

July 15, 2020

Distinguished Colleagues and Friends in Allied Organizations,

We are living in interesting and challenging times. Individually, as an organization, as a nation and as the world, we have been experiencing events that will shape who we are, individually and collectively, now and in the future.

### **Teaching Amidst COVID-19 Restrictions**

COVID-19 has affected our lives in many ways in all corners of the world. The pandemic has not only affected the health and well-being of our communities, but also social and economic networks. Education has also been affected in many ways. Educational institutions experienced a massive and rapid migration from traditional face-to-face format (F2F) to online within a few weeks. These transitions took place at all levels, from primary school to institutions of higher learning. We are all planning for fall semester without answers to all of our questions. Some institutions have chosen to continue online education while others plan for on-campus, F2F education. Many alternatives are still being discussed. The CELA Annual Meeting and our 100<sup>th</sup> Year Celebration fell victim to the pandemic like meetings of many other scholarly and professional organizations.

During the last several months, I have attended a number of webinars dealing with the challenges of online teaching in landscape architecture. These webinars focused on following questions:

- What is essential about studio instruction in our discipline(s)?
- How can that be achieved in an online or remote instructional environment?
- What cannot be simulated or achieved remotely/online?
- What recommendations could be made for:
  - the immediate needs for studio instruction this fall (whether it be F2F, Hybrid, Online) and
  - the future of remote learning in our discipline.

These webinars were organized by our allied organizations (LAAB, LAF, AIA, et.al.). Speakers were faculty members who have been teaching online or remotely with success and in ways that make sense to study/examine in our own disciplines and institutions. They have also shared what resources exist to support online/remote instruction in our discipline(s). It was obvious to me that there was no single strategy, method or technology that will satisfy the needs of all institutions. I have also listened to webinars from practitioners who have successfully continued their practice online/remotely while they were under shelter-in-place orders. It is becoming clear that academic and professional practitioners are experimenting with online technologies with various degree of success. I heard from educators that rapid, unexpected migration to online education halfway through the spring semester was not the total disaster that most of us expected. Instead, I heard success stories from different faculty members. Yes, achieving that rapid transition required faculty and students to work above and beyond the call of duty, and, as a result, we have learned about ourselves and our capabilities to adapt. Some of the ideas and techniques we have discovered or stumbled upon were so helpful and effective that we made plans to use them when we return to F2F on-campus education. One innovation that has greatly assisted my program is welcoming

professional practitioners as jury members via video conference. My program is located in a remote location, so having professionals as jurors has been a challenge. Not anymore; we will tap into professionals, experts and alumni in all corners of the nation and the world from this day forward. Viva technology! I do not know why we did not think of this long time ago!

## Incorporating Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into The CELA

While all these educational experiments have been taking place, our nation and the world have been observing an incredible movement of demonstrations, discussions and dialogue surrounding racial and social justice. In response, we released [this statement](#) in June.

I am extremely delighted to share with you that The CELA had been working toward the commitments made in our statement long before we issued it.

We have the following three new initiatives:

- Effective the 2021 Annual Meeting, **The CELA has a new conference track entitled Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**. The following operational description has been adopted:

*“As a scholarly discipline and an area of practice, landscape architecture continually confronts issues of environmental, economic and social justice in academics and in practice. This track encompasses research and creative scholarship in landscape architecture and allied disciplines such as issues and concerns based on gender, race, sexual orientation, sexual identity, culture, ethnicity and/or other perceived differences. Other topics include fairness, equity, inclusion, and/ or cultivating a culture of inclusivity in leadership, activism and advocacy for all people across landscapes.”*

I am also very pleased to share that Professors CL Bohannon (Virginia Tech) and Alpha Nawre (University of Florida) have been appointed as co-chairs of this new track. Vice President Taner Ozdil, President-Elect Galen Newman, Immediate Past President Ashley Steffens and their committees have tirelessly collaborated for creation and establishment of this new track.

