

Honors and Awards

The Road to AIA Fellowship

Paved with excellence and contributions to the profession and society

by Robin Lee, Hon. AIA

Director, Honors and Awards



Fellowship is the highest membership honor an architect member can receive. A distinguished jury of fellows bestows it on their peers who have displayed the highest standards of excellence in the profession. Fellowship recognizes an AIA Architect Member's significant contribution to architecture and society on a national level. Approximately 2,300 AIA members have earned the distinction of using the initials FAIA after their names. Annually, on average, an additional 100 members are added to the College of Fellows roster.

Qualifications

To qualify for nomination for fellowship, one must be an AIA member in good standing for at least 10 cumulative years. Most members are nominated by their components, but any 10 individual AIA members or any 5 Fellows nationwide whose membership is in good standing may also nominate members. A member in good standing must be current with dues payments and meet the AIA's Continuing Education System requirements. This also applies to candidates, sponsors, and member references.

Nominations should be based on a member's notable and outstanding contributions to the profession in fulfilling the mission of the Institute. There are five categories of nomination that correspond to the five Objects of the Institute as stated in the Bylaws. Candidates must be nominated in one of the categories.

Achievements should include those that are national in scope and have made substantial and positive contributions to the AIA as well as to architecture and society. Portfolios and reference letters should concentrate specifically on results, achievements, and outcomes, as opposed to titles, offices, and longevity.

The seven members of the Jury of Fellows—selected by the AIA Executive Committee for their regional and practice diversity—will meet for one week, February 9-13, 2002, to evaluate the portfolios. All candidates and their sponsors will be mailed notification of the jury's decision no later than February 20.

The 2002 submission and reference letter postmark deadline is **October 19,**

nated, you must work closely with your sponsor to present a portfolio that will highlight your achievements and demonstrate how they contribute to the profession's body of knowledge. The following tips should be considered when preparing a nomination.

1. Start early! The nomination process is time-consuming and you cannot wait until the last minute to pull it all together. This may be the most important thing you are working on, but it may not be the top priority for anyone from whom you're trying to secure information or a letter of reference.

2. Select a sponsor who can help you be objective about yourself. Your sponsor

should be someone who knows you and your work well and can take an active role in preparing your portfolio. It is beneficial to have a sponsor who will honestly critique your portfolio before it is submitted to the jury. The sponsor also plays a key role in provid-

ing follow-up with reference writers to ensure they meet the submission deadline.

3. Organize your achievements and select one category. Fellowship recognizes

excellence in all areas of the profession, not just design. The varied paths to success for which Fellows are honored speak to a profession that is diverse and broad-based in achievements and has moved far beyond "traditional" practice. Your submission will be evaluated in the category in which you have excelled. Therefore, the materials that you present, achievements

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2001. If you have been nominated for fellowship and need a submission package, contact Tanisha Hoaney at the Institute, thoaney@aia.org or 202-626-7586. For first-time candidates, the \$150 application fee is due when you order your FAIA kit. All other submissions (second- and third-time candidates) must be accompanied by the \$150 application fee when submitted in October.

Guidelines for successful submissions

Nomination for fellowship is in itself an honor. It means that those who know you best (whether you have been nominated by your chapter or by a group of your peers) feel you are qualified. Once nomi-

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that you describe, and reference letters should support the primary focus of your submission.

4. *Clarity in your presentation is critical.* Most of the jury won't know you, so the material submitted in the binder and the way the story is presented become critical. An effective presentation of your achievements requires a clear, concise explanation of what you have done, why it is important, and whether there is any ripple effect (how it contributes beyond your immediate locale). Focus on results.

5. *Follow the rules.* Nominees who don't follow the rules or who bend them risk disqualification and losing the jury's attention from the start. One rule in particular that seems hard for people to follow is the maximum number of required project images. For some reason, many nominees seem to think more is better. It isn't. If there is a strong story to tell, it can be done within the allotted space.

6. *Reference letters are critical.* Reference letters verify and comment on the impact of the accomplishments that are presented. Letters that are highly specific, citing circumstances of familiarity with the nominee's work and personalized view of achievements provide the verification that the jury needs. General "should be a fellow" letters and those that parrot back the nominee's summary statement are of little value.


7. *Avoid these common mistakes:*

- Reference letters that are late or longer than one page (these are not reviewed by the jury)
- Reference letters from a limited source (e.g., all from local region, all from same committee or organization, more than one from the same firm)
- Achievements claimed in sponsor letter and summary statement that are not substantiated elsewhere in the portfolio

- Presenting activities versus results (e.g., every year hundreds of individuals serve as president of their component—what were the *results* because *you* were the leader?)
- Large unexplained gaps between projects or years of service/achievements
- Poor quality photographic images or exhibits that do not support the category of nomination
- Presenting the same nomination in successive years without making any changes to the submission. Contact the honors and awards department for a debriefing if you are unsuccessful.

Questions?

In conclusion, the jury wants to be supportive of each nomination. Excellent work presented clearly and supported by exhibits and references that verify the accomplishments will provide the jury with the information they need to bring recognition to those leading our profession.

This year, 72 AIA members were elevated to Fellowship (see April *AIArchitect*, page 10). Questions about the Fellowship process or qualifications should be directed to Robin Lee, Hon. AIA, 202-626-7390 or rlee@aia.org. 

The 2002 Jury of Fellows

Chair, Carole J. Olshavsky, FAIA (Columbus, Ohio)

Daniel Avchen, FAIA (Minneapolis)

Burtch W. Beall Jr., FAIA (Salt Lake City)

Rod Kruse, FAIA (Des Moines)

Frank E. Lucas, FAIA (Charleston, S.C.)

David Meckel, FAIA (San Francisco)

Christopher J. Smith, FAIA (Honolulu).