

Introducing High School Students to Architecture

Contributed by AIA Atlanta

January 2010

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

AIA Atlanta started a high school design competition in 2006 that has grown each year and now receives close to 80 student entries per year. The program provides college scholarship funding for three winning project recipients, which are now fully funded by national and local corporations.

HOW IT WORKS

The High School Student Design Competition began in 2006 and has grown every year since. The goal of AIA Atlanta's High School Student Design Competition (HSSDC) is to engage students in the design process, raise awareness of the built environment, and spark interest in an architecture career.

In September, the HSSDC committee meets to begin the planning process. Information and the necessary forms are made available online at the beginning of January and registration is due in February with submissions due one month later. The selection jury meets in early April and award announcements are made a couple weeks later.

Three winners and multiple honorable mention prizes are selected each year. Prize money is as follows, the first place winner receives \$2,000; the second place winner receives \$1,000; the third place winner receives \$500; those who receive honorable mention are given a gift certificate to an art supply store.

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN STUDENT AND PROFESSIONAL

As part of the HSSDC, architects and architecture students visit participating high schools, high school students visit the firms of committee members, and students are invited to attend applicable functions at local architecture schools. Typically the firm visit is structured as a school field trip; however, for schools that have only a few participating students, the Committee works with them individually to set up visits.

In 2006 the High School Student Design Competition was AIA Atlanta staff driven and had

very little sponsorship. To help offset the costs, sponsorships were sought in the second year.



Kevin Adkisson, 2008 First Place Winner, accepted an offer to attend architectural school at Yale

THE VALUE OF SPONSORSHIP

During a chance encounter, AIA Atlanta members were introduced to several directors from The Home Depot Foundation. The chapter was very impressed with the Foundation's sustainability efforts especially since the Committee had focused that year's High School Student Design Competition on sustainability. The Committee approached the Foundation and asked if they would be interested in serving as a program sponsor. They agreed and have since maintained their sponsorship each year.

The sponsorship money the Committee raises is used to fund the three cash prizes and all costs associated with administration of the competition and the awards ceremony. The chapter also approaches firms with an active mentoring or K-12 initiative, as well as vendors like Utrecht, Sam Flax, and Sketchup to request sponsorship.

The High School Student Design Competition Committee now primarily runs the program with assistance from AIA Atlanta staff members when needed. The committee is made up of AIA members, AIAS members, and educators from local architecture schools.

STUDENTS SUCCEED

Approximately 80 students from 25 schools participated in the 2008 and 2009 programs; about the same number of students participated in the program during its first two years, though they came from fewer schools. Competition winners have been accepted to architecture schools in Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Louisiana and Connecticut. Many have interned with local firms – one student traveled to Abu Dhabi as part of his internship with Rosser International. Antoine Predock, FAIA, 2007 Juror and Gold Medal winner, described the competition as “one of the highlights” of his career. “The competition reflects two poles: constant professionalism and poetic string to dream to manifest those dreams,” said Predock.



Patricia Kusumadjaja, 2009 First Place winner, from North Cobb High School

In 2007, student Kevin Adkisson placed third and followed in 2008 with first place. Kevin had interned with Smallwood, Reynolds, Stewart, Stewart & Associates over two summers and applied to Cornell and Yale to study architecture. Kevin was accepted to both but decided upon Yale’s offer for a full scholarship and began his studies in August 2008. Kevin also exhibited his winning project to Atlanta City Council member Kwanza Hall and was present on June 16, 2008, when in recognition of the winning design and overall competition, the Atlanta City Council honored AIA Atlanta for its High School Student Design Competition and increasing awareness of the profession to local high school students.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 22.08.04 Kids in Architecture: A Grade 5 Curriculum
- 22.08.07 Architecture, It’s Elementary! A K-5 Curriculum

22.08.01 Architectural Awareness Program for Junior High Students

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Design competitions