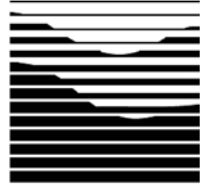


2008 Illinois Chapter of ASLA Membership Survey

ILLINOIS



ASLA

AMERICAN
SOCIETY OF
LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTS

Conducted by the ILASLA Executive Committee
October 2008

Executive Summary

In October of 2008 members of the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ILASLA) were sent, via email, an online survey by the acting Executive Committee of ILASLA. This survey was conducted to determine the perception of members in several key areas that reflect upon the value they place on belonging to their local Illinois Chapter. It was designed to assist the leadership in four areas: program evaluation, strategic planning, chapter communication, and program development.

Overall, those who completed the survey (86 individuals) were generally satisfied with their membership to the Illinois chapter. Members feel the three main reasons for joining the chapter were to improve their knowledge, network with colleagues and promote professional standards, policies and awareness. While some ratings and comments suggested some approval of the efforts put forth thus far by the chapter in communication to members and public policy, many feel there is room for improvement. The evaluation has shown that there are primarily four areas of strategic importance: education, location, public policy, and communication.

When asked to rank their reasons for joining the membership in order of importance, the number one reason many chose to belong to the state chapter was to improve their knowledge. When asked to rate the performance of the chapter in regards to the continuation of education, of the 90 members who answered the question, 40 percent of those were less than satisfied with the performance. This rating may be due to the fact that many of the educational events are held within the Chicagoland area, which may not be a convenient location for members who reside or work downstate or west of Chicago. Others feel the priorities are being given to the wrong events/chapter functions and should be refocused.

A number of the respondents, over 50 percent, stated that they are not being given the opportunity to be active within the chapter due to their proximity to the event location. With over 90 percent of the events held by the chapter are held within the Chicagoland area, those outside the area feel it is inconvenient to travel multiple hours to attend a lunch time or after work event. It is a source of constant dissatisfaction among many of the members and is a matter of strategic importance.

The question that was asked to measure the perception the members have on the performance of the licensure efforts was generally inconclusive. Overall, nearly 50 percent of the respondents felt there was good effort put forth by the chapter, however the remaining 50 percent was nearly split between the ratings of well done and less than satisfactory. With the ratings generally pointing towards a good effort – there also appears to be signs of impasse. This may be due to lack of

communication regarding the licensure efforts thus rendering individuals within the membership who may be less than educated regarding these efforts. Since the respondent was unable to “skip” this question within the survey – they must answer before moving to the next question – one may argue that a “best guess” was chosen if otherwise unknown.

This leads to the last topic of importance: chapter communication. While nearly 80 percent of the respondents rated chapter communication efforts as well done or good, there was also evidence that there is room for improvement. *Dispatch* is viewed as the most effective form of communication, along with the periodic emails sent out to membership. The timing of these emails seemed to be an issue, with one individual pleading for the emails to be delivered prior to “...the day before the event.” *Elevation* and *Folio* are less favored publications, however many felt (through comment) that *Elevation* may just need some more attention. Also, to be considered is how the chapter presents its events to the membership. There seems to be confusion among what appears to be the more experienced members that the Young LA Mixers are for entry level members only. As this is not the case, it is clear this idea was never communicated fully. Moving forward the chapter should consider such matters.

Overall, the survey’s results solidified some areas that have been in question by the Executive Committee in the past and has brought to new light some new areas of importance. The chapter would like to thank those who participated in this survey and those who contributed to the development and refinement of the many questions.

Introduction

An online survey was completed by members of the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. 95 members started the survey, with 85 completing it. The purpose of this survey was to gauge the overall satisfaction of membership benefits and opportunities, as well as, interest in proposed opportunities. The survey was similar to studies done in 1998 by ASLA and was sent to members via a SurveyMonkey link (an online survey software) embedded within an email, which is unlike surveys done in the past as they were sent via a paper mailing. The results are summarized in the following report.

Member Information

1. Age

Out of 86 of the respondents, nearly 30% of those listed their age as 50 years or over. Nearly 50% of the respondents were between the age of 30 and 49, with the remaining percentage between 21 and 29 years.

2. Gender

31.8% of the respondents were female while the remaining 68.2% of the respondents were male.

3. How many years of experience do you have within the industry?

Many of the respondents (over 36%) have indicated their level of experience as 25 years or more. The second largest group of respondents indicated their years of experience between four and eight.

4. How many years have you been a member?

Nearly 60% of the respondents indicated they have been a member for eight or more years. The second largest group of respondents has indicated they have been a member for 3 years.

Member Satisfaction

5. Overall, how satisfied are you with your ILASLA membership?

66.3% of the 92 respondents were generally satisfied. With 8.7% very satisfied and 19.6% less than satisfied. 5.4%, or 5 of the respondents, were not satisfied with their ILASLA membership. Many respondents feel that more events need to be made available outside the Chicagoland area; to both southern and western Illinois members. Other members would like more support during the professional registration process.

6. Rank the following reasons for your membership from 1 to 10 in order of importance (1 being the most important, 10 being the least important):

- a. Increase public awareness**
- b. Promote professional standards**
- c. Influence public policy**
- d. Contact with peers**
- e. Improve knowledge**
- f. Receive publications**
- g. Sense of belonging**
- h. Gain credentials**
- i. Business development**
- j. Job contacts**

Based on the responses within the survey, members feel the three main reasons for joining the chapter were to improve their knowledge, network with colleagues and promote professional standards, policies and awareness. Respondents indicated that a sense of belonging, gaining credentials and business development were least important. Influencing public policy and receiving publications appeared to be at the middle of the scale with, on average, over 11.5% of the respondents measuring the importance of these reasons between a 4 and 6.

