



**PRINCIPALS AND PARTNERS GAVE MODEST RAISES TO THEIR EMPLOYEES, EVEN AS THEIR OWN TAKE-HOME SHRANK.**

# EQUITY & INCOME

**PRIDE WAS HARDLY THE EMOTION** I expected to feel upon reading the AIA's 2011 Compensation Report. What reaction did I anticipate having? Perhaps mild interest in some detail such as the differences in income from region to region, or a touch of boredom from perusing such a data-intensive report. But to be perfectly honest, what I really expected to feel was sadness at the negative effects of the recession on peoples' livelihoods.

Given the state of the economy, it should come as no surprise that compensation is down across the board. And that is not good news. But the dip isn't consistent at every rung on the career ladder—which is where the report gets interesting, and even inspirational.

Here are the basics. Executive compensation has dropped from an average of \$208,600 in 2008 (the last time the AIA conducted the survey), to \$164,800 this year. That's a mighty big drop. On the other hand, the three other core job categories (senior managers, architects and designers, and interns) actually saw an increase, which means that principals and partners gave modest raises to their employees, even as their own take-home shrank.

Unfortunately, when pay is adjusted for inflation, pretty much everyone came out a loser. As I read the numbers, however, the important takeaway is not just that compensation is down, which one would expect under the circumstances, but that the percentage of income lost *decreases* the further down one looks on

the totem pole: senior staff lost 3 percent in the three-year gap between surveys; architects and designers lost 1.7 percent; and interns lost 0.3 percent. Everybody got pinched, but the pain that they felt was proportionate to their station. Those who make the least money took the smallest cut.

There are plenty of reasons why the numbers may have played out the way they did. But, ever the optimist, I believe that the proportional income distribution evident in the 2011 survey was at least in part the result of deliberate action—and wise leadership—on the part of architecture executives. A proportional compensation policy is good business: There's no long-term value, but there is long-term harm, to be had in alienating prospective architects and future industry leaders by offering a low entry-level pay grade. Architecture should attract, and retain, the very best minds possible.

Moreover, a proportional pay policy is the right thing from an ethical perspective. Families supporting themselves on less than \$50,000 a year feel small fluctuations in income much more acutely than families making six figures. I know I couldn't look my staff in the eye if I ever took a raise at their expense. It makes me proud to think that the profession's leadership feels the same way.

*Neil Cramer*

## LETTERS

*In Ned Cramer's "Goose Bumps and Ballyhoo" editorial for the August issue, we asked you, our readers, for "your architectural goose-bump moments." And many of you responded. Here is a selection of those responses.*

I've had plenty of goose-bumps moments: touring Rome for the first time, walking a half-mile away from the Cologne Cathedral to contain the façade in my camera viewer, entering the red-veined-marble and bright-brass lobby of the Empire State Building. But after visiting Fallingwater with my husband (also an architect), coming across a photo of it still brings out a gasp.  
*Linda Derivi, AIA, Stockton, Calif.*

After college and Vietnam, I spent four-and-a-half months driving through the U.S. and Europe. Nothing can compare to standing 6 feet from Michelangelo's *La Pietà* in St. Peter's (before that idiot attacked it and they moved it a football field away from viewers). It was a spiritual enlightenment.  
*Rick D. Clark, AIA, San Diego*

The first time I visited Carlo Scarpa's restoration of the Castelvecchio in Verona, Italy, I was in graduate school. My day spent exploring the nooks and achingly particular crannies of that renovated castle was one of constant discovery and inspiration.

