



**speak up.  
stand out.  
make an impact.**

**RYAN CUSACK**  
PRESIDENT 2016



# RYAN CUSACK

B.Arch, 2017 • New Jersey Institute of Technology  
(570) 352 - 5317 • ryancusack993@gmail.com

The American Institute of Architecture Students  
1735 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

RE: Candidacy Letter of Intent

To Danielle Mitchell, Assoc. AIA, Chair of the Elections Committee,

I am humbly writing to you to declare my intent to run for the position of National President on the 2017-2018 National Board of Directors of the American Institute of Architecture Students.

As a member of AIAS at New Jersey Institute of Technology, I have found that AIAS is a community of talented leaders who work to support one another in accomplishing their own goals and towards improving the community around them. Being a part of AIAS has given me the opportunity to develop myself as an individual professionally and socially, providing me with a platform by which I have been able to channel my passion towards bettering the communities I have surrounded myself with.

As Chapter President of AIAS NJIT, I have learned many valuable skills that I believe make me a qualified candidate to run for a position on the AIAS National Board of Directors. Serving as President on the National Board of Directors would give me the opportunity to give back to the AIAS community I've learned so much from, and to push the AIAS forward as an organization that empowers architecture students to do more, say more, and have a greater impact on the world.

With enthusiasm,



**Ryan Cusack**

Chapter President  
*American Institute of Architecture Students  
New Jersey Institute of Technology*

## COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

American Institute Of Architecture Students  
National Office  
1735 New York Ave. NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20006

November 20, 2016

To members of the selection committee,

It is with much enthusiasm that I write in support of Ryan Cusack's application to serve as President on the 2017-2018 National Board of Directors of the American Institute of Architecture Students. I am in my second year as the faculty advisor of AIAS at NJIT and it has been thrilling to be involved with such an engaged group of designer-citizens led by Ryan's sterling example. Within the School of Architecture at NJIT, the AIAS chapter is an incredibly active force. The organization plays many of the roles that a conventional student government would: interacting with the school's administration; providing and managing support and production infrastructure; facilitating workshops; developing outreach opportunities; planning social events; and organizing other enrichment activities. In addition to these things, the chapter is active in supporting its members through inventively engaging in AIAS programs, including an award-winning Freedom By Design chapter, enthusiastic participation at national and regional conferences, and energetic support of professional development opportunities. Taken together, these activities and accomplishments reflect the NJIT chapter's crucial role within the institution and demonstrate the ambition, enthusiasm, and resourcefulness of a group of students full of promise as future leaders in the field. Ryan's leadership in the chapter has been fundamental in growing the organization, increasing its involvement with the school of architecture, and, most importantly, securing the chapter's future through an investment of time and energy into its governance infrastructure.

Within the numerous contributions listed above, I would like to single out a few because I think they are emblematic of the qualities that make this organization unique and are evidence of Ryan's leadership talents. As a large public school of architecture in a state with limited resources, the AIAS chapter plays a fundamental role in supporting our students' efforts. Under Ryan's leadership, the chapter oversees and maintains the Print Room, including several plotters, printers, usually running at full capacity and providing a service that the school depends on to meet its educational goals. In 2016, the AIAS opened the 3D Print Lab which has had a dramatic impact on the design culture of the school, especially around the engagement of digital production tools. Where other schools might organize this internally or contract with a third party provider, at the NJIT School of Architecture, this is done entirely through student volunteer labor. By doing it this way, aside from demonstrating a remarkable commitment to the school's culture, AIAS members also acquire significant management and project-based experience that is difficult to find within a traditional classroom setting. That undergraduate

students would have the wherewithal to take on such responsibilities is a testament to their dedication, commitment, and enthusiasm. Moreover, as the chapter president, Ryan understands the manifold benefits of such conditions and has gone out of his way to help create such opportunities for his fellow students.

