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THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT

A Detailed Look at the
Slowing Growth in
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Spending

The Impending Talent
Shortfall and How to
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THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Members,

In the past few weeks, new executive orders have significantly impacted how architects fulfill their vital role in shaping the built environment. Rather than supporting our core values—innovation, inclusivity, sustainability, and adaptive design—several directives run counter to the profession's ethos.

It is important for us to address these tensions. Where architects seek flexibility and community-led design, these policies risk imposing restrictive, one-size-fits-all approaches, potentially stifling the creativity, diversity, and inclusivity at the heart of transformative architecture.

Recent initiatives aimed at broadening the pipeline for minority-owned firms, mentorship programs, and scholarships for underrepresented students may be weakened by policy changes that reduce funding and opportunity. At the same time, new directives erode environmental protections, slowing progress toward net-zero structures, renewable energy, and regenerative design.

In addition, mandates for federal architecture that favor rigid aesthetic guidelines undervalue the localized, context-driven solutions architects champion. By ignoring community input and cultural nuance, these orders jeopardize the multifaceted idea of "good design," which must consider social, cultural, and environmental conditions.

The housing crisis demands collaboration among developers, nonprofits, and architects to create safe, affordable homes. Yet these executive orders may curtail funding and impose regulations that make it harder to deliver equitable housing, exacerbating an already urgent situation.

Although these orders conflict with our guiding principles, AIA Connecticut remains firmly dedicated to uplifting the architecture profession. While policy and practice may shift, our commitment to inclusive, sustainable, creative, and accessible design endures.

Let us stand united in our belief that architecture can truly improve lives.

Thank you for your continued commitment and advocacy for a profession that embraces equity, safeguards the planet, and expands opportunities for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina Calabro".

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT NOMA
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



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To Our Dear Membership,
February: A Time for Leadership and Reflection



February is more than Black History Month; it is also a time when leaders from countless interest groups make their annual pilgrimage to Washington, D.C., to advocate for causes shaping industries and communities.

We are living in a world fraught with turmoil. Wars and political conflicts persist, natural and man-made disasters disrupt lives, and challenges escalate.

Around the globe, people are yearning for leadership—leaders who can ease suffering and offer hope for a brighter future.

As we welcome a new president, we remain hopeful that our nation will continue to serve as a beacon of light: a haven for those fleeing oppression, a source of sustenance for the hungry, and a symbol of hope for those in despair.

But what role can architects play in alleviating pain and fostering hope for a better tomorrow?

In 1968, Whitney M. Young Jr. addressed this question during his historic speech at the AIA Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon. He boldly challenged the architectural profession for its lack of involvement in addressing civil rights issues, stating: "As a profession, you are not a profession that has distinguished itself by your social and civil contributions to the cause of civil rights... You are most distinguished by your thunderous silence and your complete irrelevance."

As one of the few Black licensed architects at the time, Mr. Young used his voice and platform to advocate for marginalized communities. His leadership inspired change, reminding us of the profound responsibility architects bear in shaping society. While we have made significant progress, there is still much work to be done.

Architects must broaden their advocacy beyond environmental policies. The built environment depends on responsible and inclusive citizenry—one that represents all of us. Our work must go beyond creating innovative and functional structures; we must design solutions that alleviate pain and suffering across the globe. Buildings that bring relief and hope within our borders should also be adaptable to communities with limited resources elsewhere.

Political violence, wars, and environmental disasters do not exist in isolation. Their impacts ripple beyond the immediate regions affected, influencing us all. Architectural leadership must prioritize solutions that improve lives universally, transcending borders and barriers.

At the recent AIA leadership meeting, I engaged with architects from across the country and the world. Many shared a vision for a profession transcending boundaries, fostering collaboration, and establishing adaptable standards to address humanity's shared challenges.

I dream of leadership uniting us in a common purpose: one that creates generational change and fosters positive outcomes for all people on this resource-rich yet fragile planet. Together, we can build a future where architecture reflects our aspirations and fulfills our moral obligation to uplift and support one another.

Disruption is good. Silence is a dream killer.

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By Michael J. Crosbie, FAIA

The *Brutalist* is the latest addition to the film genre that features architects as primary characters, and it's generating a lot of buzz. The winner of three Golden Globe awards, it's been nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor. Adrien Brody soulfully plays the architect, László Tóth, a Jewish Hungarian who emigrates to the U.S. after his liberation from a Nazi concentration camp. He arrives at Ellis Island in 1947 to rebuild his practice (a Bauhaus graduate, he achieved design notoriety in his native Budapest). He finds work with his cousin, a furniture dealer, which leads to the redesign of a private library in the Doylestown, Pennsylvania, mansion of a wartime industrialist, Henry Lee Van Buren (Guy Pearce). Postwar America is booming. This is the place to be, Tóth learns, but only if you're the right sort.

There are dozens of films with architect protagonists (you can find a list here). In many, the fact that the character is an architect is incidental to the plot. I'm thinking of movies like *Indecent Proposal*, where an architect, whose practice isn't going well, pimps out his wife to a billionaire; or *Something About Mary*, in which two losers on the make pretend to be architects in order to score with a beautiful woman; and the Adam Sandler character in *Click*, who is an architect (according to screenwriter Steve Koren) only for the "positive spin" of respectability. Only a few films have memorable characters who propelled the plot through their actions as architects: Doug Roberts in *The Towering Inferno*, who takes on the superhuman architect task of saving his flame-engulfed skyscraper (I'm sure his professional liability insurance was cancelled the next day); Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* (a cinematic portrayal probably more responsible than any other for people deciding to go to

architecture school); and the character Miles Moss in *The Architect*, who delivers a steady stream of condescension and arrogance to the hapless couple for whom he's designed a house that is wrecking their marriage (the film, described as a comedy, borders on parody). The *Brutalist's* László Tóth is in this mold: the thrust of the entire narrative of the film is focused on his actions and efforts to realize the commission of a lifetime that is under attack from all quarters.

"They do not want us here," says Tóth to his wife. "We are nothing." Tóth's redesign of Van Buren's shabby library is an elegant, light-filled space with louvered bookcases to protect a rare book collection. In this film about architecture, this project takes the prize. It reminds one of an Alvar Aalto interior with its teak details and soft luminance from a central dome. But the architect/client relationship sours, resulting in financial hardship for Tóth, who ends up living in a shelter and working as a day-laborer shoveling coal.

THE BRUTALIST:

*A Cinematic Architect's
Dream and Nightmare*





The underlying theme of *The Brutalist* is the plight of the immigrant, which makes it particularly relevant to contemporary America. Architects, however, might find resonant chords in Tóth's struggle with a belligerent, domineering, and ultimately destructive client. Tóth's fragility is in stark contrast to *The Fountainhead's* Howard Roark. He's more akin to director Peter Greenaway's architect Stourley Kracklite in *The Belly of An Architect*: a stranger in a strange land, dealing with the locals, insecure, given to substance abuse and marital infidelity.

Tóth's architectural salvation, however, tracks closely with that of Roark, whose uncompromising modernist design for a bank is rejected by his clients (they want a few classical details added here

and there). That's a deal-breaker for Roark, who ends up working as a day laborer in a quarry. He's rescued from this dead-end by a self-made millionaire who seeks Roark out for a career-changing commission. Tóth is eventually redeemed by Van Buren, whose reborn library receives an architecture critic's blessing. He finds Tóth shoveling coal and hires him to design a new landmark "institute." But Van Buren is also in the market for the social luster he receives as Tóth's patron. For his client, Tóth is no more than a pencil and a pass among the cultural intelligentsia.

