

From the time she was a teenager, Marnique Heath knew she wanted to be an architect. By developing a focused approach to her education, IDP, and the ARE, she achieved her dream of licensure.

## From Intern to Supervisor

By Marnique Heath, AIA, LEED® AP



*Marnique Heath, AIA, LEED® AP joined STUDIOS Architecture in Washington, DC as an intern in 1998. Soon after completing the Intern Development Program and receiving her license, she became a supervisor. Less than ten years after entering the firm as an intern, Heath was named Associate Principal. Her story shows how setting career goals helped propel her to a leadership role in her firm.*

Ever since I can remember, I've enjoyed creative activities and hobbies. As a young teenager, I used to create collages with photographs from fashion and design magazines and then add my own sketches. Initially I wanted to pursue interior design. When I was about 16, I had the chance to do an externship in an architecture firm owned by a family friend. While I was only exposed to the basics of the profession, the experience made me decide that architecture was for me.

During my last few years of high school, my parents and I visited several architecture schools and talked to many people about four-year and five-year programs. Although I was fairly certain that I would follow through with architecture, I thought it would be beneficial to focus on liberal arts courses during my first few years of study. The four-year degree allowed me this opportunity. I had a great high school guidance counselor who encouraged me to attend the University of Virginia (UVA).

I took her advice and went to UVA where I received a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture in 1996 and a Masters in Architecture in 1998. After completing the education requirements for licensure, I established an NCARB Record, and began looking for an internship.

### FINDING AN INTERNSHIP

Because of my interest in interior design, I decided to look for an internship with a firm that did both architecture and interiors. This is what led me to STUDIOS Architecture in Washington, DC. During my interview I made it clear that I intended to complete my IDP training and get my license. I was pleased to learn that the firm paid for testing fees, but this didn't play a major roll in my decision to accept the internship.

What I appreciated about STUDIOS was the fact that the firm was organized into studios that focused on each project, bringing together the best skill sets for that particular project. There was no distinction between architects and interior designers. Even as an intern, I was exposed to many different aspects of many different types of projects.

During my first few years of working I focused more on transitioning from academia to professional practice rather than on completing my IDP training units. After about three years, I realized that I had a variety of on-the-job experiences that would likely satisfy many of the required IDP training units. It was around that time that I began to backtrack my hours using my firm's timesheets and filling out the IDP forms. Because I didn't start tracking my hours until the third year, it took me about five years to complete IDP. Had I started sooner, I probably would have been able complete IDP in less time.

### MAKING AN ARE PLAN

By my fifth year of practice, I had completed IDP and was issued a testing number. Before starting to take the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®), I talked to several people who were also taking the ARE and determined an order for taking each division. I took the tests that I thought would be simplest and those that would help me prepare for future tests first. Becoming a licensed architect had been a goal of mine for such a long time that, as soon as I receive my Authorization to Test, I focused only on completing the exam. Within a year, I had taken and passed all nine divisions.

### BECOMING A SUPERVISOR

Shortly after obtaining my license, I began to take on the role of project leader and had a voice in manpower decisions within the firm. In this leadership role, I naturally began to fill the role of supervisor and mentor to younger staff members.

Now that I am a supervisor, I make sure to meet with my interns on a regular basis not only to assess their progress but also to find out if there is any way I can better assist them. As someone who had recently completed IDP, I am able to address their concerns about the IDP process, discuss how to obtain credits in areas needed, and place them on projects that satisfy their needs. I also know how important it is to stay abreast of any new developments in IDP and ARE. I've

found that the Emerging Professional's Companion (EPC) is a great tool that helps me guide my interns.

My advice to architecture students is to start an NCARB Record while you're still in school so that you can take advantage of the reduced fees. When you are interviewing, find out if the firm helps with exam preparation and if they pay for some or all of the IDP and exam expenses. You should also learn what type of incentives they have for completing IDP and getting licensed.

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Look for a firm that expresses concern about your professional development. Try to find one that has an organized mentoring program. If possible, talk to other interns within the firm to determine what their experience has been and if their needs and goals have been met.

When selecting an internship, you should consider the type of professional experience and the types of project that most interest you, as well as the size of the firm. Large firms tend to divide their staff into departments

and people tend to specialize. Often interns are given limited exposure to the various responsibilities within the firm. In small firms, interns typically are exposed to a variety of experiences, but the variety of project types and sizes can be limited.

One of the reasons I chose STUDIOS for my internship is that it has consciously chosen to stay small enough to remain nimble. This allows interns the opportunity to craft their own experiences and to gain a wide variety of experiences. Another thing I like about my firm is that titles are earned on the basis of performance. I started as an intern 1998,

and am now an Associate Principal. As part of the firm's leadership, my responsibilities include serving as project leader, managing client relationships, supervising junior staff members, and developing new business opportunities. I'm also a member of the American Institute of Architects' Emerging Professional Advisory Committee, served on an IDP panel at the 2007 NCARB Annual Meeting, and was recently appointed to the mayor's Green Collar Jobs Advisory Council in Washington, DC. **DC**

### RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR SUPERVISORS

As Marnique Heath mentioned, it is important for supervisors to be aware of developments in the Intern Development Program (IDP) and the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®). The latest requirements for these programs are available by downloading the *IDP Guidelines* and *ARE Guidelines* from [www.ncarb.org/publications/freepubs.html](http://www.ncarb.org/publications/freepubs.html). The Emerging Professional's Companion (EPC) is another useful tool Heath uses to help interns develop practice competence. It is available through the EPC web site: [www.epcompanion.org/](http://www.epcompanion.org/). Links to additional resources can be found at [www.aia.org/ep\\_toolsforfirms](http://www.aia.org/ep_toolsforfirms).