

# Framework Partners Incorporated

## Summary of Findings from the 2011 Ontario Association of Architects Intern Survey

It is the purpose of this summary to describe the methodology, the reliability, the findings, and suggested next steps of the 2011 Ontario Association of Architects (OAA) Intern Survey. This Survey, along with the Member and Intern Surveys, was solicited in support of the OAA's future internal and external administration and communications efforts; to aid in establishing and planning future programs and initiatives. The summary has been broken into the following sections:

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Response Rates
- Definitions
- Findings

## Introduction

The OAA retained the services of Framework Partners Inc., a strategic planning and market research firm, to gather and interpret member perceptions, and to compare these findings with those from their 2002 survey, where possible. The stated research objectives of this engagement included examining member perceptions in the following areas:

- *General Satisfaction with the Intern Architect Program;*
- *Demographic Profile of Intern Architects;*
- *Work Environment of Intern Architects;*
- *Intern Architect Exams and Admission Courses;*
- *Experience of Intern Architects; and*
- *Barriers to completion for Intern Architects.*

The survey was conducted in the late fall of 2011 with the final results presented to the Council of the Ontario Association of Architects in February of 2012.

## Methodology

### **Reliability**

For this research Framework used an online methodology, which gave the project both accuracy and breadth. The online survey was open to all those who wanted to respond, and was advertised. It is important to note that a convenience sampling methodology, such as the one used for this survey, cannot produce a margin of error or confidence interval. A survey of this nature, where the respondents chose whether they would respond as opposed to the respondent being chosen to respond, is actually a census, where all members of the population are allowed to choose whether or not they will participate in the survey. In a sample survey, the researcher chooses who will respond, therefore producing much more accurate results. With a census survey there is no way to calculate a margin of error; however a high response rate is always better than a lower response rate. A wide ranging survey has the benefit of allowing all who want to respond the opportunity to contribute and to be heard

Framework prides itself on producing exceptional response rates for our clients, and has frequently far surpassed response rate goals. Framework has a proven yet respectful response rate generation system.

### **General Methodology**

- *Stage One – Questionnaire Development*
- *Stage Two - Electronic / Online Survey*
- *Stage Three - Data Smoothing and Analysis*
- *Stage Four – Recommendations, Report and Presentation*

## Reliability and Response Rates

As has been described in the previous section, the survey was conducted online where all who chose to participate could respond. The intern survey is a portion of the larger member survey, which received 1,935 responses. The intern survey portion received 366 responses.

Readers are encouraged to examine the full results of the Intern Architect survey, particularly the open-ended questions.

## General Statistical Definitions

In support of the conclusions described below, the following statistical definitions and explanations are detailed here to help the reader better understand the information presented.

**Mean.** The mean is a measure of central tendency. It is the arithmetic *average* of the set of values, or observations received from a question.

**Median.** The median is also a measure of central tendency. It is the observation or number that is at the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in an ordered data set. Stated differently, it is the point at which half of the observations are above it and half of the observations are below it.

**Mode.** The mode is another measure of central tendency. It is the most popular or frequently mentioned observation in a data set. It is the value that occurs most frequently.

**Score.** The score is the mean or average of the responses received expressed as a percentage for easier interpretation. The Score is an important measure of all responses received; it demonstrates the overall response average, and includes all respondents. Stated differently, the score is a batting average, or percentage that helps us to better understand the average response. It is important to examine the score as interpreting the average or mean response, and when a seven-point Likert scale is used, this can be difficult.

**Top Two.** The percentage of respondents to a question who responded with either a 1 (“Very Important”, “Very Satisfied” or “Strongly Agree”) or a 2 (“Important”, “Satisfied” or “Agree”) on a scale of 1 to 7. The Top Two is an indication of strength of opinion; it represents the proportion of respondents who have answered that they have a firm opinion about the stated question.