The project—to be built on the highest hill in town—is to include a community center, assembly hall, and library, but the program keeps fluctuating, to Tóth's frustration. A late addition is a "Christian gathering space" (to

grease the skids for a building permit). Tóth's design makes this sacred space the building's heart, crowning it with a cruciform tower.

The exterior of the structure—shown only as a model—is a dead ringer for Louis Kahn's First Universalist Church in Rochester, New York. Which makes one wonder: Who actually designed the building in the film? Tóth's designs were created by film's production designer, Judy Becker, who isn't an architect. Tadao Ando's Church of the Light was an influence, along with the work of James Turrell. Becker also spent time looking at buildings by Brutalist architects—among them Marcel Breuer. She worked with architectural designer Griffin Frazen to create a building model that became the basis of the construction images, which were



entirely fabricated. When real surgeons watch movie surgeons, they must pick up on all sorts of things they would never do. Same with architects in a film. There are a few odd things about Tóth's design that undermine his reputation as an architectural genius: Why locate a community center on a hill away from the town center? (We can blame the client for that. He picked the site.) The design features a deep, windowless cellar filled with water. (I don't get it. What's it for?) Tóth explains that as the sun moves over the building, at noon every day a cross of light will fall upon the altar. This isn't possible, as the sun is in a different position at noon throughout the year.

"They do not want us here" just as easily applies to Tóth's

architectural vision for this major commission. He doesn't articulate a comprehensive architectural theory, nor does he ever discuss Brutalism; the word is never mentioned in film, which probably leaves nonarchitects wondering what it means. Tóth says some vague things about beauty, but not much beyond that. "Why architecture?" Van Buren quizzes him. Tóth responds by reflecting on his training at the Bauhaus and his completed projects in Budapest.

"There was a war on, and yet it is my understanding that many of the sites of my projects had survived," Tóth tells Van Buren. "When the terrible recollections of what happened in Europe cease to humiliate us, I expect for them to serve instead as a political stimulus sparking the upheavals that so frequently occur in the

cycles of peoplehood." For Tóth, his architecture is a legacy for change.

Tóth's Brutalist opus is historically a bit ahead of its time. The style surfaced in Europe and the UK in the early 1950s; Le Corbusier's Cité Radieuse, considered one of the first examples, was completed in 1952. But it didn't pick up steam in the U.S. until the mid-1950s. It's easy to understand why the Doylestown locals have their misgivings about the design. The general contractor notes that concrete buildings are hard to love, and this one doesn't look like it belongs here. During a town meeting on the project, the design is met with polite silence. Tóth's architecture, like himself, is an object of suspicion.

Van Buren also has his doubts. He hires a local architect to value-engineer Tóth's design and keep an eye on him. Tóth explodes over the design changes, telling the interloper that the goal of his design is beauty and grace, while "everything ugly is your fault."

The film's darkest, most revelatory moment transpires when Tóth and his client journey to the legendary marble quarries of Carrara, Italy, to choose a stone for the institute's central altar—its most sacred place. It is here, in the same quarry where Michelangelo selected his stone, that Tóth suffers the ultimate humiliation at his client's hands. At a boozy afterparty in the quarry, Van Buren finds Tóth dazed on heroin. He rapes him, whispering in the architect's ear that he is nothing more than "a lady of the night, a tramp"—channeling Philip Johnson's infamous quip that architects are just whores. It's at this point where the significance of the film's title becomes clear: the Brutalist isn't the architect, it's the client.

In this way, the film's hackneyed portrayal of the architect as the misunderstood genius—fighting for an architectural vision against the world—is predictable and breaks no new ground. It's a common trope for cinematic designers, which unfortunately

colors the public's perception of architects as difficult to work with, interested only in feeding their own egos. But the film also offers a gloomy twist on the architect/client relationship that will make many architect moviegoers—who may harbor their own dreams of the ultimate project—squirm: Be careful what you wish for.

All images courtesy of A24.

Michael J. Crosbie, FAIA is a Connecticut-based architect and writer who teaches at the University of Hartford and is Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Distinguished Professor. The author of and contributor to some four-score books, he studied architecture at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.

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Outlook: A Detailed Look at the Slowing Growth in Construction Spending Through 2026

By Paul Makovsky

After a period of robust growth in construction spending in nonresidential building—commercial, industrial, and institutional facilities—with nearly 20% in 2023 and an additional 6% in 2024, the construction industry is set for a stark slowdown. The American Institute of Architects' Consensus Construction Forecast predicts subdued growth in the coming years, with increases pegged at just 2.2% for 2025 and 2.6% for 2026 across nonresidential sectors. Spending on institutional facilities is projected to see the strongest gains of 6.0% this year while commercial construction spending is expected to increase by only 1.7% in 2025.

The Consensus Construction Forecast panelists, a group comprised of the leading construction forecasters from across the country,

- Projected gains not expected to increase construction volume: Increases in construction spending so modest that they likely won't even cover rising material and labor costs
- Increase in spending on offices due to data centers: Overall weakness in that market but projected increase is coming from strong spending on data centers
- Warehouse construction has driven retail and commercial growth, expected to slow: Warehouse construction has become overbuilt in many areas of the country

- Health care and education poised for health gains: The major institutional sectors less prone to boom and bust pattern


Sector-Specific Opportunities and Challenges

Institutional Facilities: These are expected to experience the strongest growth among all sectors, especially in healthcare and education. Projections show a 6.0% increase in 2025, primarily fueled by investments in healthcare and educational facilities. With an aging population, the demand for healthcare facilities continues to evolve, shifting from traditional large hospitals to more accessible community health centers and specialized clinics.

The focus within healthcare is shifting towards smaller, community-based health centers from large institutional campuses, in response to an aging population and consolidation among healthcare providers. This transition opens opportunities for construction firms specializing in smaller, more technologically advanced facilities that can meet the needs of a changing healthcare landscape.

In education, the demographic shifts indicating a decrease in school-aged populations suggest a potential decline in new school construction. However, there remains a significant opportunity for renovation and modernization of existing facilities, particularly to accommodate new technologies and create more adaptable learning environments.

Commercial Construction: This sector's growth is heavily influenced by changes in the workspace environment, with an increasing shift toward remote work leading to high vacancy rates and reduced demand for traditional office spaces.



Industry insights reveal modest growth amidst emerging economic challenges, highlighting the need for strategic adaptation in non-residential construction.

Commercial and Retail Spaces: The commercial sector, particularly office spaces, faces significant headwinds due to the rise in remote working. The traditional office market may continue to experience soft demand, but this also presents an opportunity to repurpose and redesign office spaces to suit hybrid working models that blend in-person and remote work. Growth in

commercial construction is significantly more tepid, with an anticipated rise of only 1.7% in 2025, improving slightly to 4.2% in 2026.

Similarly, the retail sector can adapt to the growing e-commerce trend by transforming retail spaces into experiential centers that offer services and experiences not easily replicated online.

However, the hotel sector might see better growth rates due to recovering travel and tourism post-pandemic.

Manufacturing and Industrial: The warehousing sector, after years of growth driven by e-commerce, is expected to face a downturn, considered overbuilt in many areas.

The industrial sector will see a modest increase of 2.6% in 2025, but forecasts suggest a contraction of 2.5% in 2026. The industrial sector, particularly manufacturing, has benefited from reshoring but faces future contractions.

Manufacturing facilities, particularly those for computers, electronics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals, have seen significant investment, driven by reshoring initiatives and increased domestic production due to global supply chain disruptions during the pandemic. Firms involved in the construction of manufacturing facilities must adapt to the cyclical nature of this sector, potentially by diversifying into industries with more consistent investment, like pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, which have shown robust growth and resilience.

