

Educational Facility Design Awards 2021



Committee on Architecture for Education
an AIA Knowledge Community

AIA | CAE Educational Awards
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INTRODUCTION

CAE EDUCATIONAL FACILITY DESIGN AWARDS PROGRAM

The Committee on Architecture for Education (CAE) is a large and active group of architects and allied professionals committed to the planning and design of educational facilities, firmly believing that the design of the physical environment plays a key role in the educational experience.

The CAE Design Awards is an internationally recognized marketplace of ideas. Through this forum, the committee disseminates quality ideas on educational facility planning and design to clients, architects and the public. As the way in which we educate ourselves continues to evolve, we must evaluate and measure our successes and have an arena in which to test ideas. This awards program is an opportunity to engage in critical evaluation and experimentation, not as an end in itself, but within the context of our clients and their needs.

The CAE Design Awards identify, honor, and disseminate the projects and ideas that exhibit innovation and excellence through:

- Demonstration of excellence in architectural design
- Enhancement of a client's educational program through thoughtful planning and design of facilities
- Integration of the local environment as a part of the design and learning experience
- Integration of function and aesthetics in designs that also respect the surrounding community and context
- Understanding of social and emotional needs of learners and the corresponding manifestation into physical spaces
- Implementation of a planning/design process that is educational, collaborative and builds the capacity of the learning environment and its community to support its students
- Commitment to sustainability through a holistic and integrated design approach
- Understanding of the connection between the built and natural environment
- Connection the design of space and place to enhance the educational experience of the learner

THE JURY

LETTER FROM THE JURY CHAIR

The Education Facility Design Awards program, sponsored by the Committee on Architecture for Education, an AIA Knowledge Community, serves to celebrate those exceptional and inspirational projects that create progressive, future-ready, and sustainable learning environments, combining design with pedagogy and the needs of the learner and community at large.

The year 2021 saw a total of 74 varied submissions from around the country. The composition of this year's jury included a balance of educators and architects with both higher education and K-12 expertise, gender and geographical diversity, and wide-ranging experience, enabling us to view submissions from a variety of perspectives. This diverse lens enabled a robust evaluation process as the jury came together to discuss the merits of each of the submissions.

We received project submissions for both public and private institutions, including early learning facilities, K-12 schools, higher education projects, and non-traditional learning environments such as community centers, visitor centers, libraries, and nature centers.

The jury meticulously reviewed each submission and awarded projects in two categories: Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit.

Awards of Excellence were given to projects that represent exemplary practice in all the areas of educational facility design listed below.

Awards of Merit were granted to other superior projects that did not necessarily meet all of the below criteria but are still phenomenal and deserve recognition.

This year's awards include six Awards of Excellence and five Awards of Merit.

The projects that emerged award-winners are outstanding examples of innovative and community-minded education design that serve to inspire us with possibilities. These projects celebrated traditions and history, encouraged an inclusive planning process, overcame budget constraints and challenging renovations, placed a high value on sustainability and a connection to nature, and emphasized discovery and collaboration.

Each of the award-winning projects excelled at the following six themes identified as differentiators by the jury:

- **COLLABORATION** – Spaces that inspire teamwork, spontaneous and intentional interactions
- **THE BUILDING AS A TOOL FOR LEARNING** – Uses the architecture and landscape to act as a learning tool for both students and architects
- **CONTEXT** – Leverages both indoors and outdoors to integrate the building within its context and geography
- **WELLNESS** – Provides places that support a focus on physical, mental, and social well-being
- **EQUITY** – Breaks down boundaries and neighborhoods to integrate the community and maximizes project budgets with creative and innovative solutions
- **FRAMEWORK FOR DESIGN EXCELLENCE** – Supports the AIA's Framework with sustainable, resilient, and inclusive design

The quality of these submissions exemplifies the level of excellence, creativity, and care that educators and architects alike place on creating context-driven and student-centered spaces, regardless of project scale, type, or location.

Congratulations to all the winners!

– *Olivia Graf Doyle, 2021 Jury Chair*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Olivia Graf Doyle', with a stylized, cursive script.

DESIGN AWARDS JURY



OLIVIA GRAF DOYLE, ASSOC. AIA (CHAIR),
Architecture for Education, Inc, Los Angeles, CA

Olivia Graf Doyle is a Partner and the Design Principal for A4E (Architecture for Education, Inc) a women-owned and majority women-staffed design firm that specializes in education architecture. As the design visionary and thought leader responsible for conceptualizing innovative learning environments at A4E, Olivia leads the practice from the belief that outstanding projects begin with a clear concept, augmented by a comprehensive research-and-discovery process to balance aesthetics with curriculum-based innovations.

Olivia currently serves on the Leadership Group of the American Institute of Architects' Committee on Architecture for Education (AIA-CAE), and is a former Co-Chair of the AIA/CAE K-12 Sub-Committee.



ANGELA FREEMAN,
Reynolds School District, Portland, Oregon

Dr. Freeman earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Portland State University, and earned a Doctorate in Education Leadership from George Fox University. She began her educational career in 1999 as an elementary school teacher in North Portland. Her experience includes six years of teaching in elementary and middle school, 14 years as a building principal in Pre-K–8 settings, and over 15 years of teaching and supervising at the university level.

Dr. Freeman currently oversees all 16 of Reynolds' elementary and secondary schools and leads professional development for district leadership. She has a passion for equity and social justice, and champions the district's work in equity and anti-racism.



