



# SDA Fellows Program Candidate Guidelines

## SDA Fellows Program Summary

### Purpose

The purpose of the SDA Fellows Program is to recognize individuals who have made exceptional contributions to SDA and to excellence in design firm management above and beyond participating in ordinary national and chapter events or performing normal duties as an officer or employee.

The SDA Fellows Program differs from the Lifetime Achievement Award as it is a self-nominated application process that will encourage SDA members to undertake roles within the organization, further their education and self-development, and attain certification, as well as participate in the A/E/C community at large to improve practice management overall. The Fellow designation also encourages members to participate in continuing future activities that will lead to further self-development and the development of other SDA members.

Only those recognized by this process will be entitled to use the FSDA designation. The SDA Fellows Program allows this honor to be bestowed by a panel of peers (the Fellows Jury) who evaluate each application individually. (Until there are ten SDA members with a Fellow designation, the jury will be comprised of two Fellows, one SDA Past President, and one member of a peer organization who has attained the status of Fellow (e.g., FAIA, FNSPE, FCSI, FSMPS).

### The Role of Fellows in SDA: Three Goals

1. Honor Outstanding Individuals. SDA Fellows are individuals who have made contributions above and beyond the norm to SDA, the A/E/C industries, and their communities. Fellows have the responsibility of continuing to accept leadership roles in SDA, mentoring roles within the profession, and service to the A/E/C community.
2. Meet the Needs of Fellows and Members. Fellows will help SDA define the leadership and management issues to be addressed in SDA members' professional development by attending education, networking, and social events held for and by them.
3. Use the Talents of Fellows. Fellows will be expected to serve as leaders through contributions such as:
  - Writing articles for industry periodicals, contributing to the SDA Forums and Blog, writing White Papers or other body of knowledge-related resources, and contributing to SDA's social media presence.
  - Serving as mentors, trainers, and advisors to individuals.
  - Serving in leadership positions at the chapter and national levels of SDA.

### Program Guidance and Management

SDA Fellows Program policy is governed by the SDA Executive Committee, which shall have exclusive authority to modify or interpret these guidelines. The Fellows Jury will have full authority to rule on the qualifications and eligibility of any candidate during their consideration of applications. The SDA Headquarters staff will implement and manage the program.

## Eligibility

To be considered for the Fellow designation, a self-nominated designation, a candidate must:

- Have 10 years' experience as a manager or administrator in the A/E/C industries.
- Have been an active member of SDA for at least seven of the previous ten consecutive years and currently be a member in good standing.
- Have held a current CDFA certification designation for a minimum of five years.
- Complete a detailed application that documents the candidate's work history, education and professional development, professional accomplishments, association participation, and perception of the meaning of the Fellow designation.

## Limitations

- Jury reserves the right to not name Fellows in a year.
- The Jury's decision is final; there is no appeals process in this program. An application may be resubmitted once in a subsequent year with a \$50 reprocessing fee.
- The Fellow title is valid only for regular SDA members and Emeritus members in good standing. It shall be written as [member name], FSDA (no periods). Both professional and associate members are eligible.
- One must remain an active or emeritus SDA member to be a Fellow. If membership lapses the Fellow designation shall no longer be used. Following an interruption in membership, if SDA membership is subsequently reinstated, Fellow status will automatically be restored at the same time at no additional charge to the renewing Fellow.
- All Fellows are required to maintain their CDFA designation to keep their Fellow status.

### Required Information

Candidates will complete an application on the form specified and submit one electronic copy of the application to the SDA Headquarters Office. The candidate's application and all attachments, including endorsement and testimonial letters, should be formatted to 8-1/2" X 11".

Candidates are required to present their application in an organized, concise manner. The quality of the application will be a factor in the Jury's deliberation. Please do not include copies of newsletters, meeting announcements, and/or other print materials. Applications are evaluated strictly on the quality of the content and thoroughness of the responses to the criteria, and information included therein should be substantiated by the candidate's references and endorsements. Narratives must express in a concise yet compelling manner the candidate's contributions to their firm(s), to the Society, and to the profession at large beyond SDA.

The terms "management," "administrative," "practice management," and "design firm management" are interchangeable terms and are inclusive of the Society's five (5) Professional Emphasis Groups (PEGs), which are administration, marketing, human resources, accounting, and project management. Experience in all areas is not required. Experience can be in one or more of the PEGs.

1. The application requires the following:
  1. Name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address.
  2. Year CDFA was earned.
  3. SDA member number and years of membership.
  4. Education and professional development history.
  5. Work history, organized with most recent first, describing in detail at least 10 years of A/E/C experience and professional growth, as well as the candidate's practice management experience in each position, and including information on the level of responsibility for management and/or administrative decisions within the firm. List the same employer twice if your job title changed significantly during your tenure, e.g., accountant to controller to CFO or HR specialist to HR Director. Candidates may include non A/E/C work in their work history if they feel it is relevant or would like to show continued employment between A/E/C positions.
2. ESSAYS (all to include evidence and specific examples):
  - A. *Significant sustained contributions made to SDA (500-word limit)*. Provide specific examples of chapter and national leadership in the areas of education, finances, membership, management, or other activity that has had value to members and/or SDA.
  - B. *Significant sustained contributions made to practice management in the A/E/C industries, beyond SDA*, and how those contributions made a difference to excellence in design firm management (250-word limit). The contributions should relate to at least two of the following topics and may include publishing, training, and/or speaking, or significant contribution to the body of practice management, in general:
    - a. Education of A/E/C professionals in practice management (e.g., BizTrak, individual presentations)
    - b. Practice management education to A/E university students (e.g., presentations, round tables, advisor)
    - c. Advisor within firm's ADP, EIT, LSIT, (or similar) program
    - d. PEG-specific education to other industries (e.g., accounting to SHRM or SMPS members or project management to software designers)
    - e. PEG-specific programs to other peer organizations (e.g., AIA, ACEC, NSPE)