Conversely, manufacturing has seen significant growth, partly due to reshoring but also due to specific increases in sectors like plastics, stimulated by domestic oil and gas production.

Data Centers: A notable exception to the broader slowdown is the data center sector, which is projected to see explosive growth of 21.9% in 2025 and 14.6% in 2026. This sector benefits from the increasing move towards digital transformation and the growing need for data processing capabilities.

Economic Influences Impacting Construction

Kermit Baker, the AIA's Chief Economist, has cited several economic headwinds that are expected to challenge the sector in the near term. "Potential tariffs on imports and the effects of emerging immigration policies on the labor force are anticipated to be significant disruptors," Baker said. The construction industry, reliant on a steady supply of materials such as lumber, cement, and electronics predominantly imported from Canada, Mexico, and China, could face increased costs and supply chain disruptions due to proposed tariffs.

Labor Market Concerns

The labor market is another critical factor in the construction industry's forecast. With about 12 million workers, approximately three million are foreign-born, including an estimated 1.5 million undocumented workers. Changes in immigration policy could drastically affect the availability of skilled labor, potentially leading to delays and increased costs for construction projects.

The View from Architecture Firms

The forecasted economic environment poses varied implications for architecture firms across the country. While some firms report a pickup in project inquiries and stabilizing commercial property values, overall sentiment remains cautious.

A survey conducted by AIA in October 2024 revealed that while just over forty percent of firms expect revenue gains of 5% or more, a substantial number foresee losses, and many anticipate flat revenues for 2025.

Strategic Adaptations for Construction Firms

Diversification: Construction firms might consider diversifying their project portfolios to include a mix of commercial, industrial, and institutional projects to buffer against the volatility in any single sector. Specializing in sustainable construction practices can also provide a competitive edge, as there is a growing demand for green and energy-efficient buildings.

Technology Integration: Embracing new technologies such as Building Information Modeling (BIM), prefabrication, and modular construction can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and shorten project timelines. This technological adoption can be particularly beneficial in a market environment where cost pressures are intensifying.

Labor Strategies: With potential disruptions in the labor market due to immigration policy changes, construction firms need to invest in training and development programs to build a more skilled, reliable domestic workforce. Partnerships with trade schools and apprenticeship programs can help mitigate labor shortages and prepare for future demands.

Economic and Policy Monitoring: Firms need to stay informed about economic policies that could impact the construction industry, such as tariffs, tax

reforms, and infrastructure spending. Proactive engagement with policymakers and participation in industry associations can help firms influence decisions that affect the sector.

Long-Term Outlook and Strategic Planning

Firms and investors in the construction sector are recommended to engage closely with the detailed forecasts and interactive data available on the AIA's website. This resource provides invaluable insights into how different segments of the market are expected to perform, aiding strategic planning and investment decisions.

As we look towards 2025 and 2026, the construction industry faces a landscape marked by modest growth projections, influenced by economic policy changes, labor market fluctuations, and sector-specific dynamics. Stakeholders across the industry will need to navigate these challenges with strategic foresight, relying on comprehensive data and adaptive strategies to mitigate risks and capitalize on new opportunities.

"The modest outlook is partly based on a few expected headwinds to building activity, including potential tariffs on imports," said Baker. "There is also policy concern around how the construction labor force might be impacted by emerging immigration policy. Construction sector spending has been exceedingly strong – albeit unusually unbalanced – and coupled with these headwinds the projections are only very modest gains the next two years."

Complete details on the latest Consensus Construction Forecast can be found on AIA's website.

Paul Makovsky is editor-in-chief of ARCHITECT.

The American Institute of Architects' Consensus Construction Forecast predicts subdued growth in the coming years, with increases pegged at just 2.2% for 2025 and 2.6% for 2026 across nonresidential sectors.



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ARCHITECTURAL CRISIS AHEAD: THE IMPENDING TALENT SHORTFALL AND HOW TO OVERCOME IT

As U.S. high school graduates decrease by 15%, the architectural industry faces a critical need to innovate and attract talent or risk losing its competitive edge.

By Blaine Brownell

If you work in higher education in the U.S., you are likely familiar with the term “enrollment cliff.” This unsettling concept refers to the imminent decline in college matriculations. The math is simple: Based on demographic data, the number of domestic high school graduates will peak in 2025, followed by a 15% drop over the next four years.

Given universities’ reliance upon a healthy student body to sustain their core mission, this is grim news. The phenomenon will be unevenly distributed, as the most desirable and wealthiest institutions are predicted to be less affected than others. Nonetheless, this looming “Darwinian threat” has captured every college administrator’s attention.

The profession of architecture will also be affected. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the architectural field will expand by 5% between 2022 and 2032, with an average of 8,200 new job openings annually. Despite the positive news, this prediction does not reconcile with a 15% dip in college graduates, which will likely reduce the proportion of the youngest entrants to the profession by a similar percentage.

Long-term projections merit even more attention. The recently revised census report points to a second cliff. Although prior estimates suggested that the number of high school graduates would rebound in the next decade, the new numbers reflect another decline from 4.2 million in 2033 to 3.8 million in 2039—with no increase above 4 million throughout the remainder of this century. (For reference, there were 4.6 million U.S. 18-year-olds in 2008, or 18% more than predicted in 15 years.)

The new forecasts invite thoughtful consideration about the future of the architectural profession. Assuming the proportion of 18-year-olds pursuing architectural careers remains constant, the profession faces a significant aging phenomenon similar to the U.S. population. This older demographic, which has been growing five times faster than the overall population, will continue to need architectural services. This projected mismatch between market demand and the supply of entry-level professionals should motivate the profession to plan accordingly. Here are a few crucial variables and their consequences.

Immigration

Increased immigration could make up some—but not all—of the predicted gap in the 18-year-old population. In compiling its new statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau generated a “high immigration” model that increases the foreign-born immigration population by 50%. Even with this significant hypothetical uptick, the high school graduate population is still anticipated to decline. However, after a low of 4 million in 2039, this population could rebound to 4.3 million by 2050. The U.S. is a popular destination for foreign-born architects-to-be, who can help diversify and broaden established industry perspectives. Universities can play a significant contributing role in conferring professional degrees to international applicants, streamlining their pathways to U.S. licensure. That said, the profession and academy have limited agency over immigration policy, which is subject to the whims of larger cultural and political currents.



Recruiting

Attracting a larger proportion of existing high school graduates to pursue architectural careers is another approach to diminishing the severity of the demographic cliff on the architectural profession. Compared with many fields of study, architecture is mainly absent in U.S. K-12 education and, therefore, misses an early opportunity to attract potential architects-to-be. Although the AIA tracks K-12 programs nationwide, like summer camps and workshops, architecture remains a peripheral subject and should be better integrated into the core K-12 curriculum. The rapid growth of the U.S. architectural services market, which is expected to expand by 4.2% between now and 2030, should be compelling news for students considering architectural careers—but this market growth will also exacerbate the projected talent pool gap. A successful push to incorporate architecture into K-12 curricula may be necessary to fill this gap, absent other factors.

Automation

One estimate suggests that AI could automate up to 37% of architecture and engineering tasks such as “data entry, basic customer service roles, and bookkeeping.” The idea of automation replacing human workers is an unpalatable prospect in many industries. Architecture, which relies heavily on creativity, nuanced problem-solving, and sophisticated interpersonal skills, is an unlikely territory for computation to replace people. The U.S. Career Institute corroborates this suggestion, ranking architecture among the jobs least vulnerable to automation risk. Nevertheless, busy firms that cannot fill vacancies may proactively pursue AI strategies to automate everyday tasks. Suppose automation can satisfy less glamorous operational needs (like data entry or bookkeeping). In this case, the fact that company employees might focus on the more creative aspects of the

business is a positive outcome. However, given the field’s relative lack of automatability, AI is unlikely to fill the gap resulting from a 15% or greater drop in entry-level employees.

