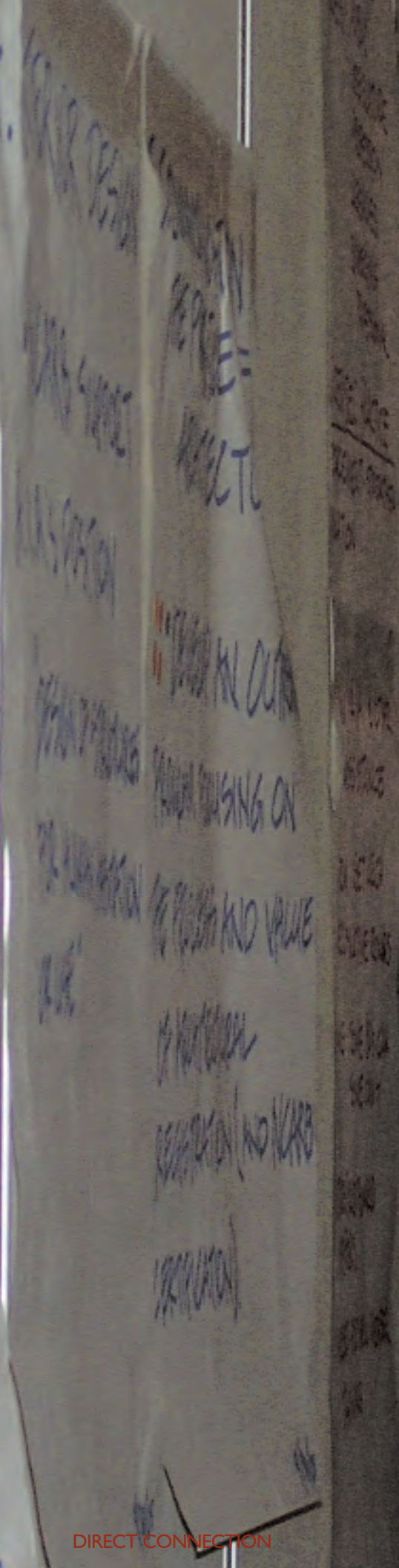




NCARB's Visionary Strategic Plan Debuts

by Bill Houseman

Imagine what a lift it will be when architects may hold a national license. Imagine too, how beneficial it will be when the last serious impediment to reciprocity is removed and all Blue Cover transmittals are accepted by all NCARB member boards. Once scarcely thinkable, these incredible milestones may be reached sooner than anyone might have guessed—judging from the commitment NCARB has made to jump-start its future through the provisions of its new Strategic Plan.



Excerpts From James P. Cramer's Address to Delegates at the 2005 Annual Meeting

"The context for the practice of architecture is changing, and the context for the responsibility to oversee health, safety, and welfare is also changing. So we're in a time of paradigm shifts. And just like, you know, buildings have life cycles, just like people have life cycles, the responsibility here for these life cycles is going to be ever increasing.

"We were asked at the Greenway Group to do a critical analysis, an objective evaluation, of your existing Strategic Plan. We did an environmental scan of all of the issues that are affecting the worlds in which you have responsibility. We looked at pivot points—in other words, the places that are changing in government and in the profession. We also looked at the regulatory bodies of knowledge on policy issues, and here we looked at a lot of other organizations that have licensing authority in this country and in other countries. We also did a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis with state and regional leaders.

"We looked at core values that feature the invention process, which I think was satisfying for all involved. The draft plan we have now really can lead to an evolution of NCARB. Someone asked me last night if this is going to be revolutionary. It's not so much revolutionary, but you're leading an evolution. There are some significant changes I think you're going to be feeling pretty positive about.

"We wrote a short paragraph in the last issue of *DesignIntelligence*, which I would like to share with you at this time: 'State and national governments will enact new laws to improve health, safety, and welfare and vastly improved social well-being. NCARB and other design licensing authorities will take on new relevancy as the power of place comes to be better understood. The experience of well designed spaces will be credited with better learning and increasing brain functionality. Architectural spaces will be credited with healing and emotional rejuvenation. Architecture will shape the social experience and become a force to better the entire human experience.'"

