NCARB Tackles the Great “Intern” Title Debate

The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) will work with U.S. licensing boards and the architect community to implement the recommendations of its Future Title Task Force: restrict regulatory language to post-licensure status only and remove use of “intern” terminology.

Washington, D.C. — The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) will embark on a new initiative to sunset the usage of the term “intern” as a way to describe those who are working to become architects versus those who are already licensed architects.

The new term? There isn’t one. Just don’t use “intern.”

“Architects are those who have met all the requirements to become licensed in states and jurisdictions throughout the United States,” said NCARB President Dale McKinney, FAIA, NCARB. “Everyone else is not an architect. But their status also doesn’t need a regulatory title such as ‘intern’ or any similar reference. This has become a term that has been perceived as negative by many in the architecture community and a term that really does not fully value the work that aspiring architects bring to the profession.”

McKinney formed a Future Title Task Force in 2014 to come up with a solution to the profession’s titling debate—an issue he calls “fraught with controversy.” He chose the Council’s Past President Blake Dunn, AIA, NCARB, to lead the group, comprised of architects and architect candidates including leaders in various architectural collateral organizations.

The task force carefully debated the issue for many months, finally coming to the conclusion that there is no agreed-upon terminology for professionals on the path to licensure. At the same time, the task force recommended that all variations of “intern” are no longer
reflective of the pre-licensure population.

“We felt this was the right moment in time to tackle this issue,” McKinney said. “If we don’t tackle it now, then when?”

NCARB is planning a series of initiatives, which will include proposing changes to NCARB Model Law and guidelines. These changes could, in turn, lead to consideration by the 54 U.S. licensing boards to remove “intern” from existing rules and regulations. Any Model Law proposal would be addressed in a resolution requiring a majority vote by representatives of the licensing boards at a future NCARB Annual Business Meeting. Implementation would not occur unless a jurisdiction adopts the Model Law change or makes some other change through amending its own laws, rules, or regulations to remove the word.

In the meantime, NCARB Chief Executive Officer Michael Armstrong indicates NCARB will begin making plans to remove “intern” from its own communications and correspondence. A future action, subject to review by the NCARB Board, is likely to involve the renaming of its Intern Development Program (IDP).

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**About NCARB**

The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards’ membership is made up of the architectural registration boards of all 50 states as well as those of the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. NCARB assists its member registration boards in carrying out their duties and provides a certification program for individual architects.

NCARB protects the public health, safety, and welfare by leading the regulation of the practice of architecture through the development and application of standards for licensure and credentialing of architects. In order to achieve these goals, the Council develops and recommends standards to be required of an applicant for architectural registration; develops and recommends standards regulating the practice of architecture; provides to Member Boards a process for certifying the qualifications of an architect for registration; and represents the interests of Member Boards before public and private agencies. NCARB has established reciprocal registration for architects in the United States and Canada.