



## CANDIDATE for AT-LARGE DIRECTOR (3-year term)

John Folan, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, University of Arkansas

### Candidate Statement

It is an exciting time to be an educator, practitioner, and advocate; a time of elevated expectation – by the academy, profession, and public. Extensive experience teaching, researching, and practicing in the context of both public land grant institutions and private institutions provides a breadth of perspective in understanding the landscape that we all navigate.

The opportunities presented through service as an ACSA At-Large Director, by extension of the associated responsibilities, are significant. Working with member institutions is critical in advancing causes identified within the three articulated areas of influence – enhanced research, increased access/equity, and enriched pedagogy. Each of these areas is influenced by the broader constellation of strategic goals and objectives outlined in the 2019 ACSA Strategic Plan.

The domains of influence identified in the most recent ACSA strategic plan represent sensibilities inherent experiences that I have been privileged to have benefitted from and understand tangibly. The predominant component of my professional and educational effort for the past seventeen years has been the implementation of community-driven public interest design and related pedagogies. The success of those efforts have been predicated on inclusivity, understanding methods to achieving inclusivity, establishing relevance of effort in the context of financial consideration, and evaluating the work to verify whether or not there has been impact. While not necessarily apparent, these dimensions of consideration are linked, inherently recursive, and reinforce the three predominant sectors of traditional valuate assessment - teaching, research, and service.

This experience has provided me an opportunity to tangibly understand the gulf in equity that currently exists. Stating that we can do better, is a gross understatement. We must do better. The desired sensibilities of an At-Large Director underscore the notion that we all benefit from collective intelligence and communication. The exchange of information facilitated by ACSA and affiliated organizations is central to that objective. An At-Large Director must be able to support that endeavor. In recent years, there has been exponential growth in awareness of issues related to equity – social, economic, and environmental. The growth needs to continue on that trajectory. The ACSA, four affiliated professional organizations, and networks of stakeholders have been instrumental in that success. The refinements to, and affordances provided by the strategic plan, poise us to do more in trying to level a grossly imbalanced playing field.

In a time where populations are polarized and flaws in human behavior are demonstrated each day, it is important that members of professional and educational organizations operate with dexterity informed by a diverse set of experiences. Perspective provided by experience cultivates requisite objectivity in decision making. My background, which is informed by public undergraduate professional education, private graduate education, practice with globally recognized practitioners, design leadership in a large corporate enterprise, and extensive work in non-profit public interest domains provide an expansive set of lenses through which I consider all matters of significance – social, technological, and environmental.

In each context I have had to establish the value of what has been contributed, and have had to help others see the value in what they offer. I am grateful to have learned from those who have demonstrated the same sensibilities regardless of circumstance. Sensibility offers potential for a future, evolution, and more importantly provides currency for positive advancement of collective cause. Accomplishments are a reflection of sensibility.

To date I have raised more than four million dollars from a vast network of organizations to support applied research/design research at three different universities. Teams that I have built, directed, and mentored have been able to achieve significant success in establishing professional relevance evidenced by numerous design awards and exhibitions. More importantly, thousands of community residents, who would not otherwise have had access to design and implementation services, have benefitted from the work done by groups I have been fortunate enough to have connected through collective processes. In each case there has been social benefit, technological advancement, and regard for the environment. Projects have been purposeful for end-users, of qualitative merit warranting publication, recognized by the profession, and representative of innovative pedagogies that cultivate collective knowledge. Service as an At-Large Director provides an opportunity to act as an agent and empower others in advancing communication and efforts central to the advancement of our collective educational, professional, and societal aspirations – the development of better citizens.





