

CHESTER AND DIANA WIDOM ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Five California Community College Students Awarded

Disparate Group of Students are Connected by Determination to Excel in Architecture

//for immediate release

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(Tuesday, May 7, 2024. Sacramento, CA.) The California Architectural Foundation (CAF) and American Institute of Architects California are honored to announce the recipients of Chester and Diana Widom Architectural Education Scholarships (Widom Scholarship).

Five community college students transferring to four-year institutions have been awarded—each student receiving up to \$5000 to help offset the costs of higher education in architecture and design. S

“These scholarships are amongst the most meaningful actions the California Architectural Foundation can take to provide a pipeline of talented, qualified next-generation designers for the profession, while also expanding diversity in the field,” said Mary Follenweider, FAIA, President, California Architectural Foundation. “I admire the work of all students awarded this year’s scholarship. And, I am deeply grateful to Chester and Diana Widom for establishing this scholarship to support such deserving students.”

2024 Chester and Diana Widom Architectural Education Scholarship Recipients:

\$5000 Level Recipients



Omorilewa Tayo Ajegbile

Omorilewa Tayo Ajegbile – Bakersfield College

An emigree from Nigeria, Omorilewa Tayo Ajegbile is already recognized as a valued leader by educators. In writing a letter of support, Bakersfield College Professor of Architecture Lidia Torres said she leveraged his experience with Revit—he worked in offices in Lagos prior to immigrating—to inform other students. “I can tell the rest of my students have learned to respect and admire Ty, not just for [his] professionalism, [and] beautiful designs but his willingness to help and teach others,” she wrote in her recommendation letter.

These types of qualities were also recognized by the jury who notes Ajegbile’s “high-quality design work, his motivation and his experience.”



Nicholas Huynh

Nicholas Huynh – *City College of San Francisco*

Named to the Dean's List for every academic quarter to date, Nicholas Huynh is diligent about producing high-caliber and meaningful architectural drawings, renderings, and physical models. A physical model he produced was selected for exhibition in the gallery of the school's architecture department.

But, in making the award, the Jury looked more expansively at Huynh's work noting: "It is incredibly creative and out of the box. There is great deal of promise in it."



Juan Garcia

Juan Garcia – *East Los Angeles College*

Juan Garcia's academic journey demonstrates determination, tenacity, and his capacity to succeed. Struggling with early education, he left school to support his family; he returned to become an architect, teaching himself to overcome obstacles—a journey the Jury recognizes as well-taken.

In bestowing the scholarship, the Jury noted, "The Jury is in awe—appreciative of Garcia's talent" as well as his "excellent hand-drawing skills."

\$2500 Level Recipients





Rachel Zuniga

Rachel Zuniga – *Glendale Community College*

While the housing crisis has been a focus of the profession, both in terms of core values and the production of housing units, it is already shaping Rachel Zuniga’s perspective of architecture. Influenced by a job in which she interacted with and got to know many people living without shelter—many of whom had experienced traumatic events—her focus is on pursuing Empathic Architectural design, using empathy for the user as the core of the design process.

The Jury recognized her commitment to Empathetic Architecture in providing the scholarship and also the “high quality” of her work. one who could use our financial support.



Michelle Perez

Michelle Perez – *Glendale Community College*

Michelle Perez’s journey to architecture began with a cartoon. It “enlightened me with tremendous curiosity on creating a thought-provoking scene with meaning, metaphor, and the possibility of integrating shapes, color, light, and shadow.”

A little less than two decades later, the Jury sees the fruition of these early ideas. Describing her current portfolio as “fanciful with work of very high quality. Perez has an aesthetic agenda which shows sophistication.”

The **2024 Widom Scholarship Jury** was composed of: Mary Follenweider, FAIA – President, CAF; Jeannie S. Bertolaccini, AIA – CAF Regent & Principal for Ordiz Melby Architects; Debra Gerod, FAIA – CAF Regent & Partner at Gruen Associates; Emily Potts, AIA – Assistant Professor at Sacramento State University; and Ginger Thompson, AIA – AEP COA Vice President & Dreyfuss + Blackford Architecture Associate.



About The California Architectural Foundation

The California Architectural Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting excellence in architecture through scholarships, grants, and educational programs—bridging the gap between the academic and professional worlds. CAF exists to provide a mechanism for members of the AIA and the general public to contribute to an organization with a great benefit to society.



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