

Subject: [ArchVoices] Back to the Future

"To begin taking the ARE an applicant shall have fulfilled all requirements for eligibility established by his or her jurisdiction and shall have enrolled in IDP by establishing a Council record."

--NCARB Resolution 07-08, passed as amended

The future of the profession, that is. This special, one-time bonus issue of ArchVoices newsletter is to help announce the biggest national change in the licensing process since the advent of the computerized exam in 1997. And to ask for your help in bringing this change to a state near you. Further, we believe that the process of getting to this point provides useful lessons for future changes in the profession, and so we take a moment to chronicle that process.

ARE+IDP

Last weekend at the NCARB Annual Meeting in Denver, Colo., state licensing boards voted to amend NCARB's Model Law to allow individual states to determine when interns should begin taking the nine divisions of the ARE. For the official NCARB press release, [click here](#). By treating all divisions of the exam equally, the Model Law will also better accommodate future changes to the ARE, such as Version 4.0 coming soon (incidentally, IDP is almost 30 years old, and we're still on version 1.0).

Change takes compromise

If you've been following this issue over the past few years, you'll know that the NCARB Board proposed in February 2006 to allow interns to begin taking seven of the nine divisions of the ARE upon completion of the state's education requirement, but would only allow the Construction Documents & Services and Building Design & Construction Systems divisions upon the completion of IDP. This proposal represented a compromise of sorts between those who felt there was no health and safety reason to withhold any of the exams, and others who felt it was important to maintain the existing standard where the licensure process ends with a bang (an exam) rather than a whimper (IDP).

However, this compromise would also have represented the first time NCARB made any substantive distinction among the nine divisions. Additionally, many states felt it imposed on their responsibility to establish a licensing process that best protects the health, safety and welfare of the public, without unduly limiting access to the profession by the public.

Change takes State Board leadership

So at the Annual Meeting last weekend, more than one state board introduced amendments that removed any distinction among or preference for some of the ARE divisions, and explicitly allowed individual states to determine when their candidates should begin taking the ARE. Specifically, the amendment said that, "To begin taking the ARE an applicant shall have fulfilled all requirements for eligibility established by his or her jurisdiction and shall have enrolled in IDP by establishing a Council record." The NCARB Board had previously rejected a similar resolution by a vote of 9-2. But state boards passed the new resolution, as amended, 43-9.

Change takes time

This change is the culmination of a great deal of work, research and advocacy, starting with the recommendations of the 1999 Internship Summit. The recommendation to allow interns to take the ARE upon graduation was subsequently reiterated by every multi-collateral task force or group to study the issue: in 2001, 2002, 2003 and again in 2005. In response to the 2003 and 2005 Internship & Career Surveys, interns and recently licensed architects expressed overwhelming support for this change. The AIAS Board and the ACSA Boards both formally endorsed this change in 2001, and the AIA Board adopted it as formal AIA policy unanimously in 2005.

Immediately following the AIA Board's vote, ArchVoices launched an [ARE+IDP Advocacy](#) website to facilitate communication on the issue by interns and architects directly to state licensing boards. Meanwhile, the AIA developed official issue briefs in 2006 and targeted advocacy efforts at individual state licensing boards. Now, as a result of all these national, state and local efforts over the past eight years, NCARB's official policy supports the ARE+IDP concept. Democracy in action.

Change takes, well...still more time

This change to NCARB Model Law is both a Very Big Deal, and totally meaningless. Because what matters to individual interns is actual state law, not some quasi-public national organization's internal model "law." And it's only the latter that changed this past weekend. So while states have collectively made clear that they want the flexibility to allow for all nine exams following graduation, currently only eight states actually allow any of the exams to be taken at any time prior to completion of IDP. In order for individual states to empower their own interns with this opportunity, existing regulations must be changed, and in many cases, the law itself must be changed.

So, there is still work to be done on a local and state level. All the national organizations now either actively support this change or have expressly endorsed it where local leaders decide to pursue it. ARE+IDP was always a state issue, as is every licensure concern, but

the lack of a clear national consensus made it easy for individual states to wait. After all, why should they be among the first to step out of a very important line?

Now the line has been moved. But the question still remains--why should your state step up?

Change also takes some of your personal time

You have to help answer this question for your local state board. The AIA has developed issue briefs on ARE Timing, and the ArchVoices ARE+IDP site has additional background information. Read this information and attend a state board meeting to begin to understand the state board's genuine concerns. Bring a friend to this meeting. Consider reasons why already-licensed architects should care about eliminating regulatory barriers for aspiring architects. Then volunteer you and a colleague to work with your local AIA Component or intern committee to support their efforts on behalf of the AIA's position on ARE timing.

Remember that state board licensing regulations are designed to serve the public, not the profession. That the AIA supports this change is likely to be irrelevant to many state board members. But also know that the board's responsibility extends to ensuring access to the profession by the public. And for interns involved in this process, remember that you are in fact a member of the public. Where regulatory requirements are arbitrary and not necessary for public safety, it is the Board's responsibility on behalf of the public to remove such barriers.

This is a Very Big Deal at a national level. Now let's make this matter on a local level. Pass it on.