EVE KLEIN, ASSOC. AIA,
Pratt Institute, New York, NY

Eve Klein is an architect and planner with expertise in the social and psychological impact of built environments in higher education and cultural institutions. Her research and teaching focuses on how the social sciences can contribute to design processes. She currently teaches Environmental Psychology and Urban Studies at Pratt Institute and she is doctoral candidate in the Environmental Psychology program at the Graduate Center, CUNY, where she is also a research associate of the Public Space Research Group, in the Center for Human Environments. She is the co-founder of the Social Science + Architecture Committee for the AIA NY Chapter. Previously, she was the AVP of Strategic Assessment, Planning & Design at NYU. She received her B.A. from Vassar College and her Master of Architecture from UCLA.



L. MATHEW RYAN LOWE,
DLA Architects, Itasca, Illinois

As a child, Matt discovered a passion for imagining and visualizing the world around him. In 2002, he graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with his M. Arch Thesis on "Music as a Metaphor for an Architectural Language." Over the past fifteen years, Matt has infused his passion to shape and transform learning environments with DLA Architects where he serves as Director of Design. Many of his projects have gained national recognition. At the Association for Learning Environments' 2018 LearningScapes Conference, one such project, Kennedy Elementary School in Schiller Park, Illinois, was selected as a featured tour site.

Lowe believes in his firm's philosophy that "form follows learning" and that a successful design must truly reflect, support and inspire the needs and the vision of the client. He is extremely conscientious as to how people connect to their surroundings and how architecture effects one physiologically and psychologically. When Matt is not involved in the design process, he finds peace at the piano and with his family. He resides in the Chicago suburbs with his wife Charmaine and their four children, all of whom provide him with his greatest inspiration when designing learning environments for tomorrow.

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

BELMONT DAY SCHOOL BARN

Belmont Day School | Boston, Massachusetts

Architect: Utile. Inc.

As one of the critical elements of the Belmont Day School's master plan, the Massachusetts private school's new barn provides ample space for its evolving STEAM and athletics programs. More than 27,000 square feet of space is divided between two stitched-together buildings: an engineered steel fieldhouse containing two dual-use basketball and volleyball courts and a stick-built steel classroom headhouse. Working in concert the two programs provide the right combination of big and small spaces that foster collaboration among the school's K-8 student population.

The barn negotiates two discrete structural systems with the athletic fieldhouse spanning over the educational headhouse. Both programs embrace the common language of corrugated metal facades. A three-classroom bar establishes the rhythm and depth for five similar classrooms on two floors of the head house, both of which are flanked by support spaces. Inside, each classroom opens onto a large flexible space that softens the line between focused learning and gym activity. Generous in size, the areas also accommodate larger gatherings and serve as gallery space.

Custom insertions complement the scale and raw character of the barn, tailoring the space for a wide array of teaching and learning styles. Its exposed structure and mechanical equipment serve as teaching tools and provide opportunities for student discovery. Based on teacher feedback, the team implemented a playful composition of window openings and custom millwork that lends each classroom its unique identity.

In the fieldhouse, large glass doors directly connect to the surrounding landscape and, with operable clerestory windows, provide passive cooling. Its rooftop photovoltaic panels generate a portion of the barn's power. The athletics spaces include two full-sized basketball courts that can be converted quickly for volleyball, an approach that has appreciably expanded the school's athletic programs. In addition to students, they regularly welcome recreational leagues in the evenings and on weekends.

Belmont Day School has significantly grown since its founding in a one-room schoolhouse two centuries ago. Its existing facility has been transformed into a charming maze of later additions, but its 2014 plan dictated the need for new construction. The barn carefully balances the school's historical sense of intimacy and interaction while affording it some much-needed breathing room.

