ASLA Diversity Summit 2014 Report

ASLA HQ, Washington, D.C
June 27-29, 2014

Introduction & Key Takeaways

Year two of the ASLA Diversity Summit initiative capitalized on the dynamic personalities and experiences of the first year. The goals of the first summit were to provide ASLA with action items and strategies for attracting African American and Latino prospects into landscape architecture (LA) programs. The key focus areas were identified as 1) Raising Public Awareness, 2) Early Exposure to the Profession, and 3) Mentorship.

The first area is an ongoing priority for the Society, but special efforts were made in the past year to expand and amplify messages to minority communities. This year's summit focused on further defining strategies for the latter two.

All participants from year one returned for the second year, joined by six new voices. The summit followed a model of wide-ranging, guided brainstorming continually narrowed to come up with an action plan. Participants were broken into three groups, each with a blend of new and returning participants. The weekend alternated between substantial time in these breakout groups and group report-back/discussion time.

In the next 12 months, ASLA will address public awareness and early introduction to the profession through two central channels: content creation, and a social media marketing campaign. Content creation will involve "boxed content" that can be sent to schools, publications and other outlets looking for activities and/or materials to be used in the classroom and in publications, particularly those aimed at parents and various minority audiences. ASLA will work with chapters to highlight public landscapes in their markets that resonate with target audiences.

The social marketing campaign idea is based on the" #thisdidntjusthappen," a tag that emphasizes that built landscapes required design and planning and contribute to everyone's quality of life. It will capitalize on the power of visual imagery (already a strong component of landscape architecture) and will ideally gain its own momentum as users contribute photos globally. Instagram, Flickr, Facebook, and Twitter have been identified as potential platforms. Augmented reality platforms such as Layar may also be integrated.

One idea was to create a landscape architecture "superhero" mascot that children can relate to, as well as infographics and other graphic media to support outreach efforts. Multimedia marketing outreach will tie-in to the image campaign, with efforts across media.

The final outcome was substantial progress in developing an ideal 360-degree, project-based mentorship model of continual feedback loops spanning elementary students to seasoned professionals. Not only would each group see the opportunity to act as both mentor and mentee, but young students would also receive substantial early exposure to the field of landscape architecture. ASLA will explore potential community-service organizations that have shown success in working with diverse minority communities. These organizations can help engage communities and identify projects that can serve as the focal points for mentorship and experiential learning.

Participants
Returning:
C.L. Bohannon, ASLA
Wesley Brown, ASLA
Anita Bueno, ASLA
Jessica Centeno, ASLA
Domini Cunningham, Assoc. ASLA
Ricardo A. Garcia, ASLA
Luis Gonzalez, ASLA
Mike A. Hill, ASLA
Janelle Johnson, ASLA
Tammy Martin, Assoc. ASLA

Margarita Padilla-Posey, ASLA
José M. Rodriguez, ASLA

New:
Carolina Carvajal, ASLA
Diana Fernandez, Assoc. ASLA
Courtney R. Hinson, ASLA
Christoper L. Sanders, Assoc. ASLA
Lindsey D. Smith, ASLA
Jose Alvarez, Assoc. ASLA

Facilitator:
Juanita Shearer-Swink, FASLA

ASLA Support Staff:
Terry Poltrack, Director of Public Relations and Communications
Barbara Drobins Fles, Director of Chapter and Member Services
Susan Apollonio, Director of Educational Programs
Yoshi Silverstein, Summer Communications Intern

Full Summary of Proceedings
Day One
The 2014 Summit began with an introduction of new and returning participants, who shared stories of their paths into the profession and any new developments since the previous year's summit. Several participants had started new ventures or moved to different firms or universities. And a few expressed frustrated at lack of progress with their landscape architecture careers.

Terry Poltrack then updated the group with steps taken to date. Having brought the original 12 participants back and added six, the plan moving forward will be to invite six new participants a year to join the previous year's returnees to maintain connectivity.

The key goals from last year were 1) Early Exposure; 2) Public Awareness; and 3) Mentorship. While public awareness has seen solid progress, the other two were targeted for additional input and served as the focus of this year's summit.