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### Biography

John Folan is Head of the Architecture Department and Professor at the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design (FJSoA+D), University of Arkansas. He is also Director of the Urban Design Build Studio (UDBS) which he founded while appointed as the T. David Fitz-Gibbon Chair in Architecture at Carnegie Mellon University from 2008 to 2019. Through the UDBS and other collaborative ventures John has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to work with underrepresented communities on the development and implementation of catalytic projects through participatory design processes. His work prioritizes public interest, social justice and equity as a productive end. In 2011 John founded and assumed responsibility as the Executive Director of the 501(c)3 organization, PROJECT RE\_, to expand the capacity of the UDBS in Western Pennsylvania through strategic partnerships with other non-profit entities in addressing problems of regional significance at scale. His leadership in the realization of PROJECT RE\_ has straddled transactional and physical dimensions of purpose in the promotion of entrepreneurial opportunities for under-represented populations, provision of job skill development, and demonstration of innovative design centered construction; supporting simultaneous aspirations of community restoration, resident empowerment, and material resource advocacy. John's work with the UDBS and community partners has been published widely and exhibited internationally with dedicated installations at the 2016 XX Pan American Bienal de Arquitectura Quito, Ecuador and the 2014 Hong Kong/Shenzhen (UABB) Biennale. The work has also been recognized with 28 American Institute of Architect (AIA) Design Excellence Awards, 9 ACSA Collaborative Practice Awards, 2 AIA/ACSA Housing Design Education Awards, and 3 Design Corps SEED Awards for excellence in Public Interest Design. In 2018 the Urban Design Build Studio (UDBS) was named the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Impact Practice for sustained ability to span a wide range of design disciplines that are tied together by a common goal to design and create a better world through innovative, scale-able and measurable solutions. This work has been made possible through the acquisition of over four million dollars in grant funding from philanthropic organizations, governmental agencies, and corporate sponsors.

Work in Pittsburgh, PA and Fayetteville, AR represents an extension of efforts in university affiliated community-based design and construction initiated while he was a tenured faculty member at the University of Arizona (2001-2008). In Tucson, Arizona John co-founded, co-directed, and served as an executive board member of the Drachman Design Build Coalition (DDBC); a university affiliated, non-profit, 501(c)3 corporation dedicated to the design and construction of environmentally specific, energy efficient, affordable housing prototypes. Projects completed by John in collaboration with the DDBC implemented in Tucson's Urban Empowerment Zone were recognized with three consecutive AIA Arizona Awards for Residence of The Year, the 2011 AIA/ACSA Collaborative Practice Award, and the 2016 Design Corps SEED Award for excellence in Public Interest Design. Urban strategies employed in the implementation of the DDBC work influenced the collaborative development of the Drachman Institute's legislative proposal for regionally specific sustainability guidelines. The work was recognized with first place award in the 2008 National Urban Policy Initiative Competition (NUPIC).

His work in the Public Interest arena that focuses on regionally specific, appropriate, replicable design solutions predicated on community vested entrepreneurial opportunities for residents is informed by work in private practice. Registered as an Architect since 1995 and a LEED Accredited Professional since 2008, John's applied research in practice across the span of his career has included high-performance residential, cultural, and institutional commissions in the United States, Japan, Africa, and Europe. Included in this body of work are the Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, the National Wildlife Federation Headquarters, the United States Embassy Compound in Nairobi, Kenya, and the East African USAID Headquarters. Since 2003 he has maintained a private practice, FoLAN, that has focused on Adaptive-Reuse, Urban-Design and Alternative Development Strategies. The overlapping domains represented in his creative practice inform the translation from drawing to building through understanding of material, productive process, and place. Sensibilities developed in practice inform teaching in Design, Design-Build, Ethics, Technology, and Reality Computing. Innovative teaching pedagogy has been recognized with the 2016 Henry Hornbostel Teaching Award from the College of Fine Arts (CFA) at Carnegie Mellon University, 6 consecutive Robert C. Geibner Teaching Awards from the College of Architecture, Planning and Landscape Architecture (CAPLA), The Daryl Dobras Award, and Honors College Five Star Faculty Award at the University of Arizona. In 2014 John was named one of Design Intelligence's 30 Most Admired Educators and in 2019 received the AIAS Educator Honor Award. Folan completed his graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania as a Kahn Fellow where he was awarded the Henry Adams Medal, and his undergraduate work at the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, graduating with high honors.