Impacting K-12 & Higher-Education Environments

JUNE 2026

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TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL

Education design Showcase 2026

OUTSTANDING DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE IN EDUCATION

GRAND PRIZE WINNER

ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

Education design Showcase 2026

OUTSTANDING DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE IN EDUCATION

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

We're thrilled to present the winners of the 27th annual Spaces4Learning Education Design Showcase! The following pages are dedicated to just that—showcasing 13 amazing recent construction projects at education institutions around the country. We've divided our entries into two general categories, K–12 and higher education, as well as differentiated between new construction and renovation projects. This year's contest saw a wide range of new or improved spaces, from a classroom revitalization to a brand-new, 400,000-plus-square-foot high school.

Primarily, of course, we encourage you to learn more about the practical aspects of each project. Modern classrooms require more than student desks, a teacher's desk, a chalkboard, and maybe a plant in the corner for some color. Design considerations for modern learning spaces include active-learning pedagogies, technology installations, security considerations, sustainability initiatives, student wellness, inclusivity, and more. Spaces dedicated to specific subjects—whether it's performing arts or agricultural sciences—require an even further degree of intentional design and deliberate use of space.

However, because EDS is an architecture and design competition at heart, I have to say: The pictures accompanying this year's projects are fantastic. If you've ever seen a teen movie from the 80s—say, Ferris Bueller's Day Off or Revenge of the Nerds—then you've seen my high school: drab hallways lined with lockers, a front office that looks like a dentist's waiting room, a kitty-litter track surrounding the football field. Today's sprawling, daylit atriums and informal gathering spaces decked out with furniture leave me feeling a little jealous.

Be sure to also visit the **Education Design Showcase** page on the Spaces4Learning website, which features longer project narratives and additional photos.

Finally, we at Spaces4Learning would like to extend our deepest gratitude and congratulations to all of this year's winners. Thank you for your continued efforts in improving learning spaces for students, and thank you for participating in our program and letting us share your results with the world.

And, without further ado, this year's winners are…

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Senior Editor

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Arlington High School

ARLINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
ARLINGTON, MASS.

GRAND PRIZE
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF HMFH ARCHITECTS

ARCHITECT
HMFH ARCHITECTS

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
ELIZABETH HOMAN, SUPERINTENDENT

COMPLETION DATE
02/01/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
1,755

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
1,757

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
408,500 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
233 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
22 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
$133,497

COST PER SQ. FT.
$573.50

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$234,287,347

THE DESIGN OF ARLINGTON HIGH SCHOOL supports interdisciplinary learning, community programs, and the town's goal of a carbon-free future. Carefully planned and constructed over four phases just feet away from the occupied school, the new AHS replaces an outdated facility with welcoming, flexible spaces for hands-on teaching and learning.

The school is organized along a central spine that connects the upper Massachusetts Avenue entrance and tree-lined green to the athletic fields, parking, and bikeway at the lower entrance. Four wings—STEAM, humanities, performing arts, and athletics—plug into the spine and contain flexible classrooms, science labs, teacher planning areas, independent and project-based learning nooks, and makerspaces. As one moves through the building, the spine serves as a student center and lobby for main public venues including the 800-seat auditorium, black box theater, and gymnasiums, then becomes a broad forum stair cascading down to the cafeteria and lower entrance.

The design achieves flexibility at both the whole building and individual classroom scale. The layout is adaptable to various educational models: It can be organized by program or restructured as a house model in which each floor functions as a self-contained learning community. Classrooms feature moveable furniture, operable walls, and adjacent breakout spaces.

The natural environment is woven into the learning environment through daylighting and connections to outdoor spaces including an amphitheater, pollinator garden, work yard, and central courtyard. Multi-story lightwells in the library and academic wings bring daylight deep into the school's compact interior and feature perimeter countertop study areas.

Backed by an overwhelmingly positive town vote, the all-electric, LEED Platinum-certified Arlington High School celebrates its role as an accessible, flexible, and sustainable town-wide resource.

