

FEATURE

Donating for the Future: How shared generosity is shaping the vision for what's next in the AEC profession.

By Fawn Radmanich, FSMPS, CPSM

Vision often begins quietly. It shows up in the space between where we stand today and where we imagine our profession could be tomorrow. It emerges in the questions we ask, the insights we garner, and the opportunities we create for ourselves and others. Across the AEC community, this sense of possibility is harnessed and shaped in large part by the work of the SMPS Foundation and by the generous people, chapters, and regions who support our work moving forward.

The SMPS Foundation expands our collective vision by highlighting early shifts and opportunities, allowing our profession to see what is developing before it fully comes into view. In a time when markets, technologies, and client expectations continue to constantly evolve, the SMPS Foundation's research and education help us to navigate the uncertain space ahead with greater clarity and purpose.

It is because of the generosity of people like Brad Thurman, P.E., FSMPS, CPSM, 2025 Weld Coxé Marketing Achievement Awardee, that the Foundation can meet its objectives. According to Brad, "The Foundation is an essential element supporting SMPS's mission. SMPS members need current, relevant research to advance their firms and their own careers. I am proud to have played a role in the Foundation, and I know that my donations will help further the cause."

Sharpening What We See

One of the most direct ways that giving shapes the future is through support of the SMPS Foundation's research. Recent studies, including "Emerging Trends in AEC Marketing and Business Development" in partnership with FMI Consulting, and "Client Experience in the AEC Industry: Benchmarks, Insights, and Trends" in partnership with Client Savvy, a Clearly Rated Company, help our industry understand where it is heading and how our member firms can use that insight to stay competitive. These reports explore everything from workforce change to technology shifts to evolving client expectations, offering guidance at a moment when many leaders are navigating uncertainty.

"The research we implement is critical to industry growth and innovation," said Paula D. Stamp, PhD, MBA, FSMPS, CPSM, SMPS President. Many supporters agree that the SMPS Foundation's research influences how firms think, collaborate, and make decisions. The insights it provides help professionals navigate change, strengthen relationships, and better serve their clients and communities.

The Foundation's research helps the profession define the open space ahead and move toward it with more confidence. It is a shared resource created through shared support, and it continues to shape the decisions that firms and leaders make every day.

Expanding Who Steps Into the Future

Vision becomes stronger when more people are included in shaping it. Through its scholarship programs, the SMPS Foundation supports students who may never have seen themselves in the built environment, widening the path into AEC careers.

In partnership with the UNCF, the SMPS Foundation has awarded 47 scholarships to students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities since 2020. These awards provide financial support, mentorship, and SMPS student membership, connecting students to an industry they might not otherwise encounter.

“The Foundation grows the pipeline of AEC professionals by engaging students from underserved communities through the Zinsmeyer Scholarship Program,” said Paula. “It is an extension of the thought leadership and professional development SMPS is known for.”

The Zinsmeyer Scholarship Fund, created by Andy Zinsmeyer and his family, reinforces this commitment to the next generation.

“When we started, it was all about growing the opportunity for others to succeed,” Andy said. “That has not changed.”

In 2025, a national partnership with the ACE Mentor Program of America expanded that commitment even further. With ACE’s reach and the SMPS Foundation’s support structures, more students can now access mentorship, guidance, and visibility into the built environment than ever before.

The Strength of Collective Contribution

SMPS Foundation support is not driven by one group alone. Across the country, SMPS chapters incorporate giving into their annual budgets and regional event plans, extending the Foundation’s reach and influence. These contributions help make SMPS Foundation research universally accessible to members and firms, ensuring that insight is not limited by geography or budget.

“Our chapter’s gift to the SMPS Foundation is a thank you,” said Dana Williams of SMPS Colorado. “The Foundation’s work helps us grow stronger together, and continuing to give feels like the right way to return that support. SMPS has shaped the careers of so many of our volunteers, and we would not be where we are without this community. The Foundation keeps us learning and looking ahead, helping our members lead positive change within their firms and the industry.”

When chapters, firms, and individuals give, they help fill the space between what our profession knows today and what it needs to understand tomorrow. They enable the SMPS Foundation to keep asking the questions that matter and pursuing the answers that will guide us forward.

A Continuum of Support

The instinct to contribute has been part of SMPS from the beginning. Long before the SMPS Foundation existed, members were helping one another build something greater than any one person could imagine at the time. Andy Zinsmeyer, SMPS member number one, describes those early years with unmistakable clarity.

“We needed to get a lot done in a short amount of time to keep the momentum going,” he said. “So we all helped where we could. That is how it has always worked.”

Today, that same spirit of shared effort and forward motion supports the SMPS Foundation's work. The momentum continues because members, chapters, and firms choose to keep it moving. They see the value of research that sharpens our understanding, scholarships that widen participation, and programs that help professionals step confidently into their roles. Their support reflects a belief that the future of our profession is something we build together.

Looking Ahead

Vision does not arrive fully formed. It comes into focus gradually, shaped by what we learn, whom we encounter and include, and how we invest in the people and ideas that will define our next chapter. The SMPS Foundation plays an essential role in bringing that future into view.

Through annual contributions, chapter support, firm participation, and legacy gifts, the SMPS Foundation produces insights from research that guide decisions, expand opportunities for emerging professionals, and keep our community learning together.

The generosity of our members and chapters fills the space between where we are and where we hope to go. It ensures that progress is not accidental or isolated but intentional and shared.

We look forward by giving forward. And together, we are shaping a profession with the vision to be ready for whatever comes next.

As we enter the giving season, one truth is clear:

The generosity of today is creating the AEC profession of tomorrow.

And together, we're building a future worth investing in.

About the SMPS Foundation

The SMPS Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization established by the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) to deliver intelligence and insights for growth professionals and leaders. Its mission is to help the AEC industry navigate trends, change, and business evolution in a highly competitive marketplace through research, thought leadership, and strategic foresight. The SMPS Foundation is funded by donations and is underwritten by SMPS. Gifts by U.S. citizens may be tax-deductible for charitable purposes. To learn more, visit the Foundation page on the [SMPS website](#).

The research referenced in this article can be accessed [here](#).

- [Emerging Trends in AEC Marketing and Business Development](#)
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- [CX in the AEC Industry](#)
Developed in collaboration with research partner Client Savvy, a [ClearlyRated Company](#)

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