The first decade of the 21st century had its fair share of hot topics at IDEC. Town halls, business meetings, and Fellows Forums provided avenues to dialogue about the many challenges and opportunities the organization and its members have faced. Some were generated from internal forces, while others came from external forces. Some created division, while others fostered unification. Nonetheless, the organization grew stronger with each conversation.

A Common Body of Knowledge
In 2003, selected members from IDEC, professional interior design associations, and allied design organizations met in Washington, D.C. to discuss the profession's body of knowledge, which had recently been defined in a study by Dr. Denise Guerin and Dr. Caren Martin (2001). The focus was on what was unique with interior design, and what was common and shared with other disciplines. The intent was to help clearly define (to ourselves and the public) who we are and what we do through our knowledge. This endeavor had its challenges because of interior design's roots in architecture, art, decoration, psychology, sociology, and a wide number of other disciplines. The boundaries of the “box” in which we work is much more unwieldy than medicine or law.

The Guerin/Martin document was controversial. Some meeting participants embraced the document's content while others questioned the definition of the box itself. Within the IDEC community, some questioned if the document was too limiting and restrictive. The authors stated that the Common Body of Knowledge was just a starting point, and that its purpose leaned more toward educating the public about the specialized knowledge that is required to practice interior design rather than limiting the quest or application of knowledge in design programs.

Drs. Guerin and Martin continued their research, producing a second study in 2005. The contribution of this was the weighting of the knowledge areas identified via analysis of content, which identified the specialized knowledge most frequently associated with interior design practice. The 2006 Fellows Forum in Savannah focused on the second study and evoked spirited and thoughtful discussions. The most recent study was completed in 2010 and sponsored by six leading interior design organizations (ASID, CIDA, IDC, IDEC, IIDA, NCIDQ). The Interior Design Profession's Body of Knowledge and Its Relationship to People's Health, Safety and Welfare highlights a growing body of evidence that supports the positive impact of interior design on public health, safety, and welfare. The report also includes recommendations "for advancing the interior design profession through the continued identification, documentation and measure of health, safety and welfare performance standards to provide meaningful benchmarks" (www.idec.org).

Creative Endeavors
One of IDEC’s main goals is to advance the membership of IDEC. In the last quarter of the 20th century, more and more universities added interior design to their list of programs. Many of these required research from their faculty as a means of successful tenure and promotion. Although many adopted the more traditional approach of research and publication, it became clear that the creative aspects of the discipline were not being recognized or valued in academia. In 1985, the IDEC Board published the first position paper on the criteria for the evaluation of interior design faculty in postsecondary...
institutions. This original document identified “creative work” as a viable scholarly activity (Appointment, Tenure and Promotion, 1985; updated in 1993) as long as it received outside or peer assessment, but many universities were slow to adopt and the membership asked for assistance.

IDEC had already held its first annual IDEC Juried Design exhibition in concert with the annual conference (Fort Worth, 1983) prior to the approval of the document. The conferences, however, continued to be dominated by scholarly papers, presentations, and posters. The creative endeavors appeared to be secondary. As an organization, IDEC made strategic decisions to enhance the significance of the juried exhibition. In 1999, Jean Edwards took over as coordinator and presented the Creative Awards at the Annual Banquet in a manner befitting the quality of the entries. By 2007, individuals accepted for exhibition were also given slots for presentations, thus enhancing the discourse of creative endeavors.

Simultaneous to the changes made at the annual conference, President Eric Wiedegreen (2006-2007) charged a task force chaired by Dr. Shari Park-Gates to begin work on what would become The Value of Including Creative Endeavors in the Tenure and Promotion Process (2008). The document delved deeper into the subject and has become a useful resource for faculty who wish to engage in creative work and administrators who will ultimately be required to evaluate it.

Graduate Education

During the first decade of the 21st century, graduate education became a hot topic. Members expressed concerns regarding the wide range of degrees, their content, requirements, and nomenclature. John Weigand and Buie Harwood produced a white paper on graduate education in late 2006, which became the motivation for addressing the issue at the Fellows Forum in Austin (2007) and Montreal (2008).

