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My A'19 Experience

I was recently awarded a stipend from AIA Cleveland to go to the AIA National Conference 2019 in Las Vegas, Nevada. I am a third year architecture student at Kent State, and AIAS Kent State's chapter treasurer for both the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years. As an active member of Kent's AIAS chapter I have tried to take as many of the wonderful opportunities that AIA and AIAS provides to Kent's Students. I have been to other much smaller AIAS conferences, but I was amazed by the massive scale A'19. The four day experience that I had in Las Vegas is one that will not "stay in Vegas" as I learned so much about the profession and AIA that I hope to use in my career as a member of AIAS and in the profession. This letter serves as a recap of my experience as I hope to share what I learned and inspire other members to see the value of AIA.

A'19 is the national conference for architects, it serves as an opportunity for leaders in the AIA to network with other professionals around the country, learn about the newest technologies in the industry, and experience the architecture of other cities. The theme for this year's conference was "A Blueprint for a Better Future".

I traveled to Las Vegas on the evening of Wednesday June 5th. When I arrived I was immediately in awe from the large scale of the city of Las Vegas, which was a constant feeling I had throughout my entire trip, especially at the conference itself. The conference began Thursday morning where I attended my first panels. The specific panels that I attended focused on resilience as a theme for a building. The various panels talked about how that could describe a building finding new uses once it has outlived its purpose, or how architects can design a building that could serve many purposes, or designing a building that would last a long time. The most interesting parts of some of the panels were the questions at the end, I was surprised by the thoughtful and insightful discussions brought by other attendees. One example of this was at the "Future Use" panel, that I attended, which discussed how buildings are adapted for different uses over time. One attendee, asked the panelist if there were any good examples of buildings that could not be adapted after the panel discussed many seemingly impossible adaptions that ended up being successful. This question brought about a discussion about basic design choices that could be made to make a building more adaptable. The conference had a strong focus on thinking about and designing for the future, which is important for a student like myself to think about. When I was not in a panel, I explored the expo. Where I took the opportunity to learn about the various products in the field, and how they were used. I attended wonderful keynote speeches that also focused on the future of not only the profession but humanity that highlighted exceptional people including: Roman Mars, Ayla Abiad, Keller Rinaudo, and Ryan Coogler. I was especially inspired by Keller Rinaudo, who uses drones to deliver blood to health clinics in Africa.

In the evenings I attended the AIA parties where I was introduced to many exceptional people in AIA. It was humbling and inspiring to meet so many leaders in the AIA. At the Kent State Alumni party I was introduced to many Kent State Alumni who work in Las Vegas, including AIA Las Vegas's next president. I realised that through AIA and with a Kent degree, I can work anywhere I want in the world. The parties highlighted some of the amazing buildings of Las Vegas, the emerging professionals party was especially fun being under the Eiffel Tower with views of the Bellagio's fountains in the evening. I had never been to Las Vegas before, so I took the opportunity to see some of the giant Casinos, which were exciting to see. I am very greatful to AIA Cleveland for providing me the opportunity to go on this adventure.

My trip to Vegas is a prime example of what AIA has to offer. Not only did I have a memorable experience, but I learned a lot about the profession that will help me in school, as a leader in my AIAS chapter, and especially my future career in architecture. Between the practical skills that I learned about construction materials and the big picture ideas about resiliency, my career will be forever improved by this trip. The people that I met and traveled with including AIAS leaders, AIA Cleveland Leaders and the Kent State Graduates who have supported and mentored me, and I know will be invaluable to my career. Whenever someone in my studio asks me, or doesn't ask, why they should be in AIA, I tell them that the best part is the community of peers and mentors that support each other as well as the fun and inspiring events that this community hosts.

Sincerely,

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