

American Institute of Architects  
Committee on Architecture for Education  
**2011 Design Awards**

THE JURY



From left to right: Peter C. Lippman, Susan Whitmer, R. Thomas Hille, David Schrader and Christian Long.

## DESIGN EXCELLENCE AWARD

- Innovation and excellence of the client's educational program through responsive and responsible programming, planning and the design of learning environments.
- Does each project further the client's mission, goals and educational program?
- Understanding the learning environment beyond the aesthetic where the function and surrounding regional and community context are valued as part of a participatory planning and design process.
- How was each submitted project conceived, programmed, planned, designed, built and inhabited?

## 2011 Design Excellence Award

### GFS, Urban Science Center

Philadelphia, PA, High School

SMP Architects

Overall, this project stimulated the most conversation about the building as an educational tool. The fact that the design team worked with the science department to include the carefully integrated sustainable elements as “didactic” teaching tools within the science curriculum was critical to the jury. Further, the connection to and integration with the math department building



represents the critical role that math and science integration represents in today's society. Architecturally, this project represented the highest level of excellence to the jury due to its' minimalistic aesthetic response to the program and a maximized highlighting of the educational and sustainable building features. The project functionally achieved its' metaphoric goal of “the building as a teaching tool”. We all admired the simplicity of the aesthetic and the power of the statement that this small “living laboratory” creates.

## 2011 Design Excellence Award

### Royal Conservatory, TELUS Centre

Toronto, Ontario, Corporate / Specialized Training

Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects

The jury felt that this project exemplified an extremely high level of craft. The



challenging program nestled in and around the historic structure within the campus of the University of Toronto was handled with extreme



sensitivity. This urban site presented some significant challenges including how to meld the potentially overwhelming scale of a performing arts educational complex with the intricate detail of the original structure. The masterful finishing of the auditorium is complimented by its connection to the existing structure through a sensitive, light-filled atrium or galleria. This atrium galleria allows the users to experience the contemporary performing arts complex and the intricate stone work of the historic structure in the same breath. The public circulation within the building is carefully handled

to allow a multitude of views to various parts of the urban environment beyond. Exterior connections seem to blend seamlessly with the established circulation paths of the campus beyond.

## 2011 Design Excellence Award The Saguaro Building at Mesa CC

Mesa, Arizona, Two-Year Technical or Community College  
SmithGroup

This building represented to the jury a careful educational and environmental response to the Sonoran Desert context within which it is located. The educational planning is very thorough in that it not only addressed its bifurcated program in a sensitive fashion but it allowed for



a very transparent association of interior and exterior



social and public spaces so important to a facility of this type. More importantly, it allows for the building to provide for these spaces through architectural elements that address the severe climactic conditions. A number of carefully orchestrated exterior gathering spaces are provided through the architectural shading that provides the dual functions of covering exterior spaces and providing daylighting control for the spaces within. Further, the team recognized the significant planning process that integrated the community and student body since buildings such as these

are outgrowths of community need. The jury truly appreciated the simplicity of structure combined with the careful articulation of climactic response tools.

## CITATION AWARD

- Does each project further the client's mission, goals and educational program?
- Understanding the learning environment beyond the aesthetic where the function and surrounding regional and community context are valued as part of a participatory planning and design process.
- How was each submitted project conceived, programmed, planned, designed, built and inhabited?
- This award does not necessarily showcase an entire project, but rather select elements from each project which highlight the best aspects of design.

## 2011 Citation Award Mothers' Club Family Learning

Pasadena, California , Early childhood learning  
Harley Ellis Devereaux

The jury immediately recognized this externally humble project for what it true value: a pragmatic decision to honor the reality of the community's current building resources while providing its members with a life catalyst within a light-filled nurturing oasis. Deep within



the building's core lies a subtle manipulation of space, allowing a tight corridor and configuration of rooms to open up through the careful use of transparency and diffused daylight. And while the project exists within a previously windowless factory, the design team used top-lit play areas and a combination of large sliding doors and over-head garage doors to extend each spaces into shared activity zones (both indoors and outdoors) to provide a range of experiences. Classrooms reach out into the common spaces in an inviting manner while simultaneously allowing young children to play and learn within intentionally child-scale spaces. Nearby, mothers work within domestically detailed spaces, allowing the center to serve as a safe harbor for entire families. With a mission to provide families "living in isolation and poverty" a chance to better their lives, the design team and community have created an elegant solution that invests in people's lives at every turn.



