



IT'S A TWO-WAY STREET

Learning through communication with all of its constituents keeps the Council responsive to those in the profession.

NCARB strives to interact—and to interact well—with Record holders, interns, the entire architectural profession, its key leaders, and many of its associations and regulatory boards.

NCARB's very reason for existence is to support a broad-based collaboration for the sake of both the profession and the professional. As the steward of the records for the nation's architects, NCARB serves both the 54 jurisdictions and territories—called Member Boards—that regulate who can practice architecture, as well as the tens of thousands of seasoned and emerging architects who practice in the United States. At key points throughout an architect's career, NCARB helps that architect develop and maintain a Record in accordance with the regulations of his or her registration board(s).

To achieve this exchange of information, NCARB has various vehicles in place that contribute to the profession's need for efficient collaboration. These include the areas of customer service, an outreach program, social media and the internet, Member Board partnerships, work with other professional organizations, and work with its many volunteers who are also practitioners.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

On the frontline for service is NCARB's Records Directorate and its troop of 27 Record evaluators. They field an average of 200 phone calls and 150 e-mail inquiries per day. Their goal is to answer calls within two minutes, and if that is unmet, callers can opt for a call back after three minutes. NCARB then attempts to return those phone calls within 24 hours.

Most calls are general in nature and can be answered by any call recipient. If answers are more complex, the customer service team members are assigned and trained in “specialty areas” like the Intern Development Program (IDP), Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®), and the Broadly Experienced Architect (BEA) program.

This team is also responsible for all other Record services, including credential verification and evaluation, Record transmittal services, and Record renewal and maintenance operations. Accordingly, all team members have been trained to be Record evaluators as well as first tier customer support. That means they have been cross-trained in all Record services and share these responsibilities across the directorate. All inquiries and transaction requests are managed in the order they are received and all applications and evaluations are managed based on receipt of all requested materials. Oftentimes, the processes are affected by delays in NCARB's receipt of materials or information that must be requested by Record holders and provided by universities, IDP supervisors, or other entities.

In accordance with NCARB's strategic goal of “delivering excellent personalized service,” the customer service area has undergone major improvements over the past several years. Processing times have continued to shrink for most services due to a focus on continued business process re-engineering, incorporation of new technology to streamline operations, and a continued commitment to provide quality service to all Record holders.

The result has been the ability to give Record holders faster and more informed responses and to provide immediate co-

LEFT: NCARB'S BOOTH AT THE 2010 AIA NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN MIAMI, FL. **RIGHT:** HARRY FALCONER SPEAKS AT THE NEWSCHOOL.



ordination of some tasks. Through better tracking, NCARB studies one day's logistics to improve the service the next day and beyond.

"I had a lot of troubles in the 2006-2007 timeframe," said Seth Oakley, NCARB, LEED AP, Project Manager at M+A Architects, Dublin, OH. "For example, I e-mailed [NCARB] about an issue and was told in response to 'Contact Customer Service.'... My certification occurred this year (2010) and it was a complete turnaround in all aspects. It was not only fast, but the people I spoke with were nice, knowledgeable, and seemed to want to help me along."

PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Not content to operate in a box, NCARB is actively involved in ongoing collaboration with its sister organizations. In concert with other key entities, NCARB's leaders regularly communicate, coordinate, and strategically manage activities and initiatives that enhance the profession.

The partnering organizations are NCARB, the American Institute of Architects (AIA), the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), and the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS). Each organization is responsible for some aspect of the education, training, registration, and practice of architects.

"People would be surprised to know just how much interaction occurs between the five collaterals, and how much we all rely on each other for leadership and resources that impact and inform our programs," said Stephen Nutt, AIA, NCARB, CAE, Vice President, Programs.

MEMBER BOARDS

NCARB partners with and provides support to the 54 Member Boards that regulate the practice of architecture in their respective jurisdictions.

Each jurisdiction is led by a decision-making body, commonly referred to as

the "board," while administrative operations are handled by a Member Board Executive and staff. The frontline of licensing architects and regulating the practice of architecture is at the board level; however, they rely heavily on NCARB for Record services, credentialing programs, examination content and administration, and many other issues impacting the practice of architecture in the United States (and even beyond our borders).

