

Supporting interns on their path to licensure adds to a firm's long-term growth and marketability.

THE UPSIDE OF PROMOTING LICENSURE



PERKINS EASTMAN

Today's emerging professionals represent the future of the profession. It is up to every firm, large and small, to support and mentor their growth and development as they pursue licensure. Support comes in many ways, from providing exposure to the diverse areas of practice required for the Intern Development Program (IDP), to providing study materials for the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®), to recognizing interns when they become licensed. Firms that have a reputation of encouraging interns to become licensed and supporting them through the process find that it is easier to find and hire new talent and keep valuable trained employees. This article profiles how three firms around the country support their interns' journey to licensure.

HOW DOES YOUR FIRM SUPPORT LICENSURE?

No matter the size of your firm, focus of your practice, or where you are located, it is easy to see that there are many ways for firms to encourage and support interns on their path to licensure. The IDP and ARE play an important role in ensuring that emerging professionals are prepared for a career in architecture. However, the active participation of a firm is also a vital part of the process. It is easy to see how licensure can benefit an intern. Many firms also see licensure as a benefit to the long-term growth and marketability of their practice

Perkins Eastman employs 240 architects and 281 interns in its eight domestic offices (New York, NY; Arlington, VA; Boston, MA; Charlotte, NC; Chicago, IL; Oakland, CA; Pittsburgh, PA; and Stamford, CT) and five international offices (Toronto, Canada; Shanghai, China; Guayaquil, Ecuador; Mumbai, India; and Dubai, UAE). Their core practice areas are healthcare, senior living, primary and secondary education, higher education, housing, office buildings, corporate interiors, hotels, government facilities, retail, urban design, science and technology, cultural, country clubs, and religious.

Each office has an IDP coordinator to assist staff with their IDP needs. The firm provides a wide range of opportunities for interns so that they are exposed to as many areas of architectural practice as possible before they start taking the ARE.

An integral part of the firm-wide education program includes AIA Continuing Education System

(CES)-approved "lunch & learns." Perkins Eastman scholarships are available to employees to fund continuing education through classes, seminars, and conferences. In addition, the firm encourages staff to form study groups with others in the office who are taking the ARE and pays for ARE study materials.

Employees who successfully complete the ARE receive a bonus equal to one week's salary, and are recognized on the firm's intranet and in company announcements when they become licensed.

"We support the IDP and ARE process because interns are an investment in our future," said Tracy Maher, Associate. "By supporting their journey to become an architect, we are building a better relationship between professional practice and education, and creating strong leaders for the future. We benefit by encouraging our staff to become licensed by being surrounded by outstanding

SEVEN FIRMS EARN IDP OUTSTANDING FIRM AWARD

Since 1991, the Intern Development Program Advisory Committee (IDPAC) has recognized firms from across the country that actively embrace the Intern Development Program (IDP) and demonstrate their commitment by

making the path to licensure an integral part of the firm's culture through the IDP Outstanding Firm Award program. Firms that meet that meet 12 essential criteria in the categories of mentoring, supervising, training opportunities, commitment to the IDP, and ARE support and demonstrate excellence in at least three of

these categories receive the IDP Outstanding Firm Award. These firms can identify themselves as an "IDP Outstanding Firm Award recipient" on their web site, in press releases, or for recruiting purposes for three years.



LEFT TO RIGHT:
 PERKINS EASTMAN'S SHANGHAI OFFICE/IMAGE BY TIM GRIFFITH/
 COURTESY PERKINS EASTMAN;
 GBD ARCHITECTS' STUDIO IN PORTLAND, OR/IMAGE BY SALLY PAINTER;
 TWO PROJECTS DESIGNED BY SEARL LAMASTER HOWE ARCHITECTS: THE BENJAMIN MOORE DESIGNER SHOWROOM AT THE NEW YORK DESIGN CENTER AND A POOL CABANA FOR A PRIVATE RESIDENCE IN PALM BEACH, FLORIDA/IMAGES BY MATT WARGO.

GBD ARCHITECTS INCORPORATED

professionals who bring creative design, humanity, sustainability, and purpose to our projects.”

GBD ARCHITECTS Incorporated in Portland, OR, specializes in community planning, housing, institutional, interior design, mixed use, office, recreational, and space planning. They have a staff of 80, including 26 architects, four interior specialists, two LEED specialists, and 30 intern architects and five design interns.

Each intern is assigned a mentor who meets with the intern quarterly to see how he or she is progressing toward licensure. Annual reviews provide salary incentives to complete the process. The firm also has an IDP coordinator who maintains a large library of materials that interns can use to prepare for the ARE, and the firm pays AIA Associate fees, which provide interns with access to IDP seminars around the Portland area. The company offers no-interest loans for ARE

fees. In addition, GBD offers monthly “lunch & learns,” pays for software training in CAD and MS office products, and holds annual LEED training sessions that are free for staff.

“By promoting licensure, our firm is more marketable,” said S. Scott Martin, AIA, LEED AP, Associate. “A better trained staff improves production, which makes clients happier. GBD really tries to promote from within and empower people to improve themselves.”

Once interns become licensed, they are typically made associates within the year. With that title, they receive a notable bump in salary, company stock, and increased vacation time.

SEARL LAMASTER HOWE ARCHITECTS

Searl Lamaster Howe Architects in Chicago, IL, is a team of three architects and three interns. About 60-80 percent of their work is in residential design, including single-family homes, condominium remodels, and multi-family dwellings. The remainder of their work is a mixed bag of light commercial work, including office spaces, restaurants, showrooms, and religious and education facilities.

Interns in this small firm are involved in every phase of the design process from initial planning and schematic design through construction administration. The office has an open format with no doors, so even if someone is not working on a specific project, they can listen, learn, and offer advice. Interns are encouraged to ask partners when they have questions.

The firm offers regular “lunch & learns” and pays for other continuing education classes on a case-by-case basis. Interns can

use a variety of study materials available in the office to prepare for the ARE. Additionally, they are paid for the time they spend taking the ARE.

“Because we are a small firm, everyone has contact with our clients,” said Pam Lamaster-Millett, Principal. “The more licensed professionals we have on staff, the better we can divide our resources between projects, without risking quality. Having more licensed architects also assures our larger clients that although small, we are a serious, experienced firm that can fulfill their needs and bring special knowledge to their project.”

“We believe licensure is an important step in professional development because it gives the profession legitimacy,” Lamaster-Millett said. “The IDP helps focus interns on that goal, and grasp the many facets of what a licensed architect should understand and be able to execute.” **DC**

In 2008, the IDPAC—whose membership includes representatives from each collateral organization and other organizations with a stake in the IDP—selected seven architecture firms as recipients of the IDP Outstanding Firm Award:

- ANOVA Architects, Inc. in Placerville, CA
- Becker Morgan Group, Inc. in Salisbury, MD
- BRR Architecture, Inc. in Merriam, KS
- Carrier Johnson Architects in San Diego, CA
- Eskew + Dumez + Ripple in New Orleans, LA
- JG Johnson Architects in Denver, CO
- Seay, Seay, & Litchfield in Montgomery, AL

The IDP Outstanding Firm Awards Program is now accepting submissions for the 15 July 2009 deadline. For details and submission materials visit: www.aia.org/professionals/groups/epn/AIAS075023.