

March 2, 2022

Dear AIA Austin Members,

This week, AIA National announced the 2022 members that have been elevated to Fellowship in our profession. This group of people have dedicated an incredible amount of time and energy toward making positive impact in the profession and in our greater society. They are our leaders, our educators, and our change makers for a more positive version of how we practice architecture and shape the world around us. I would like to congratulate and thank the 9 new fellows in our state for their time, service, and dedication to moving our profession forward.

As the Chapter President of AIA Austin, in the capital of our state, I have been the recipient of many questions regarding the demographic make-up of this year's Fellows. They are not questions about the qualifications of the men elevated this year, but of why we are not seeing a Fellowship body that more closely reflects our communities, offices, and chapters. These are valid questions.

Why do we not see more architects that look like our professional community being elevated to Fellowship from our state?

There are many issues that can contribute to the lack of diversity in the process. It is important that we examine each of them to learn where further work needs to be done. Many of our members have asked if the problem stems from the jury selection. This year the jurors came from a diverse background and included even gender representation. You can read more [here](#).

Additionally, [at the national level](#), the group selection to be elevated to Fellowship is far more diverse in both race and gender than at the state level.

So why does Texas' group look different?

I don't have the answer for how we got here, but I'd like for all of those who saw the announcement and asked the same question to join me in finding solutions and clearing paths for those additional deserving candidates out there that have not yet been elevated.

Gaining Fellowship status is not something that happens overnight. It can take decades to accumulate a body of work and history of service that will get you to even the minimum qualifications for nomination. You must be a member of the AIA in good standing as an Architect for 10 years as the most basic qualification. Beyond that, you are required to demonstrate significant "ripple effects" of your work in the profession beyond your local community.

How does one make such "ripple effects"? Often that looks like regional, state, or national leadership roles. It can also be through lectures, juries, publications, awards, and presentations of work outside of your local area. The national status of Fellowship requires a national level of service and impact.

[Applying for Fellowship](#) takes time, strategy, and an incredible amount of support from the candidate's community.

Here is what can we do right now to help ensure that Fellowship looks more like our community:

1. Find a colleague that is a potential candidate and encourage them to start their application process. It sometimes takes years to complete this process and they will need support. Be there.
2. Nominate and Advocate. There are many leadership and knowledge sharing opportunities out there every year. Opening opportunities for colleagues at the regional, state, and national level is key for a successful application.
3. Contact your executive director and put good potential candidates on their radar. Applicants must be nominated by either 10 architect members, 5 Fellows, or by the Chapter itself. Do not assume that they know everyone who has potential to be elevated.
4. Start your own application process right now. These applications require strategy that spans the timeline of your career. Understanding the requirements and defining YOUR path should start earlier in your career than you think. See [this link](#) for the six paths to Fellowship.

Thank you to everyone who has spoken up in texts, emails, social media posts, and phone calls. We need your voices, but we also need your help to make positive change.

I know we know these people...the ones out there working like mad to be our leaders, our educators, and our change makers for a more positive version of how we practice architecture and shape the world around us. Help us identify and support them through the long process. We don't need to wait for anyone else to make meaningful change right now. Decide on action you can take and commit to it.

At the organizational level, we have work to do as well. We have already started the self-examination process locally. Our Fellowship Committee is working on better processes for education of the application process, better outreach for potential candidates, and improved mentoring through the earlier years of career building that impacts the application so greatly. This will take the assistance of the other AIA committees to help make contacts and reach members.

We will also be reaching out across the state to ask questions, discuss strategies, and create a means of accountability toward our J.E.D.I. goals. It's a big state and our many chapters are hugely varied in size, programming focus, and demography. We can all help each other. The number and type of applications submitted for Fellowship is a trailing indicator for the talent pipeline into the profession. Statewide efforts on both ends of this work will make the highest impact.

Keep us accountable with your continued communication and consider joining a committee or group at AIA or NOMA that allows you to either help someone else in their career path or helps you get where you want to go. There are already many efforts being made at the committee levels in Fellowship path education and mentoring. It's going to take the whole village on this one!



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AIA Austin President 2022