

New York Program Goes “Beyond IDP” for Exceptional Mentoring

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SUMMARY

AIA New York and the Emerging New York Architects Committee realize the importance of mentorship. They have created a program that allows emerging professionals to meet in small groups with a mentor. The program allows mentees to choose whom they would like to learn from. The program offers kick-off and wrap-up events and encourages groups to meet at least four times in between.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTORS

The Mentoring: Beyond IDP program gives young architects access to inspiring, experienced architects in a comfortable, informal, small-group setting. The foundation and continuum of architecture practice has always had its roots in education, and mentoring has been the traditional method of teaching young architects.

Historically, young architects worked alongside a master architect and learned by listening, observing, and participating. Today this notion has been challenged by the shift to university-based education, the increase in the size of firms, the advent of technology, and required training completion (i.e., the Intern Development Program, or IDP) before licensure. Above and beyond the IDP requirement for collaboration with a mentor, young architects in New York needed a program that facilitates personal relationships and fosters the learning process with experienced architects.

Mentoring: Beyond IDP is open to professionals including artists, architects (licensed or unlicensed), landscape architects, graphic designers, and urban planners who have completed their education at the undergraduate or graduate level within the past 10 years. It is not open to students. The program is based on a “mutual selection” process, in which potential mentees submit applications for the program and select their top five choices from the volunteer pool of mentors. After receiving the applications of those mentees who selected them for review, the mentors select three to five young architects for their mentoring group and meet with

them, as a group, at least four times in the following nine months.

Though the application is designed to distinguish highly motivated individuals with defined professional goals, the selection criteria are entirely up to the mentor, as are the content and format of the mentoring sessions. This flexibility allows the mentor to assess the collective needs and interests of their mentees on a group-by-group basis.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The kick-off and wrap-up events are the highlight of the program. They are open to the public and create a unique environment with highly regarded architects in an informal, approachable setting. The kick-off includes a panel discussion on mentoring by the mentors. Many of the mentors are frequent lecturers, and hearing them speak about the importance of mentoring is inspiring. The program culminates each year with a wrap-up event, in which mentors and mentees share their experiences in their respective roles.

IMPACT

The program has received wide support and encouragement from the architects approached to be mentors as well as from the young design and planning professionals with varying experience who applied as mentees. All acknowledged that the program is an invaluable asset to young professionals given the dearth of support and training available beyond academia to foster professional training toward licensure beyond the basic requirements of the IDP.

The program is highly selective. Of the 77 applicants, 48 were placed with the mentor of their choice. The remaining applicants received contact information for several other inspiring New York architects who had expressed interest in future participation as mentors.

The program also benefited from partnering with an existing, more informal mentoring discussion group through the AIA New York Chapter. This helped

those applicants who were not accommodated in the Mentoring: Beyond IDP program by connecting them with a group that encourages mentoring relationships between practicing architects and young professionals.

MONITORING AND FEEDBACK SHAPE THE PROGRAM

To monitor the program, one mentee from each group submits a short report of each group meeting. This provides vital information on the success of the program as well as details on the groups' activities and discussion topics.

Based on feedback from the mentees, the program provides nearly one-on-one access to exceptionally inspiring architects. The mentees and mentors alike indicate that they are enjoying the unique relationship that the program encourages—unlike student-teacher or employer-employee relationships. Both parties say they feel at ease with the nonstructured format. The July wrap-up event is an opportunity for mentors and mentees to speak publicly about the impact of the program.

This program has added an element of prestige to mentoring by virtue of the application process. Although it is a somewhat exclusive program, the competitive aspect seems to generate interest and elevates the status of mentoring among young architects in New York.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

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RESOURCES

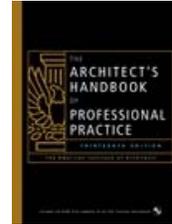
More Best Practices

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, *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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