

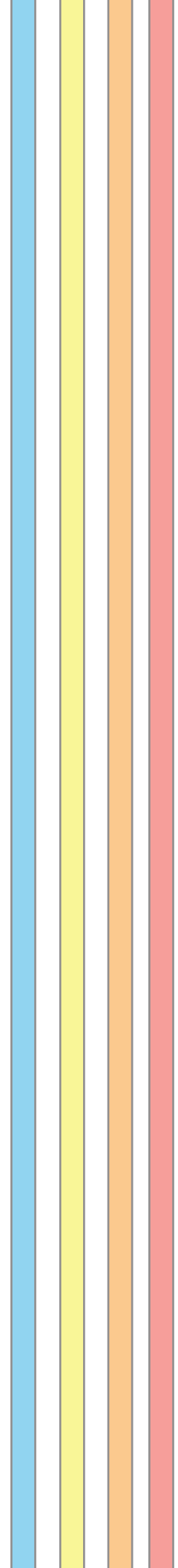
LUKE VASTANO

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**NORTHEAST QUAD DIRECTOR
2025-2026 CANDIDACY PACKET**



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Colt Brock, AIAS, NOMA, Assoc. AIA, Past President
American Institute of Architecture Students
1735 New York Avenue, NW WASHINGTON D.C. 20006-5292

Past President Colt,

When I was a freshman, I chose to take a chance and come to my first AIAS meeting. Not knowing what I was expecting to see, learn, and who I would meet. Never in a million years would I have imagine that eventually I would be sitting here writing this letter to you to run for the National Board of Directors. Never, would I have thought that every member of my chapter would be cheering me on. But mainly, I never thought that when I took that chance and went to my first AIAS meeting, that it was the beginning of the most impactful phase of my life.

In the blink of an eye, four years have passed and I am nearing the end of my time in the organization. While this does make me nostalgic and sad, I must say that I am extremely proud and lucky to have met leaders such as yourself from around not only the United States, but also the world. Seeing how leaders within AIAS navigate challenges, constantly re-imagine the voice of the organization, and give all their effort towards making a positive impact, is extremely inspiring. So much so, that I have decided to **declare my intent to run for the 2025-2026 American Institute of Architecture Students Northeast Quad Director Position.**

In my time in AIAS I have learned a wide range of lessons. From being our chapter president for two years, being a NCARB Student Licensing Advisor for four years, a member of the Student Health and Wellbeing Task Force, and even Co-Chairing the Climate Action and Sustainability Task Force. All of those have taught me two main lessons. Courage and Curiosity. To have courage for the challenges that you never see coming, courage to represent and advocate for your members, and courage to be uncomfortable in the spirit of being a leader. To be curious in what task to take on next, how to improve, and to find the great ideas that haven't been found yet. Curious to listen and ask questions when needed, and to be curious enough to dream big and never let the inspiring light fade.

It has truly been a pleasure and an honor to have been surrounded by leaders such as yourself and many other past Board of Director members. To witness your curiosity and courage through the tough times, I must say you have paved the way for many leaders to follow. Yet inevitably, new troubles and challenges will arise and new paths will need to be paved. It is my hope to being among some of the best leaders within our organization as a member of the Board of Directors.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Luke Vastano', with a stylized, cursive script.

Luke Vastano, AIAS
Thomas Jefferson University Chapter President
Climate Action and Sustainability Task Force Co-Chair
NCARB Student Licensing Advisor

Luke Vastano, AIAS

Education

Thomas Jefferson University: Philadelphia, PA
Bachelor of Architecture, 2021-2025
Master of Urban Design, 2024-2026

Rowan College of South Jersey: Vineland, NJ
Associate of Arts, 2021

Leadership Experience

AIAS Thomas Jefferson University Chapter
President
2023-2024, 2024-2025

Climate Action and Sustainability Task Force
Co-Chair
2024-2025

Student Health and Wellbeing Task Force Member
2023-2024

NCARB Student Licensing Advisor, Region 2
2021-2025

Dean's Student Advisory Council, Thomas
Jefferson University
2022-2025

Tau Sigma Delta Honor Society Member
Inducted 2023

Thomas Jefferson University Honors Program
Admitted in 2021

Digital Fabrication Lab Safety Instructor
2021-2026

Faculty Search Committee Student Representative
Member for six faculty searches

Skills

- Revit
- Rhino
- Grasshopper
- Climate Studio
- Enscape
- Twin Motion
- 3D Printing
- Adobe Photoshop
- Adobe Lightroom

Accomplishments

Overall Chapter Growth

- During my time as president, our chapter has grown from fifteen people to nearly one hundred and eighty.