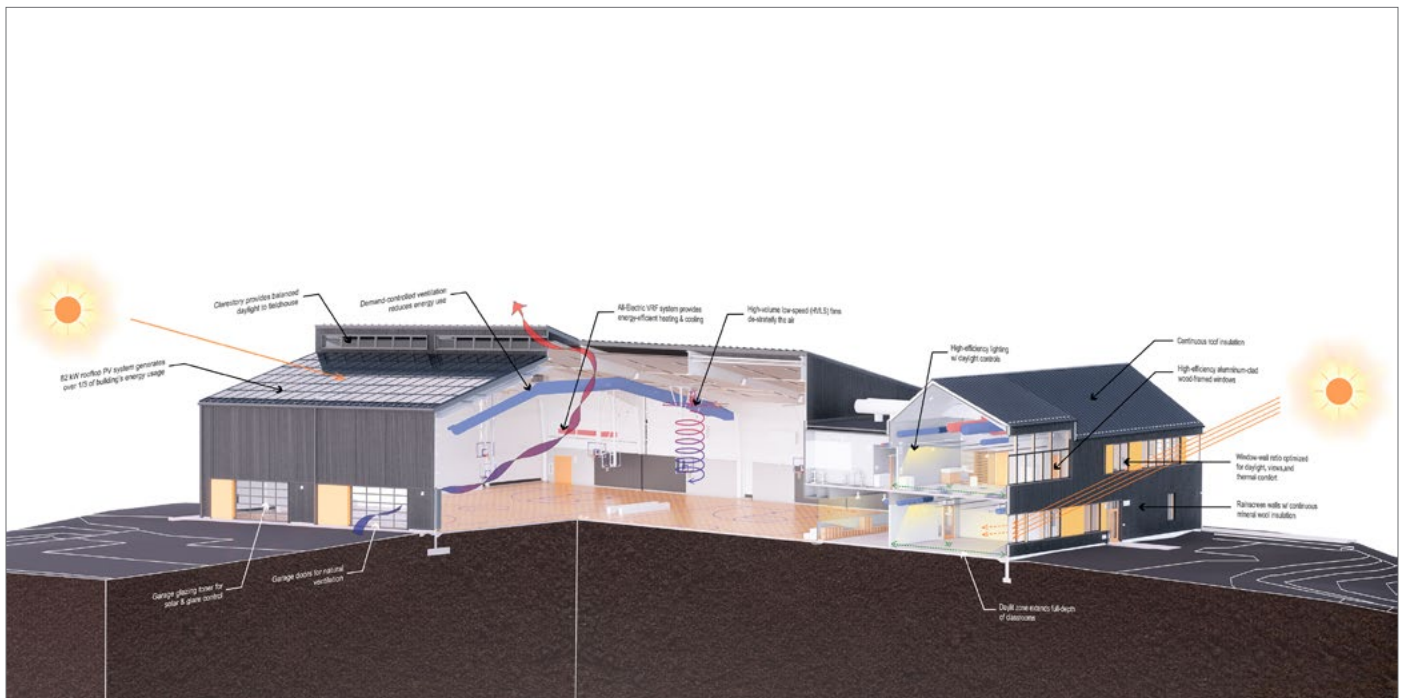


IMAGE CREDITS: © JOHN HORNER

JURY COMMENTS

This design showcases inventiveness in what can be achieved by marrying a cost-effective pre-engineered building with customized classroom construction that blend seamlessly to create a thoughtful, clean, and elegant project. Interstitial spaces between the two building types act as a buffer to create a makerspace while still providing transparency and visual connections to play and learning.





BLUESTONE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Harrisonburg City Public Schools | Harrisonburg , Virginia

Architect: VMDO Architects

Living up to its “Friendly City” nickname, Harrisonburg, Virginia, is a designated refugee resettlement community currently experiencing significant growth. More than 35% of the students enrolled in the city’s schools identify as English-language learners. They hail from more than 60 countries and speak just as many different languages. This new school helps the school district meet the growing needs of its diverse student body and signals its commitment to the environment and inclusive learning spaces.

Bluestone Elementary School’s design emphasizes a range of spaces and scales for different learning opportunities that are balanced with several public areas. Its dynamic landscape and wayfinding system celebrates the city’s unique geography and geology. In doing so, the team encourages students to become active stewards of the region while developing deeper connections to the world around them.

At its core, the school is designed to celebrate diversity and meet the needs of its teachers and students. During the planning process, teachers expressed an interest in team teaching and a need for flexible spaces. With those directives in mind, the team delivered 42 core learning studios organized into discrete grade-level neighborhoods. The studios all feature flexible scales and arrangements that allow teachers to configure their spaces for small groups or combine classrooms for team teaching. Extended learning areas distributed throughout each neighborhood help empower one-on-one collaborations that bolster project-based learning happening elsewhere.

Across the school’s three stories areas for play and outdoor learning were maximized. A series of patios, terraces learning meadows, and outdoor classrooms that are carved into the site’s topography flow from each of the four main entries. Boulders and trees that were harvested during construction were transformed into natural play structures. Much like their indoor counterparts, the exterior learning spaces include a variety of scales to accommodate a wide range of programming and community events.

Near the lobby an interactive flag wall heralds the school’s emphasis on inclusion and the broad range of cultures found across its population. Throughout the building, sweeping views of the landscape connect students and staff to the unique beauty of the Shenandoah Valley. The dining commons are modeled on a “garden patch” serving model. Connected to raised vegetable beds and exterior learning spaces, it incentivizes healthy food choices and activity.

In 2019, the school was feted with a Livable Building Award from the Center for the Built Environment. By championing the diversity of people, place, and program, this school significantly contributes to its students’ health and happiness.



IMAGE CREDITS: © ALAN KARCHMER / OTTO

JURY COMMENTS

With this project, every opportunity was taken to integrate a learning moment directly into the architecture and design, and that rigor sets it apart to make this an example of student-driven design. This project delivers spatial attributes and site amenities that empower future-ready learners while encouraging an appreciation of sustainability, wellness, and cultural diversity.





ENVIRONMENTAL NATURE CENTER PRESCHOOL

Environmental Nature Center/ Bo Glover | Newport Beach, California

Architect: LPA Design Studios

This addition to the Environmental Nature Center's Newport Beach, California campus supports the nonprofit organization's mission of providing nature-based education for young people. Developed through the vision of educators, the community, and the center's leadership, the LEED Platinum-certified preschool mirrors the existing facility in its ability to blend indoor and outdoor spaces, instilling an intuitive understanding of the natural world in children ages 2.5 to 5.

The center was constructed in 2008 to serve as the organization's headquarters. It inspires and educates visitors by highlighting green strategies focused on sustainable practices and environmental education. The 10,380 - square foot preschool opened in 2019 and quickly became a natural extension of the center's sustainable goals and educational ambitions through hands-on experience.

Challenged to develop a premier green building on a tight budget, the team focused on cost-effective passive controls. The school building's north-south orientation controls solar heat gain and glare. Natural ventilation encourages ocean breezes to pass through low intake windows along the school's south side. Hot air rises across the sloped ceiling where it is eventually expelled through operable windows on the north side. The school's footprint encompasses an already disturbed area that housed temporary buildings and a parking lot, a strategy that maintained open space and allowed the school to exist harmoniously within the existing cultivated habitats.

Mixing free play and nature into its daily curriculum, the school fosters an ideal atmosphere to encourage early brain development and an appreciation for nature. The interior program includes three learning studios, space for staff and administrative support, and a kitchen supported by an adjacent children's garden. The classroom spaces are open, flexible, and flow into the outdoors encouraging students to explore the world on their terms. This freedom is essential to the school's pedagogy, and the school's green features help root students in ecological responsibility at a very early age.

