Message from Richard Wetzel

2009 Nominating Committee Chair

One of the unique privileges in serving as our Chapter's president is to chair the Nominating Committee during one's last year in office, a task for which I was honored to serve. So please join me, and the rest of the board and Nominating Committee, as we host the Annual Meeting and Elections on Tuesday, September 8 at 5:30PM in the AIA Kansas City Courtyard at 104 West 9th Street. This will be a historic meeting - not only because of the strength of our candidate slate, but also because it will be the last meeting hosted in our beloved courtyard before our move to 1801 McGee in the Crossroads. As always, it should prove to be a great party - lots of old and new friends, cold adult beverages and whatever type of funky music Dawn chooses to present. But, most importantly, this meeting is about choosing the future leadership of our chapter and the voice of our profession in Kansas City. This new group of leaders will be charged with helping our profession out of the last few months of difficult times and into what we all hope is a healthy recovery. That being the case, we hope to see you there.

This year's slate of candidates is truly one of the best I've seen - and I don't say that to pat myself on the back as the Chair of the committee. In fact, it was truly an easy task to assemble this slate, something I have not seen as much of in the past. Why was it so easy? I think for three reasons: 1) great leaders emerge in times of crisis, and the entire slate is comprised of people willing to step forth and take the torch in this difficult time; 2) our chapter has seen amazing growth in membership, the quality of our programs, and our voice in the community, and this slate wants to be a part of that continuing evolution; and 3) they were asked (isn't that why any of us really do anything?) Thanks to the Nominating Committee who put together this stellar slate and obtained their commitments to run. It was a pleasure serving with the group, which included:

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Omni Architectural Products KC
Amber Harden, AIA - HNTB  
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Mark McHenry, AIA - McHenry Shaffer Mitchell Architects  
Zane Muntz, AIA - HNTB  
Justin Murray, AIA - Bell Knott & Associates  
Boyd Rau, AIA - BRR Architecture  
Amy Slattery, AIA - BNIM  
Reeves Wiedeman, AIA - Helix Architecture + Design

Thanks also in advance to our sponsors for making the event possible: Omni Architectural Products, PSI, and SGH. Without you, this would be a potluck dinner, Kool-Aid, and an iPod. With that, here are the candidates for the 2010 Board of the American Institute of Architects - Kansas City chapter. I look forward to seeing all of you on Tuesday, September 9 at 6:00PM in the Courtyard!

Richard Wetzel, AIA  
2009 Nominating Committee Chair

President Elect

Tony Rohr, AIA  
Gould Evans

I am honored to be a candidate for President of the Kansas City Chapter of AIA and would like to thank the Nominating Committee for the opportunity. It is a humbling thought because of the great leadership our chapter has enjoyed and benefitted from. The chapter has the great luxury of developing AIA award-winning programs because of the health and vibrancy of the chapter. My recent time as Chapter Treasurer was an enriching experience because of the quality of ideas and the creative spirit that the Board consistently followed. We have great opportunities because we can stand on the shoulders of some very dedicated leaders in this chapter.

In my daily role as National Managing Principal at Gould Evans, I wear multiple hats almost everyday. I still enjoy the challenges and thrills of project design and that is balanced with the realities of positioning a firm to be successful in an uncertain future. I have the luxury to work with some great people and therefore the ability to modify my responsibilities so that I can confidently commit to the role of President.

Very little from my days growing up in a small western Kansas town prepared me for a career as an architect. It did prepare me for hard work and common sense. Very little from my higher education prepared me for the daily challenges of the business aspect of our profession. It did prepare me to think much larger and about all aspects of design and community. My participation with KC Chamber of Commerce Centurions, the Johnson County Museum, the Homes Association of the Country Club District, KC AIA Chapter, and as a grade-school Athletic Director and coach have all played a role in my development as a collaborator and leader.