Beaux Arts Ball Collaboration

- In collaboration with Drexel University, we organized a city wide Beaux Arts Ball with nearly three hundred attendees

First National FORUM Conference Attendance

- As president, I organized our chapter's first attendance of a national conference (AIAS NOLA FORUM)

Student Advocacy

- As a chapter, we have widespread our Community Culture Document and we constantly talk about its use and updating process

Peer Mentor Program

- Our chapter runs a peer mentor program with roughly fifty members participating

Liam Presser
AIAS Active Member
Nomination: Luke Vastano

I am a fourth year student in the B.Arch program at Jefferson and I have been friends with Luke since our second semester in the program. We attended AIAS meetings together during that semester and I have continued to be an active member of the club as Luke has become the president.

During Luke's time as president in the past two years, the club has grown considerably and I believe that is entirely due to his leadership and commitment. Under Luke's leadership, the Jefferson AIAS Chapter has become the largest club in the university and average meeting attendance has more than tripled.

Under Luke's leadership, the club has organized 14 firm tours (a record), multiple social gatherings (such as a barbeque and ice cream social), the club's first ever beaux arts ball (in collaboration with Drexel University and with hundreds of attendees), and fostered a greater connection amongst the community of architecture students at Jefferson.

Even before Luke had expressed interest in being president of the club, I knew that he would eventually take over a leadership role. During our second year, Luke was very active in helping the first years with technical, design, and even life problems. The relationships he built with them led to them coming to AIAS meetings and inspired them to now be mentors to the year below them in the same way.

True leadership is about empowering those around you so that the sum of the group surpasses the individual pieces. I believe this is what Luke does best. He leads by example and puts others in a position to succeed. Luke has not only done an exemplary job as president, he has also created a culture of collaboration and exploration that will ensure the next generation of students can successfully lead the club as well.

Luke Vastano is a role model to myself and other students in the way that he leads by example through creating connections with other students and staff. His consistent morals and ideals for the profession of architecture and what we as students can achieve are admirable and indicative of the future of his leadership and architecture career. I enthusiastically and emphatically endorse Luke Vastano for the position of Northeast QUAD Director.



Liam Presser
Thomas Jefferson University
Bachelor of Architecture 2026
Ram Riders Ultimate Frisbee Club, President

2 December 2024

American Institute of Architecture Students

Dear Nominating Committee:

I am a tenured professor in the Bachelor of Architecture Program, currently the Associate Dean of the College and previously the director of the B.Arch. Program, and have been at Thomas Jefferson University for almost 30 years. During that time, I have taught well over 1400 largely undergraduate students in history-theory and studio courses. I write this letter in strong support of Luke Vastano as the AIAS Northeast QUAD Director.

Luke is in the fourth year of our NAAB-accredited five-year B.Arch. program; he is following an accelerated degree path leading to a Master of Urban Design and currently has a very high cumulative GPA. Last year, he was enrolled in my American Architecture seminar and excelled in all assignments, including exams, class participation, and a research paper/public presentation on Black architect Howard Hamilton Mackey, Sr. As an honors student, Luke dove into the latter project, visiting the site of Mackey's work and impressing my faculty colleagues with his thorough account of the architect's impact.

By channeling his strong work ethic and ability to collaborate, Luke has found multiple ways of assisting other students. He is a leader in student organizations (AIAS chapter president, AIAS Student Health & Wellbeing National Task Force, and NCARB student licensing advisor) and is helping me organize our Tau Sigma Delta Honor Society. When I interact with Luke on the Dean's Student Advisory Council and at recruiting events, I find him engaged, prepared, and ambitious. In a more informal setting, I see him sharing his visualization skills with other students. He has been a great asset to our program and college as he helps raise the quality of the student experience here.

As soon as Luke enrolled in our college, it was evident that he valued involvement in co-curricular activities and he has continued to balance his academic demands and his leadership in the venues I mention above. This is why I believe he is prepared to serve as Northeast QUAD Director and will preform well in that role. I acknowledge that our college is fully aware of the commitments and responsibilities he will carry in that position and all the implications it may have on his academic commitments.

