

INTERIOR DESIGN EDUCATORS COUNCIL  
External Service Task Force

## **RESULTS FROM THE 2016 SURVEY**

EXTERNAL SERVICE: Activities as related to the public good/societal needs

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### **Introduction**

In February 2016, the Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) External Service Task Force committee<sup>[1]</sup> circulated a survey to explore members' present and future activities in the external service and scholarly and community dissemination. The survey explored the connections between external service activities, community engagement methods, and academic scholarship practices. The findings inform and support the mission of the IDEC. To the best of our knowledge, it is the first survey of its kind.

This article introduces the idea of external service as it relates to the public good/societal needs. Next, it discusses the current state of teaching and research, summarizes the survey results, and explores new directions for interior design teaching and research.

### **External service activities related to public good/societal needs**

Definitions for the term 'external service' vary among colleges, universities, and professional institutions, as do interpretations of external service for the public good.

#### **Defining service**

In general, the higher learning community defines a faculty member's service in terms of internal and external activities. Internal service is defined as activities within one's home school, faculty, and the university/college at large. This type of service tends to be clearly defined by the university or college, for example via employment contracts and/or on institutional websites. The definition of external service tends to be more vague. Each college or university has its own interpretation of external service: it may be based on the school's civic mission statement; it may be set out by one's discipline/profession; or it may be linked with service-learning or community-based research. All of these interpretations are correct. The classic understanding of scholarship and service was put at the forth by Ernest L. Boyer in 1990 and then expanded in 1996.<sup>[2]</sup> He began by defining teaching in academia, and later called for academics to consider the scholarship of engagement (community). Boyer along with Mitgang expanded these ideas into the discipline of design education. It is here where we begin to see the '*commingling of ethics of care and aesthetics*' – service for the public good/societal need<sup>[3]</sup>. This call for more scholarship in the area of community engagement still resonates today and many scholars, including designers, are actively trying to lay the foundation for this type of external service.

#### **Teaching and research**

The survey triggered insightful comments from members about teaching and published research. Some noted a disconnect between the mandates driving their home institutions, the needs of the outside community, and their personal goals as an educator and/or researcher. Some commented that external service is not limited to the public good, and that faculty should have the academic freedom to choose the focus and outlets for their external activities. Others noted that service for the public good is not valued within the academy and that any research in this area is considered 'soft' and not promotion-worthy. Some did not want service learning/teaching work to overlap with publications/research, commenting that this type of work is a personal choice and/or that the additional time to prepare, coordinate and supervise this type of work took more than enough effort so publishing seems like a chore. Still others felt that external service is more about self-promotion than about scholarly pursuits.

Still, most respondents were aware of pressing local and global design issues and were willing to embrace these challenges in innovative new ways, whether they had a research appointment or not.

Most also felt that external service for the public good is a valuable academic experience and benefited the student body. Many asked for more discussion in this area, specifically as it relates to funding support, as well as opportunities for knowledge mobilization within the IDEC community, the academy, and the profession. Some suggested that IDEC assist by serving as centralized hub for potential community partners.

## Summary of survey results

The 34-question online survey was launched in February 2016 and closed in April 2016. It was announced and distributed by the IDEC administration.

As of 2016, the current total membership of IDEC was 557. We received 118 (21.18 %) completed questionnaires. Based on responses to Question 3, **25.71% of these members were from the East Region** (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Quebec, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC); **20.95% from the Midwest Region** (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Manitoba, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Saskatchewan); **24.76% from the South Region** (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia); **12.38% from the Southwest Region** (Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Mexico, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas); and 16.19% from the Pacific West Region (Alaska, Alberta, Arizona, British Columbia, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Korea, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming).

Question 4 asked members about their role in higher education. More than 44% of respondents were full-time and tenured; 17% were full-time, tenured track; 23% were full-time, non-tenured track; and the remaining 15% were part-time/adjunct.

Questions 5 and 6 explored types of service and regions of concentration. Approximately 23% of respondents worked in NGOs or civil society organizations, 59% in donor/philanthropic/NGO funding agencies; 17% in government/policy-making, and 23% in intermediary organizations or units (e.g., knowledge exchange units, think tanks). Respondents had the opportunity to specify other organizations (e.g., religious, community arts, historical boards), but many members included service that was university related, or related to the interior design profession (e.g., working in the profession, or presenting results in journals or at conferences), illustrating the imprecise interpretation of external service. An overwhelming percentage (97%) of activity was located in the US and Canada, followed by approximately 6% in Europe, 5% in Africa, 4% in Asia, 3% in the Middle East and Australasia, and 1% in Latin/South America.

Next, members were asked whether funding from public and/or non-profit sectors was required for external service. Approximately 25% of members neither agreed nor disagreed, while 20% agreed that it was necessary to drive their external service for the public good and/or societal need. When asked whether funding from private and/or commercial sectors was required for external service, approximately 30% of members neither agreed nor disagreed. These findings revealed that members did not necessarily require funding, as external service was sometimes more of a personal choice. However, members requested more information about funding resources to help secure the longevity of their project and/or community.

The next series of questions asked about external activities related to the public good and dissemination. Approximately 46% of IDEC members said that they planned to participate in work for the public good in the next year: 28% said they may or may not present this work at a conference; 20% said they would likely not present this work; and only 9% said they would present this work. When asked if they planned to publish a peer-reviewed article, approximately 31% said they may or may not write an article; 30% said they will not publish, and only 6–7% agreed or strongly agreed they would publish. When asked if they would engage in any form of online self-archiving (e.g., blogs), approximately 46% said they may or may not self-archive, while 17% said they will self-archive.