## Findings

The summary learnings are from the intern survey of 366 Intern Architect respondents, which was conducted in the fall of 2011. They are as follows:

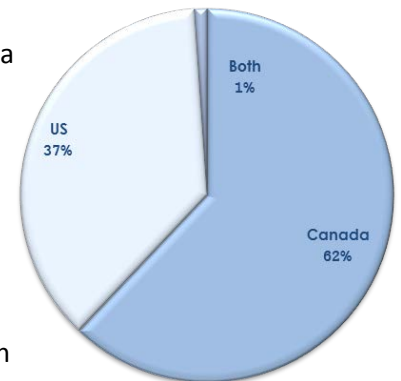
- **General satisfaction with the Intern Architect Program.** In order to determine satisfaction and engagement with the Intern Architect program, respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree with three separate statements:
  - "The Intern Architect Program is appropriate to the training needs of an Architect";
  - "I am satisfied with the mentorship component of the IAP"; and
  - "The OAA has been responsive to my needs as an Intern Architect".

Unfortunately, the respondents to this survey have indicated that they do not agree with any of the three statements. In particular the respondents do not agree with the third statement, and have consequently indicated that the OAA has not been responsive to their needs as intern architects. Clearly, the intern architect program is not meeting the needs of the existing set of intern architects. These scores and ratings are very clear and declarative; the results demand attention and consideration of significant change to this program.

- **Year graduated from architecture degree program, and years as intern architect.** There is a significant spread in breadth of years reported since graduation from an architecture degree program. The earliest year is 1968, and the median, or 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, year is 2003. The median is a measure of central tendency, as is an average, which indicates that a typical intern architect graduated with a degree in architecture nine years ago. The median observation of the number of

years that the respondents had been an intern architect is three years, with 2008 being the 50th percentile year. This information allows us to conclude that it takes most intern architects six years after graduation to enter the intern architect program.

- **Source of architecture degree.** A significant majority of the respondents obtained their architecture degree from a Canadian University (90% plus), a surprising number indicated that they receive their architecture degree from neither a Canadian University nor an American person (35%).



- **Barriers to completion.** Those intern architects, who indicated that they had been intern architects for more than three years, were asked to choose a series of 11 factors or barriers as to which of those barriers has been the most significant in preventing them from becoming licensed as an architect. There are three significant barriers that stand out:

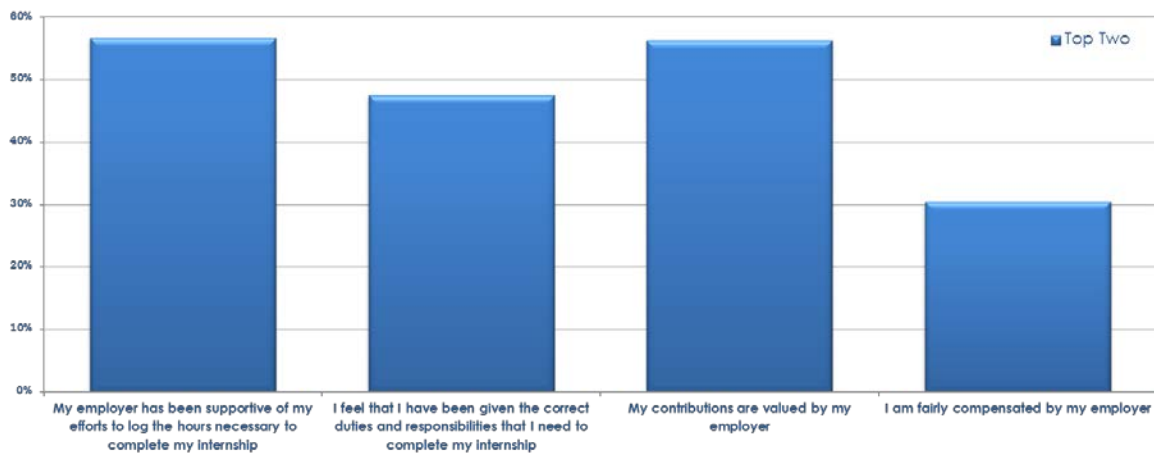
- the process takes or took too much time;
- it was difficult to arrange work in required categories; and
- the respondents believe that there is no measurable benefit in becoming a licensed architect.