Currently, the school is pursuing certification through the Living Building Challenge. When it receives it, the school will be among the first projects in Orange County to achieve such a high level of sustainability.



IMAGE CREDITS: © CRIS COSTEA

JURY COMMENTS

This project is an excellent example of how to apply the Framework for Design Excellence to a small space. The jury valued the incorporation of biophilia and children-centered spaces that support play-based and hands-on learning. The building's indoor and outdoor spaces are integrated with nature and serve an impactful mission to support early childhood development. This project is both a dynamic learning center and an example of the sustainable values it teaches.





HOME BUILDING AT THADEN SCHOOL

Thaden School | Bentonville, Arkansas

Architect: Eskew+Dumez+Ripple

In Bentonville, Arkansas, the Thaden School has emerged as a new high school that challenges traditional educational paradigms where young people learn by doing. The school's pedagogy hinges on three central programs focused on narrative and visual communication, physics and mechanics, and the intersection of biology, chemistry, and community pertaining to the growing and preparation of food. The Home Building informed by a comprehensive master plan developed by the design team, is a critical link for the school's ambitions and houses its food-based program.

The master plan envisioned a series of makerspaces that correspond with the school's three distinct programs, charmingly named reels, wheels, and meals. Meetings and conversations with more than 30 school leaders the team and a dozen community organizations informed the Home Building, which allows the meals program to subvert existing notions of food consumption and production in its contemporary teaching kitchen.

Taking visual cues from the region, particularly the notion of an Ozark farmhouse, the Home Building is clad in board and batten facades, and its all-wood construction incorporates the local architectural vernacular. Besides its teaching kitchen, the building functions as the campus hearth, welcoming students into its expansive dining hall for communal meals.

Like the rest of the buildings on campus, the overarching theme celebrating indoor-outdoor relationships is embodied in the Home Building's concept and site planning. Beyond the kitchen and dining hall the building is surrounded by a productive landscape filled with fruit and vegetable fields, orchards, planter boxes, and a functioning greenhouse. The integration of the outdoor spaces creates a near-perfect loop wherein students harvest crops, cook and prepare them for student meals, and then compost the scraps to fertilize future crops.

Sustainability is placed at the forefront of the students' education and the landscape functions as a botanical textbook rife with plants that are a microcosm of the region's native species. About 91% of stormwater is managed on-site through a distributed strategy with several detention areas scattered across the site. The building's rear houses an ever-present "water lab" that invites students to learn directly from their surroundings.

More than just a model for ethical and sustainable food production, the Home Building strives to establish a new vision for the future while celebrating the rich heritage of the surrounding landscape.



IMAGE CREDITS: © TIM HURSLEY

JURY COMMENTS

This project is both warm and grand, with a volume that you don't normally encounter in K-12 schools outside of gyms. It thoughtfully embraces the barn vernacular of the region. The jury loved the history reflected in the design and the team's commitment to stakeholder engagement. It is an embodiment of their education values.





LAFAYETTE COLLEGE ROCKWELL INTEGRATED SCIENCES CENTER

Harrisonburg City Public Schools | Easton, Pennsylvania

Architect: Payette

On its Easton, Pennsylvania, campus, Lafayette College's new Rockwell Integrated Sciences Center sparks and strengthens interdisciplinary connections, a hallmark of its mission. The new LEED Platinum-certified building addresses the college's need for new facilities to support growing demand for its science programs and anticipated student growth of nearly 20% in the coming years. It provides new departmental homes for biology and computer science, offering those programs teaching and research labs, support spaces and offices, a rooftop greenhouse, and an animal facility.

Located on a tight, triangular site on the edge of the campus core, the center completes a previously unfinished quad and announces itself as an essential academic destination. After more than a decade of weighing its options for a new science building, college leadership selected a site at the back of the campus that had been deemed nearly impossible for such a project because of the constrained footprint and steep slope. These challenges became opportunities that allowed much of the building to remain out of sight while still becoming a destination that has reenergized a neglected area of campus.

Envisioned by the design team as an "inside-out" building, the center revolves around its heart, a vibrant four-story gathering space. From its perch on a hill, the building fosters intimate connections between the college's science departments within. The greater campus community is engaged through its cascading exterior landscape.

The center takes advantage of the sloping site, with much of its extensive program tucked into the historic brick fabric of a historic courtyard. The team leveraged the site's topography, with most of its 103,000 - square foot bulk flowing down the steep slope. Its entrance is located on the third of five floors, matching its neighboring buildings in both scale and context

Inside, the four-story commons features a grand stair that vertically links the center's academic programs to its community spaces. Those spaces include two landscaped courtyards, a dynamic atrium, and other informal student spaces in varying scales that have made the center a destination for the entire college community.

