

# Producing the Next Generation of Architects

Contributed by Baskervill, recipient of the 2007 IDP Outstanding Firm Award

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## **SUMMARY**

Baskervill believes that the core of intern training lies primarily in the fabric of the traditional working environment and the completion of the Intern Development Program (IDP) is symbiotic with the overall training process. Interns play an active role in all phases of marketing, management, design, documentation, and construction administration. The firm recognizes that each intern's experience is unique and strives to provide an array of programs and opportunities to make the training experience more diversified.

Baskervill is a full-service architecture, engineering, and interior design firm with offices in Richmond and Roanoke, Virginia.

## **COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS**

### **Brown Bag Lunch & Learn Program**

In this bi-weekly forum, principals and associates spend an hour presenting topics in which they are interested and have significant expertise and then facilitate a full discussion with the attendees. The topics range from sketching tours of the city to specification writing to coordinating drawings with mechanical systems to discussing potential failures of building envelopes.

### **Products and Materials Education**

Given the size and influence of the firm and the number of project types it works on, product representatives seek a regular audience with employees. The firm has a full-time resource librarian and 2,000-square-foot library. Also, the librarian coordinates product-specific Lunch & Learn programs several times each week. These product pitches are attended by the in-house specialists who provide insight through questions and lessons learned. This turns into an organized forum where interns learn about the importance of calling on representatives as another resource they have in the industry.

## **Construction Tours**

Bi-monthly tours of projects under construction are given exclusively to the firm's interns. Tours might be led by the principal-in-charge, project architect, owner, general contractor, or even one of the interns. The tours focus on issues of constructability, sequencing of trades, and the translation and use of drawings in the field. The tangible lessons interns learn in the field translate into a greater appreciation for the contractor's role and a better understanding of how the lines they draw affect the quality of the resulting building for owners and end-users.

## **MENTORING/ADVISORY SYSTEM**

### **In-House Program Coordinators**

The program coordinators fill a much-needed advisory role in helping interns get started with the IDP process by familiarizing them with NCARB requirements and supporting interns throughout their IDP progression. Additionally, the program coordinators manage, schedule, and run all meetings, set up construction tours, and provide voluntary supplemental training programs. This role not only benefits interns but also the program coordinators who glean leadership training and an opportunity to be a liaison between the firm management and the interns.

### **Peer Advisory Meetings**

In addition to meeting with supervisors and mentors regularly, Baskervill interns gather in a number of different forums. One example is a monthly meeting held prior to the office staff meeting. Interns and program coordinators discuss their successes, challenges, and other related matters as a group. An unanticipated benefit has been that interns push each other to be diligent and persistent in completing and submitting IDP paperwork regularly. These meetings have become the core of our IDP community and a large part of our "Ask + Listen + Create" culture.

### **Year-End Celebration**

At the completion of every year, the interns, mentors and advisors gather for a pizza party in the firm's public area to celebrate the successes of the year. The gathering is a fun way to unwind, show the rest of the firm how hard the interns have been working, and discuss ways to improve the program for the upcoming year.

### **Skills Matrix**

The human resources department, supervisors, and interns use Baskervill's Skills Matrix to chart professional growth in relation to their progress through IDP. Baskervill designed the matrix based on NCARB training requirements as well as the firm's internal goals for its employees. Management uses the results to establish standards for promotion of interns to higher levels of responsibility. Similar skills matrices are now in development for the engineering and interior design departments.

## **IDP IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Orientation**

On their first day, interns are introduced to the Baskervill Intern Development Program. Program coordinators provide interns with information to start their NCARB records and set up spreadsheets to track training units. Interns are also paired with a "buddy" who can help them with everything from how to fill out their training unit report to finding a cup of coffee and a good lunch.

### **Baskervill IDP**

The firm's program coordinators go beyond just meeting with the interns as a group on a monthly basis. They also hold individual meetings with each intern twice a year to gauge his or her development within the program and address deficiencies or frustrations. When interns have difficulty gaining experience in certain areas, the program coordinators, with the support of upper management, investigate opportunities that would help interns fulfill these requirements. Coordinators may even facilitate a temporary move to another project team or provide supplemental training exercises to help interns reach their goals.

### **Examinations**

The coordinators help interns close out their NCARB paperwork and prepare to sit for the ARE. The firm provides a complete set of study guides in the resource library and keeps NCARB practice software

on training computers. In addition, interns are given paid time off to take the examinations at a local testing center.

## **CHALLENGES**

### **Satellite Office**

One distinct implementation challenge has come from Baskervill's recent growth and expansion into the western part of Virginia. Baskervill opened a satellite office in Roanoke, and the interns in that office do not yet have the same access to IDP resources as those in the Richmond office. A goal has been set to bridge that gap. The program coordinators are working with the Roanoke office manager to set up a parallel track. By sharing the processes and resources developed in Richmond, the training and development will be consistent with Baskervill's commitment to the well-balanced intern.

### **Ringling of the Bell**

Baskervill moved into a newly renovated tobacco warehouse in the summer of 2003. This historic structure was kept intact, but the interior offered the chance to show off our youthful and progressive culture. The center of the office is a community area that serves as the primary meeting space, play space, and lunchroom for the Baskervill staff. A reclaimed firehouse bell, installed on one wall of this room, is rung to announce significant events in the firm. At the successful completion of an intern's Architect Registration Exam, the bell rings to inform the entire firm of its newest licensed architect. This is a great celebration and allows Baskervill's registered architects to recognize the former intern as a peer.

As the practice of architecture has become more complex and time-sensitive, work assignments have become highly specialized, and interns can find it difficult to obtain certain critical IDP training units in a timely manner. For our interns, this has been especially true in the categories of Engineering Systems Coordination, Building Cost Analysis, Bidding and Contract Negotiation, and Office Management. These are tasks that an intern is not typically expected to work on, so Baskervill strives to provide opportunities for interns to complete these categories in a timely manner. Interns also have difficulty obtaining the Professional and Community Service training units, so Baskervill actively encourages involvement with public charities and causes.

## RESOURCES

### For More Information on This Topic

See “Staff Development and Retention,” by Laurie Dreyer-Hadley, Kathleen C. Maurel, Assoc. AIA, and Debra Fiori, in *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 14th edition, page 285. The *Handbook*



can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending an e-mail to [bookstore@aia.org](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).

### More Best Practices

- 09.03.37 Carrier Johnson: A Commitment to IDP
- 09.03.41 Creating a Single Project Manager Philosophy
- 09.03.42 Expanding the Exploration of Design

### Feedback

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### Key Terms

- Practice
- Employment
- Staff development
- Intern Development Program
- Professional development
- Training
- Supervising