These barriers are significant and real, and must be considered if the objective is to qualify more architects. The factors that are least likely to act as barriers are:

- that the intern couldn't afford admission course fees;
- that the intern couldn't board the exam fees;
- that it was difficult for the intern to get credit for non-Canadian experience; and
- that the intern had family leave or other personal issues that got in the way.

While it was not an intended learning of this research, it is apparent from responses to this question that there is room to increase the fees which intern architects pay. Surprisingly very few indicated that they are comfortable with their current status, which in turn allows one to conclude that the rigorous and significant intern architect process itself is more likely to be the barrier, rather than an external factor.

- Work environment.** In the survey, respondents indicate that their employers value their contributions, and that their employer has been supportive of their efforts to log the hours necessary to complete their internship. Respondents also indicate some level of agreement with the statement: “I feel that I've been given the correct duties and responsibilities that I need to complete my internship.” Therefore, employers and architectural practices are supportive and enabling of the intern architect program, and are encouraging and supporting of their intern architects to complete the program. Fortunately respondents also indicated that they are not fairly compensated by their employers, this learning tells us that there is an economic imperative to complete this intern architect program. However, even when this is considered it is not so significant as to allow the respondent to conclude that the measurable benefits of becoming a licensed architect is significant, as we learned in the previous observation.

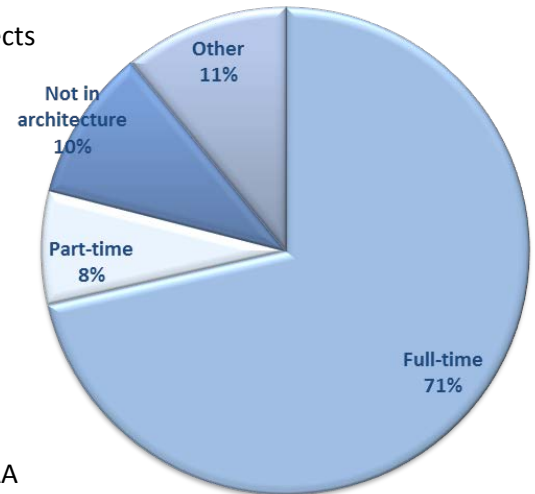


- Young Architects and Interns Forum.** This survey asked intern architects to indicate which events or initiatives they would attend as part of the young architects and interns forum. The results are clear, and allow for a distinct ranking of preference. The top five events or initiatives are:
  - Art and architecture exhibits;
  - Public lectures;
  - Design competitions;
  - Architectural building tours; and
  - Informal networking events.

Events for which there is little traction or appeal are:

- Evening events such as PECHA and KUCHA;
- Partner events with allied veterans; and
- Outreach events.

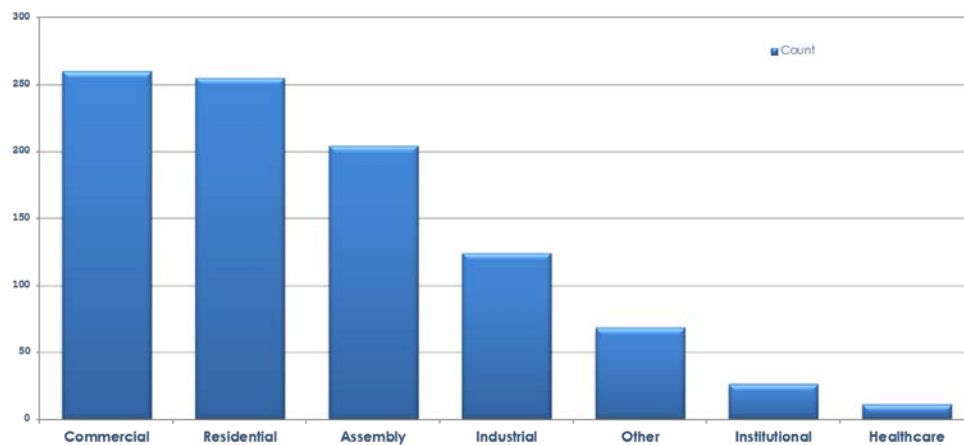
- Employment status.** Almost three quarters of the intern architects who responded to the survey, indicate that they are working full-time in architecture. A further 8% indicated that they are working part-time in architecture. Respondents who indicated “Other” are either unemployed or are not working in architecture, or for an architectural firm.