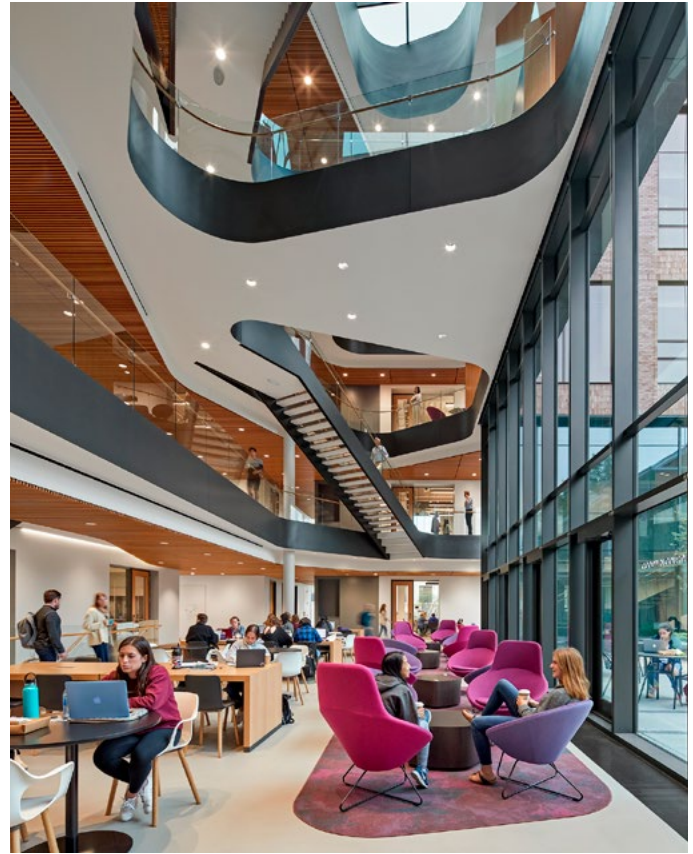
The center was built at a cost of \$630 per square foot, a significant accomplishment considering a rapidly escalating construction market and the challenging conditions of the site.



IMAGE CREDITS: © ROBERT BENSON PHOTOGRAPHY

JURY COMMENTS

The building's design blends with the existing campus while also creating a dynamic form and an elegant presence. The design is respectful of the traditional architecture and utilizes intricate and unexpected modern detailing and materials appropriate for today's learning environments. The dynamic yet intimate ribbon form of the atrium/commons creates intriguing visual and physical connections to varied learning spaces as well as the outdoors and campus beyond.





THE PHIL AND PENNY KNIGHT CAMPUS FOR ACCELERATING SCIENTIFIC IMPACT AT UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

University of Oregon | Eugene, Oregon

Architect: Ennead Architects in collaboration with Bora Architecture and Interiors

This new campus at the University of Oregon shapes a dynamic ecosystem rooted in discovery innovation, and education by gathering applied sciences, business innovation, and culture under one roof. The light-filled and highly flexible space dismantles boundaries and is ready to adapt to new directions quickly. The architecture of the Phil and Penny Knight Campus for Accelerating Scientific Impact has also forged a new, forward-looking identity for the university, taking its cues from Oregon's landscape and collaborative ethos in establishing a new gateway straddling the university and the city of Eugene.

The building is the first iteration in a new generation of research and education-focused buildings set to expand the scientific capacities of the university, and its design evokes the university's interdisciplinary ideals. Situated across from a main arterial roadway from the university's historic core, it's the first phase of a larger vision for the university's northern expansion. As such, the campus has functioned as a destination and gateway from the outset, promoting future development.

Reinforcing the notion of community, the building's massing comprises two L-shaped towers that create an elevated landscaped terrace. The terrace is joined by a transparent connector that provides acoustic protection from vehicular traffic and offers northern views of the nearby mountains. A transparent canopy spans the terrace to keep the elements at bay as students and faculty explore the outdoor space to relax, socialize, and connect with nature. Folded glass panels emulate water flowing over rock formations, a nod to Oregon's rugged landscape, along the building's southern facade. In addition, the panels control glare and thermal heat gain for the educational and research spaces within.

Inside, the upper levels host unique double-height interdisciplinary research neighborhoods that foster collegial interaction and help merge experimental and computational research. Below, teaching laboratories and flexible learning spaces support the university's graduate internship program and a new innovation center that positions the building as a community-focused institution ready to solve many of society's most pressing issues.

Flexibility was one of the primary goals for the building, allowing campus leadership to shift its focus as society's needs change. Currently, several of its research spaces have been supporting the state's need to analyze COVID-19 tests. Last October, the state approved funding for a significant expansion of the university's COVID-19 Monitoring and Assessment Program, allowing it to purchase advanced equipment that has doubled the state's testing capacity.



IMAGE CREDITS: © BRUCE DAMONTE

JURY COMMENTS

This building is impressive at all scales and offers a variety of learning spaces. It has an elegant material palette, and wood is integrated throughout in various building elements and ceiling forms that create a welcoming space for students in a scientific lab setting. This is a project that treats the care of living things with sensitivity and skill. The glazing brings ample light into the space and is bird friendly.





MERIT AWARDS

FLIGHT 93 VISITOR AND LEARNING CENTER

National Park Service | Denver, Colorado

Architect: Paul Murdoch Architects

In western Pennsylvania, Flight 93 National Memorial commemorates the 40 heroes that thwarted the hijackers of United flight 93 on September 11, 2001. The first new U.S. national park constructed in the 21st century, it has transformed the site of a former coal mine into a memorial landscape. This new visitor and learning center in the park enhances the visitor experience, providing educational and interpretive content that tells the story of flight 93 and that fateful day.

The Partners of Flight 93, a consortium of four organizations that include the families of the passengers and crew, the National Park Service, a private nonprofit and an BO-member task force developed a collaborative planning process and mission statement that has guided work at the site for more than 15 years. The memorial site was defined through agreements with adjacent landowners to preserve their perimeter viewsheds and the character of the surrounding landscape. The trails that wind through the site are open to both visitors and the community, allowing the memorial landscape to also serve as active open space.

The contours of the land shape the memorial's design, enhancing the site's features for expressive power and education. By focusing the design in this way, the team has pointed visitor attention to the crash site while affording many opportunities to experience the space. A tree-lined walkway encircles the bowl-shaped field of honor, formerly a backfilled open-pit coal mine. Additional plantings create several groves that respond to the bowl's circular form, a public embrace around the final resting place of the flight's heroes.

