



Southern Conference of NCARB
2026 Educators and Practitioners Conference
Saturday, February 7th, 2026
Florida International University Department of Architecture

**“Bridging the Gap Between Practice and Academia:
Integrating the Current State and Future of Architecture”**

Friday February 6, 2026

6:00 pm **Reception/Icebreaker/Networking:**
Courtyard Hotel by Marriott at Dolphin Mall
11275 NW 12th. St., Miami, FL 33172
The Bistro

Saturday February 7, 2026

8:45 **Arrival at Florida International University - FIU**
Paul L. Cejas School of Architecture
11200 SW 8th. Street,
Miami, Florida 33199
BEA Gallery PCA-140
Auditorium PCA-132

9:00 **Welcome**



Pedro Alfaro, RA, AIA, CAAPPR, SAP
Vice Chair SCNCARB
Chairman of the Educator Conference



Henry Rueda, AIA Associate

Chair of the Department of Architecture and Associate Teaching Professor. Department of Architecture - Florida International University.

9:10

Conference Speaker's Series:



Peter Nguyen, Conference Theme Keynote Speaker

Policy researcher at RAND and a professor of policy analysis at the RAND School of Public Policy, Rand Report Committee Member. His research is focused on strengthening pathways in education and the workforce.

The RAND research team will be in attendance to share and engage with conference attendees on findings from the Building Impact report. Panel presentations and group discussion will focus on the present state of architecture education, practice, and innovation (chapter 3) as well as collaboration between academia and architecture firms (chapter 5).

10:30

Break

10:45

FIU Faculty Guest Speakers

The FIU Department of Architecture's Industry Board is a dynamic group of leaders from the professional community who volunteer their expertise to strengthen the bridge between practice and FIU's academic environment.

The board supports initiatives in technology, design innovation, resilience, and human-centered environments. Members contribute their expertise to curricular development, mentorship, and community engagement, ensuring that our students are prepared to design innovative, resilient, and responsible spaces for all.

This panel discussion will elaborate on the Board's mission and the importance of bridging the gap between education and practice.

The panel discussion will be followed by a presentation on the unique course offered by FIU that helps students prepare for taking the Architectural Registration Exam.

Florida International University Industry Board Members



Diana Aponte, RA



Craig Aquart, AIA, NOMA, RID, CSI



Helena Hung, RA



Sofia Mere, RA



Italo Pérez, RA

11:15



Florida International University ARE Preparation Course
Schneur 'Zalmy' Meyer, RA Adjunct Professor of the ARE Preparation Course. Department of Architecture – Florida International University.

11:30



Jeremy Fretts, AIA, NCARB

NCARB Assistant Vice President, Programs: Education and Certification Team.

Understanding Pathways to Practice: Maximizing the value of education toward licensure. Learn the status of NCARB's Pathways to Practice initiative, with a focus on the impacts and opportunities for educational institutions.

12:15

**Lunch and Interaction/Discussion Break:
BEA Gallery**

1:15

Panel Discussions

New Architect/Recent Grad/Student Perspective

Jakiel Sanders, RA, NOMA, NCARB, Moderator

Janelyn Romero, AIAS President

Amrita Roy, NOMAS President

Peter Nguyen, RAND

Kaylan Phillips, Newly Licensed Architect

Enrique Socarrás, Alpha Rho Chi President

Shannon Jones

2:15

BREAK

2:30

Practitioner/Educator Perspective

Ralph Raymond, AIA, NOMA, NCARB, Moderator

Chris Elberson, AIA, NCARB

Jeremy Fretts, NCARB

David Hill, NCSU

Jason Chandler, FIU Professional Office Practice Professor

3:30

Question and Answer Period

Conference Wrap-Up/Closing Remarks



Jason Chandler, FAIA

Incoming Chair of the Department of Architecture and Associate Professor. Department of Architecture – Florida International University



Greg Durrell, NCARB, AIA, NOMA, CSI
NCARB Southern Conference Chair closing remarks/thanks,
etc.

4:00 Conference Concludes

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Conference Organizing Committee:

Pedro Alfaro, RA, AIA, CAAPPR, SAP - Committee Chair and Vice Chair of NCARB Southern Conference

Darren James, FAIA, NOMA - Secretary/Treasurer of NCARB Southern Conference

Chris Elbersen, AIA, NCARB

Jackiel Sanders, RA, NOMA, NCARB

Ralph Raymond, RA AIA, NOMA, NCARB

Walt Teague, FAIA, NCARB, LEED AP, SEED AP

Cathe M. Monte Carlo, Executive Director of NCARB Southern Conference and Executive Director of the North Carolina Board of Architecture and Registered Interior Designers