

Preparing Architects for Leadership Roles

Contributed by AIA Dallas

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SUMMARY

Over the past several years, the AIA Dallas Leadership Committee has worked diligently to implement an internal leadership program to identify, cultivate, and mentor emerging professionals in three areas of leadership related to the architectural profession: the firm, the profession, and the community. This drive was in response to an emerging need to recognize, develop and prepare women and men to assume increasing responsibilities in firm leadership and community reciprocity.

LOOKING FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

In early 2009, this vision culminated in the formation of the AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program for which leaders of local firms were given the opportunity to nominate up-and-coming professionals in their office to participate in a ten-month curriculum of notable keynote speakers and panelists to compliment a series of discussions directly related to leadership, problem solving, and management of professional relationships. The inaugural class was comprised of nineteen participants representing seventeen Dallas-area architectural firms. Attendees dedicated one Friday afternoon each month to learn about an array of leadership topics through example, practice, and theory.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The program's diverse line up of speakers and panelists include such notable local and national figures as Hunt Oil Chairman Walt Humann, Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert, Texas Society of Architects President Bill Reeves, AIA Vice President George H. Miller of Pei Cobb Freed & Associates, and Texas Comptroller Susan Combs, along with a host of local firm leaders and project managers.

Todd Howard, President of AIA Dallas, was especially interested in this program, visiting often to ensure its success. This group of contributors has given the program's participants insight into the professional and political workings of a number of prominent companies and organizations, as well as renewed motivation to dedicate individual talents to positively impacting the natural and built environments.

In the program's first session, Mr. Humann challenged the group to use problem solving to embrace new ideas and concepts in a host of disciplines in order to take incremental steps toward bringing communities together and achieving solutions for a better societal future.

FORMING NEW LEADERS

Speakers are followed by program facilitator Peter A. DeLisle, PhD, Professor of Leadership Studies at Austin College, who teaches leadership by breaking down complex and dynamic workplace-related situations into effective practice of leadership and a greater understanding of human behavior.

Dr. DeLisle brings valued experience and knowledge of leadership effectiveness through his past affiliations with professional organizations, the military, numerous prominent corporations, and national and international leadership advocacy programs. He has been an advisor to the National Science Foundation and the Kauffman Foundation for Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Dr. DeLisle's lessons are heavily driven by group participation and examination of professional trends and factors contributing to individual and organizational success. The activities provide participants with enhanced personal knowledge and camaraderie among peers, which will promote values and leadership amongst a new generation of professionals in the Dallas architecture community. A strong component for developing professional and personal effectiveness is a special part of the program, presented with the intent that the learning and relationships will continue and have an impact well beyond the initial program year.

One of the unique design aspects of the program is the active participation of the program members in the design and implementation of the program events, selection of sites and engagement of speakers and guests. They are self-auditing and self-managing. An advisory committee provides ongoing oversight. Evaluation has been ongoing throughout the program year, using both on-line surveys for activity follow-up, and dialogues at the end of each session to assess program effectiveness in real-time. The final program session examined sustainability from a professional

viewpoint as well as considering the ongoing sustainability of the program. Members of the 2009 program year will act as advisors to the 2010 program through active engagement and sponsorship.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 22.08.21 AIA GE Forms Cycling Team
- 22.05.02 Preparation for the Architect Registration Examination
- 22.08.20 Celebrating Architecture Through Film

Feedback

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Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Emerging professionals