Among steps taken as a result of last year's summit: Two videos, *Why Become a Landscape Architect* and *Personal Paths*, were created from footage filmed last year and featured on ASLA's redesigned Career Discovery page at http://www.asla.org/yourpath under "Diverse Voices." The goal of these videos was both to help minority professionals "get in the room" and expose potential landscape architects of minority backgrounds see a closer reflection of themselves in professional voices. Since launch, the page has seen over 17,000 pageviews. The department is now looking for ways to get into more schools and integrated into curriculum.

New alerts of the new site were distributed to minority media and translated into Spanish and Chinese as part of National Landscape Architecture Month. Participants also suggested French translation as a future gateway for African immigrant communities. A brochure introducing the profession to students was created, with accompanying outreach by chapters, student members, and ASLA to deliver copies directly to guidance offices at schools in minority neighborhoods.

One ongoing challenge is obtaining effective lists of high school guidance counselors. That search continues and will prove important in the 2014-15 efforts.

Other initiatives planned include hosting the National Building Museum's (NBM) Teen Council for a tour of ASLA HQ's green roof and an introduction to the Green Streets demonstration project on Eye Street.

President's Council Statement
The summit next moved to discuss a proposed joint commitment to diversity by allied organizations under discussion by the Presidents' Council. The council includes presidents from six groups: ASLA, Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA), Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF), Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards (CLARB), and Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB); the Canadian Society of Landscape Architects opted not to join the effort as it is U.S.-specific in scope. The statement reviews the progress and challenges to date of strengthening minority representation in the LA profession and commits the allied organizations to striving to meet an appropriate goal. Terry Poltrack sought ideas and discussion from diversity summit participants for how and where to set this goal.

To guide this discussion, Susan Apollonio, ASLA director of Educational Programs, presented an overview of trends in ASLA's graduating-student survey which assesses, among other things, demographic representation in LA program graduates at U.S. colleges and universities. The survey goes out to roughly 800 students a year, with a typical response rate of 200-300. This year's survey still had one week left before close, so data were incomplete but presented with this caveat.

Participants were also informed that generally program chairs at university LA departments are looking for tools to help increase recruitment along with diversity..

An extensive discussion followed. Some of the ideas expressed and questions raised were:
- The goal should be in the form of a regular percent increase over time, to avoid the common issue where nothing happens until the last-minute in terms of attaining goals.
    - E.g. 2 percent increase in minority populations within profession (graduating?) every year over next 10 years – small steps lead to significant change
- Whatever the increases, they need to reflect actual trends over time – too easy to tweak numbers (e.g. by getting more minorities to respond to survey, rather than actually increase number of minority students in programs)
- Percent increases should ultimately reflect % of overall population more closely
    - 2% a year may be too ambitious
    - Should make sure goal is both ambitious but obtainable
    - Research percentages of minorities in other design fields.
- Considering economics and attrition rates – minorities with limited resources have especially difficult time completing LA programs, which are rigorous and demanding.
    - Less job security in their families = financial hardships
    - Very difficult to work full-time and continue with school
    - Key question – how to open the door for non-traditional students to access programs
    - Non-full time, evening and weekends, etc.
    - Program alternatives geared towards working people
    - Can certificate programs complement more traditional LA programs?
- Can online education be more incorporated into LA programs?
    - Recognition that Studio requires in-person presence or really loses essential quality
    - But perhaps "accessory" classes such as theory, history, etc. can be online
    - LARE exam is computer-based now anyway – makes sense that some of the learning can use similar platforms
    - But, issue still existrs of needing physical students in classrooms to ensure funding stays consistent
    - Fewer students in classroom, even if online, could lead to funding cuts for department
- Five-year combined masters-undergraduate programs can sometimes be promising model . . . but tuition is frequently much higher (paying for three-years worth of graduate credits) and an already intensive program becomes that much more time-intensive
- How can LA programs better capitalize on STEM priorities? E.g. more recognition for LA as a STEM field.
    - Also a way to get more funding as it's typically more available for STEM fields
    - Example: Richmond, California, "expanding your horizons" group for girls in math and science
- ASLA should issue statement of support for national green schools programs
    - People "on the ground" already get that LA is STEM profession
    - Capitalize in high numbers of students interested in environment and sustainability

