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Philadelphia University Architecture and Interior Design Students Win First Place in Prestigious ACSA Steel Competition

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 27, 2013 – A team of Philadelphia University architecture and interior design students took first place in the prestigious 2012-13 Steel Design Student Competition for their Bridge to Building entry, “Stream Line.”

Third-year architecture students Christopher Garrow and Heather Martin and senior interior design student Kaitlin Shenk collaborated on the winning design. More than 1,000 students from the U.S. and Canada participated in the competition.

The winners were announced by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), which administers the national competition, which is sponsored by the American Institute of Steel Construction. To view the project on the ACSA web site, [click here](#).

“We are thrilled with the announcement of our win and, as a team, we are delighted to highlight Philadelphia University and its commitment to Nexus Learning—the successful collaboration of students across different disciplines,” Garrow, Martin and Shenk said.

The winning project is a design for a new pedestrian bridge that offers a renewed sense of community by connecting parts of north and south Philadelphia currently divided by a highway. The design includes multi-purpose, dual-level paths for fast crossing or more leisurely strolling, reminiscent of New York’s High Line, as well as a café, exhibition space and gift shop. The student designers said they wanted to provide both safe passage and an attractive site for crossing the expressway, providing some green space in the heart of the densely populated city.

According to competition jurors, the PhilaU team’s winning design “Is a bold and elegant merging of the two programs: building and bridge. The scheme is ambitious, while not being aggressive or overwrought. The presentation is comprehensive, illustrating a lot of well thought-out details from shading to sensible material selections.”

Architecture and interior design students worked in teams on the competition brief as part of a studio class taught last spring by Donald Dunham, assistant professor of architecture, and Lisa Phillips, assistant professor of interior design. Students were asked to focus on bridge designs for the elevated Reading Viaduct train track that transects diverse and rapidly redeveloping neighborhoods just north of Center City Philadelphia. Designs also had to include an ancillary function to create a destination and enhance the experience.

“Real-world issues require more inclusive and interdisciplinary strategies—strategies that can help craft sustainable real-world solutions,” Dunham said. “Giving our students real-world frameworks through international and national competition forums allows them to test new knowledge patterns in the most competitive, creative and intellectual environments.”

“This competition is the most prestigious architecture student competition in the country organized annually by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture,” said Barbara Klinkhammer, executive dean of the College of Architecture and the Built Environment. “The winning team composed of two architecture students and one interior design student provided an exemplary demonstration of the possibilities of Nexus Learning at Philadelphia University.”

According to the ACSA, the 13th annual Steel Design Student Competition “is intended to challenge students, working individually or in teams, to explore a variety of design issues related to the use of steel in design and construction.” Students were required to use steel as the primary structural material and design at least one space that requires a long-span steel structure. Special emphasis was placed on innovation in steel design.

Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,600 students enrolled in more than 60 undergraduate and graduate programs. As the model for professional university education, the University prepares students to be leaders in their professions in an active, collaborative and real-world learning environment infused with the liberal arts. Philadelphia University includes the innovative Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce; the College of Architecture and the Built Environment; and the College of Science, Health and the Liberal Arts. For more information, go to www.PhilaU.edu.