Inaction

If the U.S. architecture profession does nothing to respond to the coming demographic shortfall, it faces the erosion of its market share from outside competition. Presuming the bullish growth projections hold for the industry, architecture will face an employee shortfall that will diminish its capacity to meet the corresponding demand. As a result, adjacent domestic fields such as engineering or construction management may fill the resulting gaps. Furthermore, U.S. clients may increasingly look to foreign firms in countries with healthy populations or less domestic demand to satisfy the need for U.S.-based design services. This is not a favorable scenario, and it includes much speculation. Nonetheless, because the demographic cliff prediction is based on the simple math of domestic births—a reality we can readily measure—we must fully anticipate this change.

Inaction, therefore, is not an acceptable response. Architecture must plan now for the coming talent shortfall.

Blaine Brownell, FAIA, is an architect and materials researcher. The author of the four Transmaterial books (2006, 2008, 2010, 2017), he is the director of the school of architecture at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

“The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that the architectural field will expand by 5% between 2022 and 2032, with an average of 8,200 new job openings annually. Despite the positive news, this prediction does not reconcile with a 15% dip in college graduates,

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How To Be An Exemplary Mentor

By Jack Whalen, AIA

To some, the idea of becoming a mentor may seem vague, and even unnecessary. “Why should I mentor?” “What should mentorship look like?” By the end of this article, I am confident you will have answers to all these questions and be an impactful and effective mentor to others.

First of all, what’s the purpose of mentorship? Shouldn’t emerging professionals be able to learn all the skills needed to be successful on the job? While there are many skills to be gained through professional practice, there are so many more skills a job will never teach you, such as:

- ***Learning how to position yourself for a promotion.***
- ***Learning how to ask for a raise.***
- ***Learning how to effectively network.***
- ***Learning how to be a powerful speaker and communicator.***

There are skills emerging professionals learn on the job through experience, and skills they develop outside the walls of an office. In service of helping an emerging professional develop the skills listed above, there are several types of mentor roles you can take on.

The three types of mentors

A mentor at your place of work

This can be through a formally-structured program at your company or more typical project relationships, such as a project manager and architectural designer. Your company may also have a “buddy” mentor system that helps new hires onboard and acclimate their new role. A mentor may be tasked with teaching a mentee any proprietary tasks/skills within your company, and to serve as a resource to answer any questions they may have.

This type of relationship is a great support system for new hires navigating their new role. For project-based mentorship, it is one of the primary methods professionals can use to grow their knowledge and skills, no matter what experience level you’re at. The most important professional relationships you will ever have are the people you work closest with.

A mentor within an organization

This could be through a professional organization such as AIA, or a mentor-based program such as the ACE Mentor Program of America, a high school program that mentors and educates students interested in architecture, construction, and engineering. This time is often volunteered and not part of a mentor’s full-time job.

These types of mentors are a great resource for career advice. Since the setting is out of the workplace, mentees are

in a safe space to ask more sensitive questions, including ones about pay and benefits, or talk about working conditions or professional relationships. These types of mentor-mentee relationships can be a great way for mentees to receive advice on navigating difficult professional hurdles.

An informal mentor

A more informal mentorship can be non-industry-based, covering life as well as career skills. If you’re just starting your career, reaching out to someone you admire for coffee or an informal chat can help solidify them as a mentor; if you’re farther along in your career, offer (solicited) support and advice to those who might just be starting out.

The A’s of mentorship

No matter which type of mentorship you may be interested in pursuing, mentorship, at its core, is universal. The keys to being an exemplary mentor can be broken down into five categories. I like to call these the “A’s” of mentorship. If you exhibit traits in each of these categories, you will be able to help your mentee accomplish any goals you set forth together.



Active

The responsibility of initiating in a mentor/mentee relationship isn't the sole responsibility of the mentee—it's on the mentor, too! Mentees may not always know when they need support. If you haven't heard from your mentee in some time, take the time to reach out and check in on them.

Think ahead in your mentee's career. What resources might they need in the future? How can you provide them with these resources, or guide them to someone (i.e., their next mentor) that can provide it to them? Think of the questions they might not even think to ask at this stage in their career that you wish you had thought about when you were in their shoes.

Lastly, be an active listener to your mentee. Acknowledge their struggles and hardships, and meet them where they're at. Something that worked for you in your situation may not work the same for them. Before providing advice, summarize what they've voiced to you and make sure you understand where they're coming from, and what they're really trying to say. Provide advice, not solutions. Your goal as a mentor is to help guide the ship, not be the one who steers it.

Available

A mentor needs to create an environment where a mentee feels comfortable reaching out and asking for support. We all get busy, so how do we increase our availability for our mentee?

Set a recurring meeting, such as a monthly check-in. There doesn't always have to be an agenda, and it gives both the mentor and mentee a set time they can rely on, and most importantly, plan around on their calendar!

If you have a schedule with availability at recurring times, make this availability known to your mentee. This gives the mentee the comfort of knowing they can reach out to you without interrupting something important.

In workplace mentorship roles, mentorship is often one of the first things on the chopping block when work gets busy. I argue that mentorship is critical to the success of your team and company and should never be put off or ignored.

Advocating

What do you do for your mentee when they're not in the room? This is especially critical in mentor relationships at work. To move with upwards mobility in a firm, it's crucial to have someone who can attest to a mentee's skills and capabilities "in the room where it happens." You can also serve as a referral for your mentee or write a letter of recommendation. Be the person who attests to and stands behind their brilliance.

Accessible

In addition to being available, ideal mentor relationships are within arms' reach. This is more easily accomplished in an office, but how about outside of the office?

If physical location or distance is a barrier, opt for a virtual meeting.

If your time is limited, consider breaking chats into smaller chunks of time, or hold them asynchronously.

Consider giving your mentee a direct line. It can help your connection feel more genuine. (If your mentorship is through work, you may not want to have that same level of availability. Always take care of yourself first, including maintaining a healthy work/life balance.)

Accountable

Don't just give your mentee advice and goals to shoot for; set goals for yourself, too! There is always the opportunity to grow, no matter what stage of career you're in. Late in his career on a way back from a client meeting, world-renowned architect Michael Graves said to an associate, "I finally know how to be an architect."

In addition to holding yourself accountable to your own goals, be accountable to your mentee. Be available when you say you are and put in the effort outside of meetings to support them. Mentorship is a responsibility, and your mentee puts great trust in your guidance and support.

Is mentorship right for you?

Are you ready to be a mentor? How do you know when you're ready? As Michael Graves said, it can take a lifetime to know everything about something. The point is, you don't need to know everything to be able to teach someone. Your experience matters and can be a valuable resource to others, whether they're one year behind you in their career or just beginning the journey.

We are all the culmination of all our mentors and wouldn't be who we are without them. We owe it to the countless people who taught us to teach the next generation, and to inspire them to be future mentors as well.

Jack Whalen, AIA, is a licensed architect and Regional Director for the ACE Mentor Program of America. Within his local community, Jack is a mentor for high school students in ACE Mentor Delaware and an adjunct instructor at Delaware Tech Community College and serves as the AIA Delaware 2024-25 Young Architect Representative.







How Should Architects Respond to the L.A. Conflagration?

By Duo Dickinson, FAIA

Los Angeles has experienced a hellish week-plus of wildfires that have destroyed thousands of buildings and uprooted countless lives. As of this writing, the fires continue to burn, and the death tolls are mounting. If the past is prologue, the brutal tragedies of this moment will be subjected to the wisdom of Rahm Emmanuel, who famously said, “You never want a serious crisis to go to waste.”