- What's the return on investment to become an LA?
  - Many minority communities want to see career routes that are "set" guarantees for making money (e.g. law, science, engineering, medicine)
  - Point we should making – LA probably won't get you rich, but it's a solid path to make a decent salary AND help build and strengthen your community
  - Very appealing to all sorts of communities where civic engagement is important
- Can also educate on the many other paths a LA degree can take you – being a designer is not necessarily the only outcome of LA degree
  - These can / should be positives not negative "fall backs"

Remaining questions:
- What is the final goal?
- By what year is the goal aiming for?
- How can we track not just graduating students but retention as early career professionals?

NOTE: Post Summit, Poltrack drafted a statement based on this feedback and shared it with attendees for comment. It is still a work in progress and has not yet been presented to the involved groups.

TO DATE: Landscape Architecture's allied organizations will strive to achieve a profile for the profession that over the next 10 years achieves at least parity with 2012 population-share estimates while working towards longer-term goal of parity with 2060 projections for the nation as a whole.

Benchmarks:
2012 (2060) Census Data Projections* by Race:
White alone: 78 percent (69)
Black alone: 13 percent (15)
American Indian/Native American alone: 1.2 percent (1.5)
Asian alone: 5.1 percent (8.2)
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone 0.2 percent (0.3)
Two or more races: 2.4 percent (6.4)

2012 Census (2060) Projections* Data by Hispanic Origin:
Non-Hispanic White alone: 63 percent (43)
Hispanic of any race: 17 percent (31)

* based on 2010 Census.

Breakout Groups – Early Exposure to Landscape Architecture
Participants formed three breakout groups with four returning and two new participants in each. In their groups, they reviewed the strategies and potential tactics identified the previous year and added new suggestions for early exposure strategies.

Group 1 focused on urban campuses, parents, youth and college athletes.

The group felt urban campuses were more likely to have design interest. Their action suggestion was to create focused presentations highlighting the work of LAs most relevant to these populations.

Parents who enjoy watching home renovation shows see a lot of residential projects but not so much in the way of larger scale LA projects. The closest was an architecture-themed show called "Build It Bigger."

ASLA could send pre-written copy to publications geared towards parents.

Public parks could include ASLA info packets. They could also integrate with digital platforms – augmented reality (QR codes, Layar App), smartphones, etc.

Key focus for this group was on athletes:
College athletics requires a major time commitment. But a lot of athletes go into agriculture majors so perhaps LA could field more of that interest. They should be included in classroom activities and program heads should remain open to the different ways they could contribute. One example was a stadium in San Francisco that recently launched an urban agriculture project to grow much of the food they serve. Perhaps similarly targeting LA as a route to designing for better health and nutrition would be a good way in. Also targeting specialty areas like golf courses and other sport-specific landscapes. Finally, plugging into national events such as NFL Green Week, Play360, and Green Weeks on TV networks could be a good strategy.

Group 2 also had ideas for reaching out to parents and campus-wide events. They recommended hosting a booth at tailgating events during college games, which could be sponsored by local vendors. This would also be a good way to deepen partnerships with similarly-minded organizations.

Additionally, budget willing, they suggested radio spots, audio spots at games, and radio sponsorships (e.g. NPR). They recommended Parenthood Magazine, which could feature LA-themed activities for kids, and also getting Las to early childhood conferences.

Additional suggestions included using LA students in university as ambassadors to their communities. This would need to be part of the curriculum so that students received credit for their time – not just a volunteer spot.

Group 3 first echoed many of the previous suggestions: using community service as a great way to accomplish many of our goals; partnering with vendors, especially those with higher budgets; and more use of social media and other digital media platforms. Their strongest push was for using networks of organizations that *already* work with minority communities and thus have expertise. Partnering with these organizations might yield better results than partnering with organizations similar to ASLA (e.g. NPS) which may have similar diversity goals but no better ideas for reaching those goals. Potential organizations are black and Latino fraternities and sororities; and the National Hispanic Environmental Education Council, who regularly hold STEM career path conferences and will generously support presenters accepted at these conferences. Magnet and charter schools were also a promising venue as they tend to have greater flexibility as well as support for environmental and arts education.