Questions 13 and 14 asked about external service as it relates to the public good and societal needs. When asked if they were engaged in the areas of service-learning and community engagement teaching/practice, less than 35% of the respondents were engaged in this work. When asked if they

were aware of colleagues' work in external service for the public good in either scholarly or non-scholarly environments an overwhelming 58% are were not aware of other colleagues' work.

When asked if they were able to explain external service to others, 46% agreed they could explain it and 13% strongly agreed. When asked if they could explain service-learning, 33.5% agreed they could explain it, 32.5% somewhat agreed, and 32.5% strongly agreed. When asked if external service for the public good was an ethical thing to do, 76% agreed or strongly agreed. Approximately 38% of respondents believed that external service for the public good is somewhat easy to accomplish and 42% believed that co-workers value the principles of external service for the public good. However, 36.5% of respondents thought it was somewhat difficult to obtain funding to support this work, and approximately 32% agreed that obtaining additional funding for the public good is an ethical thing to do.

The next series of questions focused on teaching, research, and service. (We assumed that most educators would have similar employment obligations; see Question 4). With regard to having a research focus on service-learning and community engagement, 30.5% neither agreed nor disagreed that this was a priority for them; 41% agreed or somewhat agreed that they planned to engage in this type of research. When asked about teaching and the public good, 21% neither agreed nor disagreed that this was a priority for them; 50% agreed or somewhat agreed that they planned to engage in this type of teaching. Many respondents planned to ensure that their service would be community-engaged: approximately 33% agreed, 28% somewhat agreed, and 0% disagreed.

The next series of questions focused on the possible future dissemination of their work related to external activities for the public good. Approximately 55% agreed or somewhat agreed they would make their work available to other scholars and interested members of the public, while 30% neither agreed nor disagreed. Approximately 71% agreed, somewhat agreed, or strongly agreed that disseminating/publishing their research would have a larger impact, while 19% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Finally, respondents were asked about the benefits of external service for public service: approximately 52% said it would benefit their profession, 80% said it would benefit their overall career, and 78% believed publication would be beneficial for the community at large.

## **New directions for interior design teaching and research**

Many IDEC members consider it important to engage in some form of external service for the public good and/or societal needs, and this kind of work has been observed sporadically in colleges and universities in various regions. However, the results of this survey reveal that this type of work is often undocumented and/or underrepresented. The findings highlight the complex ways in which the IDEC community understand external service for the public good and/or societal needs, especially with regard to teaching and research, and more specifically how external service relates to tenured track and non-tenured track IDEC educators.

In general, external service for the public good and/or societal needs can be best described as a series of layered processes. For example, this kind of work may be defined in a school's mission statement or academic plan, or may be observed within interior design schools in good standing with the Council of Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). Our organization - IDEC acknowledges members working in community engagement (service-learning) with a Community Service Award. The Journal of Interior Design offers publication opportunities that includes issues related to social justice and a recent issue highlighting this type of work - *'Studio + Collaboration + Service.'*<sup>[4]</sup>

CIDA recently developed the 2017 Professional Standards Section II: Knowledge Acquisition and Application (Standards 4–16).<sup>[5]</sup> These standards will help encourage students to engage in community service or service learning. Standard 4: Global Context states, *"Interior designers have a global view and consider social, cultural, economic, and ecological contexts in all aspects of their work."* Standard 4 offers faculty members additional guidance in how to achieve this, highlighting the need for developing multicultural awareness via exposure to diversity (e.g., economic, cultural). For example, designers could be exposed to diversity by studying abroad or engaging in cultural exchanges or community-based projects. Standard 6: Business Practices and Professionalism states,

*“Interior designers understand the principles and processes that define the profession and the value of interior design to society.”* It is important to be aware of the complex relationships between design, design responsibility and ethics, and the interior designer’s role and value in public service.

## Conclusion

Survey responses revealed that in general, IDEC members are interested in engaging in external service for the public good and/or societal needs. However, the motivation for engaging in research about this type of work, or disseminating the findings, is often insufficient. Other times, the motivation is cautionary, for example tenured track promotion. Many members are unable to obtain sufficient funding to support external service. Currently, no organizing professional body or institution<sup>[6]</sup> formally mandates external service for the public good and/or societal needs among interior designers (professionals or educators), but many educators and emerging/established interior designers choose to engage in public service voluntarily. To advance IDEC’s mission statement, encouraging external service for the public good/societal needs may require more scholarship, more funding, and more motivation among interior design educators/designers.

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<sup>[1]</sup> 2015–2016 External Service Task Force committee members: Task Force Chair: Lorella Di Cintio (Ryerson University), Task Force Members: Alana Pulay (Oklahoma State), Kim Burke (Mount St. Joseph University) Kimberly Burke from the University of Cincinnati, and Alana Pulay from Oklahoma State University.

<sup>[2]</sup> Boyer, Ernest L., Scholarship reconsidered: priorities of the professoriate, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990.

Boyer, Ernest L and Lee D. Mitgang, Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996.

<sup>[3]</sup> Di Cintio, Lorella, Educators as Design Activists: Co-mingling Ethics of Care and Aesthetics, Cumulus Mumbai, India, 2015.

<sup>[4]</sup> [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1939-1668/homepage/VirtualIssuesPage.html](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1939-1668/homepage/VirtualIssuesPage.html)

<sup>[5]</sup> CIDA Professional Standards 2017 <http://accredit-id.org/professional-standards/>

<sup>[6]</sup> Some lawyers are expected to complete pro bono work (exact hours specified by state/province), whereas AIGA designers are encouraged to contribute 5% of their time to projects serving the public good. Engineers and architects have similar standards and mandates.

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