While the Print Room functions as a necessary piece of institutional infrastructure, the AIAS Shop provides a crucial piece of social infrastructure. Also operating under Ryan's guidance and functioning as café, supply shop, and meeting place, the recently opened Shop fills a significant gap within the life of the school. While there are other food sources on campus, the difference between such a place within the building and one fifteen minutes away means that students can minimize disruption to their work while also getting to know other members of the school's community. Like the Print Room and 3D Print Lab, the Shop is run entirely by volunteers.

The NJIT Chapter of the AIAS provides other forms of social infrastructure in its efforts to help grow the community here. They actively host design workshops in which upper level students meet with more junior students to share ideas and suggestions for their projects. Likewise, recurring tool-based seminars and workshops allow students to teach other students in efforts to remain current with contemporary applications. Even though we are only a short ride from New York City, the demands of each semester can sometimes make it difficult for students to take advantage of this resource. AIAS plays an important role here as well by organizing office visits, cultural excursions, and social activities. Not only does this broaden students intellectual horizons, it is also a reminder of the importance of maintaining a healthy life balance. In terms of professional development and support, the NJIT chapter of the AIAS facilitates IDP opportunities, portfolio workshops, meetings with practitioners, mock interviews, and other forms of support and peer mentorship designed to help our students find rewarding and stimulating positions during summers and upon graduating.


The NJIT chapter of AIAS Freedom by Design is an especially exciting arm of the organization that has undertaken initiatives with a broad reach and with an emphasis on public spaces, economic disparity, and education. These projects have allowed the chapter to develop a more entrepreneurial sensibility with which they both seek out projects but also through which they have been able to launch their own projects (like the DIY Emergency Handbook). Through their inclusive and public nature, these FBD projects expand the possibilities of the organization's mission while creating more opportunities for students to get involved with substantial projects at a range of scales. This is a positive model for the FBD program in general because it presents new audiences with whom to share the transformative potential of design. While the NJIT chapter of FBD continues to pursue efforts to help individuals, they are commendably inclusive and creative in finding ways to provide architectural services to their communities. As a further testament to Ryan's effectiveness as president, he is able to create a space for such success to flourish.

Ryan has demonstrated an understanding that leadership is about looking beyond one's own term to improve the strength of the institution as a whole. He understands the potential impact of the AIAS and is not afraid to tackle some of the mundane and, at times, tedious tasks of governance in order to provide the stability necessary to grow the organization. These tasks include updating and amending the chapter's constitution, securing standing within the university as a whole, and working to ensure a smooth transition for the next group of leaders. On top of that, Ryan continues to be a dedicated mentor to incoming first year students. He is also an outstanding design student in his own right.

The NJIT chapter of the AIAS—thanks largely to Ryan’s effort, dedication, engagement, and selfless leadership style—is an integral part of the School of Architecture. In short, it keeps the place running. The chapter’s energy and enthusiasm are as boundless as they are contagious. For incoming students, they provide models of emerging architects with commitments to design, to the public, and to the health and well-being of themselves and their community. As a member of the faculty here, I am grateful to them for their efforts and inspired everyday by their presence. I am incredibly hopeful for the future architectural world in which these talented and selfless people are its leaders.

It has been an honor to work with the AIAS over the past year and a half this year and I plan to continue supporting them however I can. Ryan has proven himself to be an outstanding leader and I have no doubts that he will continue to work untiringly to improve the world around him. AIAS National would be lucky to have him and I know he would take full advantage of the chance to grow in this new position. I recommend him highly and without any reservations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse LeCavalier". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "L".

Jesse LeCavalier  
Assistant Professor, College of Architecture and Design  
jlc@njit.edu

# RYAN CUSACK

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EDUCATION      2012  
-2017

**New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ**

Bachelor of Architecture, 2017 & Albert Dorman Honors College Scholar  
Recipient of Dean's List Scholar Award, 2012-2017

PROFESSIONAL      2011  
-2016

**Intern Architect, PKSB Architects, New York, NY**

- Participate in all phases of the design and construction process on a wide range of project scale, producing drawings, graphic presentation material, digital 3D models, renderings, and physical models
- Participate in design meetings within the office as well as meetings with project consultants and contractors
- Worked on construction administration of multiple NYC School Construction Authority projects, including: submittal processing and review, construction phase sketches, compilation of deficient construction items into an architectural punchlist
- Worked on multiple landmarks projects requiring review and approval of the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
- Conducted site visits and surveys for projects of varying scale to recreate existing conditions drawings

