

# AIAS

## Architecture Students Converge on Nation's Capital

The American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) is holding its annual grassroots meeting in Washington, D.C. July 27-29 to catch up on institute activities and take a serious look at the studio culture.

Among the activities were the Mall Crawl tour of memorials in D.C., including the National Japanese American Memorial, which opened June 29, and a visit with World War II Memorial sculptor Ray Kaskey at the University of Maryland.

The afternoon of July 27 featured a discussion among the Five Presidents' Panel of the challenges and benefits of the studio-centric culture prevalent among students in U.S. schools of architecture. Past AIAS President Scott Baldermann moderated the panel of AIA President John D. Anderson, FAIA; National Council of Architectural Registration Boards President William C. Bevins, AIA; Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture President Frances Bronet; AIAS President Matthew Herb; and National Architectural Accrediting Board President Rodney B. Wright, AIA. ■



PHOTO BY DOUGLAS E. GORDON, HON. AIA  
 AIA Executive Vice President/CEO Norman L. Koonce, FAIA, welcomes the 140 AIAS leaders to the AIA national component headquarters.

## Students Becoming More Aware of the AIA

by Scott Baldermann

*As a farewell address, 2000-2001 AIAS President Scott Baldermann offers the students' take on collaboration with the AIA, leadership, and the value of peer interaction.*

To create a strong and viable future for the AIA, it is important that students are actively engaged in leadership roles and aware of issues facing the profession. As simple as the principle is to state, however, there are challenges to getting people actively involved in any worthwhile enterprise.

Many components have encountered obstacles in getting students from local architecture schools involved in AIA activities, and, conversely, many students have gotten involved only with their local AIA and not their schools. Neither direction, by itself, is enough. It is important for students to have opportunities to par-

ticipate in AIA events, and it is important (maybe more important) that students have the opportunity and experience of being leaders among their peers through the American Institute of Architecture Students, Inc. (AIAS). By mutual cooperation among the AIAS, AIA, and the three other collateral organizations (ACSA, NAAB, and NCARB), we will find that the profession will have better leaders.

The AIAS is an independent, nonprofit, student-run organization representing the interests of all students of architecture across North America via the efforts of more than 5,300 members. In accordance with its mission statement, the AIAS works to:

- Promote excellence in architecture education, training, and practice
- Foster an appreciation of architecture and related disciplines
- Enrich communities in a spirit of collaboration
- Organize students and combine their

efforts to advance the art and science of architecture.

Established as an independent entity in 1956, the AIAS continues to be a valuable partner of the AIA. By informing students wishing to join the AIA that their interests are being represented on the AIA Board of Directors (the AIAS president serves on the Board as the student director), they are more likely to join the AIAS and be active student leaders.

### Getting students more involved

To create a strong body of involved students, it is important to realize that leadership among students comes in waves. Many schools go through periods when they will not have students interested in participating in either AIAS or AIA activities. We have seen AIA components overcome these phases of inactivity by making programs readily available for those

*continued on next page*

# AIAS

## Students Becoming More Aware of the AIA

*continued from previous page*

students who do express an interest. We have also seen that when these programs are not continually available, students will spend more time fundraising instead of focusing on leadership and programs for other students.

It is very common for state and local components to have student representatives on their boards. Even if it is to only update the components on student activities, this interaction is important. It is also an opportunity to find out if the AIAS chapter is active and financially stable (and why or why not). It is an opportunity also to ask about current issues facing students. You can also look at the offerings and open discussions on the AIAS national Web site, <http://www.aiasnatl.org>. For instance, the AIAS is currently investigating issues such as studio culture, especially as it affects students' health and safety; internships; and the growing propensity of schools to require students to purchase computers upon admission into the architecture program.

### What the AIAS means to us

At the national level, the AIAS offers students two opportunities to gain leadership skills and interact with peers from across the country. The first is Grassroots, which takes place in late July at the AIA headquarters in Washington, D.C. Here students attend leadership seminars, meet the five collateral presidents, and participate in issue forums similar to AIA Grassroots. The second student conference is FORUM, the AIAS annual convention that takes place over the New Year's holiday. Last year almost 800 students attended the conference in Los Angeles. Many components provide scholarship assistance to help students cover the cost of traveling to these conferences. Ask any student that has attended an AIAS

Grassroots or FORUM, and they will tell you how it was a life-changing experience. As one student put it, "the AIAS to me has been an organization that has provided great information and meaningful connections all around the United States. It has offered me a way to show my leadership skills, and to encourage the student body at my school. Grassroots and Forum are the most wonderful conferences that I have ever attended. I learned things that will not only help me in school, but will also carry through the rest of my career. I owe a lot of my success to this organization, and I personally think that it is a great organization to be a part of."

When there is not an AIAS chapter at a particular school but there are students that want to become involved, their best option is to talk to the AIAS leadership and the local AIA component leaders to get an AIAS chapter started. The actions of a few involved, dedicated students are multiplied immensely as more students join the effort. All receive the benefits of strength in numbers, not to mention the range of AIAS information targeted to students, such as *Crit* (the journal of the AIAS), a monthly electronic newsletter, and the benefits of interacting with AIA members.

### Graduating from the AIAS into the AIA

The first object of the AIA strategic plan, AIM (Aligning the Institute for the Millennium), states:

**"[P]artner 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."**

By adopting this objective, the AIA has

demonstrated that this is the most effective method to ensure that students are aware of mentorship opportunities, practice issues, and alternative career paths. (A critical phrase is "students of professional degree programs.")

And the AIA is following through on this commitment. In March 2000, the AIA Board approved an initiative to offer graduates of these professional programs a free year of membership in the AIA. The AIAS leadership has been working with AIA management to develop a program that best meets the needs and interests of these new graduates so that they will see the value of participation in the professional association on graduation.

For example, next fall, all AIAS members will have access to certain areas of the AIA portal. You will soon see a section on the portal that includes a compilation of student and AIAS activities. Other benefits for AIAS members will include search capabilities to the AIA Knowledge Center and information about registration for the AIA Convention in Charlotte in 2002. These are offerings of real value and demonstrate a commitment to collaboration.

### The value of the AIA to the AIAS

One of the most important of AIAS member benefits is the partnership with the AIA. Students are interested in what's going on with the profession. Active AIAS chapters are always looking for an eager professional to lead a seminar on new and innovative issues. (One hot topic among students these days is time management.)

Please, take a little of your own time to review the AIAS National Web site. Click on links to your local schools of architecture (or alma mater) and let the AIAS members know that their future professional associates support them. ■■