Sincerely,



David M. Breiner, PhD
Associate Dean and Associate Professor
David.Breiner@jefferson.edu

1. We all love the AIAS for different reasons, but it takes a critical and constructive analysis of the institutions we appreciate most to continue to evolve them into entities that can support each new generation of membership. **Why are you running for a position on the AIAS Board of Directors?** What about the organization and its membership motivates you to seek a leadership position?

A position like Northeast QUAD Director is an embodiment of what I find the most valuable about the AIAS, connection. We all took a chance when we went to our first AIAS meeting at our local chapters. That chance is what led us to be connected to a web of resources that would have gone unnoticed. To me, encouraging others to take that chance just as I did, is something that is very personal to me. Without meeting the mentors and leaders I met in our local chapter, I am unsure if I would be in the position I am in right now.

The pride I have for this organization has led me to make the decision to run for a position where I can make an impact on the highest level. In the two years that I have been the president of Thomas Jefferson University's chapter, we have grown from fifteen members, to over one hundred and eighty. This growth comes from the core values that I have preached about for our chapter. Our chapter does not "belong" to a single person, or an executive board. Instead it is a culmination of countless voices and visions that all come together to make something truly impactful. Students constantly come to me with new ideas for events, resources, and desires to be more involved in something so lively and exciting such as our local chapter. In seeing the way that our members talk about AIAS to people who are debating coming to their first meeting, I can't help but acknowledge the fact that this is what the AIAS is at its core. A web of connection that is only valuable because of the people that comprise it. Each of us has a set of tools and values that we bring to the organization and we all have the power to make a serious impact.

It is my mission to use my experience and resources to ignite that same passion within each chapter of our region. To meet with every chapter and learn more about what they feel they need to be able to break past their challenges, bring more students into their web, and find their voice as a local chapter.

2. Though it may be hard to believe, the AIAS is not perfect. A critical analysis of any organization is a healthy part of its operation. There may be things that you feel the AIAS could do better, or maybe you see new opportunities or partners to engage. **Where do you see room for improvement or new areas for the organization to expand into?**

As an NCARB Student Licensing Advisor, I think that the level we are involved in the licensure process for our members is not high enough. I can see tremendous value in creating a network of recent AIAS alumni to meet with others who are beginning their path to licensure and forming study groups and resource centers for common use. Resources such as slack channels for organizing study groups, to meeting recently licensed architects who can share wisdom about the process, to inviting NCARB to give more frequent discussions on updates and resources for our members.

At Thomas Jefferson University, we currently have this relationship with our members and it is one of the most used resources we have. We offer tutorials on how to use AXP, news about changes to the ARE's, and even as simple as a friendly face to ask basic questions such as "why even get licensed?" I think our organization needs to expand into the success of our members when they are nearing the end of their education and they are trying to navigate their path in the profession. This guidance is another added benefit that we can offer as an organization that shows how much we value the future of our members.

3. In recent years, the AIAS has increased its efforts in advocacy for architecture students on issues including but not limited to health and wellness, equity, student loan debt, Learning & Teaching Culture, practice experience, leadership, and technology. **What one issue do you personally find the most important?** How would you make progress on this issue as an elected leader on the AIAS Board of Directors?

I think that I speak for most architecture students when I say this, but our major gets pretty rough. In a way that may make you feel isolated, constantly struggling, confused, or just lost. Our field of study is a qualitative field that struggles to fit into the quantitative nature of college. How do you receive a numeric grade for the sketches that “failed”, or the study models that did not work out? Meanwhile, students struggle with how to advocate for themselves in the classroom and inherently have less time to be creative and question. Our GPAs suffer, scholarships are in the balance, and the idea of “failing” a class hangs over our heads.

So if I had to put it briefly, I believe the most important issue is advocacy. Architecture students are constantly under pressures that most other majors are not privy to. When applying for architecture programs, students are not prepared to have the mental challenges that are hidden within the profession. But my suggestion is that we embrace this problem and have the courage to speak openly about it. One of the first things that I share with our new members is that the struggle is inevitable, but I can promise every single member of our chapter that they are never alone and that I will stand with them when they have troubles. I think that if this mentality is amplified and upscaled, we can make a serious impact on this problem.

