

Boston Program Provides Mentoring Alternatives

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SUMMARY

The Boston Society of Architects/AIA (BSA) created a mentoring program in 2003. The mentoring program offers an arena outside of work for emerging professionals to form relationships with practicing architects.

INTRODUCTION

The Boston Society of Architects Fellows Committee established an initiative to create a mentoring program at the BSA. A workshop was held at the BSA in January 2003 to brainstorm ideas and to agree that the concept was feasible. Teams discussed issues such as how to define mentorship, how to structure the mentoring program, and how to administer the program. As a result of that meeting, Gary Graham, FAIA, appointed a diverse task force to develop the BSA Mentoring Program. Jeffrey DeGregorio, AIA, was selected as the task force chair and served as the program chair for two years.

PARTNERS

The mentoring program relies on an all-volunteer mentoring pool whose success is grounded in the strong commitment of Boston's AIA Fellows. The mentors include primarily firm principals, architects, fellows, and other leaders within the Boston architecture community. Each mentor brings unique interests and skills that allow the program chairs to make the best matches possible. Matches are based on a questionnaire that each participant, mentor, or protégé completes. The program is open, at no cost, to all protégés who are interested; this includes interns, students, AIA members, and nonmembers.

MENTORING PROGRAM

The primary activity of the mentoring program is to match mentor requests from completed protégé questionnaires. The program's committee also maintains a dedicated Web site, which provides basic program information, guidelines, helpful resources, meeting topics, the questionnaire, and information about becoming a mentor or protégé. Program information is also distributed as the

committee chairs participate in new member receptions, BSA committee meetings, and introductory meetings with local schools of architecture.

IMPACT

The BSA Mentoring Program was created to provide an alternative option for young architects to find meaningful mentoring relationships outside of their day-to-day contact with colleagues and friends in the profession. These relationships provide an unbiased look at the professional growth and development of the protégé. The mentor matches are not meant to supplant the intimate relationships developed at schools or firms but rather to provide as many opportunities as possible for guidance through the practice of architecture. Since the program's inception two years ago, more than 45 matches have been made amid a steady influx of new volunteer mentors and requests from protégés.

ANALYSIS

The BSA Mentoring Program acts as a successful example of a component-based mentoring program. Much of the success of the program has been based on the program's zero cost and its mission of inclusiveness. All portions of the program are available to AIA members, nonmembers, students, and recent graduates in architecture. All aspects of the program are also applicable to other AIA components.

Ultimately the success of the program relies on the commitment of the AIA component, the program committee/chairs, and mentors. Without the tenacity of these people, a program like this would not be possible. Each participant must take the time to ensure that their portion of the program is successful. The responsibility of establishing communication rests solely with the protégé. Once a match is made, the protégé must contact the mentor to schedule their first meeting and generally is responsible for scheduling future meetings as well. If this communication is not maintained, the match will struggle to be successful. This aspect of the

program is outside the committee's responsibility, yet it is a challenge for every such program. Given the inevitable struggles, the BSA Mentoring Program has succeeded due to steadfast commitment at all levels.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

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

- 03.02.01 Mentoring Interns: A Firm Commitment
- 03.02.03 Seek Out the Many Rewards of Mentoring
- 03.02.04 Mentoring as a Team Sport

For More Information on This Topic

See also "Staff Development" by Laurie Dreyer-Hadley and Kathleen C. Maurel, Assoc. AIA, *The Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 9, page 242.



See also the 14th edition of the *Handbook*, which can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by email at bookstore@aia.org.



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