Characterized as a "living document," the Strategic Plan has been crafted "to grow and evolve as NCARB and our member boards continue to do more, faster." The Plan leaves no doubt about the Council's determination to do more. In addition to highlighting the Council's first-ever expressed commitment to achieving national licensure and unfettered reciprocity, it identifies no fewer than 42 other "goals and strategies" to be aggressively pursued. Their scope ranges from strictly personalized service—for which NCARB aims to be an organizational "role model"—to a global perspective—where NCARB intends to spearhead the "portability of credentials on a global scale," thereby furthering its own mission worldwide, to protect the public health, safety, and welfare.

SUBSTANTIVE RESULTS, SPECIFIED TIME FRAMES

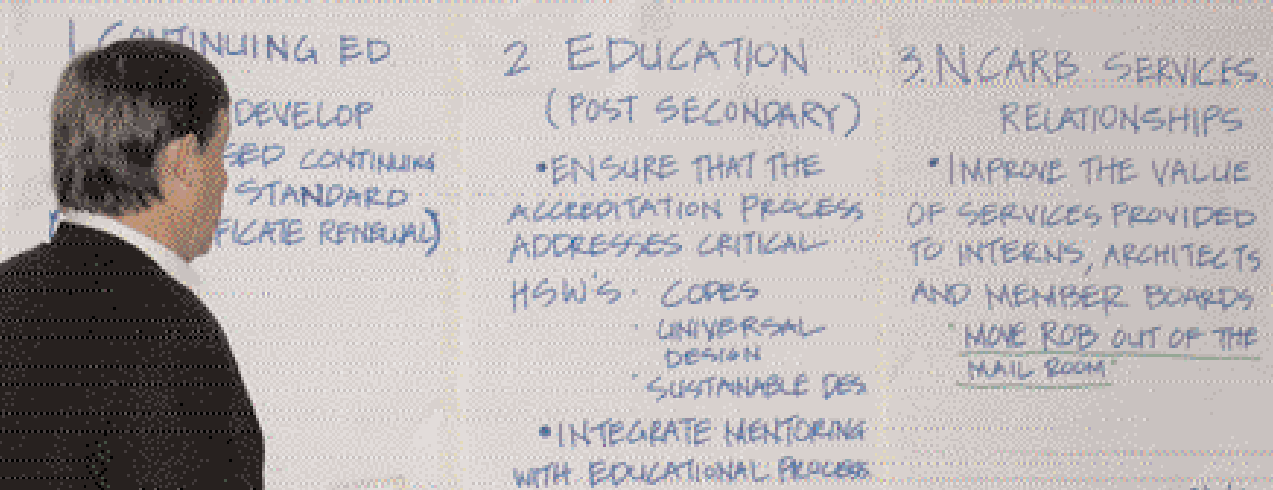
As for doing things faster, the Plan acts as a deliberate cattle prod. It commits NCARB to achieving substantive results within specified time frames. For instance, it calls for NCARB to eliminate remaining impediments to reci-

procity by 2010. And, adding a marketing aspect to the mix, it encourages the Council to "grow" its key constituencies. For example, the Plan proposes a 10 percent increase in the number of Certificate holders by July 1, 2006, and a 20 percent increase by July 1, 2008. Similarly, it sets a goal for increasing the number of "students and graduates involved in IDP" by 10 percent per year over the next three years.

CRAFTING A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

What is at least as remarkable as the Strategic Plan's ambitious agenda is the process that produced it. Contrary to the bureaucratic axiom that warns the bigger the committee the more diluted the results, the new Plan owes its sharp focus to a multitude of views that were solicited, and listened to, during its development.

