



AIA Wisconsin

A Society of The American Institute of Architects

2006 Membership Satisfaction Survey

In July 2006, AIA Wisconsin initiated a web-based survey of the membership. A total of 265 members responded, representing 18% of the total membership of 1,479. The purpose of the survey was to collect member comments and suggestions to help guide AIA Wisconsin programs and policies. The survey results were compiled for use by the AIA Wisconsin Board of Directors and local AIA Chapter officers at the 2006 long-range planning retreat in August.

Demographics

Looking at who responded, 80% were AIA members, 16% were Associate AIA members and 4% were Professional Affiliate members, which generally mirrors the breakdown of total membership. AIA Wisconsin has four local Chapters; and 39% of the respondents were from the Southeast, 30% Southwest, 18% Northeast and 10% Northwest (3% indicated they didn't know their local Chapter), which means that Southeast Chapter members may have been slightly under represented and Northwest Chapters slightly over represented relative to the actual distribution of members among the local Chapters. When asked about their length of membership, 56% of those responding indicated that they had been a member for ten years or more, with 24% over 20 years and, at the opposite end of the spectrum, 26% for five years or less.

Membership Retention

The survey asked members to rate various reasons for maintaining their membership. Over three-fourths (77%) indicated that professional development/continuing education was an "important" or "very important" reason. Other important reasons included state programs like the AIA Wisconsin Convention and Fall Workshop (62%), being part of the national AIA (61%) and local Chapter programs (54%).

Local Programs

When asked to rate the performance of their local AIA Chapters, better than 60% gave their Chapter a rating of "average" or "good" for member communications, continuing education programs, networking events and community service. Overall, local communications and continuing education opportunities received higher marks from members. However, responses related to performance and member communications varied depending on local Chapter membership. The Southeast and Southwest Chapters more often received ratings of "average-to-good" and "good-to-excellent," respectively, while members in the Northeast and Northwest Chapters were more likely to rate the performance of their local Chapter in the "poor-to-satisfactory" range. Some of this disparity in responses may be due to the membership distribution and geographic challenges faced by the two northern local Chapters.

Programs of Interest

The popularity of certain types of programs was fairly consistent statewide. When asked to rate the programs they are most interested in attending, the largest number of members responded that they were "interested" or "very interested" in the following types of programs: building tours (181), architectural design (181), sustainable design (179), business of architecture/practice issues (168) and building codes (165). For all of these top-rated programs, 60% or more of the respondents indicated they were "interested" or "very interested." Members responding to the survey expressed less interest in programs related to marketing and team development, joint programs with allied organizations and social networking events.

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Over 90 members took the time to suggest other programs they would like to see provided by AIA Wisconsin or their local Chapter, with the following examples:

- More case studies. Architects solving real problems for real people with specific information rather than general, sweeping comments . . .
- Southeast Chapter “Building Science” luncheon program and building tours are most valuable.
- General public awareness of what an architect does.
- Programs to address needs and concerns of older architects.
- More support for intern development.
- More historic preservation programs. More green building seminars.

Important Issues

Asked to rate the importance of various issues, members consistently put architectural design at the top of the list, with 89% rating it “important” or “very important.” Other important issues identified by the membership included: professional development/continuing education (79%), livable communities/sustainable design/affordable housing (72%) and community leadership/public awareness (70%).

Community Service & Communication

Better than three out of five members (63%) indicated that they contribute between one and eight hours per month to local community organizations and causes outside of their practice, with 8% contributing over 16 hours per month.

Nearly three out of four members (73%) indicated that they found the AIA Wisconsin website (www.aiaaw.org) an effective way to communicate and share information about state and local AIA news and events. Over 90 members offered comments on how to improve member communications, with the following examples:

- I think the AIA communicates often and well.
- You’re communicating just fine, it’s the content of the communications!
- There should be a forum for the firm leaders to get together to discuss their problems and needs.
- Enhance the website with more information and links.

Conclusion

Based on responses to the survey, AIA Wisconsin will need to improve our connection to grow and retain younger members. Although we have made strides in communication through web-based news and event postings, we still need to revitalize our membership by getting them involved in programs as active participants. Our programs are well received; and we have been focusing on our core passion and competency – architectural design/building tours and sustainability.

Our state programs have been and should continue to focus on emerging issues and the business of architecture, including workshops on “integrated practice” and “designer-led design-build,” to drive toward the future model of more collaborative project delivery methodologies.

The AIA150 initiatives around the state should be a catalyst to encourage more active member participation. If we, as an organization, can develop structured programs that provide opportunities for participation at all levels of experience, our membership will be rewarded with intangible benefits and AIA members will become the recognized community leaders that will be sought out to facilitate future initiatives.

W. Lee Connelley, Jr., AIA, Chair
AIA Wisconsin Membership Committee
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