## 2011 Citation Award PACCAR Hall, Foster B School

Seattle, Washington, Higher Education  
LMN Architects

This project provides one of the most powerful architectural statements of the submissions. The public spaces and interstitial gathering points are exquisitely detailed and captured in this response. Were it not for the lack of educational space photography this project might have scored even higher. The spaces provided, however, are wonderful examples of the corporate culture that the graduates of this program might later experience. It is clear that the extensive planning process undertaken with the business school faculty, including their tours of peer institutions, enabled all to develop this most responsive design. The



layers of architecture are carefully applied to the functions and provide for a unique level of transparency to the facility. This transparency is obviously important to the building as a result of the challenging siting that this facility accommodated within the master plan of this portion of the campus. Any building with a heavier architecture would have disturbed the pedestrian circulation originally located on this portion of the campus. Overall this scheme represents a high degree of response to the climate, the site, the educational program and most importantly, the user.



**2011 Citation Award**  
**St. Albans School, Marriott Hall**  
Skidmore Owings & Merrill

St. Albans Marriott Hall is a multistory classroom addition to a traditional private preparatory high school collocated on the historic campus of the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Given the complexity of the existing campus and surrounding buildings, the project is commended for its masterful site planning—a strongly contextual response that unifies the school and campus, clarifying its overall organization. The multistory intervention takes full advantage of the steeply sloping site to establish functional indoor-outdoor connections to different parts of the school and campus, while maintaining critical view corridors to the site and city beyond. The contemporary architectural expression is open and transparent to enhance visual connections between inside and outside, with traditional stone cladding providing continuity with the adjacent historical buildings. Traditional classroom planning inside is less innovative in its design, offering a somewhat limited variety of learning environments, perhaps in response to a more traditional educational program.



## **AWARD OF MERIT**

- Does each project further the client's mission, goals, and educational program?
- Understanding the learning environment beyond the aesthetic where the function and surrounding regional and community context are valued as part of a participatory planning and design process.
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**2011 Award of Merit**  
**Gary Comer College Prep**

Chicago, Illinois, High School  
John Ronan Architects

Gary Comer College Prep is a charter high school collocated with a community youth center on Chicago's South Side. The project is commended for its intelligent use of shared community facilities to create an efficient, economical and elegant architectural solution on a tightly constrained urban site with serious safety and security concerns. The introverted



site organization is protective within the urban environment, offering shared outdoor activity spaces directly accessible from adjoining interior common areas, which open outward with generous areas of glazing. Inside, classrooms are bright and open, with large windows and expansive areas of glazing to adjoining interior circulation zones for interconnectivity and visibility—important aspects of the educational ethic promoted by the school. The architectural expression features bold applications of color and applied graphics that create a strong sense of identity and place. A sophisticated layering of perforated metal screens outside maintains privacy and security within the school, while allowing views to the outside.



**2011 Award of Merit**  
**Center for Graduate Fellows**

Charlottesville, Virginia, Unique learning environment  
VMDO Architects PC

For the jury, this project is being recognized because it has a magnificent courtyard, is thoughtfully detailed and is a place to inspire and motivate graduate students who generally are an overlooked community at the university. Windows and clerestory glazing provide daylight to all of the building's spaces as well as connects the learners to the Center's courtyard. The Center courtyard can be used as a gathering space as well as an area for meditation. Not only



does the courtyard provide opportunities for people to gather formally and informally, but the interiors are integrated in that the furniture can be arranged routinely to support independent, cooperative, as well as large groupings. This project exemplifies the creation of a place where the culture of the graduate program is being supported and encouraged.



## 2011 Award of Merit

### James I. Swenson Civil Engineering Building

Duluth, Minnesota, Higher Education  
Ross Barney Architects

The Swensen Civil Engineering Building addition is a higher education facility for a new engineering department on a campus in Duluth, Minnesota. The project is commended as an interactive learning environment that organizes a variety of activities around a unique shared departmental teaching and research space—a high-bay hydraulics lab for experiments and group demonstrations. Maximum transparency and openness enhance the learning experience by encouraging formal and informal interaction



within the building, and by providing natural light and program connections to the out-of-doors. For didactic purposes, the building incorporates a rich variety of materials and methods of construction, including exposed structural steel, Corten steel-clad panels and rain screens, cast-in-place concrete, precast concrete, and recycled wood. Site relationships and sustainable features, especially those related to storm water collection, are also featured, incorporating a sophisticated system of green roofs, drainage scuppers, French drains and native landscape gardens. A trio of super-sized scuppers dominate the exterior of the building, detracting somewhat from the otherwise balanced interplay between the rich variety of expressive architectural features that support and enhance the educational program.

