1. **Impact of the Economy on the Organization**

   *The economic downturn coupled with the changing demographics within the profession has had a significant impact on the AIA at all levels. Fewer resources are available and membership recruitment, retention, and member services and delivery are suffering. This is further evidenced in increasing competition between local, state, and national components over non-dues revenues, and has inhibited collaboration within the organization. How can the AIA respond to these challenges?*

   In these challenging times for the profession, the AIA needs to creatively reevaluate and redefine how we provide member services. Continuing with “business as usual” will only place further strain on the situation. The likelihood that our profession and the AIA will face a “new normal” demands that we reexamine how the AIA remains viable and relevant.

   At every level of the AIA, we need to clarify and focus on the mission best served at that level. Reaching out to our members to learn what services and methods of delivery are most valued is a critical first step. Exploring fresh approaches to providing these services in a highly effective manner is essential.

   AIA national needs to focus on only those services that provide broad value, are most cost-effectively delivered centrally, and enhance communication and cooperation among the components. For example, advocacy at the national level and the development of programs that support local advocacy provide focus and clarity of message across the country. The Member Service Resourcing Task Force could provide a vehicle to address the concerns regarding redundancies and duplicative services and enhance the supportive roles of all levels of the AIA.

   If we proactively focus on the needs of architects and identify ways to provide services cost-effectively, every member will become stronger advocates for member recruitment and retention.

2. **Competition in a Global Market**

   *During the Grassroots Leadership and Advocacy Conference the profession was challenged to look outside U.S. boarders for new opportunities to export architectural services. Is the AIA structured to adequately support members wanting to engage in international practice, and perhaps more importantly, the challenges of design and delivery in foreign marketplaces? How can the AIA best support its members who want to practice abroad?*

   The current structure of the AIA supports members wishing to engage in international practice in several ways. The International Committee explores and identifies best practices for international practice. The focus of this committee is a valuable resource to those firms wishing to work overseas. Identification of local approaches to how architectural services are provided in different countries will help inform and educate firms wishing to practice outside of the United States.

   A significant hurdle for firms is identifying the initial connections typically necessary for entry into a foreign market. The AIA can provide opportunities to engage the UIA and
professional organizations in foreign countries that will enhance the ability of firms to make
the initial connections that may lead to international practice.

The creation of AIA chapters and regions outside of the United States is an important first
step to better support our members practicing abroad. Working with the Commerce
Department, AIA can identify the resources, opportunities, and incentives necessary to
enable firms to enter the international marketplace. Additionally, the development of
contract documents and guidelines that address the unique requirements of international
practice would be a useful resource.

3. **Member Resources**

   *Conventional wisdom suggests that at the conclusion of the recession, the architectural
   profession will be forever changed. While the economic climate has been challenging for
   all in the design and construction industry, it has been especially difficult for “seasoned”
   professionals who are often times unable to compete in today’s technology-based delivery
   environment. How is the AIA positioned to support these members?*

   Becoming tech-savvy is a personal obligation that all architects must embrace if we are to
remain viable contributors in the profession. That said, there are widely differing levels at
which one can contribute. Unless one is using the tools of technology on a regular basis, it is
as challenging to become proficient in its use as it is to be a strong designer or skillful artist
without honing those skills on a daily basis. At least a fundamental understanding of how
our technological tools advance the practice of architecture is essential for every practicing
architect, regardless of age or experience.

   AIA can provide continuing education to expose the seasoned professional to new tools for
design, evaluation, and documentation that will enhance their ability to practice. Knowledge
communities that embrace the use of technology can be another source of knowledge and
exploration. AIA negotiated discounts on product training and purchases could assist
seasoned professionals in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills.

   Creating opportunities to engage emerging professionals together with seasoned architects to
explore the opportunities that advanced technology provides when combined with a wealth of
practical experience would be enriching for both ends of the spectrum.