2014  
-2017

**Studio Assistant, NJIT Learning Communities, Newark, NJ**

- Assisted First Year Architecture Students with hand drafting skills and basic computer programs
- Worked with students in developing their individual design process
- Helped students design ideas graphically and provided tips on how to present accurately
- Met with first year studio faculty weekly and developed a healthy studio culture for students
- Helped students develop time management skills necessary for success in architecture school
- Held academic study sessions and social events for students
- Acted as a liaison between students, faculty, and University staff

ASSOCIATIONS &      2012  
AFFILIATIONS      -2017

**AIAS New Jersey Institute of Technology, NJIT, Newark, NJ**

American Institute of Architecture Students

**Chapter President, 2015-2017**

- Serve as the spokesperson and primary administrator of the Chapter, representing AIAS internally within NJIT and externally
- Coordinate the efforts of a 26 person Board of Directors, including 4 Executive Officers and 22 Committee Directors
- Execute a robust variety of Chapter Programming, including Professional, Social, and Service events
- Operate 3 services within the school - a Printing Room, 3D Printing Lab, and Food & Supply Shop - engaging student volunteers with the goal of raising funding for chapter programming
- Saw the creation of the 3D Printing Lab from its inception, seamlessly integrating the service into the school and our AIAS operations
- Developed and maintained connections with AIA NJ, AIA Newark & Suburban, AIA NJ Emerging Professionals Community, and AIA Emerging New York Architects

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- Organized and executed a school-wide dance, bringing together students from all design majors
- Audited our Chapter Constitution and facilitated the process of completing all necessary revisions and amendments
- Worked to see AIAS become a student senate recognized organization at NJIT
- Secured funding for Forum, Grassroots, and Quad conferences creating opportunities for many of our members to attend these events
- Doubled our chapter membership from 2015 to 2016
- Focused on the efforts of our Freedom By Design chapter and expanding FBD's programming and outreach

## Communications Director, 2014-2015

- Created promotional material for Chapter programming and events

2016  
-2017

## American Institute of Architecture Students

### AIAS Governance Committee, 2016-2017

- Tasked to revise the Vision Statement and Core Values of the American Institute of Architecture Students

2013  
-2017

## Alpha Sigma Phi Fraternity, Alpha Rho Chapter, NJIT, Newark, NJ

### Sergeant-at-Arms, 2016-2017

- Chairman of the judicial body of the chapter, the Standards Board
- Uphold the rules and policies of the Fraternity as presented in the Constitution and Bylaws
- Assist the Marshal with all ritualistic ceremonies of the chapter
- Maintain order during all chapter meetings and rituals

### Membership Education Director, 2014-2016

- Led the new member education program for 4 new member classes
- Established the calendar of new member events

### Brotherhood Development Director, 2013-2014

- Provided chapter programming intended to foster brotherhood within the chapter

## HONORS & AWARDS

2016

### Elly Matzko Memorial Prize

Awarded to a student displaying outstanding service to the College of Architecture and Design at NJIT

2015

### India Travel Scholarship

Based on a portfolio review, four students in their third year of the Bachelor's of Architecture program at the NJ School of Architecture are awarded a 2 week trip to India sponsored by NJIT and Abellon Clean Energy. The purpose of the trip is to acquaint a select group of students with Indian culture, architecture and the particular program and site for the Third Year project in the spring of 2015. Selected students serve as ambassadors for the third year class throughout the spring semester.

2014

### KSS Architects Endowed Scholarship

Awarded to an architecture student entering 3rd year who has demonstrated excellence, a strong sense of initiative and excellent collaborative and interpersonal skills



1. Describe your origin story as a student leader. What prompted you to get involved? What advice would you give others who have yet to realize their potential for leadership?

