RE: AIA California Council Candidate Questions
Responses from candidate for At-Large Director: Haley M. Gipe, Assoc. AIA

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to questions posed to National AIA Candidates for office.

1. Repositioning the AIA for the Future

The AIA is undergoing a transformation that is unprecedented in its history. In response to a wide-ranging study of its organization and operations nationwide, the AIA is realigning its structure to provide consistent levels of service to all members. While these changes are positive demonstrations of the organization’s commitment to increasing member value, for many in the profession (especially newly licensed professionals), the cost of membership is a significant barrier. How can the AIA increase penetration of AIA membership, including currently underserved constituencies, those on the path to licensure, those in non-traditional practice, and those not subsidized by their firms?

We have to increase the tangible and intangible value of membership. There is a perceived value in our membership to the AIA, and that value can resonate in many different ways with different constituency groups. Telling our stories, sharing the impact that membership has had on our lives both professionally and personally is one way to break through some of the perceived stereotypes that may inhibit underserved groups from joining our organization. Ideas such as stepped dues programs are innovations to address the significant membership fee increase facing our recently licensed architects. Increasing member service value by ensuring a baseline level of service for members, regardless of geography, is another step in the right direction. Understanding what the needs are of those underserved groups will ultimately be the key in aligning our services and programs with these constituency groups. In speaking with many young professionals, they have great new and innovative ideas to bring to the table, and we as an organization just have to be ready, willing, and able to listen.

2. Increasing Public Awareness of the Profession

The AIA has committed significant resources towards iLookup, a three-year public awareness campaign of architecture in communities. While we can all agree in the general value of the effort, direct benefit to individual members is more difficult to quantify. How would you define and measure the value of this campaign?

It can be hard to quantify individual member value from a national public awareness campaign. I would measure the value of this campaign in both the collective whole and the individual. Personally, I’ve engaged in many conversations about the campaign, and utilized it as a communication tool with colleagues and clients. While I can’t quantify with a number the exact outcome or penetration rate for myself as in individual member, I can tell you without a doubt that this campaign has been an invaluable tool. Conversations, both negative and positive, about the value of architecture, design, and architects are taking place, and that is valuable to every member. The fact that these conversations are even happening are a testament to the success of the campaign. The social media aspect of this campaign alone has been an incredible tool for many members to convey the value of what they do on a day to day basis. Moreover, the iLookip campaign has created a renewed sense of community through the many posts and stories shared on the website. The fellowship that has been created in conversations about sharing the ad, or hearing from someone who has seen the ad campaign, are remarkable. I would have to define and measure the value of this campaign in all of those stories I’ve heard, and all of the feedback I’ve received myself, which have on the whole been positive.

3. Ensuring Equity in the Profession
The Institute has long identified diversity and inclusion as a strategic goal for the profession. However, the rate of impact has not been significant enough to advance the ratio of underrepresented populations within the profession, with the greatest disparity being evident in leadership and ownership positions. Delegates to the 2015 AIA Convention will be asked to consider a Resolution to develop an ongoing program to assess data, set a plan of action, track progress, and report on results. Given the myriad of programs and initiatives currently underway, there’s a very real fear this research will sit on the shelf. **What is your sense as to why there isn’t greater equity within the profession and how would you ensure this call for equity moves to the forefront within the Institute’s agenda?**

This is a topic near and dear to me as a young professional. However, this topic is not unique to us in architecture, this is something that many other professions have grappled with and continue to do so. The equity conversation relates to change, and change can be hard for any deeply rooted profession. Many professionals are making headway and setting precedents to advance the ratio of underrepresented populations within the architectural profession. We must continue to be at the forefront of the change, we must BE the change. Years of hard work will not sit on the shelf because we frankly cannot afford it; there are talented men and women who deserve a seat at the table and a place in our profession. With every generation that enters our profession we have an opportunity to set an example of what we are, but more importantly who we can be. Supporting and expanding programs, research efforts, surveys, conferences, outreach work, and awareness are all important in order to keep the call for equity moving forward and faster to a point of change. We must keep up the good work and we must push for change in ensuring equity in our profession, there is simply no excuse.

4. **Empowering the Next Generation to Meet the Challenges of the Future**

As the future of the profession, the challenges facing emerging professionals must be addressed. There are increasing distractions and alternatives that are adversely impacting the pathway to licensure and the downstream consequences to meeting public demand and project delivery. **What one thing can the AIA do to affect a cultural shift to among Emerging Professionals and encourage all involved in the delivery of architectural services to stay connected with the organization?**

Be relevant. Listen. Change.

Easier said than done, but the next generation is looking for relevancy, they would like to be heard, and they want to see change. Proclaiming the value of licensure from the rooftop may not be the best way to create a cultural shift in a generation who has a different motivational drive than those firm leaders signing the paychecks. Emerging Professionals are more than just a constituency group, they will be firm owners, they will be AIA leaders, and they may not just stick around and wait for things to change. Our AIA has to continue to incorporate Emerging Professional members into the full fold of our Institute, tell their story as members instead of just a classification of membership. We must evolve as an organization and remain relevant to all the generations we encompass by listening to those asking for change.

5. **Advancing the Value of Design**

Enhancing the practice and the prosperity of architectural firms is a high priority of the Institute; employees of AIA firms will clearly benefit from this effort. However, fundamental to this priority is the need to construct a business case for design. **How can AIA best proceed with building a solid business case for the “value of design”?**
The solid business case for the ‘value of design’ can best be illustrated in tangible case studies that illustrate the positive impact of design. The correlations between design and health, design and education, design and community engagement are nothing new. Let’s tell those stories of design success that resonate more than a glossy two page spread in a design magazine. Communicating the value of design through client stories, user group input, commissioning reports, are all methodologies we could easily incorporate into how we communicate and how we practice. There are numerous studies on the positive effects of well designed environments on patient recovering time in a medical facility, or students improved test scores in an educational setting, or communities rebuilt after being reinvested in. Our members are our greatest asset and they can play an instrumental role in sharing best practices, new technologies and designs, and lessons learned. Let’s work with our members to give them the tools they need to enhance their own practices to better convey the value of design.

Thank you again for this opportunity to answer these key questions and help illustrate the type of leadership I can offer our members through my leadership at the National level.

Respectfully,

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