



AIA Detroit

A Chapter of the American
Institute of Architects

AIA Detroit Christopher Kelley Leadership Development Program 2017-2018 Cohort

Session I: Working Together

Date: October 6th, 2017

Venue: AIREA Studio

Scholars: Lauren Strauss, Assoc. AIA & Justin Wieber, AIA, NCARB, LEED BD+C

In order to be a successful leader, it is necessary to recognize our own strengths as well as the strengths of others. During the first half of the session Rebecca Kraus, success coach, encouraged participants to understand their strengths and habits in order to better recognize and support the strengths of others. The second half of the session featured panelists Deena Fox, Christina Heximer, Chris Mackey, and Lauren Hood discussing the value of healthy working relationships within the design profession.

Rebecca Kraus of Rebecca Kraus & Associates LLC first communicated to scholars the value of the DISC assessment. This presentation informed listeners on the history of the DISC assessment, the meanings of the four categories derived from this acronym (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, Compliance), and the effectiveness of the DISC as a universal language for the evaluation of human behavior.



Each scholar completed a DISC assessment prior to the session. Scholars learned how to apply the assessment's results to gain insight into their daily behavior and personality traits. Individuals compared their results with their peers and learned how to recognize behavioral traits in others. Kraus encouraged scholars to use DISC principles to increase the success of their professional interactions.



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Kraus and the scholars then shifted their focus to Strengths Finder – an assessment which identifies an individual’s top talents and provides strategies to both nurture those strengths and recognize potential deficiencies. A total of thirty-four strengths are divided into four categories – executing, influencing, relationship, and strategic thinking. The cohort enjoyed learning how many top five strengths were represented amongst their peers. Kraus concluded by challenging scholars to actively develop one professional behavior or strength and promised to follow up in a month.

Next, scholars were given an opportunity to put their team building skills to the test. They were challenged to work in groups of four to build the tallest pasta, tape, and marshmallow structure possible. Scholars used the opportunity to see how their DISC and StrengthsFinder results affected their interactions.



The last event of the day was a panel moderated by Lauren Strauss and Justin Wieber and featuring Deena Fox, Principal – Rossetti, Christina Heximer, Associate Director – Detroit Collaborative Design Center, Chris Mackey, Principal – Stantec, and Lauren Hood, MCD



Director-Live6 Detroit. The panelists brought a wide range of experiences to the table – architecture, urban design, and community outreach. They discussed the strategies they use to engage communities, owners, users, and colleagues to solve design challenges and talked about what leadership means to them.



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Hood asserted that to engage a community and earn trust, “You must show up. You’ve got to really build genuine relationships with the people in the community. Not just engage them to get something you want...” The panelists also agreed that it is imperative to approach design from a place of humility and listen.



When asked about collaboration techniques, Mackey assured the scholars that, “face to face interaction is the most effective method...” and again urged panelists to approach collaborators with an open mind and willingness to learn.

Deena Fox encouraged scholars to develop

leadership by contributing perspectives. “If you’re at the table it is OK to have an opinion.” Fox and the other panelists emphasized that it is important to build credibility by following through.

Heximer offered one final piece of advice to cohort: “Take time for yourself and make time for other things. Protect your health and sanity first.”

Throughout the session, scholars gained a clearer understanding of the value and results of building healthy relationships with others. They obtained a detailed explanation of the assessments taken and acquired the knowledge of how to interpret the results as usable data. Panelists guided scholars on how to build meaningful, productive relationships with everyone impacted by design.