I had the good fortune to return on a family vacation this past June. But what made it that much more special was that I could share my passion with my 12-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter. I love what I do, and it is in no small measure due to the impact of that one building that I do it. *John Noble, AIA, Cincinnati*

I've seen a lot of great buildings, but my goose-bump moment was when, at age 12, the sales staff let me pore over the CDs of the homes being built in my development. I went every week and took copious notes so I could reproduce them on my drawing board. I remembered the architect's name (David Baumgartner, AIA) and called him 27 years later to thank him for jump-starting my career. I'm still in awe at age 42 when

I finish a set of CDs with my stamp on them. I couldn't do anything else. *Colin Edward Slais, AIA, Scottsdale, Ariz.*

Sir John Soane's House and the Pantheon are of that order for me. I have to add the Duomo in Florence, Italy; the Doge's Palace and Carlo Scarpa's Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice, Italy; and the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet. *Sherwood Case, Long Beach, Calif.*

Seeing Fallingwater for the first time while in architecture school. Visiting Philip Johnson's Glass House while carrying my infant daughter. Touring Kahn's Salk Institute. Visiting the Acropolis in Athens as the sun set. Seeing David for the first time in Florence. *Jerry Bronstein, AIA, Malvern, Pa.*

I didn't exactly get goose bumps the first time I stepped inside the Pantheon. It was more like vertigo—that sudden feeling of expansive space you get when standing at the edge of a cliff or looking out over vast expanses of water. Until then, I had assumed that feeling was reserved for nature, unattainable by mere humans. But the Pantheon was a reminder that architecture has sublime power too. *Christine Moser, Assoc. AIA, New Orleans*

I recall walking into Fallingwater. I'm 6-foot 2-inches tall; the ceilings are not a whole lot higher. It made me

realize, instantly, that there is no way to truly understand architecture through photographs. Architecture must be experienced. *Peter Piven, FAIA, Philadelphia*

Almost every day that I go out to a client meeting or whatever, I plainly hear Wagner's *Flight of the Valkyries* playing in my head. I can't help but think that I am being sent forth to solve the world's problems, albeit only the architectural ones. Gives me goose bumps. And pumps me for the meeting. *Eric V. Horstman, AIA, Dallas*

I spent the entire school year of 1972–73 in Florence, as one in a class of 16 fourth-year architecture students from Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo, in the California International Studies Program. I had goose bumps every day. *Eric Charles Parlee, AIA, Pasadena, Calif.*

I got goose bumps when I researched the destroyed Baroque castle in Karlsruhe, Germany, and found in the archives the original drawings that Balthazar Neumann submitted for the architectural competition in the 18th century. Unfortunately, he did not get the job. *Otto Reichert-Facilides, FAIA, Philadelphia*

Seeing long-lost fellow architecture graduates after three decades. There were hugs, tears, and plenty of stories to acknowledge how our group had bonded for five years

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at the university, and, now 30 years later, we were still a unique family. *Russ Angelo, AIA, Charlotte, N.C.*

Some of my most treasured and inspiring architectural moments were triggered by Giovanni Michelucci's Chiesa dell' Autostrada del Sole in Florence, Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal at JFK Airport, Helmut Jahn, FAIA's United Airlines Terminal at O'Hare, and James Hubbell's chapel at Sea Ranch, Calif. *Dennis Paoletti, FAIA, San Francisco*

In 2000, I was in Los Angeles with a list of iconic modern architecture that I wanted to see. High on the list was Pierre Koenig's Case Study House #22. I came to a security gate, and, after a brief hesitation, I hopped over the fence. A guy was loading photography equipment into a van; he was a location scout there to document the house. I figured I'd made it this far, so I asked him if I could take a few photos. He went to see, and returned saying the owner had invited me in. I walked through the breezeway to the pool area and there in front of me was that famous house. The owners, Carlotta and Buck Stahl, welcomed me, allowed me to take as many photos as I wanted, and shared stories of their life in the house. Carlotta said, "You have to come back and see the house at night," and proceeded to give me the security code for the gate.

I could hardly wait for the sun to set. I punched in the code and drove through. I walked through the breezeway