Richard A. Balderston
OPC'69 Lower School

WILLIAM PENN CHARTER SCHOOL
PHILADELPHIA, PENN.

GRAND PRIZE
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF EWINGCOLE

ARCHITECT
EWINGCOLE

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
THU-NGA MORRIS,
DIRECTOR OF LOWER SCHOOL

COMPLETION DATE
09/01/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
350

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
315

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
78,000 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
250 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
3 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
N/A

COST PER SQ. FT.
$717

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$56,000,000

COMPLETED IN SEPTEMBER 2025, The Richard A. Balderston OPC '69 Lower School is the capstone of William Penn Charter School's multi-phase campus transformation, uniting Pre-K through Grade 5 within a shared academic village designed around Quaker values of community, stewardship, equality, and simplicity. At 78,000 square feet, the two-story building creates a welcoming home for the school's youngest learners while advancing Penn Charter's Reggio Emilia-inspired philosophy, in which the environment serves as a "third teacher."

Inspired by the nearby Wissahickon Valley Park, the building's meandering form, layered materials, and skylit central spine foster curiosity, movement, and connection across age groups. Inside, offset corridors, bridges, and visual connections between floors create dynamic spatial relationships. These elements enliven the space, allowing students to see and sense one another throughout the day and reinforcing a sense of community.

Flexible classrooms, shared gathering spaces, outdoor terraces, and accessible play environments support exploration, collaboration, and child-centered learning both indoors and out. The U-shaped plan frames a protected courtyard with natural play features, a student-controlled "busy river," a reading terrace, and an amphitheater for the entire Lower School community.

Designed to meet LEED Silver for Schools, the project integrates stewardship through bird-safe glazing, a high-performance envelope, stormwater management, durable low-impact materials, and landscapes envisioned to mature into a "learning forest" over time.

Environmental graphics and installations reinforce school identity and values. A former all-school mural has been reinterpreted as suspended butterfly installations that symbolize growth and continuity. Additional graphic elements highlight themes of language, community, and the natural world.

Barbara Vick
Western Branch

CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CHICAGO, ILL.

GRAND PRIZE
K-12 RENOVATION

IMAGES COURTESY OF BAILEY EDWARD DESIGN, INC.

ARCHITECT
BAILEY EDWARD DESIGN, INC.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
AMY O'CONNOR, PRINCIPAL

COMPLETION DATE
05/01/2024

DESIGN CAPACITY
150

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
466

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
28,700 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
191 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
N/A

COST PER STUDENT
$65,333

COST PER SQ. FT.
$341

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$9,900,000

BY TRANSFORMING A COMMERCIAL BANK BUILDING into an early education center and network administration offices, Chicago Public Schools invests in the Beverly neighborhood while illustrating how others can turn empty storefronts into community assets.

The Barbara Vick Early Childhood and Family Center embraces a play-based, Reggio-Emilia-inspired curriculum addressing all aspects of the children's development with the support of highly qualified Early Childhood Education. By nurturing curiosity, engagement, and joy, children learn to live fully and joyfully, and ultimately become self-motivated problem-solvers with an abiding curiosity about the world. The school's design provides large, inviting spaces for students to explore on their own or collaborate with others as they develop their knowledge about the world around them. The design builds confidence in young people by encouraging daily movement, collaboration, and exploration through easy-to-navigate spaces.

Upon entry, energetic blues, oranges, and yellows dance around warm wood tones of a central sculptural stairway illuminated by a large, glass atrium. The colors zigzag into six generously sized classrooms, each with unique spaces to learn, explore, and play, including nooks for small groups or quiet learning and prep areas for teachers. Daylighting from the large storefront windows and atrium has become a well-being asset for students and teachers alike. To bring students outdoors, the teller drive-through is converted into a covered play environment.

Administrative offices, training, and break areas fill spaces unused by the early education center to create a more efficient usage of the space without interrupting the early education program. Breathing new life into the former bank building, the early education design enriches both the intellectual and physical capital of the neighborhood.

Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

EAST BATON ROUGE PARISH SCHOOLS
BATON ROUGE, LA.