And now, as we are all painfully aware, the national and global economy's downturn has extracted a heavy toll on many professionals in all aspects of the design and
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I think we are all coming to grips with the notion that "business as usual" is not likely. That in fact, the playing field and rules regarding the design and construction industry have changed and the firms that can respond to the new environment will succeed. We do not need to be melancholy or sad about the new realities - our profession is heaped in creativity and that is the exact ingredient we need to move forward. The fields of crisis and upheaval can be fertile soil for sewing new ideas and opportunities.

I am hopeful that this will provide us new design opportunities - focused on quality and meaningful design and a unique opportunity to leave behind the attributes of consumption and greed and all the meaningless debris that it brought our environment. I believe that our profession and this chapter are uniquely positioned to continue to show leadership in this dialogue with our communities and civic leaders.

One final thought - this chapter knows how to work hard and knows equally how to have fun. I am a firm believer in setting goals, building consensus and enjoying the journey. So let's build upon the great tradition and momentum of this chapter and let's savor every moment of it.

Jay Tomlinson, AIA
Helix Architecture + Design

In this time of great transformation, opportunity surrounds our profession. Opportunities to strengthen the role architects play in our communities, opportunities to adapt and grow in exciting new directions creatively and technically, and opportunities to help shape public opinion sit at our feet every day, waiting for us to pick them up and nurture them.

AIA/KC has done a wonderful job re-making itself into the vibrant chapter it has become. The evidence is all around us; greater participation in chapter events, especially amongst emerging professionals, growth in membership and sponsorship, media attention, and an administrative staff unlike this chapter has ever experienced, but many opportunities still await our attention. To continue the ascent that our chapter enjoys, there are three main areas that, if elected, I would continue to build our presence and effectiveness in within our metropolis.

First, I believe in Advocacy! The primary role of President of the Chapter is that of advocate. Advocate on behalf of our chapter members and advocate on behalf of the general public. I will continue the work of advocacy that my predecessors displayed to build the opportunities the Chapter has in playing a leading role in shaping the physical nature of our City, on both sides of the state line. My vision for our Chapter is that all government leaders throughout our metro regularly invite us to provide guidance to the topics that are changing our cities every day. During my tenure as your President a new Mayor of Kansas City will likely also be elected. I will work to make sure that the AIA strengthens its influence at City Hall and is invited to actively guide the City in its growth. And not just in Kansas City, but in all of the cities that make up our metro. Our entire metropolitan area must move forward, together.

Second, I believe in the concept of strength in numbers! You've undoubtedly heard about our Chapter's leadership in creating the Design Alliance. This idea, to bring all related design professions together under one banner in order to create community and one voice, is a powerful one. Over the past year, our Chapter has been guiding leaders from all creative corners of our City towards a common understanding and purpose, in order to help move our best ideas and leadership forward. The potential of this initiative is huge, and while we have only just begun these efforts, I will make this a major focus of my year at the helm of the Chapter. I encourage all of you to find out more about this effort, and to support it by your participation.

Third, I believe in sustainability. Our Chapter must continue to lead in the direction of a sustainable future. We must build on the momentum that our fellow trail...
blazer architects, the world leaders of which exist right here in our chapter, have set in place. Momentum is now on our side, but the need to continue to solidify this national mind set has never been greater. We must work to get all municipalities in our region to adopt our 2030 Challenge, while at the same time show our clients the value that these strategies will deliver to their companies and organizations.

Architects are uniquely positioned, by virtue of our knowledge base and the trust we enjoy in the public realm, to provide leadership in all of these areas, and more. Our chapter is vital and alive, and we must build on that. If elected, I will dedicate my efforts towards that single goal via the ideas I have offered here.

Thank you for considering my candidacy for President of the Chapter.

Treasurer

John Frank, AIA
BRR Architecture

For the last year I've been working with the Emerging Professional's committee to develop reference material, provide ARE study sessions and devise new events to assist young professionals entering the workforce. Working with each of these groups has been very fulfilling and I'm fortunate to have met and worked alongside so many talented and committed individuals.