To begin with, the Plan's proponents were not starting from scratch when they set to work, a year and a half ago. NCARB already had a Strategic Plan, the product of an initiative carried out in 1998 under then-President Ann



LEFT: REGIONAL CHAIR, GREG ERNY, PRESENTS HIS GROUP'S IDEAS.

RIGHT: JIM CRAMER OF THE GREENWAY GROUP KEEPS CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS FOCUSED ON THE "BIG PICTURE."

FAR-RIGHT: GROUP MEMBERS DISCUSS THEIR THOUGHTS BEFORE PRESENTING TO THE CONFERENCE.

Chaintreuil's leadership. That earlier effort was conceived of as a 10-year plan, but as the Council's current president, H. Carleton Godsey, explains, "Most of the action items were completed in a relatively short period. The goal of the update is to refine parts of the plan that remain viable and to boldly look at other opportunities."

Strategic Plan Contributors

The fact that the 2005 Plan identifies bold opportunities across the entire spectrum of NCARB's constituents and stakeholders reflects a leadership decision to collect the most diversified opinions on where NCARB should be headed. The Council's actual "workforce" was enlisted to help shape the Plan, which drew contributors far beyond the Board's 12 officers and directors. In fact, no interested party, within or even well beyond NCARB's immediate sphere of interests, appears to have been overlooked. Contributors to the process included the Council's 55 member board chairs, leaders of NCARB's other committees, representatives from the profession's collateral organizations, representatives from other professional regulatory groups (including those of medicine, law, nursing, and engineering), architecture students, newly licensed architects, mid-career professionals, and Council staff.

The Greenway Group

Work began in June 2004, and because the Plan is meant to function as a "living" document the fine-tuning continues to this day. One of the Board's first actions was to select a management consultant that would facilitate the planning and coordinate the

research and development activities of Council staff, the Board, and the consultant itself. The Board chose the Greenway Group, whose CEO, James P. Cramer, is widely known as a former chief executive of the AIA and as an authority on the complex issues linking architecture, the construction industry, and the public at large.

Acting as "an external objective voice," the Greenway Group undertook a wide range of inquiries that were designed to expand the Council's understanding of those "bold opportunities" alluded to by President Godsey. Among its many initiatives, the Greenway Group developed and administered a survey to elicit the points of view of an "external constituency" beyond NCARB's specific stakeholders. It studied factors affecting the future of the profession, examining "micro and macro trends that have the potential to disrupt and transform the architecture profession in the future." Greenway also evaluated NCARB's "existing performance"; conducted an environmental analysis of the "changing paradigms of architecture and design, government, the economy, and societal needs of the future"; and updated the Council's "body of knowledge on government, regulatory, and policy issues."

Commenting at the 2005 Annual Meeting in Miami Beach on the scope of his firm's participation in the development of the Strategic Plan, Jim Cramer said, "We studied over 100 trends affecting the design professions and state governments, and we narrowed them down to 35. Then we narrowed those down to 15. We did a lot of talking with people over at

the Royal Institute of British Architects, and we also interviewed people in Canada." Additionally, Greenway interviewed regulators from 29 U.S. jurisdictions "in depth, meaning an hour or more per interview."

An Ongoing Process

The refining and polishing process goes on. Godsey and Cramer presided at overflow Annual Meeting workshops, where member board delegates added a superfluity of ideas to fresh "wish lists." And in October, the Plan was given further scrutiny by the member board chairs at their triennial conference (see *related story on page 18*).

In summarizing the rejuvenated Plan, circa 2005, the Board's report at the Annual Meeting concluded, "Our process has been open, participatory, candid, and action-packed. We participated in an environmental scan that caused us to take stock of driving forces that are affecting our future. We examined how other organizations are planning for success in the 21st century and how our member boards understand their priorities in a time of present and future flux, to provide an outlook of change and new relevance." **DC**



NCARB Strategic Plan Goals and Strategies

NCARB will implement a service leadership plan to position the organization as a role model for delivering excellent personalized service.