IMAGES COURTESY OF RHH ARCHITECTS

ARCHITECT
RHH ARCHITECTS/
TIPTON ASSOCIATES (JV)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
LAMONT COLE,
SUPERINTENDENT

COMPLETION DATE
08/01/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
600

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
561

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
80,000 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
133.33 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
N/A

COST PER STUDENT
$45,000

COST PER SQ. FT.
$337.50

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$27,000,000

THE BATON ROUGE CENTER FOR VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS transforms a dated, sprawling school campus on South Acadian Thruway into a vibrant, unified, two-story facility that sets a new standard for educational design in the region.

Conceived to address both growing enrollment and persistent traffic congestion, the project replaces multiple disconnected buildings with a single, highly efficient structure, increasing capacity from 450 to more than 600 students while integrating a dedicated early childhood education center. This magnet program, part of East Baton Rouge Public Schools, offers an arts-integrated curriculum that places dance, music, visual arts, and performance at the heart of daily learning. Purpose-built exploratory classrooms, a full auditorium, and a separate cafeteria underscore the school's commitment to fostering creativity and community, moving beyond the "cafetorium" trend to create spaces that truly support each function. A black-box theatre suits smaller productions and opens onto the courtyard and amphitheater. The design for the campus incorporated the school community's aspirations and needs, including the preservation of oak trees that gave the leafy campus a homey atmosphere.

The site plan exemplifies thoughtful problem-solving. New traffic flow strategies include separate car and bus entrances, a three-lane carpool loop accommodating up to 158 vehicles, and improved on-site parking, significantly reducing congestion on busy Acadian Thruway. Access design allows only southbound entry for carpool traffic and adds a barrier to prevent dangerous crossings, enhancing safety for students, families, and commuters alike.

The building is a striking contemporary form with a bold, rainbow-inspired interior palette that assigns colors to grade levels and key program areas. The architecture signals the school's dynamic mission and provides intuitive wayfinding for students. By addressing operational challenges, embracing design excellence within a prescribed program and square footage, and enriching the community's educational landscape, the Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts demonstrates a visionary, high-impact development for the Capital Region.

Homewood-Flossmoor

High School NetZero Addition

HOMEWOOD-FLOSSMOOR COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 233
FLOSSMOOR, ILL.

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF DLA ARCHITECTS

ARCHITECT
DLA ARCHITECTS

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
DR. JENNIFER NORRELL, SUPERINTENDENT

COMPLETION DATE
04/01/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
480

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
2,900

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
43,700 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
91 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
100 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
$51,063

COST PER SQ. FT.
$561

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$24,510,000

THE NET ZERO SCIENCE ADDITION at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School redefines what it means to teach and learn in a sustainable, future-ready environment. Designed in collaboration with DLA Architects, the project reflects the district's commitment to environmental responsibility, STEM excellence, and student engagement.

Pursuing Zero Energy Certification, the facility produces as much energy as it consumes through a high-performance building envelope, solar panels, and geothermal systems. Throughout the building, interactive displays and energy dashboards transform the building into a hands-on learning tool, engaging students in the science behind sustainable systems. Students can see how much power the rooftop solar array is generating or monitor the efficiency of the geothermal system, connecting abstract scientific concepts to their immediate environment.

At the heart of the project is a commitment to innovation, equity, and environmental responsibility. Thirteen advanced science labs, prep spaces, and breakout rooms support Next Generation Science Standards while fostering hands-on, interdisciplinary learning. A Learning Commons, Maker Space, and College Engineering Lab provide dynamic, flexible environments for collaboration.

Biophilic elements such as expansive views, abundant natural daylight, and the use of natural materials promote wellness and deeper connections to nature. Educational displays discuss the innate human instinct to connect with other living things; the educational, emotional, and social benefits of those strategies; and how they are incorporated into the building. An outdoor amphitheater and native plant gardens extend the learning environment beyond the building's walls, providing spaces for outdoor classes, ecological studies, and quiet reflection.