Finding opportunity in a disaster is just who we are. Humans survive wars and reform culture; we endure pandemics and discover medical miracles, and out of the ashes, we build. And architects are altogether human, so I do wonder: how soon will we start seeing stylish renderings of hip and thoughtful and ludicrous buildings pop up on the internet, proclaiming “A Resilient, Fireproof Future for the Pacific Palisades”?

Architects have often used fires, hurricanes, or wars as pretexts for their own aspirations. Of course we also use our skill and experience

to help mitigate the desperation caused by disasters. Or we use these traumatic events to promote ourselves. When the latter occurs, bad ideas and bad buildings result. A couple of generations after the orgy of building in post-World War II Europe, a number of high modernist disasters were torn down because they were unlivable, sometimes offensive to the communities they sprang from.

Most buildings are one-offs, isolated responses to circumstance. But disasters happen and they propel the desires of architects, even in the most dire circumstances. Edward Robbins and Paula Dietz in *Architectural Review*, addressing how some architects responded to 9/11, wrote: “Architects, with a few exceptions, rather than ask questions or undertake good works, began before the ashes of the World Trade Center were even cold to provide answers and to seek work.” Hurricane Katrina gave birth to thousands of “Katrina Houses.” But it also produced the playpen of architectural caprice with the

New Orleans “Make It Right” houses, where the designers’ need for self expression trumped the needs of the residents. Some of these homes were gifts of innovation, others were severe miscalculations.

The fire at Notre Dame Cathedral put a spotlight on the self-indulgent, tone deaf, ego projection of many architects. “The public’s response to the blaze was universal sorrow and fear,” I wrote previously in *Common Edge*. “One would think that architects could sense that cultural sadness and hold their aesthetic fire until the extent of the damage to Notre-Dame was known. But some couldn’t resist their worst impulses, proffering ‘solutions’ that did not respond to the loss of an icon, but took advantage of it—and so quickly that one wonders if there was other work to be done in these offices.” More than 100 architects, including Sir Norman Foster, offered up their visions for a “new” Notre Dame. What was eventually rebuilt was a re-making of the icon (minus the starchitecting).



ts Respond tion?

Just as doctors and nurses were at the center of the world during the pandemic, architects are likely to play key roles in the aftermath of the fire. There are hard realities that architects can help to define and create. Fire-resistant buildings will now become a necessity in Los Angeles, and that technology will have aesthetic and performance outcomes that will need refinement.

We adapt, we change, we survive. But the emotional devastation is always fresh, despite its familiarity—and if architects are useful that reality has to be part of their design perspective. Two things help people cope with emotional devastation: hope and listening. Architects often project hope with striking innovation and beauty. But as a profession, we have trouble listening. Fifteen years ago, I invited a group of architects to talk about doing work for a local not-for-profit. Almost instantly “great ideas” were launched by the architects, independent of the needs of the organization. No one listened or asked questions after we solicited their thoughts. The executive

director rolled his eyes. The meeting was about the designers, not the world that needed them.

The healing response to disaster is not about aesthetics, but about our common humanity. The power of hope is as real as the fear of destruction. We’re in a place where architects need to listen first and design second. We can make our designs more resilient, more efficient, more fire resistant, but the resiliency of humanity is predicated on embracing the pain and fragility that architects often ignore when the opportunity to build is thrust upon them.

When the Salvation Army responds to tragedy, are they proselytizing Christianity, or following its tenets? The core tenets of architecture—the three criteria of Vitruvius: “Fitness, Commodity and Delight”—seem especially important today. “Fitness” means that what architects do has relevance for the entire context of the culture and community. That should come before the “Delight” our profession is so obsessed by.

Yes, one-off attempts at genius can be captivating, but they’re meaningless in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. To truly be of service, architects will have to learn to listen.

Regardless of how they started, these fires are the result of 100 years of decisions about water, the ecology, and land use, and may be a glimpse at our collective future in a world distorted by climate change. The future shocks that we will all experience are unknowable. But at a time when the world’s buildings will be faced with unknowable threats, some perhaps as extreme as the fires raging in California, architects can have an important role. If they listen, first, design second. If architects simply project themselves into our buildings, we fail humanity. And I think that means we fail ourselves, too.

Duo Dickinson, FAIA has been an architect for more than 35 years. He is the author of 8 books and is an Adjunct Professor at The University of Hartford and teaches at the Building Beauty Program in Sorrento, Italy.

Reprint from CommonEdge.org

Achieving WELL

A Milestone in Workplace

By Debra Seay, AIA

As architects, we spend our days designing spaces that shape how people live, work, and interact. But sometimes the most meaningful changes start at home. That's why I'm particularly proud to announce that Amenta Emma Architects has achieved the WELL Equity Rating, marking a significant step in our ongoing commitment to creating healthier, more inclusive workplaces - starting with our own.

The WELL Equity Rating, launched in 2022 by the International WELL Building Institute, represents a more accessible approach to workplace wellness that emphasizes diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. While its parent certification, the WELL Building Standard, often requires substantial infrastructure investments, the Equity Rating focuses on practical, implementable strategies that can transform workplace culture



and employee well-being without extensive renovations.

Our journey toward achieving this rating has been both challenging and enlightening. As the leader of Amenta Emma's workplace studio, I've always believed that the best design solutions come from understanding the diverse needs of those who use the space. Going through this rating process has deepened that conviction, as we've had to look critically at our own workplace practices and environment.

One of the most valuable aspects of pursuing this rating was the employee feedback process. We conducted comprehensive surveys to understand how our team members experience our workplace and what changes they'd like to see. This wasn't just

about checking boxes - it was about truly listening to our people and understanding their needs. The insights we gained have already led to several meaningful improvements in our office environment, with more planned for implementation in 2025.

The changes we've made range from the physical to the cultural. We've enhanced our office with more flexible workspaces, allowing team members to choose environments that best

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Equity: Evolution



suit their working styles and needs. We've improved our lighting systems and incorporated more natural elements, creating a more inviting and energizing atmosphere. But perhaps more importantly, we've strengthened our commitment to inclusive policies and practices that ensure every team member feels valued and supported.

Navigating through the rating process has also profoundly influenced how we approach client projects. The principles we've implemented in our own office - from universal design features to wellness-focused amenities - have become integral to our recommendations for workplace clients. We've seen firsthand how thoughtful, inclusive design can transform the employee experience, and we're excited to share these insights with our clients.

As we look to the future, particularly in a time when many companies are requiring full-time office attendance, the principles

behind the WELL Equity Rating become even more crucial. The workplace is no longer just a place to complete tasks - it must be an environment that supports physical and mental well-being, fosters collaboration, and welcomes diversity in all its forms.

Achieving the WELL Equity Rating isn't the end of our journey - it's a milestone that marks our commitment to continuous improvement. We're already planning our next steps, including implementing additional employee suggestions and further enhancing our workplace to better serve our team's evolving needs.

For firms considering similar initiatives, I encourage you to explore the WELL Equity Rating. It offers a practical

framework for creating more inclusive, equitable workplaces that benefit everyone. The process might challenge you to think differently about your workplace, but the rewards - in terms of employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall well-being - are well worth the effort.

The future of workplace design lies in creating environments that truly serve all people. At Amenta Emma, we're proud to be leading by example, showing that with thoughtful design and genuine commitment to equity, we can create workplaces where everyone can thrive.



AIA Connecticut's Associate Representative Leads the Charge for Advocacy and Inclusion

Spotlighting impactful representation and engagement at the AIA NAC Annual Meeting in Nashville.