4. The AIAS has over 300 chapters across the U.S. and around the world, ranging in size, age range, and even purpose. **How would you use your position on the Board to better connect and engage our geographically and culturally diverse membership?** What resources would you propose to better serve Chapter leaders seeking to grow their chapters and connect to other students around the world?

One aspect of AIAS that I have grown a huge appreciation for is the national task forces. I think they are a phenomenal way to get involved on an international level and to meet people from around the world who all have such a unique set of skills and interests. This year, our conversations during the Climate Action and Sustainability Task Forces have been very eye opening in regards to how our members simply define sustainability. In being a part of a few different task forces, I see them as very easy ways to get involved and to step into the international network.

That being said, my goal is to encourage chapter leaders to inform their members about national task forces and how valuable they can be. Task forces are not exclusive to executive board members at local chapters, and I think that this message needs to be spread more commonly. Being a part of a task force has introduced me to some amazing people, one of which I am actually co-chair a task force with right now! These tools are key to getting our members more involved and invested.

It is my belief that we all have an incredible amount to learn from one another. Not only on an international scale but also from chapters who are in close proximity. The world of architectural education is defined in a wide variety of ways and the best way to learn and diversify your knowledge is to interact and collaborate. I think that task forces are the perfect catalyst for this growth and their benefit needs to be more widely discussed.

5. Describe how you intend to fulfill the roles and responsibilities of your chosen position on the Board.

Elaborate on your intended communication/action plan and the primary goals you have for your one-year term.

As Northeast QUAD Director, my main focus is going to be on creating chapter to chapter connections within the QUAD. In serving a one-year term, there will be a lot to accomplish in a short window of time. My opinion on that dilemma is to focus on establishing connections for chapters within the region that will last far beyond my term.

To give a personal example, at Thomas Jefferson University's AIAS Chapter, we have started a tradition of coordinating and hosting a city wide Beaux's Arts Ball where any AIAS Chapter in the area is welcome to attend, and use the event to meet other AIAS members. These events have been received extremely well so far with nearly three hundred attendants last year, but the most successful part is that we started a collaborative trend for future AIAS chapters to maintain. Long after I graduate from our program, I still envision that connection carrying on and in my opinion, that is the biggest accomplishment I could imagine.

As Northeast QUAD Director, I plan on making localized chats for chapters in close proximity with one another to collaborate on events, tours, speakers, or anything that their leaders can imagine. I plan on having hub hangouts in a similar fashion, but one change that I will make is that I am going to reach out and ask if chapter leaders within the region have anything that they want to put on the agenda to share, ask, or learn more about. That way leaders can send in notes as the month progresses and I can condense it into a summarized agenda and I can help as many chapters as possible. Fundraising, event planning, traveling, task forces, anything that the group wants to learn more about, I am going to try my best to find their answers.

6. As an organization that is constantly evolving, the AIAS has to often re-evaluate its priorities. What strategic priorities would you like to see the AIAS focus on during your time on the Board?

The main strategic priorities that I would like to see the AIAS focus on are advocacy for architectural education reform, and mental health / work-life balance issues within the architectural education model. In my opinion, these conversations need to become much more frequent and had with intent. I can almost guarantee that every student reading this answer has an experience from their architectural education that negatively affected them on a personal level. Whether it is financial burdens stacking up, the fear of failure due to a studio culture issue, or just struggling to find their place within the design world with little to no guidance. This feeling of fatigue and isolation for students can not continue to go untouched and unresolved. While a solution is not clearly apparent, I argue that for that reason specifically, more conversations need to be had with allied organizations about what the best next step is.

As we shift into a new wave of technology, changing expectations for students in architecture programs, heightening costs for collegiate programs, and large diversification in backgrounds for design students, I feel that now is the perfect time to press this issue. I believe that a proactive approach to this issue will be to have these conversations with allied organizations about different ways we can address this issue. To give a few brief examples: How can we consolidate the credit hours required for a B.Arch? Since interning while still being a student is becoming more common, why are students (excluding IPAL students) still not allowed to register for the ARE's? Some of these questions have been answered in the past, but I argue that as time goes on, they need to be answered again. After all, I think that advocacy for the well being of architecture students is a core value of the organization and it is very important to me personally.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS POLICY ON COMPENSATION FOR INTERNS

In July 1993, the AIAS Board of Directors adopted a "Public Policy on Uncompensated Interns." The policy has been subsequently reviewed and reaffirmed by the Board and reads as follows:

The AIAS maintains that employers must properly compensate all employees. Compensation must be in compliance with the regulations for the jurisdiction in which they are working.