Located between two concrete walls where the flight path crosses the edge of the field, the visitor center emphasizes the importance of the memorial and offers views of the site. The tall walls obscure views of the field from the parking areas as visitors wend their way along an entrance walkway that is aligned with the flight path. The walkway first leads to a comfort station and the learning center, where visitors are oriented and prepared for the emotional experience awaiting them.

On September 11, flight 93 crashed in front of a grove of hemlocks. Many of the trees were burned, but the grove absorbed and survived the event, standing today as a backdrop to the crash site and a focal point of the entire memorial experience. The trees' tall trunks and alternating angled branches formed the design motif expressed in the materiality throughout the memorial and visitor center.

Through its presentation of stories around the events of September 11, 2001, and interpretations of the actions of flight 93s passengers and crew, the visitor and learning center is an integral part of the memorial site. It also sets the stage for the third major phase of work at the site, a 93-foot-tall chime tower to be located near the park's entrance.



IMAGE CREDITS: © ERIC STAUDENMAIER

JURY COMMENTS

This project is a great example of poetic architecture in service of a central concept and experiential, life-long learning. The building is part of the landscape and context. The site, layout, lines, flow, and circular motif are beautiful in their representation of the story they tell.





GRANT HIGH SCHOOL MODERNIZATION

Portland Public Schools | Portland, Oregon

Architect: Mahlum Architects

Sharing a 30-acre site with Northeast Portland's Grant Park, Grant High School quickly became a significant part of the community's heart when it was built in the 1920s. The historic classical revival brick and terracotta school building was beloved by former students and the larger neighborhood, immortalized in Beverly Cleary's Ramona Quimby book series. By the 1960s, a series of additions prompted by the community's rapid growth transformed the campus into a maze of outdoor passages. Despite its stature, 50 years of deferred maintenance left the school seismically deficient, inaccessible, and filled with various hazardous materials.

This project demonstrates that bold design solutions can address legacies of disadvantage and oppression through engaged and empathetic design. For the \$138 million, 1,800-student renovation, the team designed for everyone, delivering accessible, inclusive restrooms, connectivity across the school's many spaces, daylight to five disconnected basements, and a renewed relationship with the park. The school is a precise marriage of historical charm and tomorrow's best practices for designing teaching spaces.

A new 30-foot, three-story bay was added to the west side of the existing structure, and the basements were removed in some cases and connected in others. The team sculpted the ground plane to provide new exterior courtyards that seamlessly connect Grant Park to the campus. This combination of elements connects all of the spaces fluidly, reducing students' feelings of isolation and anxiety and replacing the school's original double-loaded corridor arrangement with a core of modern learning spaces.

The design also intentionally addresses a legacy of division through a three-story, open, central stair, amending previously disjointed connectivity between the upper and lower floors. Multistory gathering spaces and forums flank the stair at either end. This intervention has radically transformed the school, which struggled earlier when nearly 30% of its learning spaces were scattered across five disparate basement levels.

Two new commons serve food, providing broader access for students who need reduced-fare food. During lunch periods, the campus is full of life, and students from a wide range of socioeconomic means gather at its heart. The school's career and technical education programs are now distributed throughout the campus, prompting opportunities for programmatic expansion and integration while defining exciting pathways to meaningful careers.



IMAGE CREDITS: © BENJAMIN BEN SCHNEIDER

JURY COMMENTS

This was a challenging project and the level of rigor and thought put into this design is admirable; every architect should aspire to engage in a project where mission and design are this closely linked. This project demonstrates what you can do during the planning process to promote equity. It is an example of a building that acknowledges and transcends a shameful past to remain relevant to its occupants with inclusivity at the forefront of its design.





MINNEHAHA ACADEMY UPPER SCHOOL RECONSTRUCTION

Minnehaha Academy | Minneapolis, Minnesota

Architect: Cuninghame Group Architecture

In 2017, a natural gas explosion destroyed the heart of Minneapolis' Minnehaha Academy, claiming two lives and two of the school's historic structures. This progressive 72,000-square-foot campus addition turned tragedy into triumph and was designed and built in just 18 months. The new upper school embraces the Mississippi River Valley and the city's historic West River Parkway while connecting two existing buildings. Its vibrant and flexible spaces are eager to provide exceptional learning experiences for future generations of learners.

Following the accident, the academy embraced the mantra "Together We Rise" and quickly sought a design and construction team to help evaluate its options for moving forward quickly. In a stark departure from most project briefs in which numbers of students and budget are known variables, the team was asked to design, program, and build the facility in an abbreviated timeframe without those parameters in place. Inspired by Minnehaha's enduring spirit, the team adopted and expanded on the school's mantra.

During the process, the academy grieved both the loss of life and its historic 1912 and 1922 red-brick buildings that played a significant role in the school community's fabric. While replacing what was lost in the explosion would have been a more straightforward course of action, the academy was determined to reconsider its approach to learning and embrace new buildings that built on its legacy in a new way. The design process began with a reevaluation of the school's earlier master plan, completed in 2013, and all conversations focused on young learners and their emotional needs.

A poem written in 1916 by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, recited at Minnehaha's first graduation ceremony and again at its 100th anniversary, was recovered after the accident. It played a pivotal role in shaping the upper school's forms, organization, and materials. Unlike the original buildings, the new learning spaces and common areas are rife with floor-to-ceiling windows that provide ample daylight and offer students stunning views of the Mississippi River. The team retained a natural feel through simple and honest material selection, including concrete and wood. The finishes add touches of color where needed and assist in wayfinding.