Additional suggestions included:
- Partner with professional contracting organizations (already fairly diverse)
- Create diversity professional practice network
- Garner celebrity endorsements – TV, social media
  - Find celeb willing to learn more about LA, create learning series following celeb learning LA basics
- Target teens and Millennials with puns: Cool places and "cool" places (e.g. those that lower urban heat island effect)
- Adopt minimum community service requirements for LARE prep and CEUs for ongoing professionals
  - Similar to credits for students, would incentivize community involvement
  - Many pros would prefer this to "yet another lecture"
- Use free online courses (coursera, skillshare) to introduce LA to people – give them basic foundation and exposure, leading into desire to go into full academic program

Mentorship
Barbara Drobins Fles started the next major discussion off with an update from the Emerging Professionals Committee that included an overview of steps taken to date and suggestions from the committee on potential directions moving forward.

First, Fles acknowledged that mentorship falls across a number of relevant committees besides emerging professionals – member services, leadership development, and public practice advisory committees could all benefit from a more robust mentorship program. It is most relevant to emerging professionals because they see this as a void where students lost the mentorship they (hopefully) had with the academic advisor once they leave school and may have difficulty establishing new professional mentorship, whether within our outside the workplace.

In the past, efforts to better integrate mentorship models didn't go very far. A 2011 white paper considered the importance and need of mentor programs but was not an actual working document for how to create such a program. In 2013 the committee started researching options across the board and created a matrix of available models to draw from.

Resources:
- Mentor resource page on ASLA website within pro practice
- Chapter guidelines – how to successfully and efficiently launch a mentor program
- Mentor-link program on ASLA website – looking at different existing platforms to link up potential mentors with mentees seeking guidance

Models:
- Chapter level – one-day job shadows, portfolio reviews; LARE prep; longer term professional check-ins with one on one relationship
- 360-degree mentoring model:
    - Kids need mentoring – LA students fulfill
    - Student needs fulfilled by early career professionals
    - Early career professional needs fulfilled by mid-career or seasoned professionals
    - Etc.

Mentorship – Shared Experiences
Several participants shared their particular experiences of mentorship. Two had experiences with the Urban Land Institute, whose all-encompassing approach to land use issues had both negatives and positives. The formal structure helped keep participants committed and focused, and members appreciated the relationships built across professional disciplines. The National Organization of Minority Architects was also mentioned.

Others spoke about experiences with less formal mentorships – for example, a professor in college who helped one participant with the switch from engineering and remained available "even at 10:30 at night;" and a long-time forest service employee who took upon himself a personal mission to diversify the agency by reaching out to specific people with potential and continually following up as they progressed into the agency.

Other ideas brainstormed during this session:
- Speed Dating event – an experienced pro sits at table with small group; brief intro followed by open question time for 10 minutes
- Website – post testimonial stories
    - Mentor database
- Online Q&A roundtable events
- Webinars
- LinkedIn professional practice network for mentoring

Mentorship Breakouts – Design the Ideal Mentorship 360 Program
Group 1 – Incentives for participation in Mentorship 360
How do we provide incentives / perks that make participation in mentorship a win-win for all involved? Making it worth everyone's time and energy?
- CEUs for mid-career and senior pros;
    - also for early-career building towards LARE eligibility
- Students (grad & undergrad) –
    - incorporate into curriculum;
    - give course credit;
    - create service learning courses;
    - work study
- High School / Junior high – community service credits towards graduation
    - Benefit to community where project takes place
- K-6 students – learning experience

○　　Project based mentoring

Organization of program
- Local chapter and/or non-profit identifies project, organizes team (from youngest up to seasoned pros)
- Community-needs based
- Sponsorship – use connections of senior professionals to vendors, who benefit from exposure / PR

