Inclusivity Into the Profession Task Force

Final Report to the Board of Directors | December 2022

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Responding to the AIA Virginia 2020-22 and National AIA 2021-25 Strategic Plans, both of which call for greater justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion within the profession, AIA Virginia formed the Inclusivity Into the Profession Task Force in spring 2022. The charge of the task force was to investigate broadening pathways into the profession of architecture, particularly for traditionally underrepresented groups and individuals, in Virginia.

Launching its work in June 2022, the task force was comprised of diverse statewide representatives from both academia and practice:

Sean E. Reilly, AIA | Chair
Carol Cash | K-12 Education
Willie Cooper, AIA | Member At-large
Phoebe Crisman, AIA | The University of Virginia
Robert J. Dunay, FAIA | Virginia Tech
Rebecca W. E. Edmunds, AIA | Member At-large
Jori Erdman, AIA | James Madison University
Ron Kloster | Hampton University
Crystal Miller | Brightpoint Community College
Gina A. Robinson, Assoc. AIA | Associate Member At-large
Robert L. Easter, FAIA | *Ex Officio*
Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA | Staff Liaison
Joanna M. Dreiling | Staff Team Support

The task force commenced its efforts by researching existing pathways into architecture for high school students, college students, and early practitioners through an intensive set of targeted questions to specific audiences via video interviews conducted by the staff team.

The stakeholder interviews yielded very informative insights relative to barriers and roadblocks along the pathway into architecture. Overarching themes from the interviews reveal that:

- Individuals are being exposed to the profession of architecture largely through family or classroom settings. Otherwise, awareness is minimal, at least until college.
- The pathway into the profession from college through retirement is expensive and acts as a deterrent for underrepresented individuals and communities (college, examination, pay scale, and membership dues).
- Passion for the profession is paramount when it comes to having members of the BIPOC community enter the profession given challenges other of accessibility, cost, and gatekeeping.
- Mentorship throughout the pipeline is pivotal to the success of under-represented individuals and groups within the profession, to ensure that they continue.
- The hierarchy and gatekeeping causes confusion and exclusivity on the progression into the profession.
- More education about alternative practice settings would likely encourage more individuals to pursue a career in architecture.
- A key to expanding the pipeline into the profession is creating even earlier exposure in things such as math or art classes in grade school.

Based on the full set of findings from the interviews, as well as from audits of existing related programming, the group divided into three work groups, focused on:

- K-12 Education
- Higher Education
- Practice

The group felt that many programs were already underway within the K-12 space through AIA Virginia, national AIA, and other organizations, and that AIA Virginia should leverage those to greater benefit. These resources are listed at the conclusion of the recommendations.

Similarly, AIA Virginia should optimize partnerships to strengthen relationships with academic institutions and advance more positive and constructive stronger studio culture experiences for students.

The largest suggested effort rests within the practice area. Firms and individuals should place much more emphasis on supporting pathways into the profession, particularly for BIPOC ("Black, indigenous, and people of color") populations.

The task force felt it important to note that their charge was to focus on people of color. However, they believe that many of the recommendations and suggestions included within the report apply to all the individuals and entities who are traditionally underrepresented in the profession of architecture, including women. Additionally, numerous programs, projects, and initiatives are already in place at the local, state, and national levels that advance women within the profession.

The report and recommendations below provide a synopsis of potential initiatives, programs, and projects in K-12 education settings, institutions of higher learning, and traditional architecture firms to build on what is already underway and/or to advance new efforts in this space.

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K-12 RECOMMENDATIONS:

Elementary/Middle Schools

Objective 1: Encourage members to become involved in existing K-12 outreach programs.
Objective 2: Build on previous work conducted by the Virginia Center for Architecture, The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design, and the AIA Virginia Outreach Advisory Council to effect new programming within STEAM-related frameworks.

1. **Launch a Speakers Bureau.** Develop and disseminate a list of companies and individuals, by region/location, with contact information to be considered for presentations and other appropriate involvement, which can be provided to Career and Technical Education (CTE) coordinators and school counseling directors in each school division.
2. **Provide Resource Information.** Contact CTE Coordinators and school counseling directors of each school division in Virginia to share the following resources as audited, collected, and documented by AIA National and AIA Virginia:

   o AIA Virginia "Ask an ACE" program: www.aiava.org/ask-an-ace (part of the Virginia Department of Education Work-based Learning Program)
   o AIA Virginia K-12 resources: www.aiava.org/community/architecture-activities/
   o National AIA: https://www.aia.org/pages/6319595-aia-k-12-initiatives-connect

High Schools

Objective 1: Facilitate participation in career day programs by architects and design professionals in high schools across the state.
Objective 2: Working with local AIA chapters, encourage AIA members throughout Virginia to become involved in existing K-12 outreach programs and/or create new programs.

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HIGHER ED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Objective 1: Revise existing eligibility requirements for AIA Virginia programs such as the AIA Virginia Prize and Emerging Leaders in Architecture to be more inclusive and accessible.

Objective 2: Inspire more students who are Virginia residents or graduating from Virginia schools to remain in the state upon graduation.