The new upper school addresses many of Minnehaha Academy's strategic goals embedded in its Christian mission. This 21st-century learning environment now reflects the quality of the school's programs and the highest aspirations of its community. Its adaptable and technologically advanced infrastructure lets teachers extend their reach and spark curiosity among their charges.



IMAGE CREDITS: © COREY GAFFER PHOTOGRAPHY LLC

JURY COMMENTS

This project skillfully combines the memorialization of the previous school's compelling story with appropriate spaces for today. The jury valued how the design team had a short timeframe but still incorporated robust community input, which is also evident in its history's integration into the design and interiors. Their successful integration of the site provides openness and transparency between learning spaces and the outdoors.





PACE UNIVERSITY STUDENT LANDSCAPE

Pace University | New York, New York

Architect: FXCollaborative

This renovation, repositioning, and reactivation project spans Pace University's two flagship buildings in Lower Manhattan while emphasizing the school's identity. The 55,000-square-foot project recognizes Pace University's evolving cultural and programming needs, responding with a series of interior and exterior interventions that shape new student-centric spaces and enhance the university's connections to New York at large.

The project followed the 2016 master plan developed by the design team. It began with renovations of One Pace Plaza, the school's hallmark mid-century building, and 41 Park Row, a city landmark and former New York Times headquarters. Located at the foot of the Brooklyn Bridge and across the street from City Hall Park, the two buildings abut adjacent sides of a plaza formerly known as Printing House Square.

Significant improvements address the unique structural conditions of the buildings, improving efficiency through modernization and extensive technological updates. Both contain new spaces and identities serving the Lubin School of Business and Dyson College of Arts and Sciences. On the lower floors of both, the team inserted bustling student spaces that have fostered a more cohesive campus.

At One Pace Plaza, the transformed lower level includes a front door that looks onto City Hall, a courtyard entry adjacent to Williams Street, and a vibrant student landscape that runs between them. A student living room serves as an open and flexible space that encourages collaboration and conversation. Learning spaces span a range of scales and characters to accommodate both collaborative and quieter learners. A grand stair rising from a branded Lubin School of Business improves circulation and connects to the street.

The renovations to the lower levels at 41 Park Row, originally constructed in 1889, form a new home for the Dyson College of Arts and Sciences. Its new spaces include a public art gallery that shows student work, a new commons, administrative offices, and faculty spaces. Together, they have further activated the building and created a new hub of activity.

Since completion, the project, the first phase of the master plan, has drawn praise from the university's community and the broader public. Improving the student experience is the core goal of the plan, and this project has achieved that by providing spaces students need to learn and collaborate.



IMAGE CREDITS: © CHRIS COOPER

JURY COMMENTS

This is an example of a well-executed adaptive project in a challenging urban context. The team reconciled competing needs and principles to provide a comfortable, accessible, and elegant space. The façade was treated with a contemporary touch that makes learning visible from the street. Inside, the strong contrast in colors responds to the lack of big open views. This is a school where many students live off-campus, and this building provides them with a more refined space to be throughout the day.





VIRGINIA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY GREER ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES CENTER

Virginia Wesleyan University | Virginia Beach, Virginia
Architect: VMDO Architects

Occupying the last building location on Virginia Wesleyan University's main quad, the new Greer Environmental Sciences Center represents the university's commitment to environmental sustainability and its thriving cross-disciplinary sciences program. The building also serves as a new portal for students as they move across the campus, connecting them to the building's program and natural content. Since opening, the center has transformed campus life and supported the university's desire to broaden research opportunities for undergraduates.

The center is designed to recognize former university President William Thomas Greer Jr.'s commitment to sustainability. To that end, the LEED Gold-certified building has created an inspiring sense of place and emerged as a standard-bearer for how architecture and design can advance hands-on learning opportunities and connect students to a greater sense of purpose as active stewards of their campus.

The building is an immersive science experience for the entire campus, not just science majors. The team stacked and centered teaching labs within the building, tying wayfinding, program adjacencies, and visual proximities to the lab experience through its fully glazed, quad-facing walls. Science is on full display for the small liberal arts community, and the orchestrated transparency between key spaces engenders greater connectivity among students and faculty. Rather than tie the labs to specific departments, they have been organized around atmosphere, biosphere, hydrosphere, and geosphere. Support spaces flank each teaching lab and support specialized investigations.

Interactive details complement the building's transparency, animating it as a teaching tool. Educational signage throughout explains the wide range of sustainable materials and systems used to construct it, and a building dashboard provides real-time data visualizations that track the effectiveness of the center's geothermal heat exchangers and photovoltaic panels. Sustainable features, including constructed wetlands and the center's green roof, are made available to students studying flora and fauna.

In its celebration of place-based investigations and collaborations, the center draws students, faculty, and local research opportunities into its orbit. Building resources were developed to leverage partnerships with many environmental agencies and organizations in the Chesapeake Bay region, providing them with a platform at the university. This initiative has extended the center's footprint and fostered a culture that fulfills the university's mission to engage students in applied learning experiences.



IMAGE CREDITS: © ALAN KARCHMER / OTTO

JURY COMMENTS

The jury loved how this building promotes an ethic of sustainability and creates a multitude of teaching opportunities. The atrium is a warm and intimate space with a seamless connection to the labs. It is integrated with the geography and promotes connection to the outdoors, as well as promotes collaboration between students.