- f. Service on a peer organization committee, event, or task force (e.g., AIA chapter Finance committee, AXP Advisory Committee, ACEC Finance Forum, CSI committee, SMPS event)
  - g. Service to a governmental body associated with the building industry (e.g., architectural review board, county zoning boards) OR significant contributions to governance of an organization's documentation including establishing criteria for excellence programs, e.g., certification programs.
- C. *Significant sustained contribution made to an individual or organization as a role model (e.g., an advisor, trainer, mentor, or participant in public/community service). (250-word limit). Examples of these activities may include one-on-one interaction OUTSIDE the candidate's firm.*
- a. The individual may not be a co-worker or employee of the candidate.
  - b. The organization must be a public or community service organization in or outside the A/E/C industry (e.g., Canstruction®, Habitat for Humanity, Girl Scouts, Kidstruction).
  - c. The individual or organization must confirm the participation with a certificate, commendation, or letter. If a letter, it should not exceed one page. This letter should describe just the relationship between the candidate and the individual or the candidate and the organization, indicating the nature and duration of the experience, with examples. This letter should discuss only the relationship and benefits vis a vis the individual or organization, and not be a general testimony as to the candidate's skills, experience or other contributions to SDA and the profession, like those testimonials discussed in items 2 and 3 below.
- D. Candidates will also prepare a statement (700 words max) describing to the Jury what becoming a Fellow means to the candidate and how the candidate expects to continue or expand his or her contributions to the profession and to SDA if named as a Fellow. As part of this statement, the Candidate must answer the following question: **"What is the most important contribution you have made to excellence in design firm management and what was the outcome?"** The answer must be supported with evidence or examples of the contribution.

### 3. LETTERS

- A. *Letter of endorsement from their SDA chapter*, signed by a past or present member of the Chapter Board, attesting to significant contributions to SDA at a Chapter level. The letter is given to the candidate and included in the application package. If the candidate is not affiliated with a chapter, a chapter letter will not be necessary, but a letter from the national organization may be substituted to verify the cited contribution.
- B. *Testimonial letter (not to exceed one page)* from the protégé to whom the candidate has served as a role model or the organization to whom the candidate has given their non-profit service to confirm their participation. A Commendation or certificate may also serve as proof (if the agency will not provide a letter).
- C. In addition to the letter from the individual or community service organization and the chapter, candidates will submit *two testimonial letters from individuals*, at least one of whom is an SDA member with the electronic submission. Letters should substantiate each of the significant contributions (i.e., to the profession, to SDA, and/or to the individual or public service organization), providing specific examples of the candidate's abilities and accomplishments. No testimonial letter may be longer than two pages, and no more than two testimonial letters will be considered.
- Note: All letters should be addressed to SDA Fellows Program (use SDA headquarters mailing address) and include the writer's contact information (both phone and email). The letters are given to the candidate and included in the application package. The Jury may request that Deborah Gill call the candidate's protégé, the chapter board member who endorsed the candidate, and/or the authors of the three testimonial letters for clarification. The feedback will only be shared with members of the Jury.*

4. Candidates will confirm by signature their understanding that:
  - Information on the application will be held in confidence.
  - Review of the application will be based only upon the information contained in the written application and in testimonial letters.
  - They may not approach any Juror concerning the application during or after Jury deliberations and any such activity will result in invalidation of the application.
  - They may not have been convicted for illegal activity or dismissed by an employer for illegal or unethical behavior.
  - They agree to abide by the *SDA Code of Ethics*.
  - The Jury's decision is final and may not be appealed. Notice of the Jury's decision will be provided in writing by the Jury Chair.
5. Chapters, endorsers, and testimonial submitters are prohibited from contacting Jurors directly for any reason. Queries about the process may be directed to the Headquarters Office.
6. A nonrefundable fee of \$250 must be submitted with the application. A Fellows Program Escrow fund will be established with the fees and the funds used for Fellow activities.
7. A \$50 Fellow Program renewal fee will be assessed annually for all active Fellows and will be deposited into the Fellows Program Escrow fund for Fellow activities. The initial Fellow Program renewal fee will be applied on the first membership anniversary date following investiture at EDSymposium. If a candidate's anniversary date falls within six (6) months of investiture, the initial Fellow Program renewal fee will be assessed on the second membership renewal.

*Example for June 1 Anniversary Date:*

May 15, 2018 Investiture  
June 1, 2018 Membership renewal – no Fellow fee assessed  
June 1, 2019 Membership renewal – Fellow fee assessed

*Example for December 31 Anniversary Date:*

May 15, 2018 Investiture  
December 31, 2018 Membership renewal – Fellow fee assessed