Ersa Llakmani, Associate AIA, represented the chapter at the AIA National Associates Committee (NAC) Annual Meeting in Nashville, TN, at the beginning of January.

Ersa is an Associate with a focus on Project Management at Harley Ellis Devereaux, an integrated design firm. She serves on the firm's JEDI Council and acts as a Facilitator in the Professional Development Group. She is passionate about creating inclusive environments where all voices are heard, recognizing the invaluable perspectives that drive innovation in the architecture profession.

During her trip to Nashville, Ersa joined Associate Representatives from across the United States for several days of learning, planning, and networking, despite snowy conditions at Camp Widgiwagan.

The group explored the roles and responsibilities of State/Territory Associate Representatives (STARs) and shared experiences, ideas, and strategies to enhance the NAC's role as a resource for associates at both the state and national levels.

She also became a member of the Advocacy Work Group (AWG), a dedicated team focused on amplifying the voices of associates. The AWG aims to create positive impact and increase accessibility to the profession and architectural licensure. Topics of discussion included:

- *Empowering associates to understand legislation, advocate for change, and prepare for leadership roles*
- *Strengthening outreach to educational institutions to promote architecture*

- *Promoting non-traditional paths to licensure*
- *Addressing access to study materials through discounted prices, grants, and study groups*
- *Analyzing benefit gaps in pay, PTO, and leave to foster equal opportunity*

As part of the AWG, she will participate in regular meetings throughout the coming year to further develop strategies supporting these initiatives.

In her role as the State/Territory Associate Representative, she continues to act as a resource for associates in Connecticut and serves as a liaison between the national and our state chapter.



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By Nancy Clayton AIA

Spread the Word! The CAF Scholarship Applications are Now Open

Do you know any architecture students in Connecticut? Let them know that applications for 2025 CAF Scholarships are due April 11th. Last year, the Connecticut Architecture Foundation awarded 10 scholarships, and since 1986 we have awarded over \$700,000 to architecture students.

Applications are due April 11, 2025 for:

- **Allan Dehar Memorial Scholarship**
- **CAF Scholarships**
- **Charles DuBose Memorial Scholarship**
- **Jane and Kevin Roche Scholarship**
- **Suzanne Sheng Memorial Scholarship**

To download Applications please go to CAFCT.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS

Applicants must have a connection to Connecticut, either as a current or long-time resident of Connecticut; or employment at a Connecticut architectural firm; or plans to attend an accredited college for architecture in Connecticut. Please review details on our website for specific academic accreditation program eligibility for all of our scholarships.

The Jane & Kevin Roche Scholarship and the CAF Scholarships give preference to students enrolled in a Connecticut based architectural program and/or Connecticut Residents.

The Charles DuBose Memorial Scholarship also gives preference

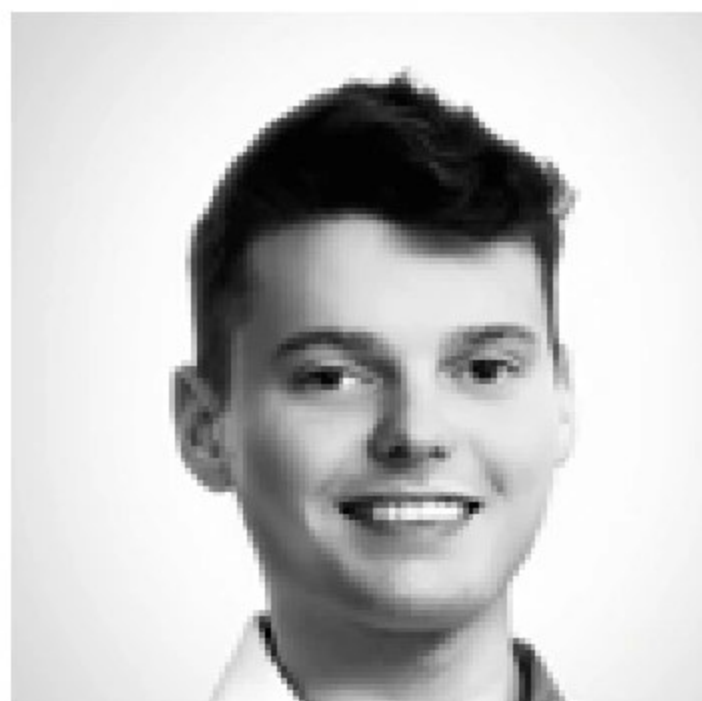
to students at the University of Pennsylvania, Georgia Institute of Technology, and the Fontainebleau summer program.

The Suzanne Sheng Memorial Scholarship includes preference to students in architectural programs at Cornell University.

The Allan Dehar Memorial Scholarship supports multiple pathways for architectural education, including vocational school, technical school, community college and part-time students.

2025 Applications for the Hoffmann Diversity Advancement Scholarship closed at the end of January, but please consider applying next year.

Connecticut Architecture Foundation 2024 Scholarship Recipients



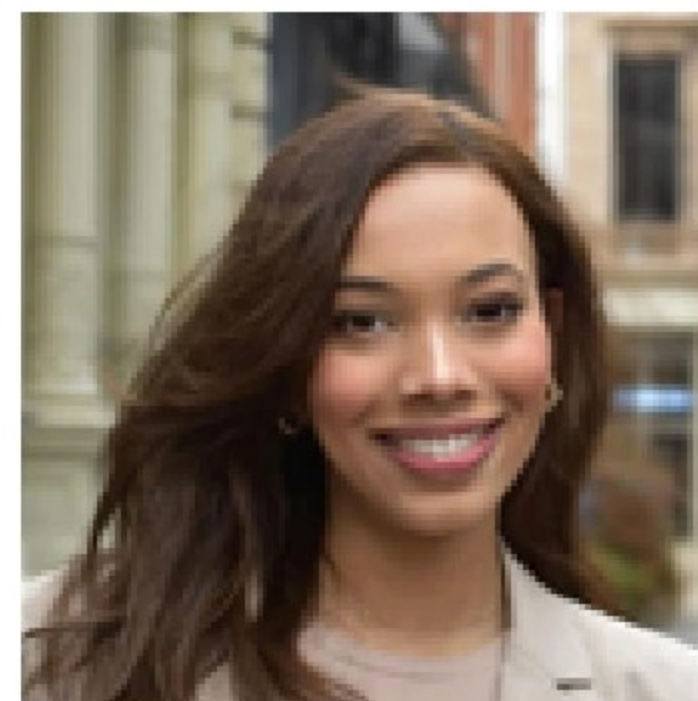
Jane and Kevin Roche
Scholarship
Stanislav Yarmoussik
Roger Williams University



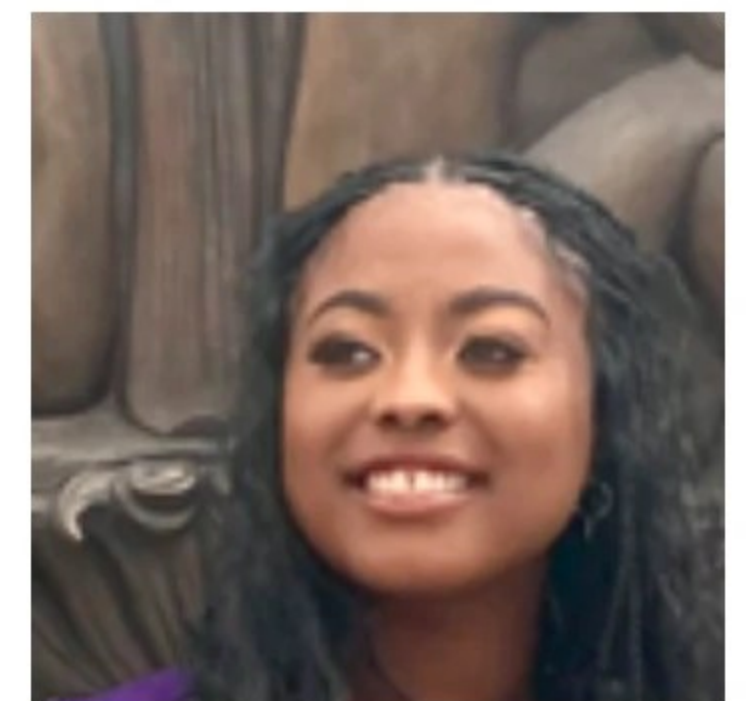
Charles DuBose
Memorial Scholarship
Mesut Sallah
Yale University



