

The YAF Connection

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Leadership Profile: Terry Smith, AIA

Magen Moody

Terry Smith, AIA is founder and Principal-in-charge of Smith & Company Architects (S&C). He was working as principal of a major architecture firm's office when he decided it was time to launch his own firm in 1999, just one year after becoming a registered architect. Prior to founding his firm, Mr. Smith also served as Vice President of Architecture, Engineering and Construction Services for Texas Southern University.

"I had always wanted my own architectural firm since I declared my major in architecture," he says.

Smith says the biggest obstacle to founding his firm wasn't funding. Architecture firms generally need little start-up capital, he says. Building a healthy portfolio of clients was a greater challenge, he says. He attributes his success, in part, to his close connection to the community and his wealth of experience.



Photo Courtesy of Smith & Company Architects

Smith got his first break when he landed the renovation of the Miles and Morgan Woods Elementary School in Tampa, Florida. No longer working with his former Tampa employer, Smith says he worked on the project from his home and used the revenue from the project to set up Smith & Company.

He continued to complete a number of projects throughout the Tampa area, including an apartment modernization and an expansion to Tampa International Airport's service building.

Then, in 2001, while maintaining the Tampa office, Smith moved the firm's headquarters to Houston. Its first major project in the area was a renovation of the president's suite at Texas Southern University.

Following the TSU project, Smith was offered a full-time position as Vice President of Architecture, Engineering and Construction Services at the university for a two-year period. He accepted the position but continued to run Smith & Company on evenings and weekends.

Today the firm continues to grow. Mr. Smith has served as Project Manager/Project Architect for a diverse range of project types and has a unique set of skills managing projects for colleges, universities, and school districts. Smith & Company's clients range from Texas Southern University, Rice University, University of Houston, Baylor University, North Forest ISD, Port Arthur ISD, and others.

Terry Smith has been mentioned in the *Houston Business Journal* special section and the *Dallas Business Journal*. Last October the firm's Texas Southern University Parking Garage projects received nationwide attention in the *National Parking Magazine*. Smith is a board member of the South Central Branch of the YMCA and the Secretary for the Houston Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects.

Magen Moody is a Marketing Director for Smith & Company Architects.