7& 8. Do you feel ILASLA provides you with opportunities to be active in the chapter? If no, which of the following accounts for this?

- a. Current commitments**
- b. Cost of participating**
- c. Not aware of opportunities**
- d. Proximity to event location**
- e. Little of interest to me**

f. Other (please specify)

Most of the respondents (nearly 62%) feel they are given the opportunity to be active within the chapter. Those who disagreed either listed the proximity of the events or meetings to their location as a problem (over 50%), had current commitments, or felt as though they had tried, unsuccessfully, in the past to become involved and were either not followed-up with by a committee member or felt that their input was not valued.

9. How would you rate the performance of these chapter functions?

- a. Licensure advocacy**
- b. Continuation of education**
- c. Communication of chapter activities**
- d. Public relations for profession**
- e. Networking**
- f. Community service**
- g. Social events**

Generally, those who responded felt there had been good performance on the listed chapter functions. The respondents were given a choice between the following rating levels – well done, good, less than satisfactory and poor. If one were to consider the overall response of “good” to every one of the listed chapter functions as a “safe” rating made by the respondent, then one would argue that the more telling information lies within those respondents who rated these functions as otherwise.

When asked to rate the licensure effort, 89 members responded. 42 of those who responded felt there had been good effort put forth. The remaining respondents had given split ratings between “well done” (23 respondents), “less than satisfactory” (21) and “poor” (3).

Again, many of the respondents felt there was good effort put forth towards continuation of education, however the remaining respondents rated the effort less than satisfactory.

In addition to the rating of “good,” many of the respondents felt the communication of chapter activities was “well done.”

The efforts put forth for the public relations for the profession were viewed as “good,” however the rating given by the second highest number of respondents was “less than satisfactory.” The same response is shown for the efforts toward community service.

The chapter’s social events were viewed as “good” by 62% of the respondents and as “well done” by 20% of those who responded.

10. Indicate the importance of the following chapter publications:

- a. Dispatch (monthly newsletter)**
- b. Elevation (quarterly magazine)**
- c. Folio (annual awards booklet)**

Overall, respondents view all three chapter publications as important benefits to their membership. *dispatch* seems to be regarded as slightly more important than *elevation* and *folio*.

Chapter Activity Satisfaction

11. How would you rate the importance of these chapter activities:

- a. Licensure advocacy**
- b. Continuation of education**
- c. Communication of chapter activities**
- d. Public relations for profession**
- e. Networking**
- f. Community service**
- g. Social events**

Those who responded felt that the licensure advocacies, continuation of education and public relations for the profession were very important chapter activities. Communication of the chapter activities, networking, community service and social events were regarded as important. However, many felt they had experienced an error while completing this question within the survey and couldn't answer this question to the best of their ability.

12. Please indicate your interest in the following continuing education topics (please choose five):

- a. Native plant materials**
- b. Plants for every season**
- c. Storm water management**
- d. Urban forestry/ecology**
- e. Stream bank restoration**
- f. Computer hardware/software options**
- g. Marketing techniques**
- h. Playgrounds**
- i. Brownfield restoration**
- j. Horticulture therapy**
- k. Ownership transition**

- l. Rooftop gardens**
- m. Water feature design**
- n. Sustainable business techniques**
- o. Ethics and professional practice**
- p. Leadership development**
- q. Design skills**
- r. Construction knowledge**

With 87 respondents answering this question, over 50% of those respondents had interest in gaining knowledge about native plant material, storm water management and rooftop gardens. Over 30% had interest in urban forestry/ecology, stream bank restoration, computer hardware/software skills, sustainable business techniques, leadership development, design skills and over 40% shared in interest in furthering their construction knowledge. Respondents were least interested (less than 20% of the respondents) in playgrounds, horticulture therapy and ownership transition.

13. Indicate your interest in the following chapter social and networking events:

- a. Young L.A. (YLA) Mixers**
- b. Sprint Fling**
- c. Golf Outing**
- d. Summer Mixer**
- e. Celebration (annual awards dinner)**

The respondents were given a choice of “very interested,” “somewhat interested,” and “not interested” to rate their response to this question. While none of the respondents rated their response to any of the listed events as “interested,” nearly 60% of the respondents (51 out of 86) were “somewhat interested” in the Summer Mixer. Viewed similarly, but with a lower percentage of respondents, were the Spring Fling and Celebration. Over 50% of the respondents were “not interested” in the YLA events. Many of those offering their comments felt that the YLA events were age-discriminatory. Others felt they couldn’t participate fully due to the location of the events.

14. Indicate your interest in the following proposed chapter activities and programs:

- a. Book Club**
- b. Mentorship Program**
- c. Lunch-time lecture series**
- d. Public service charettes**

The respondents were given a choice of “very interested,” “somewhat interested,” and “not interested” to rate their response to this question. While none of the respondents rated their response to any of the listed events as “interested,” nearly 55% had rated their response as “somewhat interested” regarding a Mentorship Program. Still over 50% of the respondents, but sharing a lower percentage, many were “somewhat interested” in potential lunch-time lectures and public service charettes. Over 50% of the respondents were “not interested” in a book club program. Again, any programs offered during business hours and within Chicagoland pose a problem to many respondents.