Much of my time is dedicated to the successful management of budgets, resources, financial planning and ensuring open lines of communication between all parties involved in a project. These interactions, more than anything, have helped me to realize that our greatest successes are born out of collaboration, listening and hard work to find a solution that addresses the concerns of everyone involved.

As Treasurer, my goals will be to actively manage the chapter's income and expenses, ensure that membership value is delivered, provide membership assistance to unemployed members, evaluate investments and focus on reducing spending without affecting the quality or quantity of offerings and events.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ryan Manies, Esq., AIA
Polsinelli Shughart PC

I am honored to be nominated to serve the AIA Kansas City Chapter as Treasurer. The prospect of working alongside other dedicated members of our profession is truly exciting.

I must admit, I am not your “traditional” architect and my career path is not “typical.” After graduating from the University of Kansas School of Architecture, I practiced with a local architecture firm, Shaw Hofstra + Associates, for approximately six years. After becoming a licensed architect, I decided to take my profession in a different direction and earned my law degree from the University of Missouri - Kansas City (in case there are any doubts, I am still a Jayhawk!). I currently practice in the construction litigation group of Polsinelli Shughart representing architects, engineers and contractors on issues
I am often asked: "Do you miss being an architect?" My answer: "Miss it? I still am an architect." Since taking my career in a different direction, I have felt an increasing connection to the architectural community. I have met dozens of architects in numerous firms around Kansas City I would never have met in my traditional role practicing architecture. I put my education and training as an architect to use each and every day to assist my clients with the opportunities and issues they face. In addition, I believe my connection with the AIA has grown stronger and I was fortunate to be chosen as a member of the inaugural Pillars Leadership class. I truly believe that this varied experience will be invaluable in providing the leadership to AIA Kansas City, should you select me as your next treasurer-elect.

Typically, speaking about the duties of Treasurer would draw blank stares. Not this year! There is arguably no better time in the history of the Chapter to be Treasurer. Early next year AIA Kansas City picks up and moves into an exciting new space in the middle of the Crossroads Art District. The relocation, together with the state of our current economy, brings an increased focus on the position of Treasurer. This year’s Treasurer will face new, and possibly unprecedented challenges to evaluate investments, manage income and expenses and brainstorm new ways of increasing annual revenue.

I am up for the challenge.

3 Year Director

Kimball Hales
Hufft Projects

I am honored to be nominated to run for a position on the AIA Kansas City Board. The AIA does great things for our profession and community and am privileged to be a part of it.

A quick intro: I have MFA in Architecture and a MS in Construction Management from the University of Illinois. After school, I worked for nearly 5 years in the Chicago area for a mid-size design/build firm before moving to Kansas City in 2007. I have an incredible wife who works hard to tolerate the fact that my other true love is architecture, and three great kids who help me keep things in perspective. Oh, and we have a cat.

I love Kansas City. It has been a nice change from Chicago's hectic pace and long commute. It is a big, small-town. Big enough to have a good amount of culture and industry, and small enough to feel like a tight-knit community. There are many opportunities for growth as well as growing pains common to other cities. As many of us know, Kansas City has one of the strongest AIA chapters in the country in terms of membership. There is a strong feeling of camaraderie among members. The organization provides a number of social, networking, and educational events. The AIA Kansas City has done an excellent job in involving young professionals through its support of the Young Architects Forum (YAF), Women in Design, and the Pillars Leadership program, which I was able to participate in this past year. Through my membership in the AIA Kansas City, I have been able to make new friends both in the profession and outside the profession, participate in continuing education seminars/events, network with community leaders, and see first-hand the various neighborhoods that make up this area along with the challenges and opportunities they face.

