

AIA Candidate Questionnaire

Matt Toddy, AIA - Candidate for At-Large Director

1. It's been both my experience as a volunteer leader and the topic of many of my conversations as a candidate how different components and committees have a tendency to excel at one particular area of the AIA's Strategic Plan. While some groups find a niche in advancing environmental responsibility, others find they have more agency to move the needle with regard to social responsibility.

I believe (one of the many) roles of AIA National is to facilitate the transfer and sharing of knowledge between these groups in order to 1) expand the impact of these initiatives beyond their locales and 2) prevent the unnecessary duplication of effort. Architects advancing environmental stewardship in Mobile, Pittsburgh, or Phoenix should have an opportunity to exchange knowledge with architects on the cutting edge of climate action in Boston or Seattle. I believe it is the function of AIA National to not simply facilitate these discussions, but to facilitate a platform that elevates the work of member architects across the country and benefits member architects everywhere.

This exchange could be further reinforced by implementing 2 strategies:

- Double-down on support of state and local component leadership through reinforcing the relationship of AIA National to the CACE network to ensure clear communication between all levels of the Institute.
 - Clarifying and/or redefining the roles and responsibilities of each level. One example could include drawing distinction between continuing education programming, political advocacy, and knowledge exchange and restructuring component support to maximize each based on the specific agency of each level.
2. I believe the key to driving the value of design begins with rebuilding relevance in our profession. We must expand support for architects practicing in non-traditional formats, and build pathways for architects to engage in all facets of society, including politics, technology, education, logistics, and so on.

For those of us in more traditional practice settings, I believe the key to relevance and value begins with how we communicate design to our clients and communities. If we can recontextualize the intricacies of our profession in terms that are easily consumed by the business community and the public, we stand a chance at rebuilding the relevance of our industry and elevating the value of design.

3. I believe this is connected to the previous issue. If we are to build resilience for our profession in the face of an uncertain future, we need to raise the business IQ of our members. Design education and pedagogy is notorious for omitting the business skills necessary for running successful architecture practices. The AIA could fill a large and critical gap in our profession by providing these business skills for members - the result being twofold:

- More successful, prosperous firms leading to increased relevance and expanded agency for the profession
 - Increased value for AIA members leading to expanded membership
4. Expanded engagement begins with increased transparency and communication of the opportunities available to members. The recent shift by AIA National to streamline the call for all national-level volunteer positions into one application window is a step in the right direction - but more work must be done to raise awareness of these positions and expand the opportunities where gaps exist. We must also constantly challenge the status quo to ensure equity is prioritized in filling these positions.

As I mentioned previously, I believe a restructuring of the roles and responsibilities of each level of the AIA could dramatically expand the agency of each to affect positive change in the Institute and beyond. As society and culture evolve, so too must the AIA to ensure we continue to meet and exceed our member's needs at all levels. I believe, however, this strategy can only be successful if the solution begins with clear communication between components, staff, volunteer leaders, and members.

5. Through 7 years of volunteer leadership with the AIA Young Architects Forum, I've seen a number of successful strategies for coordinating resources at a national level. After the recent dissolution of regions and subsequent expansion of the YAF to a state-based representation model, the committee nearly doubled in size - mandating a significant shift in the way information was developed, curated, and delivered across the committee. This shift included defining specific roles for committee representatives, and clarifying the frequency and content of committee messaging. Both are strategies that could be implemented in other national committees.

I believe it is incumbent on volunteer leaders to share both the successful and failed strategies to the benefit of other committees within the Institute - and then leverage these committees to expand the same strategies to practice.

The AIA must also expand support of those programs that advance practice - programs like Taking Care of Business (formerly Mastering the Business of Architecture) - beyond conference-only access available to only a fraction of Institute membership.