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## 2011 Award of Merit

### The Learning Spring School

New York, New York, Alternative or Innovative  
Platt Byard Dovell White Architects

What struck the jury about this project was the design team's ability to work within a tight urban site constraint while respectfully serving a unique community of learners residing across the autism spectrum. Having to build straight up on the site was further complicated by the small upper school and lower school components needing to be provided their own independent spaces with shared activity zones located between them. Furthermore, each floor was designed with a customized configuration of spaces and classrooms



servicing an 8-to-3 ratio of kids to adults. While the design team had to consider the impact of sight, sound, and touch upon the student body within all spaces, it



also managed to be elegant in its unexpected commitment to external building materials and forms at the street level, visual and tactile discoveries found within etched glass stair partitions, and to create a kid-scale library that feels both protected and full of light, color, and curiosity. The jury recognized that this particular solution would not immediately transferable due to the unusual program elements and setting. That being said, everyone felt that the design solution was an exceptional example of being innovative within unavoidable constraints.

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## 2011 Award of Merit Marysville Getchell HS

Marysville, Washington, High School  
DLR Group

The jury thought that Marysville Getchell High School was thoughtfully programmed, planned and designed school. The massing and interior spatial design in relationship with the natural environment affords a thoughtful and attentive resolution for this high school project. The design team took great care in framing views of the natural environment throughout every aspect of the campus. The jury was impressed with the alternative educational



program that divided the campus into four separate Small Learning Community Buildings for creating opportunities for more “personalized learning experiences,” and encouraging opportunities for a learner-centered environment. This design builds on what are viewed as best practices in educational design: Transparency, personalized learning communities, flexibility within the learning environment, natural day lighting, energy efficiency, and a variety of learning environments to support the different ways that people learn and teachers teach. This project exemplifies how this design firm is extending our notions about programming and planning schools to support how learners master skills.

## 2011 Award of Merit Park Shops

Raleigh, North Carolina, Higher Education  
Pearce Brinkley Cease + Lee

The jury recognized this project as a great example for a transformation of 1914 vocational / technical building to a 21st century university classroom building. The Park Shops transformation required a complete redesign of the interior of the existing structure. This challenged presented opportunities to connect the existing architectural features with the goals of the building's new educational program which is intended to provide spaces to support the diverse ways that people work. Where there were once welding classes, now there distance



learning classrooms, laboratories, advising offices, and an internet café. Furthermore, this multi-disciplinary facility connects the humanities with the sciences, creating a unique opportunity to encourage dialogue to occur between these two distinct programs. This occurs by creating educational spaces in public zones, i.e. Corridors and lobbies were programmed and planned as places for people to gather formally as well as informally. Furthermore, these wide, open corridors wind their way throughout the building which are multi-functional, because they double as study spaces, gathering spaces and public meeting spaces. The jury also recognized that while new spaces had been

created the character of the original building remained and beautifully detailed. This project truly shows how to work with the constraints of an existing building and find the affordances within to create a unique educational environment.

## 2011 Award of Merit Springfield Literacy Center

Springfield, Pennsylvania, Elementary School  
Burt Hill, a Stantec Company

The jury was highly impressed with this submission for the following reasons: (1) this project embraced the active learner; (2) understood the learning environment as active; and (3) the concepts of things to be learned and learning flow this facility. This facility was planned



to support the variety of ways that young learners acquire knowledge. They may work with the entire class, in small social groupings and independently. Furthermore, this learning environment encourages personalization by providing glazing throughout the interior so that learners can preview what others are doing in different settings. With the library as the heart of the building, students are encouraged to grab a book and read in nooks that are provided throughout the building. Furthermore, the building, developed within a densely developed urban area was designed to connect with nature, since it is located on a wooded. For the jury, this project embraces an understanding about what the learning environment is; for, the design team accepted the concept the building is forever evolving to accommodate changing student and teacher needs, technology and curricula.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- All projects had a clear vision and the educational program was valued
- Especially important to showcase a variety of instructional spaces
- Transparency
- Green – Sustainable
- Variety of spaces
- Connections between interior and exterior
- Connections between interior spaces
- Spaces are layered
- Spaces flow (dynamic not static)
- Spaces are flexible