

AIA GRASSROOTS 2001 ISSUES FORUM

EDUCATION – AIM Objective #1

January, 2001

As the primary voice of the American architectural profession, the AIA has a responsibility to its members and future generations to endeavor to ensure that graduates of architecture programs are prepared to be successful in whatever way they choose to apply their education. The AIA is also keenly interested in making sure that these individuals are quality architects who are well equipped to lead in the diversified firms and expanded practice settings of the future.

Background: Of the seven objectives advanced in the AIM report, the first focuses on education. Specifically, the report challenges the AIA to “partner with collaterals to provide students of professional degree programs in architecture shared practical experience and a knowledge of professional culture that will prepare them upon graduation to become architects in expanding and diverse practice settings.” This objective calls for an increased infusion of practice culture into architecture curricula, and further, acknowledges that the architecture profession is changing rapidly. Our future graduates must be adequately prepared and appropriately equipped to surmount the challenges of sculpting the built environment within the context of a global economy.

In this commitment, the AIA is continuing its century and a half-long effort to support architectural education in America. This need was one of the principal reasons cited by the founders of the Institute in 1857 for the creation of the AIA. In *The AIA’s First Hundred Years*, Henry H. Saylor, FAIA, writes, “From the very beginning of its life, the Institute held in the forefront of its aims the process of education—the education of the architect himself and at the same time the education of the public in the significance of architecture.” This commitment led to the AIA’s support of the founding of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) in 1912 and the founding of the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB) in 1940. When the AIA undertook its important survey of the profession in 1950 that resulted in Turpin C. Bannister’s study, *The Architect at Mid-Century*, architectural education was a major topic of interest to the membership. More recently, the AIA joined the other collaterals (ACSA, NCARB, AIAS, and NAAB) in commissioning the three-year study by the Carnegie Foundation that resulted in the 1996 publication *Building Community – A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice*, by Ernest Boyer and Lee Mitgang.

Taking Boyer’s counsel to heart, the AIA has aggressively pursued this mandate over the past several years, seeking to collaboratively satisfy the following three goals:

- **Provide a seamless transition between education and practice;**
- **Integrate practice culture and practical experience into architecture education; and,**
- **Better prepare graduates to enter an ever-changing profession.**

Issues:

Degree Nomenclature: Currently, NAAB accredits professional architecture degree programs in approximately 122 institutions in the U.S. and Canada resulting in either a Bachelor of Architecture degree or a Master of Architecture degree. NAAB considers these degrees equivalent and sets performance standards for these programs to measure output. Due to the removal of the duration requirement in 1995, each institution is responsible for setting its own curriculum and for determining how best to meet the performance standards. In 1991, the five presidents of the collateral organizations signed a declaration calling for a single, consistent title for the professional degree in architecture by 2001. This Five Presidents' resolution was supported by each of the collaterals in varying degrees: it was endorsed as policy of the boards of directors by AIAS and NCARB, and it was discussed but never formally acted upon by the AIA Board of Directors. After several years of intense debate, ACSA announced in 1998 that it could not support any changes to the system of multiple degrees for architecture.

This issue has recently arisen again. Two actions were taken at the October 2000 NAAB Board meeting that potentially will have far-reaching implications for architectural education. First, the NAAB Board passed a resolution that effective immediately, NAAB will no longer consider new Bachelor of Architecture programs for potential accreditation. Second, NAAB announced its intent to vote on a motion at its July 2001 meeting that effective 2010, NAAB will no longer re-accredit existing B.Arch programs. In addition, the NAAB Board declined to consider a request from the University of Hawaii to permit the accreditation of the D.Arch as a first professional degree.

Alternatives/Implications

The general public is confused by the multiple separate but equal accredited architecture degrees that currently exist. The recent NAAB actions afford an opportunity for a single graduate level accredited degree for the profession. Should this degree by default be the M.Arch, or should a new designation (similar to the LLB) be advocated? What curriculum changes should accompany this commitment to a single degree? As schools respond to the NAAB actions, opportunities will be created for local AIA components to positively engage their local schools. What should be advocated?

