

What the Heck is YAF?

By Benjamin Kasdan, AIA, LEED AP [January 17, 2014]

In contemporary architectural practice and within the AIA, significant attention and resources are directed towards unlicensed professionals (Associate AIA members) and seasoned veteran practitioners (AIA and FAIA members), but there is another group of AIA members that have a different set of needs than both of the aforementioned groups; that of the recently licensed architects – or Young Architects. Somewhat contrary to the name's implication, [Young Architects Forum \(YAF\)](#) members are defined by AIA National as professionals that have been licensed for 10 years or less, regardless of age. With the average duration of the licensure process in California being about 12 years, a typical Young Architect in Southern California is between 33 and 43 years old.

YAF members are done using resources related to pursuing licensure; but given most of their professional situations, they are not ready for AIA programming aimed towards firm owners. As a result of this gap in service, the YAF was created in association with the College of Fellows at the 1989 AIA Grassroots to encourage the development of national and regional programs of interest to Young Architects. Thus YAF has emerged as *the* voice of recently licensed architects charged with the mission of promoting leadership, mentorship, and fellowship for the future of the profession.

California is represented on the YAF nationally by two Young Architect Regional Directors (YARDs): one from Northern California (Ian Merker, AIA from Sacramento) and one from Southern California (me – [Ben Kasdan, AIA](#) from Orange County). There are also three members of the YAF Advisory Committee from California (Vice Chair Virginia Marquardt, AIA from Santa Monica; Communications Director Wyatt Frantom, AIA from Los Angeles; and Public Relations Director Evelyn Lee, AIA from San Francisco). Ian and I also sit on the [AIA California Council \(AIACC\) Academy of Emerging Professionals \(AEP\)](#) Council of Advisors which is led this year by VP of the AEP, [Jana Itzen, AIA](#), who is also from Orange County. With Young California Architects (and Young Southern California Architects in particular) being so well represented at both the state and national level, we are in a unique position to positively effect change for the profession.

YAF in 2014 is developing a series on YAF career advancement for the [2014 AIA National Convention](#) and addressing the issue of work-life balance with an emphasis on the difficulty of women architects re-entering the profession after taking leave to begin families.

At the state level, AEP's primary goals for 2014 are to promote licensure and mentorship; even going so far as to create a "licensure pact" for the Associate members of the Council of Advisors to become licensed this year. Also, the AEP is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Michael Armstrong, CEO of [NCARB](#), with regard to shaping future changes to the licensure process.

Since YAF exists to support and encourage Young Architects in whatever way that we can. Let us know if you have any suggestions or requests, and we will see what we can do. Along those lines, please join us for drinks on Wednesday 1/22 immediately following the AIAOC General Meeting & Tour next door at [McCormick & Schmick's](#). No idea is too big or too small.

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