My start as a leader began after volunteering in the Print Room during my first year in architecture school at NJIT. The Print Room is operated by our chapter of AIAS, which neatly channels many of our volunteers directly into positions of leadership within our chapter. This was certainly true for me. Working in our Print Room exposed me to the unique place that AIAS has within our school, as the organization drives much of the culture of our school. I quickly immersed myself within the chapter, and decided to hold the position of Communications Director during my third year of school. At the conclusion of my third year, I felt that I was ready to take on a greater role within the chapter, and I assumed the position of Chapter President for the following year.

The advice that I always give to my peers who have yet to realize their potential for leadership is to not be afraid of failure. One of the most important lessons that I learned as Chapter President is that failure is just a part of the process. Failure has a way of exposing the weak points within the complexities of an organization; it provides the team with an opportunity to calibrate and adjust, to make the necessary changes. Overextending one's self should never be an expectation, and if it occurs, it probably means that there are changes that can be made to make things more efficient. Potential leaders should not shy away from taking on greater roles out of fear of failure, because the work we put in to AIAS is not work that we do for self-recognition. We do it because we have the ability and the desire to provide for others and to see a better world for our communities and the people around us.

2. In recent years, the AIAS has increased its efforts in advocacy for architecture students on issues including but not limited to student loan debt, studio culture, intern development, leadership, technology, and diversity. 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 National Board of Directors?

The issue that I find most important for the AIAS to address in its advocacy efforts is leadership. Unfortunately, throughout much of the history of architectural education, too much emphasis has been placed on the individual and a concern for one's own design success and prowess. Little attention was given to designing for the real world, and for real communities and people. Students were praised for their innovative ideas in architectonics and form, in design for the sake of design and not for people. As a result, generations of practicing architects have had very little interest in taking on an active role in our civic processes and civic engagement, which has resulted in the disconnection between the architectural profession and the people.

AIAS has the opportunity to address these concerns at the start of an architect's education. Though AIAS has already done a great deal in terms of promoting the leadership potential of students, as



well as promoting service by students within our community, only a small percent of students who attend architecture school are actively involved in their local AIAS chapters. As a member of the National Board of Directors, I would make it a priority to reach out to the administration at schools with existing AIAS chapters to discuss ways in which more active student participation within their local chapters can be encouraged.

3. The AIAS has over 160 chapters across the U.S. and around the world, ranging in size from just a few students to hundreds. 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?

In the past couple of years, AIAS has made huge strides in improving its availability of online resources and general online presence. Both of these improvements have been very important in creating a more connected and engaged membership body across the world. Additionally, the efforts of our Quad Directors have been incredibly impactful in bringing together members within each Quad. However, there is still a lack of connection that exists between members from different Quads.

One potential solution that might help improve connection of our diverse membership is the creation of an online portal/forum where students can share resources and their own work. This would allow students to engage with other students around the world in an informal manner throughout the year, unlike other existing mediums that AIAS has to do this which tend to be static in their delivery and lack student participation (CRIT, AIAS Honor Awards). Another idea, which may be a long shot or something that needs planning across multiple years, would be to create an AIAS app, which would compile many of the resources found on our website into a mobile accessible form, as well as create a platform where students can engage with one another on relevant forums.

4. Describe one area in which you see an untapped opportunity for the AIAS to engage in a new way. Either with other organizations, with school faculty and administrators, with the profession, with the international design community, or any other audience or venue.

One area where I see an untapped opportunity for the AIAS to engage in a new way is local chapter engagement with high school students. Though this may already occur at some AIAS chapters (NJIT has recently become more active in this effort), there is very little promotion of this from the national level. The benefits of actively engaging with students at a younger age could be an increase in awareness about what architecture school is like and what the role of an architect is, an increase in student enrollment in architecture school, an increase in AIAS membership (with students being more familiar with the organization prior to college),



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## 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: **Ryan Cusack**

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: 

Date: **11/20/2016**



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## 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, Board members and elections committee 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 Elections Committee.

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 Elections Chair.

### 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: **Ryan Cusack**

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: 

Date: **11/20/2016**

Please submit this form with your confirmation for participation.



