

NORTHEAST FLORIDA Takes TOP HONORS in CIRT/ACE Competition

For the eighth year, the Construction Industry Roundtable hosted the annual CIRT/ACE design competition as part of its spring conference held in Washington, D.C. Top honors at the event went to the ACE Mentor Program of N.E. Florida's Creekside ACE National Team 1 for its Highway Interchange entry "North Star Interchange."

Each year, CIRT offers students three different design challenges, ranging from solving transportation issues to creating green space in the neighborhood to building a venue for the Olympics. According to the five-person panel of judges for 2024, Northeast Florida's entry exhibited a strong responsiveness to their selected challenge, intermodal transportation. The judges note that the team responded to the problem criteria with particular attention to: (i) finding an ideal site that was in major need of reconfiguration and redesign; (ii) identifying additional intramodal forms of transportation that could benefit from their proposal, in addition to (iii) reclaiming sufficient land to create a green space/park affording other activities and safe transit across the dense traffic areas

that previously were too hazardous for pedestrians. While every entry was impressive, the overall competence and creativity of N.E. Florida in converting an existing tangle of lanes, off-ramps and side roads into a safer, more fluid interchange that recaptured land for parks, bicycle paths and walkways won over the judges.

Second place went to the ACE Mentor Program of Greater New York, NYC DDC/SCA Team 8, for their Olympic Stadium/Iconic Structure entry "Le Stade Eiffel – The Eiffel Stadium," and third place went to ACE Mentor Program of New Jersey, Hawki-teams Team, for their Shoreline Design entry "Duo."

Six other teams were also recognized in the 2024 competition in each of the three different design challenges or options. Among this elite group were:

Highway Interchange:

- **1st Runner-Up:** ACE Mentor Program of Southeast Nevada, Team Traffic
- **2nd Runner-Up:** ACE Mentor Program of Southeast Nevada, LV Harmony Team

Olympic Stadium/Iconic Structure:

- **1st Runner-Up:** ACE Mentor Program of Los Angeles Metro Area, STEM Academy of Hollywood
- **2nd Runner-Up:** ACE Mentor Program of Illinois, ACE Chicago Team 5

Shoreline Design:

- **1st Runner-Up:** ACE Mentor Program of Connecticut, ACE New Haven Team 1
- **2nd Runner-Up:** ACE Mentor Program of Southeast Nevada, MJDL Designs Team

Overall, the competition attracted more than 500 students and some 200 plus mentors to submit entries. There were a record-tying 64 entries from 24 ACE Mentor Programs, with Illinois leading all states with a total of nine submissions.

The panel of judges was led by Thomas Gilbane, Jr., from Gilbane Inc., sitting in the "Thornton Chair"—a special position named in honor of Dr. Charles Thornton, founder of ACE Mentor Program of America. Also in the panel were Don Johnson from Mortenson, Karym Babcock from The Weitz Group, Ray Sedey from McCarthy Holdings and Mara Johnston from Keystone Global/Amaracon Testing and Inspections.

The CIRT National Design & Construction Competition is a collaborative effort with the ACE Mentor Program of America.

Mark A. Casso, president of CIRT, concludes, "Every year, I am more impressed with the quality of presentations and depth of solutions that address community and environmental needs. It gives me great confidence that we are truly building the next generation of extraordinarily talented industry professionals." ♦



The winning students from ACE Mentor Program of N.E. Florida's Creekside ACE National Team 1.