Group 2 – Key Mentorship Moments Along Career Path
Time isn't always readily available, so what are the key mentorship moments?
- K-8 students: engage and expose
- High school: 9th-10th grade exposure before college plans start solidifying
  - Substantive intro to profession, get students intrigued and interested
- Undergrad / Grad students – mid-program & thesis / senior project
  - Direct support from faculty advisor
  - Social connection
  - Professional introductions
- Early career: first 1-4 years, often a struggle to make headway in profession
  - Identify individual mentor strengths, capitalize connections to skill sets

Exposure Ideas:
- Career Days
- Parking Day – work with schools (on location or in field, design & build parklets)
- LA Month – incorporate youth components
- Earth Day
- General curriculum integration

Group 3 – How would the Mentorship 360 be structured?
** Diagram being made by graphic designer to accompany **
Two essentials:
- People progress linearly through process, but information/knowledge/mentorship moves cyclically
- The mentorship progression/cycle parallels the design process

High school students – design camp project-based learning
　　　　First experience with design
Undergrad students – design crits for HS students
Grad students mentor undergrads
Emerging Pros help guide project holistically through each major step
Seasoned pros play roles at key points – use influence & knowledge where will benefit most

** Conservation Corps work crews could also form the workforce for many of these projects, which would serve multiple purposes: providing labor; partnering with like-minded organizations; exposure to landscape architecture for diverse work crews.

Common Themes:
Clear progression through mentorship levels
Involvement at all levels mirrors actual working project
Use senior professionals sparingly where they'll have the most impact
　　　　FASLA – way to pay back influence
　　　　Senior pros can help "smooth the way" for projects with key calls to connections
　　　　Pro involvement with university students makes sense; less so 5th graders
Integration with curriculum – especially studio projects
Collaboration with community-based organizations

Distinctions were also made between emerging (early-career) professionals, mid-career, and seasoned professionals, rather than just two categories.

Mentorship Final Takeaway: Project-Based 360 Degree Mentorship Model
Infographic to be created for model
Implementation will need to be at local level but ASLA will determine how best to support local efforts nationally. For example, reaching out to other national organizations (particularly those who already work successfully with minority communities) to develop partnerships that can be implemented on the ground locally.

Homework for participants: Identify organizations for potential partnership who have both local and national organizational structure that parallels ASLA.

DAY TWO
Early Exposure Redux
Participants returned to their breakout groups and were asked to identify the top three strategies with ideas for implementation.

Group 1
Parents and teachers – exposure through field trips can include parents as chaperones. Also, a landscape architecture superhero / mascot (a la Captain Planet) could excite kids. Fields trips should also include officials and professionals to raise exposure of project awareness.

Campus outreach – student chapter members can serve as ambassadors for both rural and urban areas. Particularly **athletes** can use cache to interest younger students.

The role for ASLA here is to create the branding for these efforts – the superhero/mascot, and supporting materials such as temporary tattoos and marketing.

Possible names for campaign (+ mentorship model):
- Design360
  - And/or Design360: The City; Design360: The Suburbs etc
- Tree-60

Group 2
This group focused on multimedia advertising and targeting tailgating events. A second target was parks and recreation summer publications. The tagline was born #thisdidntjusthappen. Needs to have Spanish and French translations.

Group 3
The focus here was on identifying existing networks and working with them. They proposed creatinga toolkit for distribution to chapters as well as boxed content to distribute to schools and publications. These could be aligned to different events, national theme months, Earth Day, and curricular units.

Another suggestion was to include modeling tools in an actual box – perhaps partner with a vendor such as Landscape Structures, Kaboom, Landscape Forms, etc. for a "Design a Playground" kit.

Common Themes
- Multimedia exposure
- Social network campaign & branding
- #thisdidntjusthappen
- Targeting parents and parent-focused publications
- Toolkits and boxed content
- Partnerships with other national organizations

Final additional thoughts & next steps
- Create a LinkedIn group for diversity
- Online group meets
- Find ways to mentor back home
- Super Summit will be coming at five year mark
- Make sure to continue opportunity to share personal stories in future summits