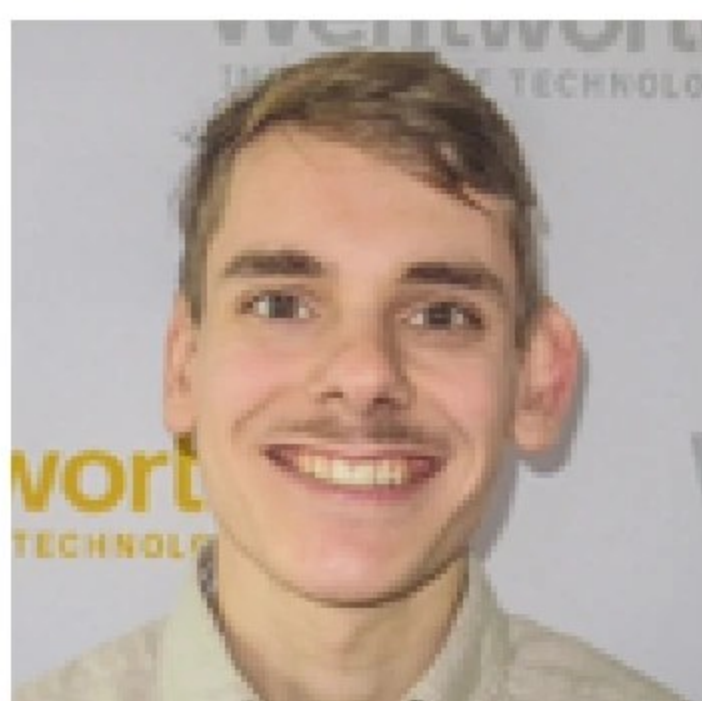
Suzanne Sheng
Memorial Scholarship
Isabella Fonseca
Northeastern University



Hoffmann Diversity
Advancement Scholarship
Alyssa Duran
NYC College of Technology



Allan Dehar
Memorial Scholarship
Samantha Barrett
University of Hartford



CAF Scholarship
Jacob Hanelius
Wentworth Institute



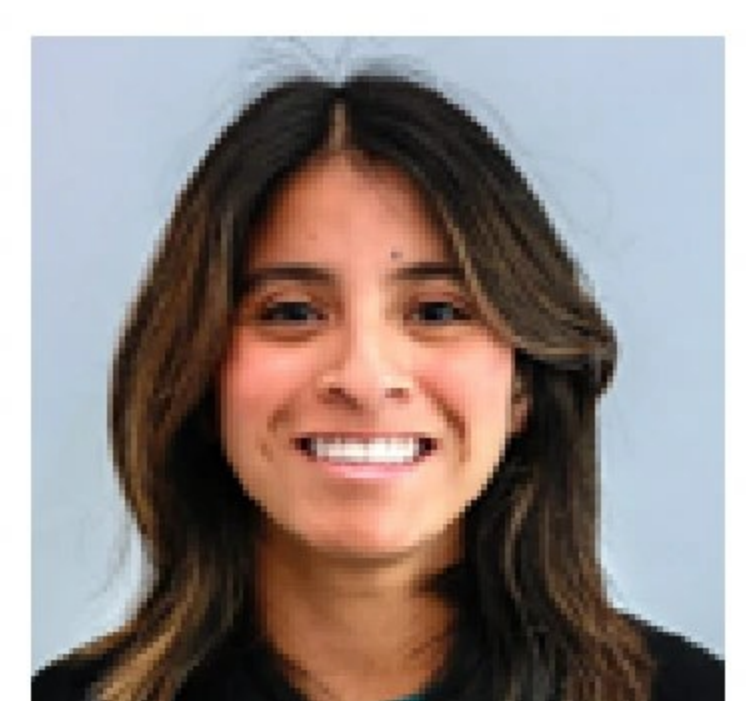
CAF Scholarship
Olivia Hoy
Yale University



CAF Scholarship
Ryan Koplin
SUNY Alfred State College



CAF Scholarship
Cornelius Pelzer
Yale University



CAF Scholarship
Sophia Rotar-Crowe
Roger Williams University

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Image: The Korean National Museum of Contemporary Art

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Amenta Emma Architects Promotions

Amenta Emma is pleased to announce the promotions of 3 team members in 2025. These team members are an integral part of Amenta Emma's architectural and design practice and have contributed to its work through design excellence and creating valuable client relationships.

Adam Palmer, AIA, CPHC, has been promoted to Senior Associate. Since joining the firm in 2023, Adam has quickly become an integral part of our firm, cultivating exceptional client relationships, skillfully managing multiple projects with ease, and fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Myles Brown says, "Adam has consistently demonstrated outstanding dedication to our clients and our team, and his sense of humor and approachable demeanor make him a valued leader in the firm. We're thrilled to see him step into this well-deserved role."

Robert Larson, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, has been promoted to Director of Technical Production. Throughout his career, Rob has demonstrated unwavering dedication to excellence, consistently delivering thorough, client-focused solutions. Tony Amenta says, "Rob's passion for exploring and mastering new technologies has elevated our firm's capabilities, and his mentorship has inspired growth and innovation within



our team. We look forward to seeing his leadership continue to shape the future of our technical production and client success."

Tim Reagan, AIA, has been promoted to Associate. Tim's technical expertise and collaborative approach make him a trusted leader in both the studio and the field. Eric Weyant says, "Tim is a fierce client advocate who is dedicated to delivering

projects of the highest quality. He strengthens our commitment to excellence and innovation and promotes a culture of learning and growth through mentorship. We are excited to see him continue to elevate our practice through his expanded leadership role."

Please join us in congratulating them!

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The S/L/A/M Collaborative (SLAM) Promotions

The S/L/A/M Collaborative (SLAM) is pleased to announce the promotion of three individuals to Associate Principal: Matt Ciaglo, AIA, Dane Hawthorne, AIA, LEED AP, and Jacob Vagts, AIA. Additional promotions within the firm include six staff members to Senior Associate and thirteen staff members to Associate.



Matt Ciaglo, AIA, Associate Principal

Dane Hawthorne, AIA, LEED AP, Associate Principal

Jacob Vagts, AIA, Associate Principal



Six NEW Senior Associates

Boston – Greg Hill
 Denver – Joshua Pendleton
 Glastonbury – Craig DeJong, Emily Leyland
 Orlando – Dajuane Thomas, Barbara Vallella



Thirteen NEW Associates

Atlanta – Austin Richard
 Denver – Steven Niele
 Glastonbury 1 – Jeehyun (JC) Choi, Mark Fanelli

Glastonbury 2 – Abigail Ciaglo, Ryan Miller
 Iowa – Lee Hanus
 Landscape – Ellen Fallon-Senechal
 Los Angeles – Cindy Liu

Orlando – Kelly Kleppin
 Providence – Jeffrey Bento
 Structural – Jamie Littlefield
 CS – Greg Losee



AIA RESPONSE TO EXECUTIVE ORDERS THAT AFFECT OUR PROFESSION

Climate Leadership and the Paris Agreement

The United States' withdrawal from the Paris Agreement undermines progress toward a sustainable, zero-carbon built environment. Because of AIA's involvement and architects' critical role in reducing emissions and enhancing resilience, global efforts like the Buildings Breakthrough Agenda were launched with the goal to achieve near-zero emissions by 2030.

