

## 2006/01: More FIDER Accreditation Debate

With the start of the 2005/2006 academic year, we asked for more reader input on the often sensitive subject of the benefit of FIDER [Foundation for Interior Design Education Research] accreditation for interior design programs. After multiple installments on the issue (catch yourself up with reader comments from April, May, June, and July), we have a few thoughtful opinions that we have yet to share. There is always room for more opinions, so if you feel the need to share your ideas &ndash; even if anonymously &ndash; please email us at [contact@plinthandchintz.com](mailto:contact@plinthandchintz.com). Comments will be posted in the coming months. So read on, contemplate, and decide where you stand on the debate.

Email from: LORI GIBSON

Students simply must understand the difference between a FIDER school and non-FIDER. If they want to work in commercial design and do more than just work in retail/residential, their careers depend on it.

I am an interior designer with a large state government agency. I work with architects daily. The interior design profession needs all the help it can get to be taken seriously in the commercial design arena. I would never have been able to become a Certified Interior Designer in the state of KY [Kentucky] unless I had graduated from a FIDER accredited school (the University of Kentucky had always been FIDER Accredited).

Having this certification gives me more credibility in talking with architects and facility managers. We must remember that Interior Design is really a very young profession compared to architecture, and we must work hard to educate the public of our value. It is up to us and only us to demonstrate the difference between a "decorator" who makes things look nice, and a professional interior designer who works to protect the health and safety of the users in the interior environment. Students who graduate from a FIDER accredited program understand this.

Email from: MAUREEN KOOPMAN, Allied ASID - Cadwallader Design; Dallas, Texas

I am a graduate of Kent State University in Kent, OH [Ohio], which is a FIDER accredited program. I have some colleagues who have attended various other institutions, only some of which were FIDER accredited. I personally feel, from my conversations with them in regards to our educational experiences, that I have attained a higher level of education due to the school's affiliation with FIDER.

I feel that all academic programs need to have some level of standard in place. By being accredited, environmental design programs have set a higher standard for their students and thus create a professional who is better prepared for the industry as it stands at this time. This has become even more critical with the public's increased awareness of the difference between a licensed interior designer vs. non-licensed designer.

Email by: SUSI SANTORELLI, Rhodec Director of US & Canadian Affairs; IDEC, IFDA, Industry Member IIDA; ASID Student Chapter Faculty Advisor

I don't know about other schools and squealing, but for us the FIDER route just isn't the best match for us. Our 100% interior design specific course is one of the most comprehensive available in the world and where else could a student get 60 semester credits for less than \$3,000?

Our mission has always been to make design education available to students who for one reason or another are unable to attend a traditional school and to make it affordable to the majority.

FIDER is a great organization, but as many have said many times over, it just shouldn't be the only measure. Is there evidence that FIDER educated students are more successful at passing the NCIDQ exam than those that aren't? Shouldn't passage of that exam alone be proof enough, and if NCIDQ don't turn their nose up at schools with alternative accreditation then why should the state boards? To do otherwise is simply shortsighted.