In 2010, AIAS crafted a public statement on intern compensation in conjunction with the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture and the American Institute of Architects, which reads as follows:

The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, the American Institute of Architects, and the American Institute of Architecture Students recognize that architects are bound by law and ethics to pay interns, and strongly advocate for the appropriate compensation of architectural students and interns. Because of current economic transformations, some architects have both solicited and accepted the services and labor of interns without pay. We strongly urge architectural firms and other for-profit employers to respect the law and comply with the ethical standards of our profession, and we strongly encourage interns to refuse to accept employment without pay, and to notify the Department of Labor in cases where employers propose such an arrangement. For more information on labor laws and professional ethics, please see the AIA Code of Ethics and the U.S. Labor Department standards under the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The ACSA, AIA, and AIAS further support architects, students, and recent graduate doing pro-bono work. We recognize the distinction between unpaid work for profit-making employers, and unpaid work for non-profit organizations, communities in need, and volunteer activities, which allows participants to determine their own hours and degree of involvement. The AIA has established guidelines for service that are provided on a Pro Bono basis. They can be found under the member section of the AIA website.

POLICY ON COMPENSATION FOR INTERNS AFFIRMATION

As a way of confirming that the AIAS is not promoting or being promoted by architects employing unpaid interns, we ask that each participant in an official AIAS function review and sign the following statement. We appreciate your participation in our event and thank you for your support of our position against unpaid internships. This position is supported as well by the Board of Directors of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) and the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Name: Luke Vastano

I do hereby affirm that I understand and support the AIAS policy on the compensation for interns. If I employ interns, I further affirm that I do not use unpaid architectural interns in my professional practice when applicable by federal wage and hour laws.

Signature: Luke Vastano

Date: 12/6/2024

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS ELECTIONS CODE OF ETHICS

Elections are a critical step by which the American Institute of Architecture Students is governed. Annual elections, as outlined in the Bylaws and the Rules of the Board, ensure that the membership of the organization participates in the selection of the best candidates to serve on the national Board of Directors.

Individuals elected to the Board of Directors represent the membership and ensure the continued success of the organization. Therefore, participants who are involved in the elections process, including candidates and Board Members, are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and good judgment.

Confidentiality is required of all participants in the elections process. Participants should not discuss details of the elections process to the general membership before, during or after FORUM. Elections information that is considered public knowledge, and therefore can be shared with the membership, occurs during the General Business Sessions and at the General Assemblies.

Campaigning is strictly prohibited prior to FORUM. Conversation between chapters regarding candidates should not take place. Campaigning will only begin at the first General Assembly of FORUM.

Campaigning during FORUM shall be professional. Candidates and candidate support groups should be respectful in their campaigning efforts. Disrespectful campaigning will be a violation of the Elections Code of Ethics, and will be grounds for immediate review by the Past President.

Campaigning materials should follow the Election Guidelines, and should be distributed in appropriate venues only. Appropriate venues include FORUM General Business Sessions, General Assemblies, and Quad Breakouts.

As leaders of this organization, and future leaders of this profession, we must uphold the highest ethical practice. Questionable behavior during elections will not be tolerated. Any concerns should be immediately raised with the Past President.

ELECTIONS CODE OF ETHICS AFFIRMATION

To promote the highest level of professionalism during elections, we ask that each participant in the elections process review and sign the following statement. We appreciate your participation and thank you for your support and dedication to the organization.

Name: Luke Vastano

I do hereby affirm that I have read, understand and agree to abide by the AIAS Elections Code of Ethics and the Elections Guidelines.

Signature: Luke Vastano

Date: 12/6/2024

Please submit this form with your confirmation for participation.

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS CANDIDATE CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

Candidate contact information will only be used by the Past President to communicate elections-related information. If provided, social media handles will be shared when candidates are posted publicly on AIAS website and social media.

Name (as preferred): Luke Vastano _____

Chapter: Thomas Jefferson University _____

Chapter Leadership Position (if any): Chapter President _____

Email Address: lukevastano@gmail.com _____

Mobile Phone Number: (856) 839 - 8247 _____

Social Media Account Handles (optional):

- o Facebook: _____
- o Twitter: @_____
- o Instagram: @luke_vastano _____
- o Other: _____