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Spring has sprung, and as every Michigander knows, that means it is time to move our snow shovels to a place where it is out of sight but still easily accessible! But truly, how time flies! I feel like it was just yesterday that I was writing my introduction and welcome message for our newsletter – when in reality since then so many great things have happened! Since we last spoke, I have represented Michigan at the National Associates Conference (NAC) in Puerto Rico, joined many of my esteemed colleges from around the state at the recent Grassroots Conference in Washington DC, sat with the Michigan Membership Committee to brainstorm how we can increase our membership enrollment and been privileged enough to connect with a majority of our chapter associate directors from around the state. Below I have outlined some of the key points and takeaways in order to keep us all on the same page.

The NAC was a great success and allowed us to make some meaningful connections with other RADs from around the country. I am happy to announce that Michigan has opted to take a seat on the *Future Practice* NAC committee to look at how to increase diversity and equity in our profession, in addition to highlighting the importance of architecture as a profession as we move towards 2030. Myself and the Illinois RAD, in addition to our larger workgroup, have been collaborating with the Center for Emerging Professional (CEP) to curate a proposal for a national exhibition/design competition that will highlight how the practice of architecture will play a vital role in creating a sustainable future for our society.

Grassroots was another great success with an array of presentations and workshops. One presentation that resonated with me most was the *Mayors and Architects Working Together*. The panel was made up of representatives from the US Conference of Mayors, including our very own Bryan Barnett of Rochester Hills. The panelist spoke about the role of the architect in city and community planning and gave great insights and arguments as to why we must, as a profession, push for a formalized seat at the table. In addition to this, I was able to attend the *Future of Architectural Education* panel and the *Architectural Based Learning for K-12* workshop – both greatly applicable to our state and its future pipeline of architects.

Finally, our Michigan Membership Committee meetings have been great and truly spurred some wonderful ideas as to how we can increase our enrollment state-wide. It is important that we as a state maintain our 2% of national membership in order to retain our Large State designation. With regards to increase of associate membership, we have discussed launching some form of a pop-up at the major universities around the state in order to enroll their soon-to-be and recent graduates as AIA Michigan members. I have been speaking with our chapter ADs to get a better understanding of their membership pool, local events, ARE prep sessions and issues that they are struggling with on a local scale. Through these conversations an excellent suggestion was made by Shawn Cencer, representative for SW Michigan, to do a bi-monthly conference call amongst ADs in order to learn what challenges other ADs are struggling with, and brainstorm ideas to increase engagement of emerging professionals. My goal is to have these calls up and running by June and hope to see a strengthening of our network of EPs that results in an acceleration of engagement and enrollment throughout the state.

In closing, it looks like we have a start to many wonderful movements for EPs in our state and many more to come! I ask, as always, that you please feel free to reach out with me with any questions or concerns that you might have. I look forward to acting as your conduit to the state board, and wish everyone a happy and healthy Spring!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christopher Stefani".

Christopher Stefani, Associate AIA