

The 2nd Annual AIA | LA Immigration Summit

**Workforce Leadership &
The Future of Architectural Practice**



EVENT DETAILS

WHEN

Friday, May 8th, 2026
8:00 AM - 12:30 PM PDT

WHERE

AIA | LA & ACLA Center for Communities
4450 West Adams Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016

Street parking is available.
Please do not park in the lots of local businesses.

LEARNING UNITS

AIA CES: 4 LU Approved

Building on the success of the inaugural 2025 AIA | LA Immigration Summit, this second convening deepens the profession's engagement with immigration as a force shaping workforce resilience, firm leadership, and the future of architectural practice in Los Angeles. Amid a shifting federal policy landscape, the 2026 Summit equips architects, educators, and emerging professionals with actionable strategies — while amplifying the voices driving change.

SUMMIT THEMES & STRATEGIC INTENT

The 2026 Summit synthesizes four interconnected themes that carry the conversation from the 2025 inaugural event into actionable territory:

- **Economic Impact** → Firm Strategy The 2025 Summit documented immigrants' outsized contribution to California's AEC economy. In 2026, we translate that data into firm-level practice: how should leaders recruit, retain, and advance this talent?
- **Policy Landscape** → Professional Response New federal rules threaten to remove architecture from recognized professional degree classifications, cutting off the international student pipeline. The Summit equips professionals to respond and advocate.
- **Educational Pipeline** → Licensure Access. From an international student to a licensed architect is a complex journey. The Summit maps barriers, highlights successful pathways, and connects students with mentors.
- **Workforce Resilience** → Leadership Development Post-wildfire Los Angeles is rebuilding. The AEC industry depends on a diverse, skilled workforce. The Summit strengthens the profession's capacity to lead through disruption.



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Thank You to Our Event Sponsors!

Toni Lewis, AIA - Lewis Schoeplein Architects

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Program & Agenda

WELCOME, COFFEE & BREAKFAST = (8:00 am – 8:20 am)

OPENING REMARKS = (8:20 am – 8:30 am)

Toni Lewis, AIA — President, AIA Los Angeles

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES — Designing the Workforce of Tomorrow = (8:30 am – 9:30 am)

Data-driven perspectives on immigration, the AEC pipeline, and Los Angeles's role on the global stage.

Cecilia V. Estolano – CEO & Founder, Estolano Advisors Workforce equity, economic development, and design in underserved communities

Miguel A. Santana – President & CEO, California Community Foundation Philanthropy, immigrant talent, and investment in the profession's future

COFFEE BREAK (9:30 am – 9:45 am)

Coffee Break & Networking Light refreshments

Connect with speakers, sponsors, and fellow attendees

PANEL #1 – (9:45 am – 10:45 am) – **From Classroom to Career: Navigating the Educational Pipeline**

How recent federal policy changes—including threats to remove architecture from recognized professional degree lists—affect the pathway from international student to licensed architect.

Discussion themes: Foreign credential recognition | ARE access for international graduates | Visa pathways for architecture students | Designing inclusive academic pipelines

Heather Flood, Assoc. AIA – Dean, Woodbury School of Architecture

Mohamed Sharif, AIA – Director, Undergraduate Program, UCLA Architecture and Urban Design

Myisha Arellano – LACCD Student & Public Artist

Monique Nogueira – Brazilian Architect, Architecture and Environmental Design Student, Los Angeles Trade-Technical College & Building Resilient Futures Fellow

Cristian I. Benoit, NOMAS, AIAS – Inaugural BSBP Cohort, College of the Canyons & National Student Leadership Committee, NOMAS

Yiceth Cosby - Architecture & Design Student, Pasadena City College

NETWORKING BREAK (10:45 am – 11:00 am)

Light refreshments | Connect with speakers, sponsors, and fellow attendees

PANEL #2 – (11:00 am – 12:00 pm) – **Building from Within: Immigrant Leadership in Architecture Firms**

How firm principals can actively recruit, mentor, and advance immigrant professionals — and why it's a competitive advantage

Discussion themes: Mentorship and sponsorship across cultural contexts | Visa sponsorship and firm obligations | Retention strategies for international talent | Building inclusive firm cultures

Jennifer Horn, PLA, ASLA, ISA – Founding Director, Design Demands Labor

Yu-Ngok Lo, FAIA – Principal, YNL Architects | President, Immigrant Architect Coalition

Flora Chou, LEED AP – Associate Principal & Cultural Resources Planner, Page & Turnbull

CLOSING REMARKS: (12:00pm)

Mitra Memari, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP B+C – Community Regional Director, HKS

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Speakers



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AIA|LA President
Principal, Lewis|Schoepfle Architects



Cecilia Estolano

Ceo & Founder
Estolano Advisors



Miguel A. Santana

President & CEO
California Community Foundation



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Monique Nogueira

Brazilian Architect,
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Los Angeles Trade-Technical College &
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Myisha Arellano

LACCD Student & Public Artist



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Inaugural Cohort,
BSBP Program at College of the Canyons,
NOMAS National Student Leadership Committee,
AIA | ACLA 2x8 Committee



Yiceth Cosby

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Pasadena City College



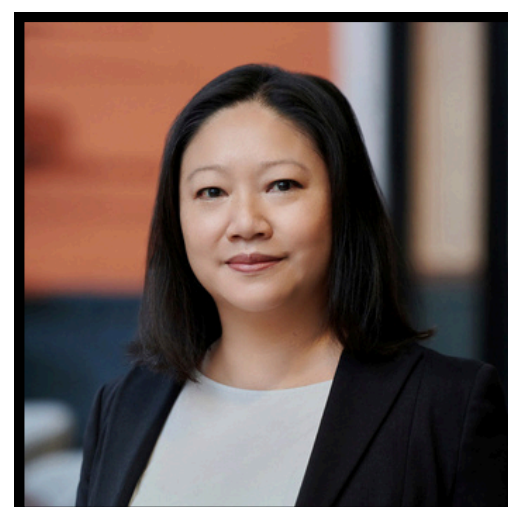
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ORGANIZERS

A special thanks to the following for helping to organize this event!

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