

Mo Zell, ACSA, AIA

Mo Zell is a visionary leader, educator, and award-winning architect dedicated to advancing design education, fostering community engagement, and promoting equity and inclusion in the built environment. Her leadership has been recognized with several honors, including the Milwaukee Business Journal's Women of Influence Award, underscoring her impact as a transformative figure in architecture and design education. Her work reflects a commitment to empowering students, supporting faculty, and building strong, inclusive communities. With 22 years of academic experience, she has held multiple leadership roles over the past 12 years at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) School of Architecture and Urban Planning (SARUP), including Interim Dean, Senior Associate Dean, and Chair of Architecture. She also served as the inaugural Interim Dean of UWM's College of the Arts and Architecture, where she led the integration of the Peck School of the Arts and SARUP, creating a collaborative environment for visual and performing arts, architecture, and urban planning. Prior to UWM, she taught at Northeastern University, NC State, and Clemson University.

Zell's approach to education emphasizes linking the academy to real-world impact. As Interim Dean of SARUP, she actively engaged underrepresented communities through outreach and pathway programs. Her High School Design Build Summer Camp empowers Milwaukee teens to design and construct community projects, fostering a diverse pipeline to architecture. The program's partnerships with Milwaukee Public School, Milwaukee Area Technical College, College of Engineering and Applied Sciences, and leaders in the construction industry expand educational access and foster interdisciplinary collaboration. Her Mobile Design Box (MDB) initiative further exemplifies this commitment, transforming vacant storefronts in six Milwaukee neighborhoods into activated spaces for exhibitions by local entrepreneurs, artists, and UWM colleagues, fostering connections between students, faculty, and the community.

In line with her commitment to community impact, she launched the Design + Construction Initiative (DCI) at UWM to enhance the quality of the built environment by blending construction and design disciplines. DCI addresses local needs by supporting affordable housing projects and collaborative research in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, with recent support from a Department of Energy (DOE) grant focused on prototyping wall panels systems for net-zero affordable housing.

An advocate for diversity and inclusion, Zell co-founded Women in Design Milwaukee, an initiative supporting women in a wide variety of design professions through scholarships, leadership seminars, and mentorship programs. Additionally, under her leadership, SARUP launched an award-winning externship program, expanding professional experiences for students and strengthening ties with architecture, urban planning, construction, and landscape architecture regionally and internationally. Her commitment to equity and social justice is evident in her role as the 2023-2024 President of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), where she has led efforts to strengthen K-12 outreach, climate action initiatives, and faculty research dissemination.

Zell holds architecture degrees from the University of Virginia and Yale University and is a licensed architect in Massachusetts. As co-founder of bauenstudio, her design work has received national recognition, including awards from the Boston Society of Architects, Boston Society of Landscape Architects, and success in national design competitions.