In contrast to the booming past decade in our industry, our current economic climate has many architects struggling to find projects and stay afloat. In school, we were bombarded with the idea that architects are great problems solvers. We are trained to look for the not-so-obvious solution. We are leaders that bring
Jon Niemuth, AIA
Ellerbe Becket

When one of our Staff wants to pursue one of the incredible service opportunities and programs within our city, there is a bit of a grilling process carried out by a small internal group individuals who have successfully "gone there before." Everything from application writing to interview prep is treated like a project interview or a client meeting; re-draft and rehearsal are the norm. Having been through the KC Chamber's Centurions program and then assisting with several others with their applications to the same and also to Pillars I was feeling prepared. Upon presenting my thoughts to the group in a quid pro quo I was confronted by the kryptonite of questions; "why should anyone vote for you?" I was stopped cold. All my (apparent) intellectual ideas and philosophies were out the window. Why would anyone vote for me?

Well, here goes. The last several years have found my focus singularly on (re) building the Kansas City practice of Ellerbe Becket. With our office now thriving and I feel the time is right to once again strike out into service. For me, the entire notion of this process and its related commitment is grounded in service. Maybe a little self-promotional-resume-building-ego-fulfilling desire too. But ultimately service has to be the core motivator or why bother? My desire to serve the AIA and Kansas City goes back a few years. I completed, albeit barely, a three-year term on the AIA Missouri Board of Directors. While the opportunity was enjoyable, what I realized from the experience was a desire not just to be involved, but rather a passion to focus that energy on Kansas City. In between the AIAMO and now, I completed the Centurions program and had time to reflect on what those two different perspectives on service meant to me; what would motivate me to get (stay) involved?

I believe the evolving advocacy mission, at least that is what it feels like to me, of the AIAKC chapter. In a three-year tenure on the Board, I would commit to continuing that same passion of advocacy for our profession, our interns, our future. Change is all around us. I believe the next five years will be unlike the previous ten, and so on. There are many pontifications on our future, but none captures the sentiment as well as "Did You Know." (http://theclosetentrepreneur.com/karl-fischs-did-you-know-presentation-remix) If you haven't seen it you may want to sit down. I think the broad issues this piece raises about Education in general can be applied to our Profession as well. Where do we go from here? When will we "turn the corner?" What does the future hold? I certainly do not have all the answers, but you as the AIA constituent, should hope the individuals entrusted to
guide your organization are both not afraid to ask those questions or to seek & listen to the answers. I find the concept of a profession in 2019 that is significantly different from what we are experiencing in 2009, or 1999 for that matter to be exciting. To paraphrase, leadership is best done through the windshield not the rearview mirror. This brings us back to the original question, “Why would you vote for me?” Well, let me put it this way, I am not afraid to ask the necessary questions, and most certainly will work hard for the membership to seek out and ensure clarity of the answers.

Follow me on Twitter @jonniemuth for more thoughts and musings.

