



LENORE M. LUCEY, FAIA
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, NCARB

As the architectural profession strives to better understand itself, there has been an outpouring of data-collection efforts. So that we can fully inform ourselves and the public, the five architectural collaterals—the AIA, AIAS, ACSA, NAAB, and NCARB—are working together to develop a comprehensive look at what information, who collects it now, and/or who should collect it in the future.

Letter From the Executive Vice President

by Lenore M. Lucey, FAIA

There have been many surveys taken in the past few years, including some affiliated with NCARB. While surveys can provide a picture of the profession, in many instances the information they provide cannot be adequately confirmed as accurate statistics. In addition, there always are scores of experts willing to put “myth-information” in the public realm. So what are some of the most prevalent “myths” versus “information?”

Myth: *It takes four years of employment, or longer, on average to complete IDP.*

Information: Based on NCARB’s computerized records on IDP employment, the reality is an average of three years and nine months years of employment. We all recognize that there are many reasons (graduate school, sabbaticals, etc.) why a person may not become eligible for the ARE beyond the actual IDP work-time; however, interns generally are completing IDP in a reasonable amount of time. The shortest completion time in the computer is two years, four months. And currently we still have one intern who has yet to complete IDP after 10 years in the system. At this time, there are more than

15,000 active IDP records in our system, including just shy of 5,000 new records in the 2005 reporting period.

Myth: *It takes more than four years to complete the ARE, with some not completing the exam 20-plus years after starting.*

Information: The average time to complete the ARE is 2.3 years. The shortest time for completion of the ARE since its delivery in computer format is five days. Yes, there still are a few people who have not completed the ARE after 20-plus years of eligibility. However, most of those candidates have not taken a division since the implementation of the computer-delivered ARE.

What we at NCARB are seeing is an organized process, involving scheduling a division several months in advance, studying, taking the division, then scheduling the next. In part, we believe this concentrated effort, division by division, has resulted in a significantly higher possibility of passing a division on the first try. Approximately 40 percent of all eligible candidates tested in 2005.

Myth: Fewer and fewer people are beginning the ARE each year.

Information: During the paper-and-pencil administrations of the ARE, comprehensive counts of ARE candidates were not collected by NCARB in the same way we now are able to, given the advent of computerization. Pre-1997, we believe there were approximately 2,500 new candidates made eligible each year. Current computer-based statistics show approximately 5,500 new eligible candidates each year. As of the 2005 reporting period, we have some 32,000 U.S. candidates in the system, which represents an increase of 8 percent over the prior year.

Myth: There are fewer examinations being taken each year—much fewer than during the paper-and-pencil era.

Information: There are several ways to discuss ARE “takings.” First, we tally divisions taken. This represents the number of times each of the nine divisions is administered during a calendar year. Second, we count the number of candidates in two distinct categories: those in the system with at least one open eligibility (32,235) and those actively taking at least one division per year (13,168).

Since beginning the computer-delivered ARE in 1997, the number of divisions administered annually has risen from 22,249 in 1998 to 41,557 in 2005. This rise is due primarily to increased numbers of candidates in the system actively taking divisions. We do not expect computer-delivered administrations to ever equal the number delivered in paper-and-pencil, which included a very high rate of retakes.

The main reason for the current numbers? As pointed out above, candidates are studying for only one division at a time, which increases the probability of passing. We are not seeing the retake rate of the paper-and-pencil exam because candidates are not required to take several divisions at one time. They now can schedule a division when they feel prepared, reducing failing scores. Current eligibilities in the system, representing the number of divisions yet to be passed by candidates who have started the ARE, totaled 211,463 for the 2005 reporting period. Regarding individual candidates, approximately 13,168 took at least one ARE division

during that period.

Myth: It takes forever to become certified, and I may never use it.

Information: If all information is received in a timely manner, the certification process can take as little as eight weeks. What delays processing? The single most frequently occurring cause of delay is the lack of timely submissions of documentation either by the applicant or other sources (schools, employers, etc.). In calendar year 2005, NCARB itself incurred delays due to staffing shortages. At this point, however, processing time for evaluations of applications for certification and internship are on track. You can find more information about certification processing on our web site (www.ncarb.org/certification/timeline.pdf).

Earning certification is insurance that you can react swiftly to a client request or project opportunity in another state. Most NCARB member boards do not permit seeking or providing services in their state if you are not registered. With certification, your credentials can be quickly transmitted to another jurisdiction so that you can become registered with them—and begin providing services to your client or seek work. As a business expense, NCARB certification is the most cost-effective way to enhance your professional mobility.

Myth: We are seeing declining numbers of licensed architects each year.

Information: Since 1998 when NCARB first began compiling actual counts of resident architects from its 55 member boards, the number of registered architects has shown little change statistically speaking.

NCARB Count: Resident Architects

1999–96,966
2000–101,506
2001–92,893
2002–101,219
2003–101,183
2004–101,179
2005–107,615

Claims that the profession is losing more architects each year than it is creating are not based on fact or statistical counts. While some may suggest that approximately 100,000 licensed architects in the country for at least

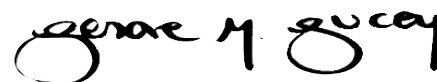
the past seven years statistically and the past 20 years anecdotally suggests little to no growth in the profession, remember that these statistics do not break out newly licensed architects against the loss of licensed architects to retirement, death, or non-renewal. NCARB's statistics show that approximately 2,300 candidates pass their last division of the ARE each year; during the 2005 reporting period, NCARB member boards granted 2,643 initial licenses. Also remember that the productivity of each registered architect increases significantly with each computer innovation.

Myth: NCARB is a huge, slow, faceless bureaucracy that could care less about my needs.

Information: NCARB is staffed by just over 70 people who want to provide you with the best possible service. Our staff members are typically long-term employees who know and perform their jobs extremely well—and who want to help you. NCARB staff will go out of their way to assist you if a problematic situation occurs. You can obtain answers to your questions most quickly through the “Contact Us” feature on the Council web site or telephone us at the number shown in this publication. All of us at NCARB take our commitment to customer service seriously. If you encounter a situation where you feel you were not properly treated, I would like to hear about it directly at EVP@ncarb.org.

Amidst all that we do, each year NCARB staff processes some 500 Certificate applications, more than 5,000 internship applications, and about 12,000 transmittals of certified credentials to jurisdictions. We are committed to handling each and every transaction professionally and expeditiously. All of us intend for your relationship with NCARB to be successful.

During 2006, NCARB will be refining and consolidating its statistical information gathering and analysis. We hope to bring you more myth-information on a regular basis in future editions of *Direct Connection*.



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