4. **Mentoring**

   *Across all levels of the organization members lament the decline in the number of new
licensees. Some suggest the lack of a culture of mentoring within firms and the profession
is to blame. What can the AIA do to effect a cultural shift among the profession and
encourage those educated and involved in the delivery of architectural services to stay
connected with the organization?*

   Actions speak much louder than words. The actions of our firms and the profession too often
send a clear signal to emerging professionals that there is little value in becoming registered.
As a profession, if we truly value licensure, we need to demand licensure for full
participation and appropriately reward those who have accomplished registration with
increased responsibility, leadership, and financial benefits in our firms and the profession.
AIA can help affect this cultural shift back to valuing registration by continuing to reward firms that mentor young professionals as a positive example and desirable goal for all firms. Recognition needs to be at many levels, not just for those at the leading edge. The current IDP Firm Awards program demands an extraordinary effort to be deemed an IDP Firm award winner. Many intern friendly firms that don’t reach the level of award winners should be recognized at varying levels to encourage participation and broad support for IDP friendly actions.

The AIA should support emerging professionals with opportunities for leadership and learning in ways that might not always be afforded in their jobs. Providing resources, study groups, and other tools to assist emerging professionals on their journey to licensure will forge lasting connections to the AIA.

The more that firms do to value, encourage, and support licensure through AIA programs, the more those educated and trained will value licensure and participation in the AIA.

5. Changing Demographics
Evidence shows the architectural profession is “aging,” and this will have a significant financial impact on the AIA in the very near future. How can the AIA position the organization to mitigate this impact while continuing to provide value to existing members?

Honestly, the focus of AIA shouldn’t be on the financial impact or self-perpetuation; it should be on supporting architects in the best ways possible for the profession and society.

That said, for all of the right reasons, we need to better engage emerging professionals to encourage their participation in the AIA. They represent the future of the AIA and will be a vital part of its success. We need to engage emerging and young professionals in ways that are most valuable and relevant to them, which most likely will be different than the traditional approaches. They need to take leadership and ownership for the participation of their generation.

There is a significant opportunity to reinvigorate our seasoned members by engaging them together with the emerging professionals. Our profession has a long and rich legacy of mentoring through the apprentice system of passing on the skill and craft of one generation to the next. This is part of our DNA and we should capitalize on this as a way to engage experienced architects with emerging professionals.

6. Governance
Despite the focus in recent years on strategic planning, some argue that the AIA still lacks focus, which reduces its effectiveness on any one priority. Recognizing there is a myriad of issues and priorities facing the organization, what are the priority issues that AIA should focus on?

If the AIA could focus on and succeed in only one initiative, building value for the services we provide would be the most effective and significant issue that we could address. Reaching out to society to rebuild a respect for and appreciation of the services we provide should be job one at the AIA.

One important aspect necessary to increase public perception of value is to change the perception that architects are so much more than simply the arbiters of aesthetics and style. Design matters in so many ways deeply beyond the style du jour. Individually and
collectively, we need to value and recognize good design that: supports functional needs in
elegant ways; is timeless; creates places that enrich life and uplift the human spirit; and is
environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.

Closely related, we need to improve communication between the AIA, its members, and the
public. It isn’t that we are lacking in information; it is that we haven’t yet found the most
effective ways to make that information available and usable. We need to find the best ways
to communicate with the public to create value in what we do. We need to enhance the ways
we communicate among the profession to improve our abilities to provide quality design.
This is an issue that is critically important to our success as a profession and an organization.

7. **Value of Design**

   *There is increasing concern among AIA members that the value of architecture and design
   is being differentiated by a focus on “design” in the absence of the context of “practice.”
   What can the AIA do to bring attention to the problems of practice and project delivery in
   an environment of growing complexity? And, in what ways can we better recognize the
   majority of professionals, who are seldom published and little recognized for their efforts?*

First, we need to recognize and place value on a more holistic definition of design. Design
awards programs need to respect and reward both the functional and artistic attributes of
design excellence and not simply seductive photography. If we are going to engage the
public in a meaningful discussion about the value of design, the discussion needs to be about
artfully supporting the pragmatic functions of buildings as well as the less tangible social,
spatial, and artistic elements of good design.

As a profession, we also need to focus on our role in the delivery of design services. We
need to regain our leadership role by not practicing defensively and once again embracing
risk proactively. The more we have tried to mitigate our risk and diminish our leadership in
the design and construction of the built environment, the more we have weakened our ability
provide value to our clients and control our destiny.

The AIA could develop programs that help our members reach out to local media in ways
that focus on the business and practice aspects of a project and the profession. Often,
especially when prepared together with a client, these types of stories appeal to business and
general interest newspapers and magazines or even TV. We need to become more skilled at
putting a “spin” on our practices and projects that will interest editors and producers.