International Reciprocity: The globalization of practice reinforces the need for a global view of education. The current process that allows for foreign-trained (and in some cases, licensed) architects to obtain licensure in the US is cumbersome, confusing, and expensive for citizens of all nations save Canada. The American system of States Rights precludes the U.S. speaking as a single voice on licensing professionals. Only individual States can evaluate the applicants' credentials and grant the license. While the AIA and NCARB are working to ease entry for US architects into China, Chinese practitioners are visiting the US to learn about internship, continuing education, and the pathways to licensure. One recent development is the announcement that effective January 1, 2001, NAAB will oversee Educational Evaluation Services for Architects (EESA), and plans to work toward a more streamlined and less costly evaluation process to assess the academic qualifications of foreign applicants.

Alternatives/Implications

In *Building Community*, Marvin Malecha, Dean, North Carolina State University School of Design, is quoted: "Through education there exists an opportunity to create a new breed of

architect who can embrace the diverse changes that are taking place in contemporary world culture and across global market economies.” The AIA should acknowledge the need for and promote a policy that enhances a global view of education, in line with the current global practices of the profession.

Integrating Practice into Education: To better prepare professionals to face the challenges that await them, each graduate of an NAAB-accredited program must be more than simply familiar with the basics of practice management. Practice refers to leadership, management, team-building, and collaborative abilities, not merely technical skills. Practice, by this definition, is a highly promising and creative opportunity for schools to redefine the profession’s future; this practice culture should be imbedded into every part of a professional degree curriculum.

Alternatives/Implications

The most direct and appropriate method of enabling a greater understanding of practice culture and management is to provide schools with ongoing assistance and input from firms and practitioners. Additionally, in-studio teams including members from landscape architecture, urban design, and building engineering disciplines, as well as case studies that address community design issues and draw on input from real estate developers, transportation consultants, and the financial community, should be introduced into the curricula. In October 1998, a group of CEO’s from the AIA Large Firm Roundtable met with deans of thirteen schools of architecture “to explore ways they could work mutually to improve the relevance of architectural schools’ curricula.” Their suggestions included workplace learning in the office, case studies, and sabbatical exchanges between educators and practitioners. What else might the profession advocate to elevate the level of accomplishment of the practice management performance criteria?

Desired Actions: The AIA should work towards implementation of the Case Studies initiative and partner with schools to create opportunities for curricula alternatives that include in-studio teams and community design involvement, in addition to regular exchanges between educators and practitioners. The profession – individual practitioners and firms alike – must become an integral partner in teaching at the university level. Their relationship with the academy must go beyond delivering a single lecture in a professional practice class, to assisting in the breadth of course offerings, including design studio.

Preparedness for Examination: The AIA believes that creating a more seamless transition between architecture education and practice will elevate the stature of emerging architects and enhance the profession as a whole. In 1999 the AIA Board adopted a Policy advocating that students of accredited degree programs be eligible to take and be prepared to pass the Architect Registration Examination immediately upon graduation. (Experience, in addition to the examination, would still be required of graduates in order to obtain licensure.)

Alternatives/Implications

In our industry, the opportunity to become a professional is withheld for a very long time, giving highly educated persons no professional status. As a result, many qualified and talented individuals exit the profession. Additionally, those emerging practitioners who remain in the profession are dubbed “interns” and are often neither valued for their contributions nor treated with respect, until they have gained a certain level of experience. The best way to increase the

worth, and thereby the self-esteem, of young would-be architects is to shift the current “portal” of practice entry, the Architect Registration Examination.

Desired Actions: We need to capture and retain a higher percentage of graduates in the profession. To that end, the AIA should support the proposal to offer the exam immediately following graduation, in order that we might not lose so many of the best and brightest young people to related careers. In making this change, we would also more closely mirror our medical and legal counterparts, among others. Certainly our schools of architecture are no less capable of preparing students to take their professional exams as medical schools and law schools are. In fact, to meet the demands of a global economy, we as a profession at large need to speed up the pace of our own professionalization.