SHORT TERM – 6-12 MONTHS

1. **Propose revisions to the eligibility for the Virginia Prize** to allow students in any architectural program, regardless of NAAB accreditation status, to participate in the program. Review program endowment prior to proposing change. Include faculty from all institutions on related committees.

   Current language from website (Virginia Prize): *The AIA Virginia Prize is a design charrette that engages students at all of the accredited schools of architecture in Virginia. Conducted simultaneously at each institution, students are given the competition program Friday at 5 p.m. They work over the weekend to create a board presenting their design solution by 9 a.m. the following Monday. The competition is intended to promote collaboration between the profession, students and professors in Virginia.*

   Proposed revised language: *The AIA Virginia Prize is a design charrette that engages students at all schools _and programs_ of architecture (as determined by the Board) in Virginia. Conducted simultaneously at each institution, students are given the competition program Friday at 5 p.m. They work over the weekend to create a board presenting their design solution by 9 a.m. the following Monday. The competition is intended to promote collaboration between the profession, students and professors in Virginia.*

2. **Propose revisions to the eligibility for the Emerging Leaders in Architecture (ELA)** program to allow students in any architectural program, regardless of NAAB accreditation status, to participate in the program.

   Current language from website (ELA Program): **Student Nominees**: *Each Virginia Architecture School (UVA, VT, Hampton, WAAC, and JMU) may nominate one or more students for admission to the program. One participant will be selected from each school for a total of four. If interested, contact your department Chair/Dean.*

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MEDIUM TERM – 12-18 MONTHS

1. **Support the development of robust policies that protect student/employee rights** in the academic studio environment and in professional practice.
2. **Launch a scholarship program** from AIA Virginia to worthy BIPOC students in architecture and related programs across the state.

LONG TERM – 18-36 MONTHS

1. **Form a new higher education committee** that can make specific higher education related recommendations to the AIA Virginia Board of Directors. All schools and programs of architecture are eligible and invited to have representatives on the committee.

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AIAVA and Graduates of Architecture Accredited State Universities

AIA Virginia is dedicated to serving its members, advancing their value, and improving the quality of the built environment. In that effort, the organization collaborates with other agencies including the academic institutions of Virginia. Attracting new, young members to the organization, helping them toward licensure, and providing a rewarding path toward professional practice are important goals.

Presently, there is a gap in data regarding the relationship between graduates of Virginia university architecture programs and the registered and unregistered architects working in the state. An informal consensus reveals a belief that many of the graduates leave Virginia to practice elsewhere – a 'brain drain' that does not take advantage of significant educational investment. The universities have no persuasion over where graduates go as long as there is some affirmation of "gainfully employed." However, there are other perceptions that see many graduates from state universities populating local offices. A rational understanding of the situation through precise data would be helpful to determine if AIAVA needs to, or can, take any action:

1. Are our graduates leaving the state?

2. How many or what percentage?

3. If a significant number, what are the conditions, limitations, and opportunities contributing to this trajectory?

4. Is there a pattern of graduates leaving or staying in state over the past decade?

5. Would a breakdown, by degree and university, of architects presently working in the state be helpful?

6. Are there any resources, provided to firms that would help in attracting in state students?

7. Can the image of Architecture in Virginia as a technological, innovative, or entrepreneurial center attract more in state graduates?

8. Is there any role for AIAVA to play because of this demographic analysis?

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PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Objective 1: Encourage participation in existing mentorship programs for recent graduates, continually improving these programs to assure relevance.

Objective 2: Create a smoother transition from college to practice by developing and disseminating tools for firms to bolster professional practice on-boarding and orientation.

SHORT TERM – 6-12 MONTHS

1. **Create a "Becoming an Architect" page** for AIAVA.ORG/VANOMA to guide graduates and inform them of the process.
   - **Example:** Become an Architect | AIA Minnesota.
     - Before this website's "Education Requirement" section, add language inviting those in non-accredited and technical programs to understand the process.
   - **Include:**
     - An onboarding guide for graduates/young professionals on hiring processes and questions to ask when interviewing regarding examination/licensure support.
     - Resources to make candidates well informed about path to licensure and selecting potential employers based on those requirements.
     - Outreach/access for existing programs:
       - AIA.org Architecture Student Resources
       - AIAVA Emerging Professionals Roundtable
       - AIAVA's and local chapters' Young Architects Forum

2. **Promote AIA Align Mentorship Program** for AIAVA/VANOMA (National Fellows/YAF program):
   - Make program accessible and visible on AIAVA/NOMAVA websites.

3. **Expand AIA Virginia Firm Roundtables** for large-, mid-size, and small firms: Expand roundtable participation to expose BIPOC recent graduates and emerging professionals to management, finance, and other aspects of running a practice.
   - Increase BIPOC practitioner roundtable participation; encourage firm leaders to bring younger staff.

4. **Elevate awareness of** VANOMA Member Spotlight YouTube channel.
   - Link on AIAVA website. Videos currently highlight board members only, but shortly will add others who inspire passion for the profession.
   - Recruit BIPOC professionals to share their stories about entering the profession and path to licensure to inform graduates and young professionals.
   - AIAVA Newsletter: Make "Member Spotlight" a feature in the AIAVA newsletter with BIPOC focus on success stories.