AIA will continue to advance climate action by advocating for design excellence and effective policies and offering resources to empower our members. We will remain an active Observer Organization of the UNFCCC, ensuring that our members' voices are heard in the global effort.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Architecture

Ending federal EDI programs disrupts progress toward a profession that reflects the diversity of the communities architects serve. Equity and inclusion are essential to fostering creativity, innovation, and design excellence. AIA urges the White House to align merit-based opportunities with DEI initiatives to ensure fair recognition and competition for all.

AIA champions a diverse profession as our association strengthens architects' ability to design inclusive spaces and ensure fairness in professional opportunities. The latest AIA demographics report highlights our progress over the last decade: underrepresented racial and ethnic groups grew 5.7 points to 17.9%; and women architects rose from 16.1% to 25.7%. These gains reflect AIA's commitment to equity and representation.

Understanding diverse human contexts is fundamental to responsive design and AIA strives to become a more representative institute in our pursuit of creating a more equitable, just, resilient, and healthy built environment.

GSA Guiding Principles for Federal Projects

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is aware of the recent Memorandum for the Administrator of General Services (GSA) regarding The White House's request to review the GSA's Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture. AIA is extremely concerned about any revisions that remove control from local communities; mandate official federal design preferences, or otherwise hinder design freedom; and add bureaucratic hurdles for federal buildings.

AIA supports the GSA's Guiding Principles, and we support freedom in design. AIA's members believe the design of federal buildings must first be responsive to the people and communities who will use those buildings. Our federal buildings across the country must reflect America's wealth of culture, rich traditions, and unique geographic regions. AIA has strong concerns that mandating architecture styles stifles innovation and harms local communities. The current Design Excellence Program at GSA, which is based on the Guiding Principles of Federal Architecture, achieves these goals and should be protected, not revised.

AIA will monitor and participate in the process laid out in the memo and provide feedback from AIA's over 100,000 members comprising licensed, practicing architects who live and work in every community across the country.



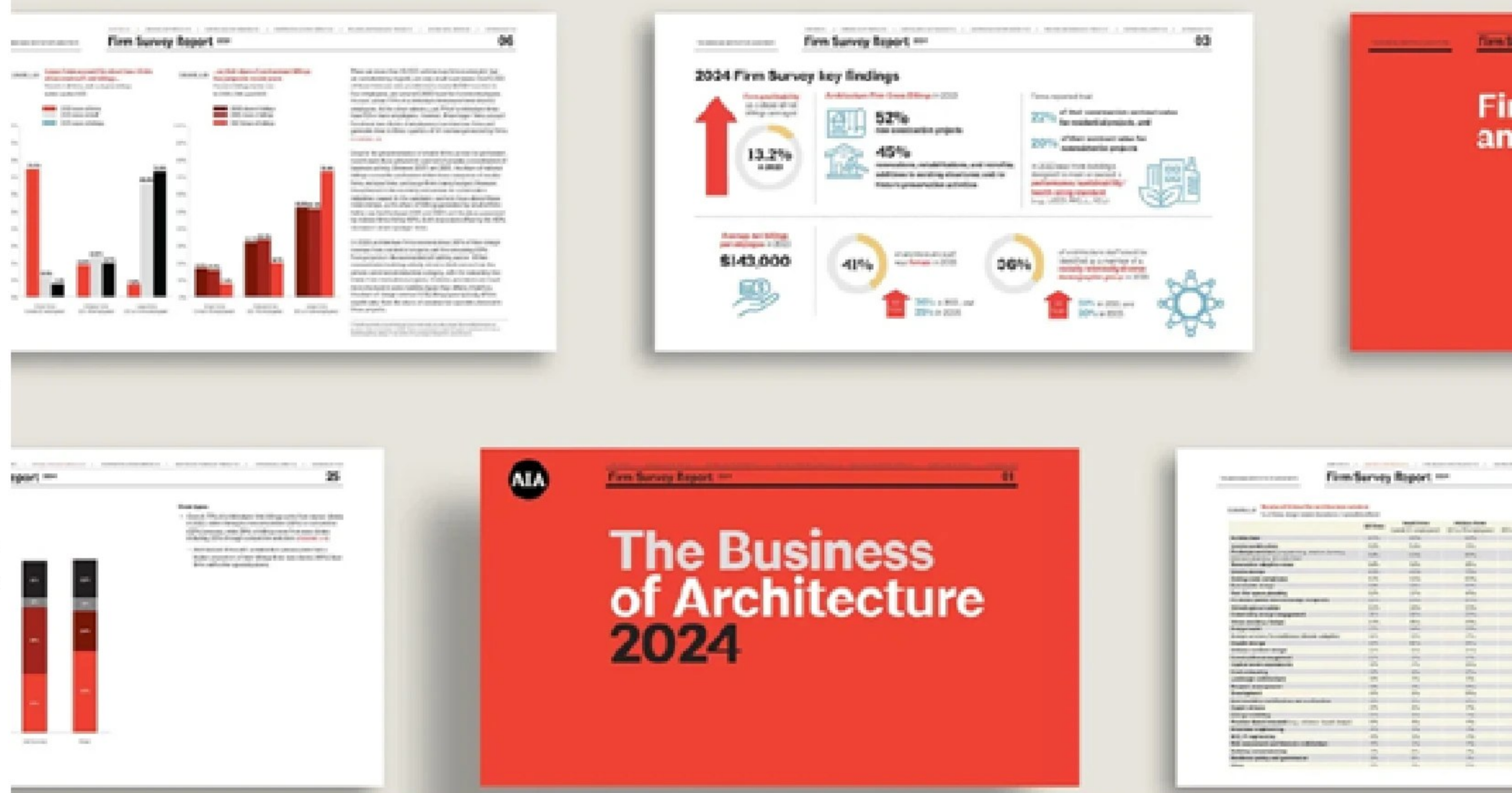


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- Firm usage of AI.
 - Information on ownership transition, business, and business continuity plans.
 - The share of firms with a sustainability or client action plan.
 - Changes in project types since the end of the pandemic.
 - The types of firms that are conducting Post-Occupancy Evaluations on their projects.
 - The share of firms using BIM and performance simulation/energy modeling for billable projects and how much revenue comes from these projects.
- This report is [FREE for AIA members](#); use discount code SURVEY at checkout.



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FEB

- 13** AIA Connecticut Board of Directors Meeting
- 14** Women in Architecture (WIA) Meeting
- 17** Office Closed- Presidents Day
- 19** AIA CT Code Series: Fire Resistance for Structural Elements and Assemblies
- 27** Committee on Design

MAR

- 5** Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) Knowledge Community Meeting
- 6** Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting
- 10** Committee on the Environment (COTE) Meeting
- 12** Small Firms Exchange (SFx) Meeting
- 13** AIA Connecticut Board of Directors Meeting
- 14** Women in Architecture (WIA) Meeting
- 20** Central Connecticut State University Library Addition: Reducing Embodied Carbon
Emerging Professionals (EP) Community Meeting
- 25** 2025 Wild West Bowling Invitational

AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

Series:	Scales	No.
Item Number:		
Product Name:		

Procrastinator

Days

Virtual Programming
April 8th-11th



Have a HSW cutting-edge, relevant virtual program that will inspire, educate, and inform the AIA CT membership?

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