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Hello! I'm Aaron, a licensed architect and NCIDQ Certified interior designer living in Salt Lake City. My biggest passion is people. I love to motivate, mentor, and teach. Being registered as an architect and certified in interior design allows me to push my projects further and ensure the small details look fantastic. I hold various certifications, a few unique ones are WELL AP, LEED Green Associate, and State Certified Commercial Interior Designer – Utah (SCCID).

Q: Brief intro/What type of work do you do/ where do you work?

A: I am currently focused on higher education and park ranger housing. Recreation and outdoorsy focused projects are my favorite! Usually, these project teams are smaller which allow me to function in both an interior design and architecture role.

Q: When did you decide to take the NCIDQ Exam? How did you decide what order to take them in?

A: I decided to take the exams in December of 2020, signed up that month, and sat for all three exams in April. It was intense taking them all on April 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. I did it this way, as CIDQ has clear blueprints which allowed me to not waste any time. I struggled with the AREs, as their information/outline was so vast. With the clear guidelines and documents published by CIDQ, I was able to laser focus and knock them out quickly. It worked well, and I highly recommend everyone read the blueprints several times. They are literal gold.

Q: Did you fail any exams/retake any? How did you stay motivated through that process?

A: No, I didn't fail, but I did fail the ARE 6 times, which is unfortunately very normal. If you fail the NCIDQ, I suggest revisiting the blueprints, mock questions on the CIDQ website, and contacting CIDQ to arrange a mentor if you have any issues. If you follow the blueprints and mock questions, you'll be set up for success.

Q: How long did you study for the exams? What did you use to study?

A: I studied intensely for one month starting with ALL NCIDQ resources. I used the NCIDQ

Reference Manual from Ballast, which was great. I also supplemented with ArchiCorner on YouTube. My study period was one month; however, this was every day with multiple hour sessions. It was fun for me, as I was learning about what interior designers do.

Q: Has the practice of interior design lived up to your expectations that you had as a student? Any surprises or disappointments?

A: I didn't study interior design as an architecture student. The profession was NOT at all communicated correctly in my education. To answer the question, no, my education did not prepare me for interior design. This is the reason I earned my NCIDQ, and I loved the whole process. I am now able to advocate for the interior design profession, as I hope to own my own firm hiring both interior designers and architects. I also sponsor individuals using my NCIDQ Certification and NOT my architectural license; as I want to show my candidates I'm a solid, educated resource for them on the exam.

Q: What advice would you give to current students that you wished you had received?

A: Don't let anyone tell you the NCIDQ isn't important. This certification will propel you into your career; I promise. If you are an architect, earn your NCIDQ! Do it right after your ARE. This is low hanging fruit, as there is so much overlap. You'll have to fill in quite a few gaps (as expected), but it's worth it. You'll be a much better architect and respected by your interior designer colleagues. We need more allied professionals, especially architects, who advocate for our interior designers. Their work is just as important!

Q: Why did you become NCIDQ Certified/why was it important to you?

A: I want to be an ally to my interior design colleagues and educate architects that ID's are highly educated, certified individuals. They are often even more detail-oriented and organized.

Q: What could the industry do to overcome obstacles from diverse individuals being represented and having equal opportunity?

A: Normalize men in the profession and de-gender interior design. Amplify the voices of people of color and the LGBTQ+ community in ID. There is a stigma with men joining the profession as well. We need more diverse male representation. Provide scholarships for minority groups who do not have as much access to design education. Spread positivity, inclusivity, and kindness

Also, I am not a fan of using the term interior architecture. I feel it is an attempt to elevate the profession by changing the name of educational programs. We should embrace the term interior design and educate people that we are in fact VERY qualified and educated.

Q: What are common misconceptions people have? How can we combat these misconceptions and communicate more effectively?

A: A common misconception is that we select finishes. We need to stop using color fan decks as icons to represent interior designers. We can't be taking headshots of interior designers in front of paint chip samples anymore. This is degrading, disrespectful, and dated. In some states, we can sign and seal! We protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public, NOT just select finishes. We are a diverse group with hundreds of skills, selecting finishes is one of the least important things we do. Look at the NCIDQ blueprints, selecting finishes is a TINY part of this exam.