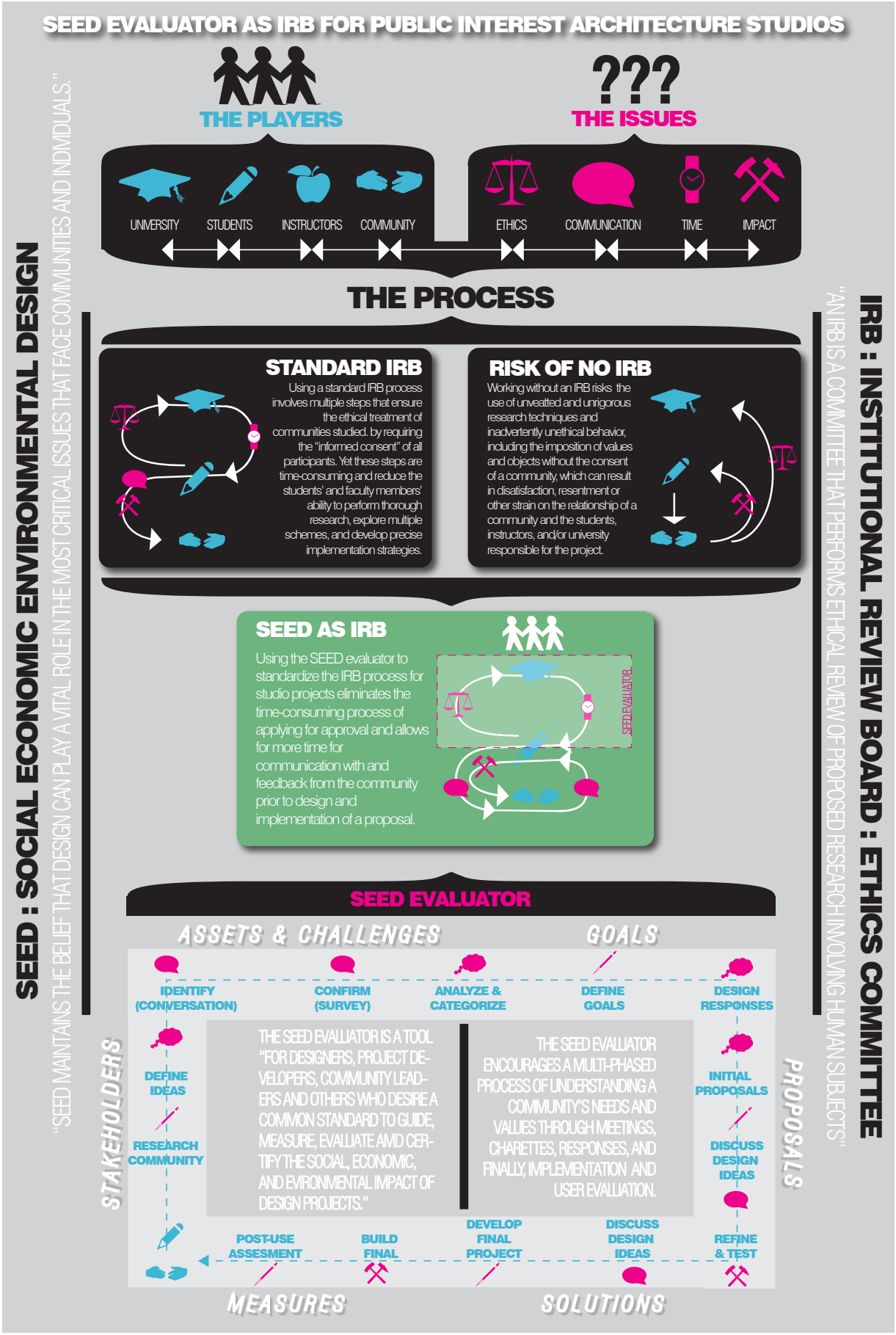
University design programs—architecture, landscape architecture, industrial design, engineering, etc.—are increasingly engaged in various forms of "community" or "public interest design" (PID). PID pedagogy holds that students and community-, or business-groups produce new and useful knowledge that neither group could produce in isolation. Benefit is seen to be mutual. There is, however, no consistent or appropriate process in place to protect participating communities, students or universities from the unintended consequences of off-campus work.