- Strengthen rapport with and become more transparent, accessible, and responsive to member boards and other constituents, related professions, and the public.
- Develop a plan for more rapport and transparency with constituents.
- Continually review and improve benchmarks for routine communications within 48 hours.
- Evaluate the timing and frequency of the Member Board Chairs Conference and the MBE Workshop.
- Conduct focus group(s) of Certificate holders to discuss service needs.
- Regularly re-energize the NCARB staff through team building to enhance customer service.
- Provide a communications and education plan for member boards.
- Audit the quality and timeliness of NCARB services through periodic, personal communications.

NCARB will more effectively explain its mission and programs to its constituents and the public.

- Assess and document all communication methods by December 2005.
- Create and annually update a communications plan.
- Explore effectiveness and cost for all communication options.
- Expand web-based FAQ for each constituent group.
- Communicate the value of the ARE and licensure.

NCARB will continually upgrade all technology, databases, and the Customer Information System to improve efficiency and responsiveness.

- Adopt process changes enabled by emerging technology to optimize efficiency and responsiveness.
- Consider use of open-source technology, where feasible.
- Complete work on the unified database.
- Investigate web-based options for all Council transactions.

NCARB will uphold the reliability, validity, and defensibility of the ARE.

- Expand training for item writers to improve the content of the ARE.
- Compare and contrast the core competencies of IDP with the ARE Test Specification to better inform each program.
- Introduce and deliver innovative testing methodologies to maintain a fresh and forward-thinking examination.
- By 2007, reconfirm and update the 2001 Practice Analysis.
- Research, obtain, and evaluate relevant data on the timing of candidate eligibility for the ARE.

NCARB will develop a plan to achieve universal acceptance of the Certificate as a national credential.

- Impediments to reciprocity will be targeted and individually eliminated by 2010, allowing for unanimous acceptance of all Blue Cover transmittals.
- Increase Certificate holders by 10 percent by FY07 and by 20 percent by FY09.
- Develop a plan to establish a procedure to implement a national license in concert with individual state registration.

NCARB will expand rapport and communication with other professional organizations to encourage that emerging professionals be recognized and respected for their knowledge and abilities.

- Increase the number of students and graduates involved in IDP by 10 percent per year over the next three years.
- Encourage the profession's respect and understanding of the value of the emerging professional through collaborative mentoring programs.
- Utilize the results of periodic evaluations and conferences in order to continually improve the internship experience.

NCARB will evaluate its role in Continuing Professional Development.

- Determine if the Council's mission supports providing a Continuing Professional Development program.
- Research and investigate current development and delivery models.
- Study standardization of all Continuing Professional Development across all the par-

icipating jurisdictions.

- Explore whether Continuing Professional Development should be required for the renewal of the Council Certificate.

NCARB will provide informed and responsive governance.

- Review and evaluate representation, board composition, leadership development, and succession.
- Work with member boards toward increased diversity.
- Work with member boards to create a leadership development plan.
- Add a Board seat for a public member (not a member board member).

NCARB's leadership on international initiatives will continue to be a priority. Portability of credentials on a global scale that furthers NCARB's health, safety, and welfare mission is a primary responsibility.

- Inform the profession, construction industry partners, and the public of the importance of global reciprocity.
- Use NCARB's policies and processes as the foundation for all international negotiations and agreements.

NCARB will be the center for registration data and regulatory policy information for the architecture profession.

- Determine, collect, and evaluate appropriate relevant data.
- Interpret data and develop appropriate distribution strategies.

NCARB will increase its impact on the HSW of the built environment by anticipating trends and seeking collaborations with all in our industry.

- Identify relevant organizations impacting health, safety, and welfare, and establish participatory relationships.
- Consider a "Futures" Summit in September 2007 with all leading industry organizations.
- Consider working with the Design Build Institute of America—special paper on appropriate methods of design (April 2006).
- Assess industry trends for Strategic Plan update annually.