The white paper offered a move toward formalization in order to achieve “a master’s degree in interior design that is clearly defined and universally recognized by the academy as ‘terminal in the field’” (IDEC White Paper: Graduate Education, 2006, p. 8). The proposal was for a post-professional Master of Interior Design (MID) degree. The idea met opposition by those who cited the benefits of the various degrees and the flexibility needed by individual institutions. The degree of emphasis on professional content versus research content also came to the forefront.

This hot topic has yet to be resolved and the conversation continues. One of the specific topics that emerged from conversations regarding education was the concern about the shortage of qualified individuals to teach interior design at the post-secondary level. This became one of IDEC’s most important initiatives in the last few years.

Shortage of Interior Design Educators

Once the conversation turned to the idea that there was a potential shortage of qualified interior design educators, the conversation became reality. In 2007 and 2008, many interior design positions remained vacant due to a large number of openings and a small pool of applicants. IDEC realized its membership was top heavy and would soon see a sizable amount of its population retire with no one to fill the void.

Kimball Office sponsored a working group to help identify strategies to deal with the shortage of qualified educators. President Jane Kucko charged the group and work began. In 2008, a full list of recommendations and strategies were presented to the IDEC Board and Issues Forum partners. To date, a number of steps have already been accomplished including: creation and dissemination of the “Believe” brochure spearheaded by Georgy Oliveri and financially supported by Kimball Office and Teknion; the development of IDEC Academy courses to assist new faculty; and a paper, Path from Practitioner to Professor (2010), researching the necessary credentials for several types of educational positions to assist professionals in understanding the many ways in which they can contribute to education.
Growing Threat of Anti-legislation Movement

Perhaps the aggressive anti-legislation movement is the most disturbing topic that has defined the 21st century. This group is actively challenging title and practice acts across the country with some success, invoking at times first amendment rights. Nevertheless, the IDEC community has made its voice clear by producing two resolutions.

The first resolution (2008) was spawned by concerns that architecture was considering the accreditation of interior architecture programs. This produced a great deal of angst amongst the members, as interior design’s relationship with architecture has been rocky at best. President John Turpin (2008-2009) spoke to the President of NAAB who stated that NAAB has no interest in accrediting interior architecture programs. The conversation soon engulfed the nomenclature being used by institutions—particularly those using the term “interior architecture.” IDEC Town Halls heard opinions from all sides, and in 2007 the membership requested a resolution from the board. In 2008 IDEC adopted a resolution specifying interior design as a distinct, well-defined profession; CIDA as the principle accrediting body; and NCIDQ as the sole instrument that tests the body of knowledge required by the interior design professional who practices in North America.

The second resolution is a result of the anti-legislation’s efforts to overturn title and practice acts. No aspect of any of the acts was spared, including a formalized education. In 2010, the IDEC Board adopted a position statement supporting the significance of a formalized, accredited education for interior designers. The anti-legislation movement and the pro-legislation movement are sure to keep state legislatures and courts busy for years to come.

Conclusion

Despite the many challenges that face IDEC, there is much to celebrate, especially our growth in the global conversation regarding the future of interior design. While we may be embattled on the home front, our list of potential allies beyond our borders is growing exponentially. IDEC is intimately involved in the International Federation of Interior Architects/Interior Designers (IFI). Under the leadership of Shashi Caan (President 2009-2013), the identity of the profession is being discussed world-wide. IDEC members participated in a Fellows Forum in Denver (2011) that addressed strategies for fulfilling the IFI Declaration. Members of the College of Fellows took that information and wrote essays that will be published as part of the initiative. It should also be noted that IDEC is a founding member of the National Academy of Environmental Design and was represented at the U.S. Design Policy Initiative (2010).

IDEC’s history is rich, diverse, controversial, provocative, and inspiring. So many amazing, dedicated, and passionate individuals have made this narrative possible. Here’s to the next 50 years!