From solar panels to flexible furniture, every design element encourages curiosity, collaboration, and ecological literacy. More than a building, the Net Zero Science Addition is a model of how architecture can inspire students, empower educators, and lead a community toward a more sustainable future.

Compton High School

COMPTON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
COMPTON, CALIF.

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF DLR GROUP

ARCHITECT
DLR GROUP

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
DR. SHANNAN SOTO, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

COMPLETION DATE
08/01/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
1,800

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
1,438

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
223,650 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
124.25 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
34

COST PER STUDENT
$128,888

COST PER SQ. FT.
$1,037

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$232,000,000

COMPTON HIGH SCHOOL'S new 34-acre campus represents a transformational reinvestment in a community long defined by resilience, creativity, and ambition. Replacing a 126-year-old facility, the $232-million project was designed to align with Compton Unified School District's vision for equity, college and career readiness, and whole-child development. The campus centers on the Academic Boulevard, a unifying spine that connects flexible learning suites, transparent CTE studios, the Andre "Dr. Dre" Young Performing Arts Center, and collegiate-caliber athletic facilities. These environments support project-based learning, hands-on skill development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and robust arts and athletics programs — creating a model of 21st-century learning that is flexible, inclusive, sustainable, and deeply rooted in its community.

Delivering a full campus rebuild within a dense urban neighborhood posed significant challenges, including complex site logistics, aging infrastructure, and the need to maintain community access throughout construction. A three-phase delivery strategy, daily coordination, and a strong local hiring initiative ensured steady progress and deep community ownership.

The campus integrates safety measures that balance openness with protection. A secure entry sequence controls access to the school, and zoned circulation separates public event spaces from academic areas. Transparent design supports passive supervision by reducing blind spots, and modern communication systems, cameras, and access controls enhance emergency readiness. The result is an environment that feels welcoming while still prioritizing safety.

Above all, the district aspired to build a campus where every student feels a sense of belonging. It wanted a school that celebrates identity, elevates ambition, and communicates that excellence is expected and achievable.

Innovations such as teacher collaboration suites, placing learning on display, and transparency-driven safety design create an adaptable, future-ready school. Compton High now provides its 2,000 scholars with an inspiring environment that reflects their potential and supports academic excellence, creative expression, and long-term opportunity.

Porter Family Center for Innovation and Academics

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

LAKE HIGHLAND PREPARATORY SCHOOL
ORLANDO, FLA.

IMAGES COURTESY OF SCHENKEL SHULTZ

ARCHITECT
SCHENKEL SHULTZ

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
JIM MCINTYRE, PRESIDENT

COMPLETION DATE
09/08/2024

DESIGN CAPACITY
594

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
2,072

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
71,000 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
120 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
22.53 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
$48,822

COST PER SQ. FT.
$408

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$29,000,000

FOR MORE THAN SEVEN DECADES, Lake Highland Preparatory School has anchored the educational and civic identity of downtown Orlando. The school's culture cultivates intellectual curiosity, whole-child development, and a commitment to preparing students not just for college, but for lives of meaningful contribution.

The Porter Family Center exemplifies a commitment to providing an elevated educational experience. Guided by the 2018 Strategic Plan, stakeholders — including parents, faculty, staff, trustees, alumni, and students — collaboratively shaped a trajectory to enhance learning environments, pedagogy, and innovation. At the heart of the facility, the Innovation Institute forms a shared ecosystem where STEM and humanities converge. Robotics, engineering, mathematics, physics, computer science, and language arts coexist in flexible, unassigned spaces that encourage collaboration, experimentation, and inquiry.

The new facility, replacing two existing structures, was designed to maintain academic operational continuity during construction. Critical infrastructural upgrades integrated power, communication, IT, and security services into the new facility before demolishing the old buildings.

Strategically placed, the new building promotes transparency and connection within the local ecology. The south emanates a welcoming warmth as a new front door, while the north prioritizes transparency, bathing classrooms in natural light, showcasing Lake Highland's scenic views. Biophilic design elements, including acoustical ceiling baffles, nature-inspired lighting, and wood-patterned vertical elements, create a calming, collegiate atmosphere. Vibrant graphics and reclaimed wood furniture throughout the space reflect the school's history, connecting the institution's past to its forward-looking mission.

