

AIA Atlanta High School Student Design Competition

Revised October 2008

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SUMMARY

The goal of AIA Atlanta's High School Student Design Competition is to engage students in the design process, raise their awareness of the built environment, and spark their interest in an architecture career.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

AIA Atlanta's High School Student Design Competition began in 2006. The program runs from January until mid-April, and the theme varies each year. In 2007, the students were asked to design a sustainable home in the southwest.

The High School Student Design Competition Committee primarily runs the program. The committee is made up of AIA members, AIAS members, and professors from local architecture schools. Staff assists wherever help is needed and works particularly close on the awards announcement program.

Planning for this program typically begins in September or October. Information and materials are available online at the beginning of January and registrations are due in early February. Submissions are due by the end of March. The jury selecting the winning entries meets in early April, and an awards announcement is made in the middle of the month.

Three winners are selected each year, and there are typically between three and five Honorable Mentions. The First Place winner receives \$2,000; the Second Place winner receives \$1,000; the Third Place winner receives \$500; and those who receive

Honorable Mention are given a gift certificate to art supply stores like Utrecht or Sam Flax.

Projects are evaluated on creativity and imagination, practicality of solution, use of site, quality of drawings, and approach to environmental sustainability.

Individual students sign up to participate in the High School Student Design Competition, but all students must have a teacher sponsor, as most communication is conducted through them. Students also work primarily with their teachers to develop the concepts and designs for their projects.

As part of the High School Student Design Competition, architects and architecture students visit participating high schools, high school students visit the firms of committee members, and students are invited to attend certain functions at local schools of architecture.

Visits to firms are often organized as field trips by the high school teachers. For schools that have only a few participating students, the Committee will work with them individually.

RESULTS

Approximately 80 students from 25 schools participated in the 2008 program; about the same number of students participated in the program during its first year, though they came from fewer schools.

While there is no structured tracking system in place, the High School Student Design Competition Committee does keep in touch with several winners

and helps them find summer internships. One student who completed a 2008 summer internship at Rosser International, Inc. had the opportunity to travel to Dubai for a project.

Many of the winners have entered architecture school.

LESSONS LEARNED

The High School Student Design Competition was mostly staff driven its first year and had very little sponsorship. To help offset the costs, sponsorships were sought for the next year. A chance encounter at a City of Atlanta program with several directors from The Home Depot Foundation helped in that area. The chapter was very impressed with the Foundation's sustainability efforts and had focused that year's High School Student Design Competition on sustainability. They approached the Foundation and asked if they would be interested in serving as a sponsor of the program. The Home Depot Foundation has increased their sponsorship each year and have already committed to 2009. The sponsorship money that the Committee raises is used to fund the three cash prizes.

The chapter also approaches firms with an active mentoring or K-12 initiative, as well as vendors like Utrecht, Sam Flax, and Sketchup, and requests sponsorships from them.

One obstacle the Committee faced was maintaining an updated list of school contacts. It may be necessary to make a number of phone calls or conduct lengthy web searches to find the names of drafting teachers, art teachers, or guidance counselors at the schools.

But finding the correct people who can pass along that information to their students "is worth the effort in the long run," says Susan Proper, Executive Director of AIA Atlanta.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

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

[AIA Cincinnati Architecture By Children Architectural Awareness Program for Junior High Students](#)

[Architectural Design Competition for High School Students](#)

For More Information on This Topic

http://www.aiaatlanta.org/members/index.cfm?menu_val=members&Fuseaction=highschooldesig&triviaid=40&triviaid=40

Feedback

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Keywords

- AIA Components
- Associations
- K-12 Education

This Best Practice was developed in concert with the AIA's Diversity initiative. Any questions or comments about the content herein can be emailed to diversity@aia.org.