- Exams.** The survey asked respondents to indicate whether they have taken a series of exams and courses. Results of these questions are:

- 61% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who completed the OAA admission course;
- 23% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who have taken the ARE exams;
- 5 \_\_ the median number of ARE 3.1 exams that have been taken and passed;
- 5 \_\_ the median number of ARE 3.1 exams that the respondents need to complete;
- 7 \_\_ the median number of ARE 4.0 exams that the respondents are planning to take;
- 30% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who have taken the ExAC exams; and
- 14% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who plan on taking the ExAC exams in the next year (please note most respondents do not know when they will be taking these exams).

- IAP Experience.** The majority of respondents to the survey have experience in the areas of commercial, residential, and assembly. It also indicated that they have experience in the areas of institutional architecture and health care.



- **IAP Experience Record.** The survey asked respondents to indicate what level of experience they have received. Results of these questions are:
  - 28% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who have recorded all their experience (5,600 hours);
  - 30% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who have completed all their experience (5,600 hours);
  - and
  - 46% \_\_ the proportion of respondents who indicated that when reduced to 3,720 hours, they will have recorded all of the necessary experience as noted in the IAP experience record.

- **Required Experience Area A – Design / Contract Documents and.** When asked to indicate how difficult or easy it was to meet the “Required Experience” requirements in each of the ten areas, respondents indicated that some areas were remarkably different than others. The areas where it was the least difficult were in the areas of Construction Documents (only 10% gave this a top two difficulty rating) and Design Development (7% gave this a top two difficulty rating). By far the most difficult area is Building cost analysis (35% top two difficulty rating). The top two difficulty of completion scores are as follows:

1. Building cost analysis (80 hrs.) ..... 35%
2. Site and environmental analysis (120 hrs.) ..... 24%
3. Programming (80 hrs.)..... 22%
4. Specifications and material research (120 hrs.) .. 16%
5. Code research (120 hrs.) ..... 13%
6. Engineering system coordination (120 hrs.) ..... 13%
7. Document checking and coordination (80 hrs.) .. 12%
8. Schematic design (120 hrs.)..... 11%
9. Construction documents (1080 hrs.)..... 10%
10. Design development (320 hrs.) ..... 7%

It should be noted that scores as low as 7% are rare and difficult to achieve, in reality respondents indicated that none of them found the required experience for design development and construction documents difficult to achieve.

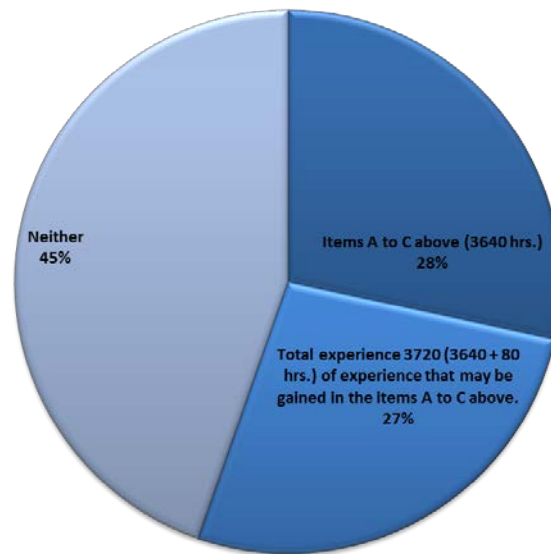
- **Required Experience Area B - Construction Administration.** When asked to indicate how difficult or easy it was to meet the “Required Experience” requirements in each of the three areas in Construction Administration, respondents indicated that it was not overly easy to gain required experience requirements in any of the areas. The Area B scores below are generally higher than the Area A scores above, indicating that, in general, these are more difficult areas to gain the required experience. The difficulty of completion scores are as follows:

1. Bidding and contract negotiation (80 hrs.) ..... 49%
2. Construction phase - site (120 hrs.) ..... 42%
3. Construction phase – office (120 hrs.) ..... 28%

- **Required Experience Area C - Management.** When asked to indicate how difficult or easy it was to meet the “Required Experience” requirements in each of the two management areas, respondents indicated that it was not easy to gain required experience requirements in either of the areas. The difficulty of completion scores are as follows:

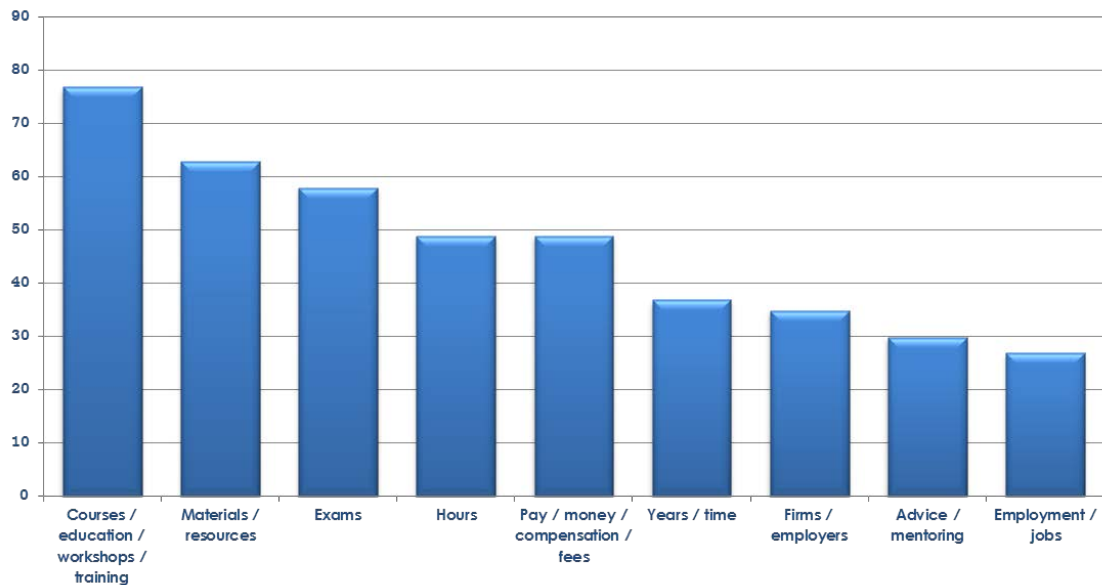
1. Project management (120 hrs.)..... 36%
2. Office management- site (80 hrs.)..... 34%

- **General Experience requirements completed.** The options to this question were: “Items A to C above (3,640 hrs.),” “Total experience 3,720 (3,640 + 80 hrs.) of experience that may be gained in the items A to C above,” and “Neither.” Results indicated a fairly even split, with “Neither” accounting for almost 50% of the responses received.





- OAA Resources.** As a summary to an open-ended question that yielded 215 unique responses the histogram below contains the summarized results. The question was: “Please use the space provided below to tell us what resources, if any, are lacking from the OAA, for Intern Architects.” The top two groups of responses focused on educational offerings and insufficient material resources. The reader is encouraged to read the detailed responses to this question for a fuller understanding, as each response is relatively unique.



- Issues preventing the seeking of a License.** Again, as a summary to an open-ended question: “Please use the space provided below to describe what issue or issues, if any, have prevented you from seeking licensure as an Architect?” The chart below is offered as a summary of the responses received.