Flexibility and adaptability are central to the design with STC-rated operable partitions reshaping spaces as needs evolve. A social stair connects the library to a floating platform for teamwork and circulation, complemented by vibrant graphics highlighting school history. Modular furniture ensures variety and accessibility, while interconnected classrooms and flex-spaces embrace fluid learning experiences.

Big Horn Academy

HARDIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
HARDIN, MONT.

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
K-12 NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF CUSHING TERRELL

ARCHITECT
CUSHING TERRELL

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
TOBIN NOVASIO, SUPERINTENDENT

COMPLETION DATE
07/24/2024

DESIGN CAPACITY
100

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
80

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
12,000 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
120 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
0.5 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
$67,000

COST PER SQ. FT.
$558

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$6,700,000

THE HARDIN SCHOOL DISTRICT set out to create a purpose-built facility for its alternative high school program, which had been operating out of a modular building across from the main high school. The goal was to establish a secure, supportive environment that better reflects the academic, emotional, and wellness needs of its students. From the outset, the design team focused on uniting three core groups under one roof—students, administration, and a health and wellness partner—to foster connection, accessibility, and holistic support.

The 12,000-square-foot building includes 10,400 square feet of educational space and 1,600 square feet dedicated to health services. Designed to reflect the spirit of a non-traditional high school, the facility emphasizes flexibility and student-centered learning. A central family room anchors the plan, surrounded by learning centers and adjacent to a student kitchen, presentation space, and small group rooms. A shed roof defines the central collaboration area and extends outward to connect covered exterior spaces, reinforcing indoor-outdoor learning opportunities.

Natural light fills the interior through continuous ribbon windows. The exterior, clad in durable white fiber cement panels, symbolizes peace and purity in honor of local Native American culture. The design team collaborated closely with tribal representatives to ensure culturally respectful design, resulting in thoughtful details such as orienting windows and entries to the cardinal directions, reflecting traditional tribal beliefs.

Today, Big Horn Academy offers a welcoming, safe, and dignified environment that supports academic growth, personal development, and overall well-being, reflecting the district's commitment to student-centered education and community partnership.

Agricultural Sciences Complex

COLLEGE OF WESTERN IDAHO
NAMPA, IDAHO

GRAND PRIZE
HIGHER EDUCATION NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF CUSHING TERRELL

ARCHITECT
CUSHING TERRELL

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
AARON WHITMAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION

COMPLETION DATE
N/A

DESIGN CAPACITY
250

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
8,500

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
15,000 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
60 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
35

COST PER STUDENT
$68,000

COST PER SQ. FT.
$1,133

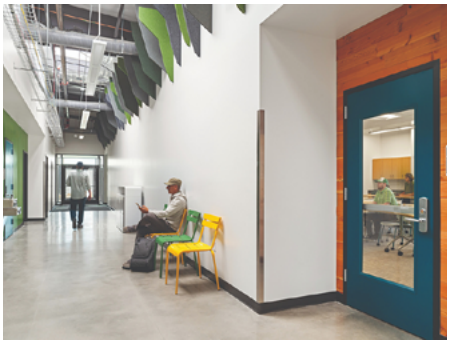
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$17,000,000

THE COLLEGE OF WESTERN IDAHO'S AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES COMPLEX is a 35-acre campus dedicated to hands-on education in horticulture, landscape design, floral science, and animal science. Located in Nampa, Idaho, the site was thoughtfully planned to support a dynamic mix of indoor and outdoor learning environments. The complex includes an animal science barn, a horticulture greenhouse, a shop, a student-designed arboretum, and the Simplot Agriculture Building, which houses classrooms, laboratories, offices, and student collaboration spaces.