The CELA Leadership has also been discussing **creation of a new officer position entitled Vice President of DEI**. While the DEI Track will focus on and manage scholarly endeavors related to the Annual Meeting, the Vice President for DEI will guide The CELA in enhancing diversity within The CELA, academia and the greater profession. We see this very important leadership position as one of the keys for The CELA to become an influential voice in successful DEI. President-Elect Galen Newman is leading the efforts and discussions.

- The CELA BOD has unanimously approved **creation of an endowment for a for a Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Student Scholar Program**. This is a working title; we will select the name of an individual who identifies as BIPOC who was/has been instrumental in developing and establishing a landscape architecture program at a Historically Black College or University. The funding for this endowment comes from non-used travel allowances for The CELA

Officers and the Regional Directors as a result of cancelled 2020 Annual Meeting and other conferences that The CELA President and officers were to attend this year. President-Elect Galen Newman and Treasurer Ebru Ozer have been leading the efforts to realize this endowment, including developing policies and processes for application and selection of winners as well as management of the endowment. We hope to be able to select at least one scholar in time for 2021 Meeting.

## The CELA 2021 Annual Conference

I am, we all are, hopeful that all stakeholders and members of The CELA will be able to gather and hold our annual meeting next year, March 17 – 20, 2021 at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya, Santa Ana Pueblo, New Mexico. The setting and the facilities provide an excellent venue for our gathering and the conference theme which has been selected: 100 + 1 / RESILIENCE. This theme is a call to action for educators and professionals in landscape architecture! The CELA supports educators to advance the profession and the conference track accepts abstracts, papers, panels, posters and/or film submissions that reflect the past, present and future resilience of Landscape Architecture as a discipline and area of practice. Specifically, we seek original research and creative scholarship on resilience that reflects a call to action now needed amid coronavirus isolation measures, climate change response and sustainable strategies to teach, research and service the community and next generation of professionals. Immediate Past President Ashley Steffens and her committee have been working diligently to make this meeting highly memorable, educational and enjoyable.

## Statement on Nonimmigrant Student Exemption Modifications

On Monday, July 6, the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) issued new guidelines that prohibited international students from returning to or remaining in the U.S. this fall if the universities they attended delivered all of their academic content online. In response, on Friday, July 9, The CELA [released a joint statement](#) with the American Society of Landscape Architects strongly opposing this rule. On Tuesday, July 14, I am pleased to report the Federal Government rescinded the policy due to pressure from groups like ours.

## Office Updates

I am delighted to share with you all that The CELA's partnership with IMI Association Executives has been paying dividends already. The CELA Officers and the BOD have been working very efficiently and managing our affairs nicely. These strides have been made possible due to diligent collaboration between the very capable and willing IMI staff and our officers and regional directors. Our new communication application, Basecamp, has enabled efficient connections amongst the members, program administrators, different teams and committees and fellows. Soon, we will launch a new database, which will allow members to enter and update their information. Allied organization representatives are in contact with The CELA to report their activities and receive feedback. Also, we are poised to catch up with the printing and release schedule of the Landscape Journal. Finally, despite the cancellation of the 2020 Annual Meeting and the pandemic, The CELA is in sound financial shape.

Based on all of our activities, both achieved and planned, I am able to state that The CELA is more accountable and accessible, and making advances for the organization, academia, and the profession. It is important to note that I am able to share all of this great news and these accomplishments by standing on the sound foundation laid by the wise leadership that came before me. Thank you all!

I would like to repeat the following passage my first message: “To all of our members, we still want to say that this journey we cannot make alone as leaders, but it is through your support, critiques and encouragement that we shall have something to do together because together we shall continue to make it.”

Please, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions and or suggestions.

Best wishes to you all making your preparation for the fall semester whether it is F2F, online or hybrid. We have serious challenges ahead of us. However, we all brag about being creative and this is the time to prove that we are indeed creative under most trying circumstances.

Meanwhile, stay healthy and stay happy.

Respectfully,



**Sadik C. Artunç, FASLA**

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