Responses to Questions Posed by AIA|California Council
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1. Repositioning the AIA for the Future

As a part of a broader effort to increase the prosperity of our practices, the AIA has already begun to celebrate the value that architects bring to our clients and communities. If only one change was possible as a part of the Repositioning effort, I would advocate for expanding this endeavor to identify and communicate these contributions to clients and communities. Celebrating the value of our contribution and sharing the many successes of our colleagues are critical if we are to change the public perspective of the power of architecture and if we are to change our professional perspective about our ability to have prosperous and flourishing practices.

The AIA should collect and distribute detailed case studies documenting in as many communities and types of projects as possible how architects have added value and improved the lives of their clients. The AIA should also collect and share detailed case studies about how changing practice models have resulted in flourishing and prosperous practices.


During her tenure as an AIA Resident Fellow, Mary Ann Lazarus organized and facilitated a Sustainability Leadership Scan. The results of this Scan and the recommended focused priorities for AIA that emerged from the Scan were reported to the Board of Directors in September 2013 and were enthusiastically endorsed. Implementation of the Lazurus' plan will have real and meaningful impacts upon our profession, on our firms, and on design practice. It changes the dialogue from one of mere compliance to embedded research-infomed exploration, design and practice.

The AIA should implement the recommendations of the Scan within the four areas of recommended focus:

- Energy
Completing the year-by-year priority actions in each of the focus areas will strengthen our role in the conversation about sustainability and will move us from a focus on compliance with the IGBCC or from multiple iterations of achieving LEED scores to real leadership and real cultural change. Implementing the plan so ably presented by Ms. Lazarus will energize young practitioners and provide firm’s with the kind of energy and purpose that is missing when our focus is restricted to the narrow areas of compliance; it shifts the conversation to engagement, empowerment and design.

We don’t need to reinvent the wheel or repackage existing programs. We just need to execute the plan that has already been laid out.

3. Resourcing Firms for Practice and Prosperity

The AIA should recommit to providing services that are specifically targeted to benefit firms and which contribute to our ability to have prosperous and flourishing practices. Executing the case-study based communication strategy outlined in my response to the California Council’s first question and executing the recommendations of the Lazarus’ plan as outlined in my response to your second question are each a reasonable place from which to efficiently and economically begin this effort without creating new programs or additional distractions.

4. Improving the AIA Organizational Structure

The Membership Services and Resources Task Force (MSRTF) has been charged by the AIA Board with recommending specific measures that would allow the Institute to efficiently use our collective resources to improve member services. The Board has endorsed interim MSRTF reports about core member experiences and it’s general findings with respect to services and resource allocations. The MSRTF is scheduled to make a final report this September. As a leader, I have seen it as my role to contribute to the
conversation (and I have), to encourage the MSRTF to stay resolutely focused on their charge, and to evaluate their recommendations in light of our expectation that service delivery become streamlined, that redundancies be eliminated, that services provided are of the greatest value to members, and that all members have a valued core membership experience no matter where they live and practice. I’ll be addressing the final MSRTF recommendations from this perspective and will insist that we have accountability from all levels of the Institute in implementing the recommendations of the accepted final MSRTF report.

5. Empowering the Next Generation to Meet the Challenges of the Future

Action is needed, not words. We need to break the “waiting for our turn” cycle in leadership service. We need to understand what young professionals want from practice and from the AIA and then help them to find or develop the programs and services that deliver on these expectations. We must allow young professionals to assume leadership roles in the same manner as any other architect; not just roles as representatives of young professional’s committees and councils. We need to ask young professionals to do things that need to be done from our perspective and we need to empower them to do the things that need to be done from their own perspectives.