Situated north of the main campus on former agricultural land, the site honors its history through landscape details such as tractor tread patterns and planting beds inspired by crop circles. The complex functions as part working farm, part classroom, and part food incubator, allowing students to experience the full cycle of agricultural education. A public-facing farm store enables students to sell products they produce and host farm-to-table events, extending learning beyond the classroom into real-world applications. The design promotes seamless connections between instruction, research, hands-on practice, and industry partnerships.

Flexible design supports evolving programs and student needs. Glass overhead doors open classrooms to the outdoors, movable partitions adjust space for different uses, and covered porches provide collaboration areas. Biophilic elements, including wood accents, seed-inspired lighting, and tree canopy-inspired baffles, reinforce connections to nature and support future experiential learning such as living walls and pollinator habitats. Practical amenities such as showers, lockers, and storage areas ease the transition between fieldwork and classroom use.

The facility balances academic functionality with public engagement. It supports students and staff with flexible classrooms, laboratories, and workspaces while providing a venue for community events, workshops, and seminars, integrating the full range of agricultural education into one cohesive campus experience.



Texas Recruitment

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
AUSTIN, TEXAS

GRAND PRIZE
HIGHER EDUCATION RENOVATION

IMAGES COURTESY OF MCKINNEY YORK

ARCHITECT
MCKINNEY YORK

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
JIM DAVIS, PRESIDENT

COMPLETION DATE
07/18/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
60

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
55,000

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
5,650 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
94.17 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
N/A

COST PER STUDENT
$52,374.70

COST PER SQ. FT.
$556.19

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$3,142,482

LOCATED WITHIN THE MAIN BUILDING at The University of Texas at Austin, known locally as the Tower, the Texas Recruitment project expands student access to outward-facing facilities located within the iconic building. The use of historic materials, warm finishes, and woodwork—inspired by the building's existing features—creates a calm, welcoming, and student-centered environment. Part of the University's push to turn its Main Building back into a student space, Texas Recruitment combines services from recruitment, admissions, orientation, and student success offices. The project streamlines students' access to university resources while fostering a supportive atmosphere, ensuring their ability to navigate not only student life but their journey beyond academics as well.

The project is inspired by its former life as the Library's Reserve Reading Room, back in 1934. It revitalizes the open spatial qualities that were lost when the area was later subdivided into closed offices, restoring access to natural light and exterior views. In the spirit of the original reading room, the design drops the floor to increase the ceiling height of the space, pairing this new height with a reconstructed version of the original concrete beam ceiling structure. Open seating and worktables in the main area encourage students to meet casually with staff or use the room as a study space.

While openness is an important part of the design, the Texas Recruitment project also includes individual service rooms that allow for private one-on-one meetings. A glassy conference room, located near the entrance, allows natural light to permeate the main space. This versatile seminar area offers opportunities for shared usage with other groups in the building, as it can operate independently from the rest of the suite.

Texas Recruitment contributes much-needed space to expand on the Office of Strategic Enrollment Management's mission of championing success for all students at every stage of their educational journey.

RIT Saunders College of Business
Lowenthal Hall Addition

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
HIGHER EDUCATION NEW CONSTRUCTION

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (RIT)
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

IMAGES COURTESY OF LABELLA ASSOCIATES

ARCHITECT
LABELLA ASSOCIATES

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
MICHAEL DELLEFAVE,
DIRECTOR CONSTRUCTION/
PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OFF
CAMPUS PROPERTIES

COMPLETION DATE
02/29/2024

DESIGN CAPACITY
600

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
2,000

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
38,000 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
6.3 SQ FT.

SITE SIZE
0.6 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
$43,333

COST PER SQ. FT.
$684.20

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$26,000,000

THE LOWENTHAL HALL ADDITION at the Rochester Institute of Technology's Saunders College of Business expands the business school's footprint by 80%, providing four floors and 38,000 square feet of space for classrooms, collaboration spaces, lounges, an auditorium, a food venue, offices, event spaces, and outdoor terraces.