Associate Director

Travis Gunter, Associate AIA
SFS Architecture

I would like to begin by thanking the nominating committee for selecting me to run for Associate Director. After graduation I took a somewhat nontraditional approach to the practice of architecture, working for myself and several small firms doing design-build in the most literal sense of the word. I found myself having to work through designs in the field to ensure constructability. I feel this gave me an intimate knowledge of an area of design many new graduates struggle with. However, I felt I was lacking true mentor training in the field of architecture. This was the reason I sought out employment at SFS and also became involved with the AIA. My involvement began in earnest by attending Social Hours and Lunch & Learns (later renamed Chow & Tells after legal pressure) and beginning to meet the local architecture community. The more people I met the more interested I became in serving this community. My first opportunity to do so came with my application to and selection for the AIA Pillars Leadership Class of 2008-2009. This opened my eyes to a new level of involvement I could have in my community as an Architect. By meeting with a number of community leaders within and outside of the Architecture community I began to understand what it takes to make a city thrive. At the same time I also became involved with the Kansas City Chapter of the USGBC serving on their communications committee. I have moved through the ranks to serve as Chair of the Communications Committee and also as member of the Board of Directors. This has given me the opportunity to collaborate with and lead a variety of people and personalities while trying to build consensus and move the USGBC mission forward. As Associate Director I would love to continue and expand our current collaborations with the USGC. I believe sustainability in our profession and built environment is our most pressing challenge and this collaboration would provide rewards for both organizations. I am also encouraged by the recent drive to foster mentorship opportunities within the Architecture community. I believe this is vital to the survival of our profession and as Associate Director I would love to grow these opportunities. More and more the construction industry is driven by profit above all else, often times at the expense of the personal development of our young architects. As a result many recent architecture graduates are leaving the profession or failing to pursue licensure. On a brighter note I am encouraged by the enthusiasm I see in our young architects through YAF, Monsters of Design, and many of the Pillars program applicants. I have this same enthusiasm and feel that I am well positioned to understand the needs of our associate members while also being able to relate those needs to our board. I have been well served by the AIA and I hope that our members will agree with me when I say that I am now ready to return the favor by serving as your next Associate Director.
Hello, my name is Erin Pias, and I’d like to thank the Nominating Committee for offering me the opportunity to run for Associate Director of AIA Kansas City. I’m a 2005 graduate of the University of Kansas where I began my relationship with the AIA as a student involved in AIAS. I love working in architecture especially because I can help to steer the world in a different direction toward sustainability. Americans are finally realizing their effect on the environment and learning how to change their habits to lessen their carbon footprint. People are looking to architects as role models, so now is our chance to reach out and educate our community and improve the future of our profession. As the Associate Director, I’ll work towards greater involvement in the Emerging Professionals Committee, and help establish programs and events to encourage mentorship and collaborative ARE/IDP relationships. In addition, I would like to take the opportunity to become involved in building a public dialogue regarding the AIA and its contributions to our community.

During my career, I’ve been involved in organizations that have helped me grow as a designer, mentor, and member of our community. Since it’s inception in 2005, I’ve been a part of Women in Design Kansas City (WiDKC), a committee of the AIAKC. In 2008-2009 I served as the Director where my main goal for the year was to increase involvement by reaching out and expanding the committees. Our most successful event, widely due to diversity, was “Design Loves Discussion” which featured a gallery and panel discussion of a diverse group of talented women in various design fields. Mentoring was also a focus and led to our first annual “Speed Mentoring” event which is a concept currently being implemented through the Emerging Professionals Committee.

Over the last four years I’ve been fortunate to work at Hoefer Wysocki Architects, where I was given the opportunity to develop our sustainable initiatives as the LEED Coordinator. I have managed the certification efforts for five LEED buildings, helped lead the process of designing LEED compliant buildings, and continued to educate others within the firm on sustainability. At HWA, I also led our “Culture Club” where I encouraged more people to participate in planning activities and community outreach events, including the AIA. I also served as the United Way Employee Campaign Manager for the past two years and led a campaign with great success in spreading the message on how people can help their community.

What does the future hold for Erin Pias? In October I will be speaking at the AIA Central States Conference as the representative from Kansas City, and I’ll present an overview of WiDKC including the latest diversity statistics of the architectural profession, WiDKC initiatives, ideas on life+work balance, and the National Diversity Recognition Award we received at the AIA National Convention in 2009. I’m also about to start my second year of volunteering with “Youth Friends.” This experience is very rewarding in developing mentorship skills and realizing the effect mentoring has on our community.

AIAKC was established in order to support architects in the Kansas City area, and all members (established architects as well as AIA Associates) should know that their thoughts and ideas can help influence the profession as well. Through mentorship and increased programming we can further include the associate voice in these endeavors. Please do not hesitate to send me an email at erin.pias@hwa.net if you have any questions or concerns you’d like me to address as the Associate Director. I’d be happy to represent your voice and hope you will support me with your vote. Take care and I hope to see you at election night!
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