COMMITTEE ON ARCHITECTURE FOR EDUCATION

MISSION STATEMENT

The Committee on Architecture for Education (CAE) is a passionate group of architects and allied professionals engaged in understanding the link between teaching, learning and the built environment and dedicated to advancing the impact each can have on the other. By coming together to share best practices and celebrate exemplary educational architectural designs, we encourage dialogue and build an interface among architects and educators, administrators and students. From early learning, through K-12 and higher education, we practice in all aspects of traditional and alternative educational environments and aim to contribute to the social fabric of the communities they serve. CAE researches national educational facility issues critical to architects and works to strengthen relationships with allied organizations, client groups, and the public.

GOALS

To bring all involved in and influenced by teaching and learning environments together to enhance the conversation and improve outcomes for the learner by sharing best practices from an international, national, regional and local perspective. We acknowledge the best examples of educational projects to elevate the role of design in the practice of educational architecture.

AIA CAE LEADERSHIP GROUP



MICHAEL A. NIEMINEN FAIA
Kliment Halsband Architects

Michael A. Nieminen FAIA is a partner at Kliment Halsband Architects in New York City with over 30 years of experience as a designer, programmer, and manager of planning and architectural projects. He has programmed over 10 million square feet of new and renovated space. His innovative and analytical programming and planning techniques focus on educational innovation, utilization of existing space, shared space, and flexible multi-use space strategies. His work has been recognized as one of the fundamental acts of sustainability: making better use of what we have and building more efficient new buildings. His recent projects include the master plan and renovations of The Spence School and Friends Seminary in New York City; South College Academic Building Renovation and Addition at University of Massachusetts Amherst; The Neubauer Collegium at University of Chicago; the renovation of Welch Hall at The Rockefeller University\ and the New Academic Building at SUNY College at Old Westbury. Michael is the Chair of the 2021 Committee on Architecture for Education after three years on the Leadership Group. He is a former Co-Chair of the AIA/CAE Sub-Committee for Higher Education. He has frequently presented at AIA National Conventions, AIA / CAE Learning Environments Conferences; and Society of College and University Planning Conferences. He received a Bachelor of Environmental Design from The University of Florida and a Master of Architecture from North Carolina State University School of Design.



JUDITH HOSKENS, ASSOC. AIA
Cunningham Group Architecture, Inc.

Judy's passion lies in creating environments that welcome and embrace ALL learners. Her strengths include facilitating authentic community engagement conversations that meaningfully involve all stakeholders. Her expertise includes all phases of project development from Pre-Design, Planning and Programming through Design and Construction, providing solutions that are both visionary and achievable.

Her influence extends nationally and internationally having served roles on two of the two leading educational associations: Association for Learning Environments (A4LE) and AIA's Committee on Architecture for Education (AIACAE). In 2013, she was awarded the Lifetime Achievement award from A4LE recognizing her contributions to the profession of educational planning and design. Her insatiable curiosity fuels her passion to continually explore the edge of learning.



OLIVIA GRAF-DOYLE, ASSOC. AIA
Architecture for Education

Olivia Graf Doyle is a Partner and the Design Principal for A4E (Architecture for Education, Inc.), a women-owned and majority women-staffed design firm that specializes in education architecture. As the design visionary and thought leader responsible for conceptualizing innovative learning environments at A4E, Olivia leads the practice from the belief that outstanding projects begin with a clear concept, augmented by a comprehensive research-and-discovery process. Olivia balances aesthetics with curriculum-based innovations, creating expressive and functional future-ready learning environments.

Olivia currently serves on the Leadership Group of the American Institute of Architects' Committee on Architecture for Education (AIA-CAE), where she advocates for innovation in pedagogy and increasing engagement of emerging professionals. She is a frequent speaker at education-focused conferences, published in numerous architectural textbooks and magazines, was former Director/ Editor-in-Chief of AIA's Forward magazine, IS A 2022 BD+C 40 Under 40 recipient, and is a former Co-Chair of the CAE K-12 sub-committee.



DIEGO BARRERA, AIA
Stantec

Diego has more than a decade of experience bringing architecture and education together to create student centric learning environments. He sees each project as an opportunity to learn a community's values, and he's passionate about creating spaces that make a difference in students' lives.

Diego understands that our clients are educational experts who know their learners better than anyone. He approaches every project with the belief that our job as educational planners and architects is understanding their vision and earning their trust in our ability to bring their vision to life.

As leader of Stantec's Innovative Learning Environments Research + Benchmarking group, Diego's depth of knowledge includes keeping current with the latest technology, resources, and trends that affect educational architecture. He works hard to impress upon his team the importance of letting the student experience be the guiding principal for our decision making—and says seeing students excited about their new school is what makes all the late nights worth it.



BRIAN MINNICH, AIA,
GWWO Architects

Brian Minnich's career has concentrated heavily on the planning and design of environments for K-12 education. He served as the national co-chair for the K-12 Education Sub-Committee for the AIA Committee on Architecture for Education (CAE) and currently serves on the Executive Leadership Group. He frequently serves on awards juries and is a regular speaker at national and regional conferences on subjects influencing K-12 project design, including school security.

Working with the Department of Homeland Security and the National Institute of Building Sciences, he helped develop the Integrated Rapid Visual Screening of Schools, a manual and risk assessment tool to help improve school safety. Brian is a graduate of North Dakota State University with Bachelor of Architecture and Bachelor of Science in environmental design degrees.



ALISSA HARRINGTON

McDaniel College

Alissa Harrington draws from more than 20 years of industry experience as an instructional designer and technology educator. In addition to her role as the Senior Instructional Designer for McDaniel College, she is also an Instructional Designer for Johns Hopkins University's Center for Safe and Healthy Schools. Alissa holds a degree in Elementary Education from Towson University, and currently serves as the Education Liaison for the Committee on Architecture for Education.