MEDIUM TERM – 12-18 MONTHS

1. **Expand AIAVA's Operation Reach, Retain, Develop.** Expand awareness and participation beyond students during graduating year.
    - Expand program to include more BIPOC graduates to provide continuing mentorship to retain diverse talent and support them on their path to licensure.

2. **Develop areas for future collaboration, cooperation, and sharing best practices.** Leverage strategic alliances with the AIA and related organizations to optimize service/support to BIPOC graduates.

3. **Eliminate 'pay to play' barrier for AIAVA and AIAVA/VANOMA events.** Promote a firm-funded $0 attendance program for recent graduates.

4. **Advocate 'bring a young person' to ArchEx:** "JEDI won't happen without investment."
    - Expand/encourage opportunities for recent graduates to attend events free of charge.
    - Incentivize bringing recent graduates to AIA events.

LONG TERM – 18-36 MONTHS

1. **Create mentorship opportunities for graduates just starting practice paired with young established professionals.**
    - Adopt AIA Chicago model: free, regular social hours for recent graduates with younger professionals.
    - Apply for College of Fellows Emerging Architects Component Grant for kick-start funding.

2. **Eliminate 'pay to play' barrier for AIAVA Emerging Leaders in Architecture Program to** increase awareness of existing scholarships for BIPOC students:
    - ELA nominees often self-select, and thus are already connected to the AIA. To encourage connections for those who do not yet have them, increase outreach/awareness on:
        - All five chapters' ELA scholarships, making information readily available. Link information on scholarships here or in application.
        - Encourage applicants for the R. Corey Clayborne, FAIA ELA Scholarship.
        - Encourage applicants for the Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA Fellowship.

3. **Create an onboarding guide for firms,** so firms take the lead in discussions. Expand awareness of ways to support recent BIPOC graduates in their efforts to meet ARE and AXP requirements:
    - Create case studies of firm policies on mentorship/licensure support from the survey of selected firms of all sizes.
    - Check with the JEDI group on existing work and surveys.

4. **Develop a formal exam scholarship program through AIAVA/VANOMA** for firms unable to subsidize the licensure process. Establish a scholarship pool these firms can contribute to for BIPOC candidate exam costs.
    - AIAVA supports licensure through Amber Book, promotes local chapter study/educational events, and provides a state licensing NCARB advisor to all associate members.

5. **Advance knowledge of Alternative Practice Models:**
   - Research *Missing 32%* for ideas: More research required into the other career paths minority architects take on sites such as Rosa Sheng's *Missing 32%*.
   - Expand information on alternative practices:
     - Expose graduates to all they can do with architecture degree.
     - Gather information on all a degree in architecture and licensure means beyond standard practice.
   - Use VANOMA Member Spotlight the spread awareness of alternative practices.

The Practice Work Group recommends AIAVA consider the IACS (Inform, Advise, Connect, and Support) concept as an umbrella framework for IIPTF programs. (VANOMA may adopt this soon as well.)

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RESOURCES:
NATIONAL AIA and OTHER:
AIA K-12 Programs: https://www.aia.org/pages/6319595-aia-k-12-initiatives-connect
AIA Align Mentorship Program:
https://issuu.com/youngarchitectsforum/docs/connection_q2_mentorship_citizen_architects_2021_/s/13697196
AIA Align Kick-off Resources: file:///C:/Users/HDreiling/Downloads/ALIGN%20-%20kickoff%20icebreaker.pdf
AIA Young Architect Resources: https://www.aia.org/pages/6477382-young-architect-resources
AIA Large Firm RoundTable ARE Scholarship: https://architectsfoundation.org/our-impact/architecture-scholarships/aia-lfrt-are-scholarship/
AIA Architecture Student Resources: https://www.aia.org/resources/66476-students-aia-is-here-for-you
AIA Guides for Equitable Practice: https://www.aia.org/resources/6246433-guides-for-equitable-practice
Architects Foundation: https://architectsfoundation.org/our-impact/architecture-scholarships/
NCARB Interested Students: https://www.ncarb.org/blog/new-resources-k-12-students-interested-architecture
ACSA Study Architecture: https://studyarchitecture.com

AIA VIRGINIA and OTHER STATE:
K-12 resources: www.aiava.org/community/architecture-activities/
"Ask an ACE" program: www.aiava.org/ask-an-ace
Operation Reach, Retain, and Develop: https://www.aiava.org/operation-reach-retain-and-develop/
Emerging Leaders in Architecture Program: https://www.aiava.org/professional-development/emerging-professionals/emerging-leaders-in-architecture/
HCD, FAIA Fellowship: https://www.aiava.org/honorsawards/helene-combs-dreiling-faia-fellowship/
Emerging Professionals Roundtable: https://www.aiava.org/emerging-professional-roundtable/
Young Architects Forum: https://www.aiava.org/community/young-architects-forum/
VANOMA Member Spotlight: https://www.vanoma.org/news/categories/member-spotlight

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END FORMAL REPORT