

Organized around the concepts of innovating, envisioning, connecting, and empowering, the 2005 Internship Conference dynamically explored its theme of “Designing Tomorrow’s Architect.” With more than 70 invited participants on hand, the conference provided a forum through which architectural internship could be strengthened and revitalized.

“Designing Tomorrow’s Architect” is Focus of 2005 Internship Conference

The 2005 Internship Conference was held at the historic Empire Theatre and at La Mansion del Rio in San Antonio, TX, in late September. A majority of the invited participants—emerging professionals, stakeholders, collateral representatives, and observers from other organizations—arrived in the midst of weather-related challenges caused by Hurricane Rita.

Organizers, Participants, and Presenters

An advisory committee led by Ann Chaintreuil, a past president of NCARB, and Ana Guerra, an associate representative to AIA’s Executive Committee, organized an information-packed agenda. Suzanna Wight and Lisa Ramirez of the AIA, and Robert Rosenfeld of NCARB, worked behind the scenes to ensure a seamless event. Kenneth Schwartz, a professor of architecture at the University of Virginia and a section chair of the Virginia Board of Architects, Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, Certified Interior Designers, and Landscape Architects, expertly moderated the conference.

Twenty-seven emerging professionals—each of whom had written an essay as part of a competition that determined which young professionals would attend the conference—contributed a lion’s share of feedback. The advisory committee had selected a diverse group of young professionals who represented different firm sizes, experience levels, and geographic distribution.

A keynote address by Edward Zalneratis, MD, an expert in graduate medical education who is actively involved in transforming the medical profession’s competency-based education standards, also generated a great deal of feedback. Dr. Zalneratis discussed his profession’s efforts to sustain professionalism through educational standards, internship, certification, and continuing education. According to the conference report, the medical model provided “many relevant suggestions for how architects might move forward” in re-envisioning internship.

Other presenters included Suzanne Bilbeisi, of Oklahoma State University, who discussed OSU's innovative Comprehensive Curriculum; Ana Guerra, conference co-chair, who shared a slide presentation set-up by Grace Kim, a Seattle-based architect who has written the forthcoming book, *A Survival Guide for Architectural Interns and Career Development*; and Jane Weinzapfel, who discussed her firm's efforts to grow and nurture its staff.

Feedback and Recommendations

Having been divided into 16 small groups by conference organizers, attendees first participated in dramatic interpretations of the intern-supervisor relationship and then discussed issues raised by the emerging professionals. Issues included accountability for mentors, competency-based internship, and the timing of examination and internship.

Each small group shared its specific action plan, which generated additional discussion. Among the small group recommendations were the following:

- adopt a dynamic model of internship,

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- measure competency rather than seat time,
- establish a one tier professional practice academy,
- encourage schools to prep students on the ARE,
- allow interns to use “architect” as a title, and
- ask NCARB to revise its examination policy based on the report issued by the Collateral Internship Task Force.

The 2005 Internship Conference was sponsored by NCARB and the American Institute of Architects. They were joined by the other collateral organizations—the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), and the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)—in planning the event.

What's Next

On the final day of the conference, collateral representatives responded to the plethora of feedback generated during the previous two days. NCARB past president Frank M. Guillot noted, “The emerging professionals were the stars. They drove the conference and their opinions, thoughts, and creativity were critical to the outcome.” Guillot also explained that NCARB is completing a rigorous analysis of a concurrent IDP/ARE sequence and what, if any, effects a change would have on health, safety, and welfare issues.

As the 2005 gathering drew to a close, conference co-chair Ann Chaintreuil remarked, “In order to be successful, we must not only expect action from the collaterals, but we must take it upon ourselves to return to our schools and workplaces and be a catalyst for change. Without grassroots support and leadership on these issues, change will be slower and more difficult. We all have a responsibility to walk the walk that has been outlined during this weekend.”

The suggestions, recommendations, and calls-to-action gathered during the 2005 Internship Conference have been archived in a graphically appealing report that can be downloaded from the conference web site (www.designingtomorrowsarchitect.com). For more information about IDP and other issues affecting emerging professionals, visit the NCARB (www.ncarb.org/idp/index/html) and AIA (www.aia.org/ep3_template.cfm) web sites. **DC**

If You Could Change One Thing About Architectural Internship, What Would It Be?

by Ann Chaintreuil, FAIA

As architectural professionals, we often are not trained in human resources development. It was only after my firm took on an MBA-educated manager that the value of developing our own human resources became an important aspect of everyday practice. Take the time to take care of your firm. This means everyone in the firm. And your firm will be spiritually healthy, perform better for clients, and have a more secure future.

A key ingredient to the change created by our office manager was communications. She literally forced us to communicate: partner to partner, partner to intern, office to office. Office-wide strategic planning helped us understand our strengths and weaknesses. And simply taking the time to take care of ourselves helped us all feel better as architects and emerging architects; we were in control of our futures. My experience has changed the way we do business. An organization that communicates well amongst its employees can better understand and respect the individuals it works with.

Based on my own firm's experience, “the one thing I would change about architectural internship” is the financial and time support of IDP and the ARE by the firm. This one move tells an intern that you value them and their development. The line item for these fees in the budget of most architectural firms is non-consequential. It is the single best investment a firm can make toward retention of its valued human resources.

This small financial commitment on the part of architectural firms will be an important step in linking practice to the successful development of emerging professionals. Hopefully mentors will be more involved in understanding IDP and the need for a varied experience for the interns they serve. When a firm pays for something, they understand it. The concept and support of a broad experience for interns has been ignored for too long, by too many.

When a firm is challenged to make a change, it gains new life. Communications are necessary. And development to accommodate the new mode is necessary. In short order, a firm that has not been facilitating internship development will experience a cultural shift. Time will be found in the work week to focus on creating responsible professionals. Information linked to real projects and real life learning opportunities will be exchanged. Maybe a sense of camaraderie will inject itself into a previously dull office. Professionals will feel more like the mentors they can be.

Development should not stop at internship by the way—it is life long. And paying for this out of firm resources is just good business.

Reprinted from the 2005 Internship Conference web site (www.designingtomorrowsarchitect.com).