President's Message

April 30, 2023

It's that time of year when college students are looking for summer internships and students who are graduating this spring are seeking full-time positions in architectural firms. I'd like to take a moment to say thank you to the architecture schools around our state for continuing to work with our future architects and providing leading architectural education in Michigan. Several states have very few or even no educational institutions with formal programs devoted to architecture. Fortunately, we have a historic and thriving architectural educational system in our state, with five quality schools that produce the caliber of candidates we see each spring looking for employment in our profession.

Over the past couple of years, many of our firms have had a difficult time finding staff. AIA Michigan Monday Minutes seem to constantly have positions available for all kinds of architectural staff around the state. As many of our firms struggle with how to attract and retain talent, we've all been exploring variations of the remote work phenomenon and evolving office environments that staff desire, while balancing the collaboration and mentorship that make our studios function and flourish. It's not enough anymore to just offer a robust salary and benefits package. As people are exploring options for employment, they are looking for a place that offers work-life balance and a value set that aligns with theirs. They want a place where their passion for architecture can be explored and expressed.

Additionally, since 2020 our profession has had some significant declines in newly licensed architects. NCARB has responded by eliminating the rolling clock that placed a five-year expiration date on passed divisions of the Architectural Registration Exam (ARE). I know this will help staff in our own studio who are pursuing licensure. This year the AIA Michigan Board is working with our Government Affairs Committee to explore options to encourage more individuals to pursue licensure. One focus is looking at alternative pathways to becoming a licensed architect in the State of Michigan. Currently, Michigan requires a professional degree from a NAAB-accredited program, completion of the AXP/IDP, and completion of the ARE. But should we consider any alternative options? For instance, California and New York, with more registered architects than any other states in the Union, both allow additional experience to be accepted as an alternative to the education requirement. As part of our exploration of this, the Board is seeking your input on potential options. During our May Leadership Call with the Chapters and Sections, we'll spend some time discussing this as part of our conversation.

This is your AIA, and as always, your input is critical. Please share your thoughts with your local chapter or section, and your representatives can then share those ideas with the board. But also know that you can share your thoughts directly with your board director or myself. Our contact information is on the AIA Michigan website.

Paul Haselhuhn, AIA
AIA Michigan President 2023