ACE MENTOR PROGRAM
ARCHITECTURE · CONSTRUCTION · ENGINEERING

SAMPLE PROJECT RFP'S
TIPS ON SELECTING A FINAL PROJECT

DEVELOPED BY:
THE ACE MENTOR PROGRAM OF GREATER NY

Project Selection

Deciding on a project that will dictate the course of action throughout the academic school year can be stressful. It can also be the most celebrated part of the entire school year.

Note: These following methods are just suggestions. Any means that allow a project to be established are viable alternatives.

Objective 1: Selecting a Site: A design project is never rendered in free space. Understanding where the building will be helps decide what type of building is most suitable for a selected site.

Method 1: Mentors select site behind the scenes

1. Establish a pool of sites from which to pick from
   a. Site can be selected from old/current RFP's or competition websites.
   b. Site can be derived from mentor input (if the mentor has external knowledge).
   c. Site can be selected if working relationships allow access to a certain locations.
2. Vote among the mentors to decide most appropriate site location for the year's goals.

Pros: Speeding up this process allows more time for project development. Decisions could be made without the need to visit each potential site.

Cons: Minimal student engagement.

Method 2: Students select site during a class session

1. Establish a pool of sites from which to pick from
   a. Site can be selected from competition websites.
   b. Students can research areas that interest them and may have project potential.
   c. Site can be selected if working relationships allow access to certain locations.
2. Vote among students to decide the most suitable site location to achieve the year's goals.

Pros: Heavy student engagement. Reliance on mentor guidance.

Cons: Reliance on a reasonably sized student contribution. Sites may not be feasible. Students may not have the initial understanding of the magnitude of the space available to them.

Objective 2: Selecting a Project Type: After a site is selected, the next step is to choose the type of project to work on. Examples include a commercial, residential, or community space.

Method 1: Mentors select building type behind the scenes

1. Establish a pool of projects from which to pick
   a. Projects can be selected from old/current RFP's or competition websites.
   b. Projects can be derived from mentor input (if site is known).
2. Tally vote among the mentors to decide most appropriate project for the year's curriculum.
3. Alternatively, mentors can choose a group of project choices for the students to vote on.

Pros: Speeding up this process allows for more project development time. Allows additional research time for students and mentors to learn about similar projects.

Cons: Lack of student engagement may reduce personal investment and interest in the project selected.

Method 2: Students select project during a class session
1. Request the students to bring in ideas for a design project for the selected site.
   a. Will likely require an entire session for students to research and contribute ideas.
2. Establish a small pool from which the students can vote upon.

Pros: Heavy student engagement.

Cons: Reliance on a reasonably sized student contribution. Massive outpouring of ideas may saturate the pool of prospective projects. Projects may not be feasible/suitable for the site selected. Be prepared for far-out ideas.

Project Selection: RFP Based Projects

All projects begin with a set of requirements created by an owner to address programmatic needs. These needs might be simply 'we need more space' to a more complex multipurpose space that demands flexibility. The ACE model-project can be explained as 'design/build a mock-project as real as possible without actually building it.' At the start of each year, the team could start out with an RFP issued by a mentor-client (addressed to the ACE team) with a due date that matches the day of the final presentation. This is not an easy thing to create, especially if there is no 'client' in mind.

On Finding a Mentor-Client: When deciding on a potential mentor-client, think about active projects, and colleagues and friends in the industry, but always be mindful of their privacy and business issues. Make sure to discuss the proposed project among the team before approaching the client to ensure there is no potential conflict. In addition, make sure you follow up, clearly in writing, all of your discussions regarding the team.

Once a potential client is on board notify the ACE Mentor Program of Greater NY staff and make introductions via email at a minimum. The client may be recruited as a future team sponsor! Here are some examples of potential conflicts so that you can appreciate your responsibility in this process:

- A client may wish to keep an anonymous profile with all non-for-profit volunteer work.
- A mentor's boss is approached at an industry function and is embarrassed by not knowing that their firm has been speaking with this client.
- The Mock-client may not let their team know about the mock-project. This could result in confusion.

To this point, it is important that the RFP is issued to the ACE team on the mock-client's letter head. Doing this adds realism and signifies that the client formally is aware of their involvement.

Just a warning, this is not an easy task. It is typical to approach 5-6 potential clients before getting someone interested in coming aboard. This may be due in part because of the unique nature of the ACE program, but also the reality that everyone in this industry is very busy.

Potential Mock-Client Contributions: Once an interested client is found, they should be brought on board as early in the year as possible. Here is a list of questions and requests for the mock-client:

- We need an RFP issued to our team on your company letterhead. I can write it for you and send you a Word file to edit and you can transfer it onto your letterhead.

