



GORDON E. MILLS, FAIA
PRESIDENT, NCARB

NCARB President Gordon E. Mills, FAIA, shares his thoughts on NCARB's path to becoming a great organization.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

NCARB is about many things, all of them good, and many of them are getting even better as we move along on our journey to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. In my talk at the Annual Meeting and Conference in Pittsburgh, I related aspects of NCARB's progress and potential to Jim Collins's book, *Going from Good to Great*. Those of you who have read the book understand the complexity of moving the simple tenets he has identified through an organization. These tenets are all principles that are required for an organization to move from good to great. At NCARB we have them in place and have positioned ourselves to transform; we are on a path to becoming a great organization. We understand what is required in this transformation, and we're building on the many strengths that we have in place. We are improving our processes and bringing in some very talented new staff to work along side current staff who have demonstrated a passion for our mission through their good work. Quite simply—we are committed to excellent service to our customers.

We have hurdles that we must leap over for us to achieve our aspiration of becoming a great organization and we'll face them during the coming year. I have confidence that we'll make leaps over and around obstacles that will occasionally block our way. One thing that I'm certain of is that we will not stray from our mission. A book that I read recently, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein, reminds me of a saying from my road racing days, "your car goes where your eye goes." In other words, focus on what you want to achieve. For me, that reminder is at the center of NCARB's movement from good to great. We—staff and volunteers alike—have our "eye" on our mission and we will keep it there. Focus and disciplined execution are critical. Here is a brief accounting of four of our high focus areas for this year.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Well over a year ago we accepted that the job we were doing in customer service was simply not good enough. That recognition—overdue, some would say—has led to important changes. First, we engaged a consultant to help us revise our business processes. The

changes we are making as a result of this have been coming online since July 2007 and are producing the desired results. Hand in hand with those changes, one of the most important ingredients underlying the intense focus on improved customer service, are the very talented people that we have on board who are leading this effort. They are a great team and are up to the challenges before them. While all of those improvements can't come as quickly as we would like, we have a plan in place that will deliver each improvement as quickly and as effectively as we responsibly can.

INTERN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (IDP)

This NCARB program is also benefiting from new, energetic staff that is improving an already good program. Over the past year, they have engaged interns and firms from many venues in a successful effort to increase the communication between NCARB and this important customer base. These actions to increase and improve communication will continue this year. One example of this is a podcast focusing on IDP that will be released later this year.

You've read about, or maybe even participated in the *NCARB Practice Analysis*. This periodic study that assesses what one must know to practice architecture independently has been used in the past to inform the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®). Now we are using it to inform IDP. It is a great step forward that will help us make this program even more robust and valid.

You likely saw an NCARB press release in early July regarding a resolution that passed 49-1 at our Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh. The resolution impacts how and when interns report their training units. Interns establishing a **new** NCARB Record on or after 1 July 2009 will be required to submit electronic training reports of no more than six-months duration. On 1 July 2010, the "Six-Month Rule" will apply to **all** interns. While there was broad acceptance that periodic reporting is an important step forward, some concerns were raised about the ability of the electronic reporting system to function properly. As we reported to Member Board Members in Pittsburgh, the software engineering

for that process is well underway and testing will begin this fall, well before its initial launch at the end of December. I will be appointing a task force who will work with a consultant to review the testing of the electronic reporting system and report to the Board before its launch.

ARCHITECTURAL REGISTRATION EXAMINATION

For an NCARB year to be successful it must include a heavy focus on the ARE. This year will be no different. We've started the year with a very successful launch of ARE 4.0. The launch was well publicized so that ARE candidates, particularly those midway through the examination under ARE 3.1, clearly understood their options.

Work on the ARE will continue this year to ensure the validity of the exam going forward. Just as they have in the past, a dedicated group of volunteers will lead this effort with the support of a capable group of NCARB staff. In addition to focusing on the exam content, this year they will continue working to overlay the exam on a new software engine with the help of a consultant. This process has been underway for two years, and is simply one more way NCARB is working to make sure that the ARE remains the "gold standard" of testing.

COMMUNICATIONS

For the past two years we've had a Communications Task Force at work to analyze our communications efforts from top to bottom. As a result of their good work with NCARB staff we are making several changes that will enable us to better communicate with our customers and constituencies. Simply put, we have sharpened the focus of an already good NCARB communications plan. This means that all of our audiences will hear from us more frequently with news and updates delivered through media most useful to them. Additionally, we are replacing many printed and mailed materials with electronic communications in an effort to reduce our carbon footprint. As I pointed out earlier, we're moving into the iPod age, and are in the process of developing podcasts.

IN CLOSING

I could go on at length to report how NCARB as an organization is moving forward. Suffice it to say, that Board and staff have a laser-like focus on our dynamic Strategic Plan. It is our guidepost in everything we do. One of my major responsibilities during this year is to work with the Board to make sure that NCARB has the resources necessary to implement these important improvements.

I have the pleasure of following a committed president and teaming with a dedicated and talented staff that is working effectively to improve the performance of NCARB. We're developing a culture that understands that good is no longer good enough. Whether you work on an NCARB committee or serve on a jurisdictional board, all of us who volunteer our time support this important work of the Council. We thank you for your hard work and dedication. We are striving to become great, and we have the dedication to make it happen. I am confident that together we'll realize our goals and fulfill our important mission.



Gordon E. Mills, FAIA
President, NCARB