

CRASH COURSE YAF

I have to admit when I accepted the position of the Young Architect Regional Director for the New England district in January my knowledge was limited to what the significance of the YAF is. My first order of business was to attend the 2011 AIA Grassroots Leadership and Legislative Conference in Washington D.C. in February. That is when all the acronyms began flying. CEP, AIAS, NAC, YAF, COF and on. I knew of AIA, but what were these all about?

Needless to say I had a crash course. Let me begin at the top of the pyramid with the CEP, Committee of Emerging Professionals and sometimes referred to as the EPN, Emerging Professional Network. The CEP/EPN encompasses three dedicated associations:

- AIAS which is the American Institute of Architecture Students. It has been the voice of students to the educational system and the profession of architecture and design. The association helps to build interest and enrich the educational experience of students of all ages and others in architecture and design.
- NAC which is the National Associates Committee. Associate membership is open to a variety of non-licensed professionals. The National Associates Committee is dedicated to representing and advocating for Associates, both mainstream and non-traditional. The regional NAC leaders are known as RADs, Regional Associate Directors.
- YAF which is the Young Architects Forum. A program of the American Institute of Architects and the College of Fellows (COF). The forum is organized to address issues of particular importance to recently licensed architects of 10 years or less. The regional YAF leaders are known as YARDs, Young Architect Regional Directors.

That is the basic structure. All the committees and forums are important to the advancement of architecture as a profession. And frequently in smaller states you will have just one Emerging Professional leader managing all three.

As professionals working through the architectural journey, we often times get caught up in trying to complete our hours for the Intern Development Program (IDP) so we can sit for our Architecture Registration Exams (ARE). Once we pass all our tests and we are licensed the question comes up: Now what?

After the long and arduous path to licensure via education, training units and grueling tests, there is an anticlimax. Your role at the workplace does not miraculously change overnight. As newly licensed architects we are confronted with a myriad of issues specifically relating to the

development stage of our professional careers. Topics most often cited are starting your own firm, moving up within an existing firm, career alternatives, economic hardships, and balancing professional and personal life.

The YAF is guided by three objectives to help assist newly licensed Architects with these questions. The YAF provides leadership opportunities to support the involvement of young architects in community boards, education, advocacy and allied organizations. And through both structured and informal mentorship programs, there is encouragement to mentor both up and down the ranks from the COF to the YAF to the AIAS. Through these professional programs and social events, opportunities arise to network and share ideas and encourage fellowship within the AIA, establishing the dissemination of information to the next generation of Architects.

Often the newly licensed architect is an overlooked population within the profession. According to the AIA Pressroom there are over 83,000 members of the AIA, 77% are licensed architects. And according to the Center for Emerging Professionals there are currently 23,818 Architect members that have been licensed for ten years or less. That is nearly 40% of all licensed AIA members!

Especially in light of the hard economic times of the past years, I encourage the emerging professionals to promote professional growth and leadership among your friends and colleagues who share similar ideas, interests and activities. These activities will evolve into a network of professionals with a common voice. From this voice we find our future leaders for our regions and for our architecture profession.

To find out how you can get involved with the Emerging Professionals Network contact your state or regional AIA chapter.