

## Faculty Advisor Role Description

Congratulations! You have been asked to advise one of over one hundred student chapters of the American Institute of Architecture Students. This letter is to introduce some aspects of the AIAS that you may not be familiar with. It's also to serve as a resource for new faculty advisors and provide contacts in the national AIAS office who can provide additional resources and support.

You may already have heard, but we brought on three new staff members at the national office in September of 2015. We have Natalie Neumann, Director of Digital Media; Lauren Fields, Director of Programs + Events; and myself, Director of Leadership + Career Services. We are all here to help move the AIAS in an upward direction, and to support our students and advisors in every way possible.

### **ABOUT THE AIAS**

Founded in 1956, the AIAS is an independent, non-profit, student-run organization dedicated to providing unmatched progressive programs, information and resources on issues critical to architecture and the experience of education. The mission of the AIAS is to promote excellence in architectural education, training and practice; to foster an appreciation of architecture and related disciplines; to enrich communities in a spirit of collaboration; and to organize students and combine their efforts to advance the art and science of architecture.

Any university or community college may create a chapter, in conformance with the AIAS national guidelines. The AIAS is not a part of AIA, although the AIA supports the organization and the AIAS National Office in Washington, DC is located in the AIA Building, along with the ACSA.

### **AIAS PROGRAMS**

At the national level, the AIAS provides resources to the many student chapters and architecture students: conferences, publications, competitions, and information for chapters. The AIAS website is especially helpful for chapters in finding best practices to support local events and fundraising. The website is currently undergoing a major renovation, which will allow us to provide more valuable information to our chapters.

### **FREEDOM BY DESIGN**

Started in 2004, *Freedom By Design* is one of the most widely recognized programs of the AIAS, and the AIAS provides excellent resources for chapters to use in planning, funding, and building a project. Liability is an important concern that has been addressed by the AIAS procedures and best practices. This is a great way to get students involved in community service and also to accrue Leadership + Service hours in IDP.

Freedom by Design programs can only be executed by AIAS chapters, following the AIAS guidelines. Extensive guidelines are on the website, and training for student team leaders is provided at the two national conferences.

### **ROLE AS AN AIAS CHAPTER FACULTY ADVISOR**

The Faculty Advisor plays many roles: mentor, team builder, conflict mediator, educator and role model.

For long-term chapter growth, development and strength, it's important to keep in mind that you are the chapter advisor, not the chapter leader. You can provide advice and insight for the students as

they work on projects and activities, but you should mentor students and encourage them to take responsibility rather than assume their work responsibilities. Students will learn more if they make decisions and are held accountable for those decisions. Students are accountable for the successes and challenges of the organization.

### **EXPECTATIONS OF AN AIAS FACULTY ADVISOR**

Understand the role and mission of the AIAS as a national organization.

- Become a member of AIAS (membership for Faculty Advisors is free).
- Meet with your organization regularly. We recommend at least twice per academic term.
  - Understand financial proposals: dues, fundraising, accounts, and spending money.
  - These meetings are also a great opportunity to check in with officers, remind them of responsibilities and deadlines when necessary, and to advise them on effective ways of communicating their ideas with the membership and the school administration.
  - Help the organization to maintain its records for continuity in future members and leaders, and also help to remind offices of transition plans and elections.
- Understand the role of the AIAS Chapter within your department and university.
- Maintain open and constant communication with student leadership.
- With a student contingent, try to attend the AIAS national events (Forum and Grassroots) and/or regional Quad Conferences.
- Learn about opportunities to align with a local AIA Chapter, for mentorship opportunities. Encourage chapters to develop relationships with local chapters and other community organizations.
- Ask questions. One of the most valuable roles of a Faculty Advisor is to help students identify areas, issues and factors that they may have overlooked or not be aware of.

Effective AIAS Faculty Advisors tend to balance the right amount of encouragement and guidance, while letting student leaders take ownership of the success of the organization and its events. In general, multi-year arrangements with a Faculty Advisor can help maintain continuity in AIAS chapters.

### **TRANSITION FOR NEW FACULTY ADVISORS**

- Learn about the AIAS nationally through its website.
- Learn as much as possible about your student chapter from former Faculty Advisors, from student leaders, from alumni, from other faculty and the department administration.
- Understand the parameters of Freedom by Design.
- Register as an AIAS member – it is free for Faculty Advisors.
- Consider attending one of the AIAS national conferences in order to understand the national network and scope of AIAS: Forum is held each year at the end of December, and is targeted at the membership as a whole. Every July, the Grassroots Conference is held in Washington, DC, with a focus on workshops for the elected chapter officers and FBD team captains.