

FROM THE DESK OF THE AICP PRESIDENT

A Fresh Perspective on AICP

I recently had the pleasure of attending NPC19 in San Francisco. It was not my first national planning conference, but it was my first attending as president of the American Institute of Certified Planners, so in many ways I was seeing things through a new lens.

From the moment our opening keynote, Vijay Gupta, raised his violin to the end of his amazing talk on social justice and engaging homeless and incarcerated populations with the arts, I was in awe. I was also inspired by the message of our closing keynote, filmmaker Brett Culp, who defined leadership as “inviting people on a mission to do something extraordinary together.” He said that, as planners, we are all “heroes.”

Those messages struck a chord with me and reminded me of AICP’s value not just for certified planners but also for employers, students, and the planning profession—and the responsibility that comes with it.

As we look to the future, it is critical that AICP continues to embrace the values of APA and the broader profession. This includes making a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion in everything we do. We must also continue to engage with a new generation of planners and build upon the success of the AICP Candidate Pilot Program.

The career benefits of certification are known; according to the APA Salary Survey, AICP-certified planners consistently earn higher salaries than their noncertified counterparts. But even more important is the network of dedicated, knowledgeable professionals that aspiring and newly certified AICP members are welcomed into.

One example of this is my recent visit to Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, to speak to students about AICP certification and the AICP Candidate Pilot Program. I offered to connect several of them with planners in locations where they wanted to begin their careers. This kind of personal outreach allows us to leverage our own networks to set future planners up for success.

I also mentor students who are on the path to AICP, and many of my AICP colleagues do the same. Whether done through APA’s Mentor Match program or independently, mentorship is vitally important. We must encourage certification among emerging planners and make a dedicated effort to welcome underrepresented groups into our profession so that we as planners may better reflect, work with, and understand the communities we serve.

The true value of AICP certification is in the people who hold the credential, not the process of obtaining it. While we are proud of the rigor involved in earning AICP certification, and the ongoing professional development and ethical commitment required to maintain it, what matters most to the planning profession is not as much the effort put in, but the impact we make. AICP members bring credibility, ethical commitment, and a verified level of knowledge and experience to their employers and to planning projects. They also lead the profession by serving at-need communities pro bono through activities like APA’s Community Planning Assistance Teams.

I am only a few months into my term as AICP President, but as an AICP member for nearly 30 years and a member of the AICP College of Fellows, I am acutely aware of our members’ dedication to the planning profession and communities. I look forward to helping them build on that commitment, expand our impact, and position our organization, and our profession, for a brighter future.



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THE VALUE OF AICP CERTIFIED PLANNERS

This short video shows how AICP-certified planners bring value to public- and private-sector organizations and their communities.

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planning.org/AICP/employers