The goal of the project was to create a sensitive addition that seamlessly blends with the existing building and its context while incorporating abundant natural light and adding program space that meets the needs of contemporary students and teaching pedagogies. The project also included renovations to modernize learning and lounge spaces, introducing flexible furniture, multiple teaching walls, and refinished classrooms that replaced exposed concrete masonry unit with improved acoustics and a warmer atmosphere.

The design reinterprets the original 1970s Modernist building, drawing on its brick, wood, and concrete palette, while introducing more glass to promote transparency and natural light. A cast concrete stair and balcony reference the existing structure. Large-format ceramic tiles form a three-story feature wall that orients visitors. Oak tones from the original wood ceiling inspired the addition's linear, metal, wood-look ceiling. Exterior phenolic rainscreen panels complement the Modernist materials. The design encourages interaction and movement through open floor plans, visible staircases, "creative collision" zones for individual or group work, and circulation loops that link all four levels.

To balance the existing structure's limited windows, the addition maximizes glazing, creating more natural light and a healthier learning environment. Ceramic fritted glass, custom louvers, and integrated shading help prevent solar heat gain while preserving campus views. Thoughtful material selection minimizes visual and acoustic distractions.

WELL principles emphasizing movement, acoustics, light, and mental health were integral to the design. "Racetrack" circulation paths encourage movement and improve wayfinding, while rooftop patios and views of adjacent wetlands promote a deep connection to nature.

Lowenthal Hall exemplifies how educational design can be both contextual and forward-thinking—embracing a rich architectural legacy while setting new benchmarks for sustainability, wellness, and academic innovation.

Health & Science Building

COLLEGE OF WESTERN IDAHO
NAMPA, IDAHO

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
HIGHER EDUCATION NEW CONSTRUCTION

IMAGES COURTESY OF CUSHING TERRELL

ARCHITECT
CUSHING TERRELL

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
AARON WHITMAN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION

COMPLETION DATE
N/A

DESIGN CAPACITY
650

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
8,500

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
58,512 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
70 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
1.71 ACRES

COST PER STUDENT
$50,679

COST PER SQ. FT.
$564

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$33,000,000

THE COLLEGE OF WESTERN IDAHO'S (CWI) 58,512-square-foot Health and Science Building brings a wide range of health and science programs together in a centralized hub on the Nampa campus. As the first completed building in a planned campus quad, it establishes a cohesive collegiate identity and sets the tone for a unified, welcoming higher education environment.

Designed to support hands-on, experiential learning, the facility brings students, faculty, and healthcare partners together in one connected environment. Advanced simulation suites, flexible labs, varied classroom settings, and welcoming study spaces create opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and real-world training. When rapid enrollment growth required the building to expand from its originally planned 45,000 square feet, the team worked side by side with the college to fully build out the additional space mid-construction to ensure programs could grow together without disruption and positioning the campus for future phases.

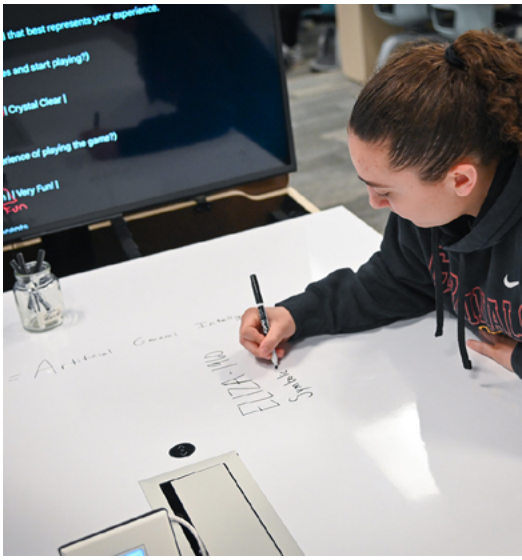
The design concept strengthens that sense of connection. Inspired by the human body, the building reveals its "skeletal" structure and systems in shared spaces, helping users intuitively navigate the environment, while specialized labs and clinical rooms remain carefully protected for safety and sanitation. A three-story, daylit staircase anchors the L-shaped plan, acting as a social heart that encourages informal interaction, visibility, and community.

