

## **OPERATION: REACH, RETAIN, AND DEVELOP**

Organizational Meeting Notes

Friday, June 5, 2020

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Zoom Virtual Meeting

Program participants were welcomed by Beth Reader, FAIA (AIA Virginia President) and Adam Fogel, Assoc. AIA (VP of AIAS National).

### **How we started this process**

Due to the pandemic and a crippled economy, many architecture firms are experiencing challenges resulting in hiring freezes and limited summer internships. Under no circumstance, does our profession want to lose the next generation of architects graduating right now.

As such, the mission of the program is as follows:

*Connect our members with architecture students graduating in May 2020 from Virginia schools of architecture.*

### **Desired Outcomes of the program**

- Through these forged relationships, keep recent graduates engaged in the profession of architecture during the recovery phase of a global pandemic and troubled economy
- Assuming personality chemistry is formed, these relationships become long-term friendships which is beneficial for career growth and exposure to career opportunities
- Good people know good people. Through these relationships, expose these emerging professionals to other AIA members thus expanding their professional network
- Keep recent architecture graduates in Virginia so that the profession and our own communities can reap the benefits of their contributions and leadership

### **Students and graduates said they were participating in this program for the following reasons:**

- New skills needed after the pandemic (ex: remote work capabilities)
- Understanding the realities of the profession
- Build a network – make connections with professionals
- Learn as much as possible about the profession – keep up with the constant learning process
- Stay inspired
- Talk about design with designers
- Stay mentally in the design world
- Looking for next steps – what role I might play in the larger architecture community?



**Mentors said they were participating in this program for the following reasons:**

- Always have interns in the office, and will not now – so needed to find a way to continue during recession
- Love to see the growth that happens in young professionals
- Like being able to help others in their growth
- Helping the next generation of architects – don't want to lose them
- I graduated in the last recession
- Want to help you build a network
- "Paying it" forward
- Summer internship program on hold
- Had great mentors in my life
- Had internship my senior year in high school that was transformational
- To convey to new graduates that it is okay if there is a delay in your launch into the workforce. These new connections will get you through.

**Expectations**

Quarantines and stay-at-home orders have shifted most of our interactions to a virtual space which makes it incredibly difficult to meet new people and form meaningful relationships. This program seeks to facilitate building these new relationships by connecting our recent architecture graduates with our AIA Virginia members. AIA Virginia has a membership that exceeds 2,300 architects and designers.

Until the public health crisis dictates otherwise, it is envisioned that the recent graduate and mentor will engage virtually. Meeting in person is permitted but should be decided jointly by the mentor and graduate. The goal is to meet twice per month (or two-hours per month) with this emerging professional, but under no circumstance, commit to not less than once per month. All coordination will be the responsibility of the mentor and graduate.

Below are some activities for consideration to occupy any given meeting or a series of meetings:

- Facilitate the transition to AIA membership (free for graduates)
- Get to know each other
- Align on goals and priorities for the mentoring partnership
- Provide support and guidance for new graduates as they pursue licensure
- Portfolio and resume review and critique (even invite other Architects)
- Mock interview (or real) and critique
- Share about current firm culture, working environment, and projects
- Invite the graduate to a virtual team meeting
- Attend an AIA component virtual event together
- Attend a virtual lunch and learn together and then discuss

**Questions/Topics discussed**

- School vs. Practice



**AIA**  
Virginia



- The speed at which you work in a firm
- The importance of having the ability to work in a collaborative setting
- The feeling that you never “know it all”
- How important communication skills/writing skills are to your career
- If you graduated in the last recession, people pivoted by doing the following:
  - Connected/networked with fellow graduates
  - Explored architecture adjacent work such as sustainability
  - Stayed with original goals of working in a firm; stayed true to dreams/passions
  - 300 applications, 50 interviews. The rejection process is valuable. Stay flexible and open
  - Improving presentation skills (ex: Toastmasters)

### **Closing thoughts**

Corey Clayborne, FAIA (AIA Virginia Executive Vice President) thanked mentors for stepping up and making this investment in the next generation. He congratulated our graduates for stepping up to the plate to take control of their future. I believe that this is a program that should continue annually beyond the pandemic.

For graduates, do not be afraid to reach out to your mentors and ask to be a part of activities!

Contact AIA Virginia with any challenges faced during the program.

### **Next program check-in meeting as a collective group via Zoom:**

Within the next 30–45 days