Within university research communities in the United States there are Institution Review Boards, or IRBs, that are charged with the overview of "human subject research." The IRB review process varies from campus to campus, but in general, IRB processes for human subject research are frequently not a good fit for PID, or "design research" projects. The goals, methods, scheduling and products of design research are quite different from human subject research employed in the social or medical sciences. At many universities IRBs do not review design research and at others faculty engaged in design research simply avoid IRB review. One result is that some universities and communities have been inadvertently harmed through the lack of clear standards for communication and conduct off campus. There are two possible remedies to the situation: (1) Universities with design programs could alter their IRB process for review of PID, or design research projects in an appropriate manner. Or, (2) Universities could adopt the existing SEED Evaluation metric as an external partner.

SEED, or the Social Economic Environmental Design Network, developed the SEED Evaluator 3.0 in 2011 as a common standard to guide, measure, evaluate and certify the social, economic and environmental impact of design projects. Each evaluation, conducted by SEED-trained evaluators, is context-dependent and based on five core principles. Making SEED certification the standard for university-based design research has the potential to preclude coursework that encourages unregulated or unauthorized construction projects. On the positive side, SEED certification could expedite approval for design research projects and thus allow for maximum time and flexibility for community engagement, research, design, and implementation.


SEED EVALUATOR AS IRB FOR PUBLIC INTEREST ARCHITECTURE STUDIOS
THE PLAYERS
UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS
INSTRUCTORS
COMMUNITY
???
THE ISSUES
ETHICS
COMMUNICATION
TIME
IMPACT
THE PROCESS
STANDARD IRB
Using a standard IRB process involves multiple steps that ensure the ethical treatment of communities studied. by requiring the "informed consent" of all participants. Yet these steps are time-consuming and reduce the students' and faculty members' ability to perform thorough research, explore multiple schemes, and develop precise implementation strategies.
RISK OF NO IRB
Working without an IRB risks the use of unveatted and unrigorous research techniques and inadvertently unethical behavior, including the imposition of values and objects without the consent of a community, which can result in disatisfaction, resentment or other strain on the relationship of a community and the students, instructors, and/or university responsible for the project.
SEED AS IRB
Using the SEED evaluator to standardize the IRB process for studio projects eliminates the time-consuming process of applying for approval and allows for more time for communication with and feedback from the community prior to design and implementation of a proposal.
SEED EVALUATOR
SEED : SOCIAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN
"SEED MAINTAINS THE BELIEF THAT DESIGN CAN PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN THE MOST CRITICAL ISSUES THAT FACE COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS."
IRB : INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD : ETHICS COMMITTEE
"AN IRB IS A COMMITTEE THAT PERFORMS ETHICAL REVIEW OF PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS"
ASSETS & CHALLENGES
GOALS
IDENTIFY (CONVERSATION)
CONFIRM (SURVEY)
ANALYZE & CATEGORIZE
DEFINE GOALS
DESIGN RESPONSES
STAKEHOLDERS
DEFINE IDEAS
RESEARCH COMMUNITY
THE SEED EVALUATOR IS A TOOL "FOR DESIGNERS, PROJECT DEVELOPERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS AND OTHERS WHO DESIRE A COMMON STANDARD TO GUIDE, MEASURE, EVALUATE AND CERTIFY THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND EVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DESIGN PROJECTS."
THE SEED EVALUATOR ENCOURAGES A MULTI-PHASED PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING A COMMUNITY'S NEEDS AND VALUES THROUGH MEETINGS, CHARETTES, RESPONSES, AND FINALLY, IMPLEMENTATION AND USER EVALUATION.
PROPOSALS
INITIAL PROPOSALS
DISCUSS DESIGN IDEAS
REFINE & TEST
DISCUSS DESIGN IDEAS
DEVELOP FINAL PROJECT
BUILD FINAL
POST-USE ASSESMENT
MEASURES
SOLUTIONS

Open