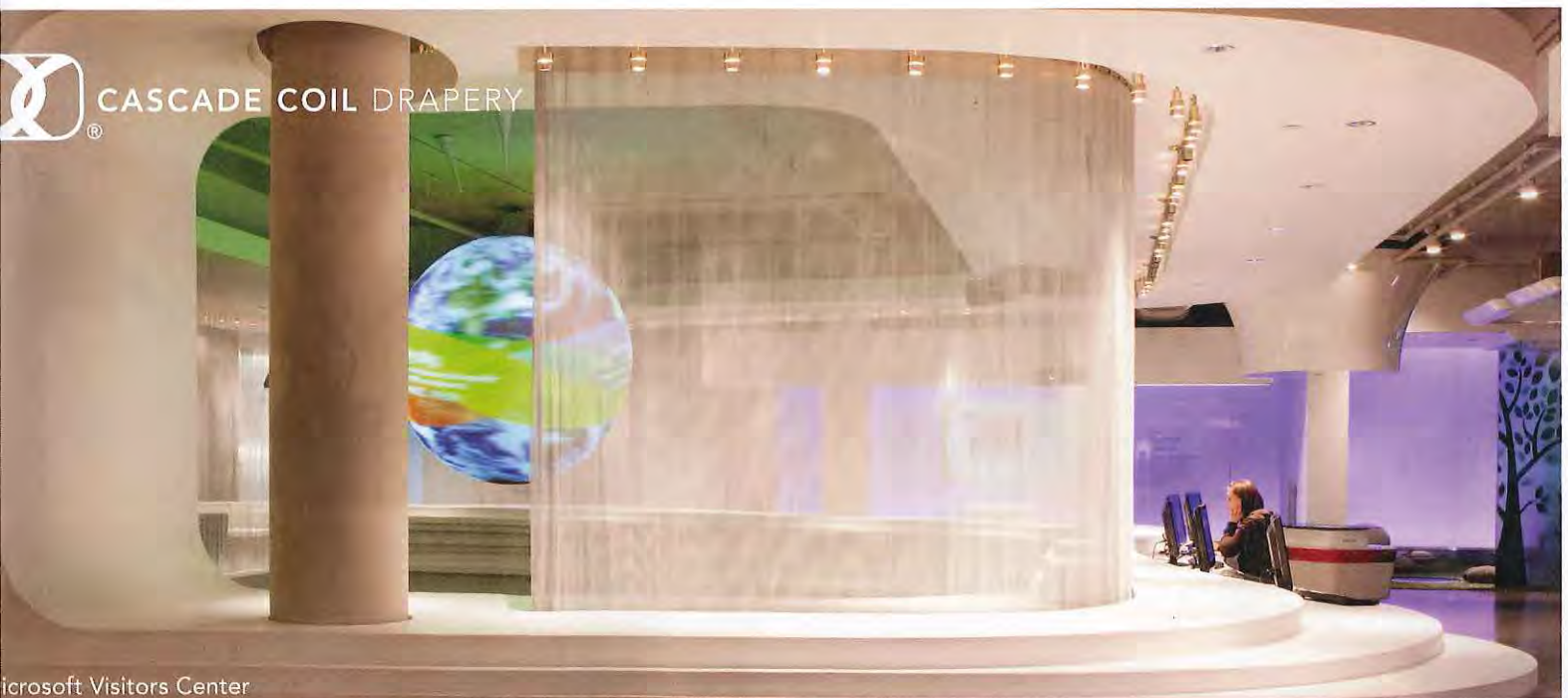
and there before me was the ethereal vision I was so familiar with: the illuminated glass box precariously perched on the edge of darkness over a vast sea of twinkling city lights. *Tom McElroy, AIA, San Francisco*

To touch and breathe and absorb a space that once only existed as an idea. There is nothing quite like transforming imagination into built form. It is humbling, rejuvenating, and emotional all at once. Thanks for reminding me why I do what I do. And thanks for doing what you do. *Robin R. Randall, AIA, Oak Brook, Ill.*

I was humbled, awed, and weak-kneed on a day trip out to Bath last winter, when I first saw Robert Adam's Pulteney Bridge over the Avon and then sat on a bench on the greensward below John Wood the Younger's Royal Crescent. I still get tears thinking of those two gorgeous structures. *Robert Meyers, AIA Emeritus, San Francisco*

In a mind-numbing recession, I got goose bumps reading your positive editorial and realizing how fortunate we are in having a pie-eyed optimist as the editor of a professional journal supported by (amazingly) the American Institute of Architects. *Stanley Tigerman, FAIA, Chicago*

You can feed your kids goose, but you can't feed them goose bumps! *Terrance Thompson, Yuma, Ariz.*



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