NCARB

4 March 2015

NCARB received the following questions from programs interested in pursuing the Integrated Path to Licensure. Related questions have been grouped together based on five general topics. While several questions were directly related to the streamlined IDP, we felt it important to provide answers to all questions submitted in an effort to support the open dialogue. A second round of questions and answers will occur in mid-April. NCARB will also host an open forum at the **ACSA Annual Meeting** in Toronto on Thursday morning, March 19. We hope to see many of you there.

WHY AN ADDITIONAL PATH ?

1. **Is market data available that suggest that there is in fact a market for an "accelerated" path to licensure?** Although for a student who chooses this path, it may in fact shorten the overall length of time to complete the full licensure process, the "licensure upon graduation" approach will inherently **increase** the length of time to graduation. That will also increase the cost of education (and in fact the full cost of achieving licensure because Universities will have to charge students to assist students in the IDP and ARE prep. process.) At a time when student debt is exploding, high school students who may be prospective architects are not focused on licensure! They are focused on time to graduation and the cost of their education. As with any endeavor, it doesn't make good business sense to create a program if there isn't evidence that there is a market for a longer and more expensive path to graduation.

NCARB RESPONDS

This topic has been part of the conversation among academics and practitioners for decades. The intent of the RFI&I was to gauge the level of interest. NCARB received responses from 32 of 123 institutions (26%). That number of favorable responses, in our opinion, justifies moving the discussion forward.

While the time to complete the education component may be longer, we would challenge the assertion that this integrated path must result in additional tuition. Does a student that is on an extended internship have to pay tuition? Can the earnings of a student actively employed in the profession be used to offset the need to borrow money in the first place?

Furthermore, an integrated path will **decrease** the time to licensure by several years, placing them in higher demand and in a higher earnings category much sooner in their career. Thus the cumulative path is shorter. The business decision is one each program will have to make; our commitment is to offer a structure for such a path if there is interest on the part of the school.

2. **If NCARB truly wants to move beyond the "what if" conversation into a realm of experimentation, then why are blended experiences off the table?** Some schools have great examples of coursework that engages real world clients under the supervision of licensed architects. If the goal is to truly blend and streamline the process, it would seem that allowing for IDP credit for some coursework that fits very specific criteria to ensure an environment similar to an office is a great opportunity to truly shorten the time required to become licensed.

NCARB RESPONDS

This process was about creating an additional path to licensure that is accepted by the State Boards of Architecture by re-sequencing and integrating the existing components of licensure. It was never about reinventing IDP. The three components of education, experience, and examination are currently undergoing their own evolution regardless of this effort. The new 2014 NAAB Conditions for Accreditation have been released. Streamlined IDP will become the new experience standard on July 1, 2015 and the Overhauled IDP will be released one year later. And ARE 5.0, as announced well over a year ago, will be launched in late 2016. The evolution of these three programs will better position the "integrated path" for success. Programs can successfully incorporate "real world experience" into their curriculum under the provisions of IDP. Studios developed to "simulate experience" may be valuable, however they do not fulfill the requirements of IDP and would not be accepted by licensing boards as a viable alternative to working for a licensed architect.

SUPPORT FOR THE INTEGRATED PATH

3. **The hurdle of making changes in state licensure processes is formidable in some states. Can NCARB be more specific about "providing the resources necessary to assist licensing boards in their efforts to enact these changes."?** In some states with weak licensing boards, legislation will be required to make any change to the current state requirements for licensure, and the "grass roots" influence of local educational institutions is minimal.

NCARB RESPONDS

To help connect the right people, the point of contact for each State Board of Architecture was included in the RFP. And fortunately, most schools already enjoy a close working relationship with their State Board. NCARB staff will serve as an intermediary when necessary to help facilitate the conversation between the schools and the State Boards.

While the majority of State Boards will have to process change, the work is already underway. NCARB has identified the state laws and Board rules that will have to be modified to allow for pre-graduation access to the ARE. NCARB staff and our Legal Counsel are "on board" to assist the States in drafting and reviewing language to ensure effective and efficient change. NCARB is also initiating direct discussions with AIA state components whose existing lobbying capacity will be a valuable element in addressing legislative change. Embracing this change management process will take time and will require the support of the profession. However those Boards with well written rules will have an easier time than those Boards that will have to engage with law makers and the legislative process.

4. A more structured approach to the examination process is certainly desirable. **Is NCARB considering a more structured approach to the requirements for the timing of the exams?**

NCARB RESPONDS

NCARB has no pre-determined approach to the sequencing of ARE 5.0. A successful proposal should incorporate a program-specific approach that responds to the curriculum and positions the student for success. However, the reduction of the re-test waiting period from six months to 60 days has already had a dramatic impact on ARE administrations and may go a long way to stem the procrastination tide. NCARB is discussing creating financial incentives to "bundle" or expedite taking the exams. ARE 5.0, and its redesign in to six "phase-of-practice" divisions is likely to reinforce the relationship to internship and demonstrate the practical value of taking the exam.