On a daily basis, the lines of communication between NCARB and the 54 Member Boards are active with the interchange of information involving individual architects and various issues impacting the profession as a whole. NCARB also represents Member Boards in its collaboration with the four other architectural organizations that participate in addressing architectural policy issues: AIA, ACSA, AIAS, and NAAB.

"This connection with Member Boards ensures that the key responsibilities to

our jurisdictions are treated as a daily priority, achieved through constant and fluid interaction,” said Kathy Hillegas, Director, Executive Office and NCARB’s liaison to Member Boards.

NCARB OUTREACH

Designed to have a grassroots connection with Record holders and architectural students, the NCARB Outreach Program resembles a “road show” that takes knowledgeable NCARB program representatives around the country.

With the mini-presentations, the presenters have simple goals in mind: answer questions and be in conversation with individuals and groups. In order to clarify and facilitate the path to becoming an architect, each presenting team usually includes an architect or two who can relate to the audience, having gone through the licensure process in their own careers. Attendees want information, clarification, or guidance regarding some aspect of education, internship, licensure, certification, or records upkeep in general. Other topics that are often covered are mobility, alternate credentials, continuing education, intern supervision, the IDP, and the ARE.

In the next year, the Outreach team plans to visit 40 schools, six components of the AIA, and eight conventions. Each school with a NAAB-accredited program is on the list on a three-year rotation. NCARB promotes events through its web site and e-mails to Record holders in the geographical area of an event.

“We are out there listening and not just speaking to people; we’re joining in the dialogue—to make sure our rules, processes, and programs are clearer,” said Harry Falconer Jr., AIA, NCARB, Director, IDP.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE INTERNET

It’s no secret that students, interns, and emerging professionals are the most electronically connected segment of NCARB’s audience. To reach them, NCARB has a presence on two of the most popular social media web sites where they congregate.

Facebook and Twitter are used by NCARB’s communications team to extend the reach of its standard channels for sharing information—its web site, *Direct Connection*, news releases, the Outreach program, and various electronic newsletters. Once news goes out in one format, it often also appears on Facebook and/or Twitter. Important news flashes sometimes result in alerts to the sites’ followers.

“As the demographics of the profession shift, so must our means of communication,” said Kim Kerker, Director, Communications. “Facebook, Twitter, web conferencing, and podcasts are just a few examples of how we get the word out to a younger generation of architects.”

NCARB’s Facebook group has over 1,700 followers. Nearly two-thirds of those are age 34 or younger. Among the 600 Twitter users are numerous architecture firms, AIA components, and architectural magazines.

VOLUNTEERS

To NCARB, symmetry means more than balance as a principle of design. It means listening as much as leading. NCARB listens in many ways, but the most pro-

found way is by working with hundreds of volunteers, many of whom are recognized leaders in the profession.

Opportunities include IDP auxiliary coordinators, ARE exam writers, and NCARB committee members. Some 175 people serve who are appointed by the president of the Council’s Board of Directors.

And, as a result of committee members’ contributions, NCARB is able to hold down the cost of programs like the ARE and the IDP that do not pay for themselves, and that would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars if provided solely by outside contractors and services.

Volunteers are essential to the ARE development. All five exam-related committees are made up of volunteers who are licensed architects and valued content experts.

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“Our volunteers bring the energy, commitment, experience and highly valued expertise of the profession to us,” said NCARB President Kenneth J. Naylor, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP.

Volunteers contribute time, knowledge, and resources to ensure the mission of NCARB moves forward. They are the real visionaries behind the organization. In fact, without them, the effective work that our profession expects in the way of credentialing and standards-bearing would go unfulfilled.

NCARB takes seriously the need to stay connected and lead and learn from interns, practitioners, and other professional partners. The organization is committed to even greater openness and responsiveness in the future.

“The entire profession has come to realize that greater responsiveness, transparency, and collaboration is necessary for continued success and NCARB is implementing change and making great progress to get there,” said Nutt. **DC**