

Many of today's mid-career architects can recall a time when internship meant going it alone. Before the Intern Development Program (IDP), they remember it was "sink or swim." Such a lamentable state of affairs must seem strange to the 15 members of the 2005-2006 IDP Coordinating Committee (IDPCC), for they are all about helping interns in every conceivable way.

A Few Good Volunteers: IDP Coordinating Committee

by Bill Houseman

The 15 members of the IDP Coordinating Committee (IDPCC) serve on an intra-professional committee comprising no fewer than eight collateral organizations with all sharing the same goal: to provide emerging professionals with a structured, comprehensive training program that is second to none. Besides the most familiar collaterals—the AIA, NCARB, ACSA, and AIAS—the committee roster includes representatives from the Council of Architectural Component Executives (CACE), NCARB's member board executives, the AIA National Associates Committee (NAC), and the Society of Design Administration (SDA).

Given this cat's cradle of acronymic bodies, it is not surprising that the IDPCC operates at a level of collegiality unique to the profession. From its earliest days in the 1970s, it has been led by co-chairs who represent NCARB and the AIA. The rationale for shared leadership derives from the fact that, among the various collaterals, NCARB and the AIA provide essential services to emerging professionals, beginning at their entry point into the IDP process and extending throughout their

career as practicing architects. This year's co-chairs are Andrew W. Prescott, representing NCARB, and Ronald J. Battaglia representing the AIA.

In both spirit and letter, collegiality defines the actual working life of the committee. A state coordinator serves the internship interests of all state coordinators throughout the country. An educator coordinator similarly represents the coordinators at all U.S. schools of architecture. And so it goes, with a student leader representing all students, two interns all interns, members of state boards representing NCARB's 55 member boards, and so on.

Asked if co-chairing the IDPCC's disparate makeup wasn't akin to herding cats, NCARB's Prescott replied with a quip and a chuckle. "Well," he said, "you've got to run a tight ship." Continuing in a serious vein, he said, "We come to our meetings with a very tight agenda. We stick to that agenda, and when you've got a goal, you focus on what has to be done to get there."

The committee began its work this year with an agenda that was largely shaped by a mountain of research generated earlier this year by several ambitious initiatives. First, the committee had the results of a landmark study, known as the IDP Evaluation Final Report, which was developed collaboratively by the IDPCC last year. Its aim was to provide "a holistic and transparent evaluation of the current IDP." Then there were the findings of a 2005 Internship and Career Survey and those from the 2005 Internship Conference, held just a month before the IDPCC's first meeting.

Of its charges this year, the top priority calls for IDPCC to use the data from the survey and conference sources "to review the 'action items' and 'timeline' contained in the Evaluation Final Report and prepare specific recommendations for program elements in need of evaluation by NCARB and [the] AIA." Simply put, this means the committee is obliged to review the 37 original program elements and to winnow them to what it deems an essential few. Those few will be recommended to both NCARB and AIA leadership for implementation as top priorities for action this year.

The sophisticated range of program elements currently being considered by the IDPCC dramatizes just how far the training of emerging professionals has advanced. To name but a few of the objectives within the program elements: the profession is expected to "provide venues and resources for training IDP State and Educator Coordinators"; to "support a mentor network for emerging professionals"; to "ensure that an intern's experience is being supervised and assessed on a daily basis"; and to "recognize the value of training acquired in alternate settings to achieve core competencies."

And what's truly amazing is that the profession now boasts a national system through which emerging professionals may be assured an unexcelled training experience, that it's theirs for the taking. And most amazing of all, it's a system run by a few good volunteers. **DC**