At the time, the process of completing the old paper-and-pencil exam was considered to be inflexible and inaccessible. The transition to computer-based testing in 1997 introduced much-desired flexibility and presented a customized, almost "on-demand" experience that better suited candidates' expectations. In reality, easier access to the exam shifted the responsibility for structure and discipline to the candidate. For some, this meant the exam was more easily postponed. Some students may need a more structured approach, and this integrated, concentrated, accelerated pathway provides exactly that: the ability to complete their degree alongside the IDP and the ARE, concurrently and seamlessly, before life "gets in the way."

5. **Is there also any planned effort to encourage firms, in addition to schools, to support emerging professionals in their examination process?** Recent history suggests that the primary factor that has contributed to the extended length of time to licensure is lack of support from firms and simple procrastination on the part of the emerging professionals.

NCARB RESPONDS

The assertion that the lack of support from firms has extended the length of time to licensure is not supported by NCARB's research. According to the 2012 *Internship & Career Survey* jointly developed by the AIA and NCARB, 62% of intern architects report a high to moderate level of financial support from their firms. Historically, the survey also indicates that ARE Fees and professional organization dues are each likely to be covered by 50% of firms. (The detailed results of the *Survey* may be found here.)

New discussions are underway with AIA on how to best spotlight firms who encourage licensure, and NCARB is planning additional outreach programs targeted at firms to help them understand the value in further supporting emerging professionals and their path to licensure.

RFP Questions - Round 1

NCARB

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RECIPROCITY

6. **Does NCARB expect the streamlined IDP to become an impediment to reciprocity?**

   ### NCARB RESPONDS
   No, given that we will continue to record additional hours and instruct interns regarding the value of keeping a Record which will comply with all jurisdictions. The streamlined IDP will become the new experience requirement for the NCARB Certificate on July 1, 2015.

   Furthermore, since a participant in this initiative will have completed the same NAAB/IDP/ARE requirements as an emerging professional following the traditional path, we anticipate no impediment to reciprocity. As in the past, NCARB will continue to work with the State Boards to grant reciprocal licensure to those Architects that present an NCARB Certificate.

FEES

7. State boards have examination and initial registration fees. **How might those be changed or connected or NCARB's fees adjusted to make a smoother transition in this special pathway?**

   ### NCARB RESPONDS
   At this time, there are no plans to adjust the fee collection process. State licensing and registration fees, in many instances, reside in other agencies and/or are beyond the State Board's control. NCARB encourages schools to explore the possibility of incorporating the known fees into the overall tuition/fee structure so that they might be financed as part of the student's loan package.

8. **My institution pays the initial $100 Record application fee for students; under this plan when does NCARB expect the final $250?**

   ### NCARB RESPONDS
   NCARB is very encouraged by programs and those State Boards of Architecture that subsidize the fee for establishing an NCARB Record. For now, the current payment process will remain in place. Based on the existing structure, the $100 application fee will apply to students and intern architects that graduated within the previous 6 month period. The $250 balance will continue to be assessed to the intern architect when they request eligibility to sit for the ARE.

IDP STREAMLINE

9. **At the moment, how many state boards look like they will adopt the lower number of IDP hours?**

   NCARB RESPONDS

   The elimination of elective hours and reliance on the 3,740 Core Hours will become the new experience requirement for the NCARB Certificate. Based on our initial research, we expect that over 30 State Boards will adopt the streamlined IDP on July 1, 2015, with an additional number of Boards needing to take additional steps that may delay their adoption. Based on past historical patterns for adoption of changes to NCARB programs, we expect to reach adoption in the mid-to-high 40s within five years. Further research is currently underway and the specific jurisdictional results will be announced prior to the July 1 implementation date.

10. **How many hours are assigned to each of the new IDP categories?**

    NCARB RESPONDS

    For the coming year, the distribution of Core Hours does not change and there are no new IDP categories. The streamlined IDP eliminates the 1,860 Elective Hours, reducing the number of hours to complete the program to the existing 3,740 Core Hours. Effective July 1, 2016, IDP will be overhauled and the core hours will be redistributed into the new six categories. We will announce that distribution well in advance of the effective date.

11. **What happens to elective IDP hours already gained?**

    NCARB RESPONDS

    The IDP hours earned in elective areas are an important part of initial/reciprocal licensure in a jurisdiction that may not initially adopt the new streamlined IDP. Elective hours will be maintained as a permanent part of the Intern Architect's Record to ensure future mobility.