

## AIA Kansas City Pillars Leadership Program

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### SUMMARY

*Pillars*, begun in 2006, is a leadership training program for AIA Kansas City members. Its purpose is to prepare a representative cross-section of the chapter's emerging leaders for their role in shaping the future of both the architectural profession and the greater Kansas City metropolitan area.

### THE PROGRAM

The training program includes active participation in programs and exposure to community leaders and issues. Applications are accepted for the program once each year. Sponsor firms submit candidates who are rising leaders within their firms. Criteria for acceptance include proven career success and community involvement. *Pillars* participants range in age from 24 to 45, and include recent architecture school graduates as well as those who have been in the profession for a number of years.

A core curriculum developed by the *Pillars* organizers is presented to participants during the Kickoff Session in August. Monthly half-day sessions are held between September and May, and attendance is mandatory. The first 2-3 sessions are a "boot camp" that, with the involvement of previous *Pillars* graduates, focuses on skills such as marketing, office management, presentation and public speaking, professional ethics, and the law as it pertains to the profession. At the end of "boot camp" the *Pillars* class will collaborate to focus on one or more "hot topics" within the profession. These "hot topics" focus on core issues that affect the profession of architecture and the local region.

New for 2008, the *Pillars* group will be composed of a maximum of 15 participants: 13 AIA Kansas City members (Assoc. AIA or AIA) recruited from the emerging professional demographic within the chapter and two candidates from professionals practicing in the allied fields. AIA Kansas sees adding these members as a way to bring diverse perspectives to the group.

Participants are selected on the basis of a written application, recommendations, and personal interviews. Each participant will be sponsored by a member firm and participation must be approved by a managing partner in the firm. For non-architect applicants, firms must be members or sponsors of AIA Kansas City. Each firm may only submit one applicant.

Tuition is \$600 per participant and covers luncheons, presenter gifts, administrative fees, and other miscellaneous meeting expenses. Half scholarships are available to four participants from small firms (with 5 or fewer employees) or who are sole practitioners. Scholarships are awarded based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, financial need, the size of the organization employing the candidate, adding diversity to the program, and available funds.

Scholarships are funded by Henderson Engineers, a chapter sponsor. Henderson Engineers hosts a charity golf tournament every year, and a specific hole is dedicated to raising money for the *Pillars* scholarships.

## RESULTS

The benefits of the program include: development of relationship skills, skill development, team performance, and chapter and community leadership.

Thirty-five professionals have graduated from the program.

The *Pillars* program was recognized at the AIA 2008 Grassroots Leadership and Legislative Conference with an AIA Component Award in the Component Outreach Communications category as an Outstanding Single Program.

## LESSONS LEARNED

One challenge *Pillars* organizers face is ensuring that the program remains fresh and doesn't become repetitive. The material must meet the needs of the participants and be relevant to them.

For another component seeking to offer a similar program, Tiffany Shepherd, Deputy Director of AIA Kansas City, suggests soliciting input from the local membership and developing a program around those needs. "Be willing to be fluid and let the program participants take the lead and make the program the best that it can be."

## RESOURCES

### For More Information on This Topic

[http://www.aiakc.org/pillars\\_leadership\\_program.asp](http://www.aiakc.org/pillars_leadership_program.asp)

### Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact [diversity@aia.org](mailto:diversity@aia.org).

### Keywords

- AIA Components
- Associations
- Leadership Development

This Best Practice was developed in concert with the AIA's Diversity initiative. Any questions or comments about the content herein can be sent to [diversity@aia.org](mailto:diversity@aia.org).