- We would love to be able to have some conference calls/emails throughout the year to give updates and discuss issues as they come up.
- We meet typically every other week. Would you be able to attend a class to meet our team in person, or perhaps we could schedule a site visit with you?
- The Final Presentation is in May, we would be honored if you could attend.
- We will typically include site photos and drawings from our meetings in inter-team emails and in the final presentation.   Please let us know if this is ever an issue.
- Your involvement is totally up to you as we can appreciate how busy you are. Just by you taking the time to create an RFP with us means a lot to our team.

Creating the RFP: The project should be something that can realistically be designed and built within 2-3 years. The project should be designed with realistic budget constraints.   DO NOT let the phrases like 'money is no object', 'sky's the limit' or 'design the tallest building in the world' pervade the dialogue.   Having a real mentor-client will help this, but please keep it in mind. Remember the goal is for the students to learn something and to experience a holistic view of the building process. If the design is unrealistic or too ambitious, the team will certainly not have enough time to discuss finishes in the lobby or create a construction logistics plan.

The mentors can start the discussion with the client by asking if is there a project that their firm is currently working on or is about to start.   There may not be anything coming up that the ACE team would be interested in ,or the project may be too far along to be viable for this exercise.

Another option is to ask the mock-client if there is a wish-project that they might be interested in starting. This may actually engage the client more and could allow for more creativity.

- RFP should be from the mentor-client addressed to the ACE team. Language should include 'I am aware that this is a mock-project being designed by High School Students in the ACE Mentor Program working with an interdisciplinary group of mentors.'
- Include description list of program requirements, including occupancy, use type, level of finishes.
- Proposal should include deliverable like drawings, schedule, logistics plan, finish board, and sometimes a model or renderings.
- Client should issue constraints on project location. i.e. 'propose a suitable location in the NYC area' or 'location should be adjacent to our current facility.'
- Questions or design changes should be issued to client in the form of RFIs.
- Proposal should be due roughly in early May.

Post ACE Presentation: After working for a year with ACE students the client may want to continue the exercise beyond the final presentation. ACE teams have travelled as far as Miami to re-present their final project to a client and their team. To present directly to the client is an additional experience that the team will never forget. If these opportunities arise, please speak with the ACE Mentor Program of Greater NY staff. At a minimum, ACE staff will probably want to participate in the presentation. Again, this is getting the word out on ACE and possibly recruiting future team sponsors.

AIA Westchester + Hudson Valley
A Chapter of The American Institute of Architects

November 17, 2014

RE: ACE Mentor: Team 42 NYC – RFP for AIA Westchester Hudson +Valley Center for Architecture

Dear Jim,

On behalf of the officers and directors of AIA WHV, please accept this letter as a request for proposal for ACE NYC Team 42 to do a MOCK Proposal for a AIA Westchester Hudson + Valley Center for Architecture. We understand that this is a project that will be created by High School age students assisted by a team of adult mentors. This scope of work includes: site selection, program development, design development. Information gathered should culminate in a formal power point presentation that will cover all aspects of the proposal including: Architectural Design and Development, Engineering Design & Major Systems, Site Development and Landscape, Constructability, Project Budget, Schedule, 3D model (SketchUp) and a scale model.

1) Site should be located in Newburgh, NY (newburghcommunitylandbank.com)
    a.   Team should propose a group of (at least) five sites that fit the RFP project needs.
    b.   Team should prepare a written comparison of pros-cons for each site.
    c.   AIA WHV shall have final site selection
2) "The Center for Architecture is a destination for all interested in the built environment."
    a.   A site that re-uses/re-purposes an existing structure is preferred
    b.   Site should have office space, Toilet facilities, and break room for a staff of Five (5)
    c.   One Large conference room (25pp)
    d.   There should be three (3) Multipurpose Galleries 1) Major/Permanent Exhibition, 2) Temp exhibition, and 3) Design Contest Exhibition
    e.   There should be Two (30 set) classrooms
    f.   Project should include a 100 person Screening Room/Lecture Hall
    g.   Site should employ LEED and alternative solutions whenever possible (ex: geothermal wells, photovoltaics, natural lighting/ventilation, green roof/outdoor space, etc.
    h.   Project should include a locker room and bicycle lock up area
    i.   3d Printing Studio

RFP should be submitted in a phased format to cover ACE 42 Season:
1) Site Selection – December 2014
2) Program Development – January 2015
3) Massing & Adjacency Study - January 2015
4) Preliminary Floor Plans – January 2015
5) Preliminary design sketches (exterior) – January 2015
6) Material Selection
7) Sketch Up Model
8) Presentation Draft
9) Final Presentation – RFP DUE DATE, May 5th 2015

Questions/RFIs should be sent via email to ███████████ Thank you very much for your interest in our program. We are excited - Good Luck!

Sincerely,

Peter F. Gaito Jr.

Peter Gaito, Jr., AIA – President Elect
AIA Westchester + Hudson Valley
CC: ACE TEAM 42 NYC

P.O. Box 611, Katonah, NY 10536
914-232-7240 www.aiawhv.org
chapteroffice@aiawhv.org

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