Home to programs ranging from Nursing and Surgical Technology to Biology and Microbiology, the building prioritizes daylight, energy efficiency, and healthy materials—supporting not only academic success, but the overall well-being of everyone who learns and works within it.

Classroom Revitalization
Basil Hall Room 216

ST. JOHN FISHER UNIVERSITY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

PROJECT OF DISTINCTION
HIGHER EDUCATION SPACES



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ARCHITECT
NONE

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR
DR. GERARD ROONEY, PRESIDENT

COMPLETION DATE
08/29/2025

DESIGN CAPACITY
45

CURRENT ENROLLMENT
45

GROSS AREA OF BUILDING
1,620 SQ. FT

SPACE PER PUPIL
36 SQ. FT

SITE SIZE
N/A

COST PER STUDENT
$9,474.03

COST PER SQ. FT.
$263.17

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST
$426,331.34

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ROOM 216 IN BASIL HALL at St. John Fisher University represents the culmination of years of continued classroom renovations and research-driven design. This space is not just a room; it is a high-tech learning environment that distills years of pedagogical practice into a single, flexible environment.

Basil 216 was once what many college classrooms still are: sterile, passive, and lecture focused. Rows of forward-facing desks, a single projection screen at the front, fluorescent lighting, hard surfaces that made every sound echo. It was a space designed for delivery rather than discovery, for listening rather than doing, for one voice rather than many. Now, it is something entirely different: a dynamic hub capable of supporting any teaching style while actively encouraging the kind of student engagement that transforms passive attendance into active learning.

The most significant aspect of this renovation is the integration of the room's original three-tiered floor. Rather than serving as a barrier to interaction, these levels now define distinct collaboration zones. By replacing forward-facing rows with technology-equipped pod-style stations, the room facilitates seamless transitions between large-scale lecture and collaborative group work. The singular "front" of the room has been replaced by a distributed display system and perimeter whiteboarding, allowing students to switch from listening to a central lecture to collaborating at their individual pods instantly using student-driven display technology or engaging with the multitude of whiteboard surfaces both on the tables themselves or around the room. This design bridges the gap between traditional delivery and modern discovery, creating a truly dynamic hub capable of supporting any teaching style.

Education design Showcase 2026

OUTSTANDING DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE IN EDUCATION

PROJECT INDEX

Agricultural Sciences Complex	Cushing Terrell
College of Western Idaho Nampa, Idaho	cushingterrell.com See page 11

Arlington High School	HMFH Architects
Arlington Public Schools Arlington, Mass.	www.hmfh.com See page 3

Barbara Vick Western Branch	Bailey Edward Design, Inc.
Chicago Public Schools Chicago, Ill.	baileyedward.com See page 5

Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts	RHH Architects/ Tipton Associates (JV)
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools Baton Rouge, La.	www.rhharchitects.com www.tipton-associates.com See page 6

Big Horn Academy	Cushing Terrell
Hardin Public Schools Hardin, Mont.	cushingterrell.com See page 10

Classroom Revitalization Basil Hall Room 216	N/A
St. John Fisher University Rochester, New York	n/a See page 15

Compton High School	DLR Group
Compton Unified School District Compton, Calif.	www.dlrgroup.com See page 8

Health & Science Building	Cushing Terrell
College of Western Idaho Nampa, Idaho	cushingterrell.com See page 14

Homewood-Flossmoor High School NetZero Addition	DLA Architects
Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School District 233 Flossmoor, Ill.	dla-ltd.com See page 7

Porter Family Center for Innovation and Academics	Schenkel Shultz
Lake Highland Preparatory School Orlando, Fla.	schenkelshultz.com See page 9

Richard A. Balderston OPC'69 Lower School	EwingCole
William Penn Charter School Philadelphia, Penn.	www.ewingcole.com See page 4

RIT Saunders College of Business Lowenthal Hall Addition	LaBella Associates
Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) Rochester, New York	labellapc.com See page 13

Texas Recruitment	McKinney York
The University of Texas at Austin Austin, Texas	www.mckinneyyork.com See page 12