

YAF

Young Architect Calls Colleagues to Action

Some ideas for developing personal leadership plans

by Mimi H. Tsai, AIA

Young Architects Forum Advisory Committee

"Let's have a discussion on leadership, shall we?"

This was how my mentor-friend Walter Netsch, FAIA, responded when I told him I would be attending this year's AIA Grassroots leadership meeting in Washington, D.C. He continued with, "It is a leader's responsibility to be able to solve every problem, to think ahead, and see issues before they develop."

I thought to myself, "Surely we don't expect so much from our leaders." But Grassroots showed me otherwise.

My coworkers were my cheerleaders for this conference. "Knock 'em dead!" said my friend Deirdre as I was leaving. That combat metaphor, however, really did not help my nerves.

On the first night of introductions, our group of 700 sat together as AIA Executive Vice President/CEO Norman Koonce, FAIA, asked each leadership group to stand. He called my group, the Young Architects Forum (YAF), last. Because my fellow members were all stuck at the airport, I was the only one standing. The AIA CEO said through the applause, "This is the future of our profession." "Uh-oh," I thought, "should I begin to have fear for our profession's future?"

About empowering young architects

Things picked up rapidly from there: other members of the YAF made it through the fog, and the whole meeting was about empowering young architects.

The message clearly was: leadership does not simply happen, nor are leaders born. Instead they are a long-term investment that we contribute to continually and gradually until the right moment in the future when they are called upon to serve.

We ask much of our current leaders—that they be trustworthy, dynamic, forward-thinking, and competent. But how can we help this along? The only way is to teach our younger members the necessary qualities and train them in the skill sets that they will use when the time is right. It means starting off with small contributions of time and energy to your own personal Young Architect Leadership Plan.

Action!

Here are some ideas of what we can do:

Publish: *Architectural Record2* is a new online publication—essentially *Architectural Record* targeted to emerging architects. With themes of "design, work, live, and talk," it allows us to show each other our work and discuss issues facing us, such as what

the professional title of an emerging architect should be. Check out the site, www.architecturalrecord.com/archrecord2. Editor-in-Chief Robert Ivy, FAIA, says it will be "a place for us to stand." Time to get on our feet.

Build: The YAF/Young Constructors Forum Building Community Design Competition is about a real project situated in the Five Points neighborhood in Denver. Come see the winning entries display at the AIA national convention in Denver, May 17–19.

Collaborate: The Young Architects Forum and the new AIA National Associates Committee will be meeting together at the Denver convention to discuss overlapping interests and potential joint efforts. Young architects and associates: you are now all represented—tell your reps what you want and how you would like to get involved!

Participate: An upcoming conference in San Francisco is a true collaborative effort in progress. YAF is working with the Educators and Practitioners Network, the National Associates Committee, and the American Institute of Architecture Students to prepare this interactive workshop/symposium coming this fall in California. Stay tuned for details.

Let's get active!

For more information, contact the Young Architects Forum staff director, Ellen S. Cathey, (202) 626-7325 or ecathey@aia.org. ■■



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All groups got to participate at the Grassroots conference.