

AIA Henry Adams Medal Program

Mission of the program

For more than a century, the American Institute of Architects has provided a medal to the top-ranking graduating student at NAAB accredited schools or CACB for Canadian schools. This recognizes the top graduate of their professional Bachelor of Architecture (BArch) and/or Master of Architecture (MArch) program(s).

Revised process

Beginning in 2018, we have a new medal and new process. We are moving back to the original method and an annual submission system for the top graduate only and discontinuing the Certificate of Merit for the second-ranking student. At present, the submission process will have an annual deadline of March 31 and medals and awards will be mailed to the schools within 4–6 weeks following, hopefully in time for most graduation ceremonies. However, we know that change is difficult, so we will leave the submission page open after the deadline, for schools to continue to submit their requests. We also realize that some schools have different graduation dates than the typical May/June ones, but we hope that by 2019, we can have a system that gets medals to all students to wear at graduation and will work with schools to do so. Please note, awards are not given for BA or BS architecture degrees. Applications can be found [here](#) and for more information, please contact nissadahlinbrown@aia.org.

History

The history of the Henry Adams Medal Program, originally called the School Medal Program, dates to 1914 when a resolution was passed at the 48th Annual Convention to create it:



Let the Institute annually offer in each school a medal for general excellence throughout the course, the award to be made in each school by its own Faculty... The medal to be silver; to bear on its face a suitable inscription and on its reverse, either the seal of the Institute or some other design as may be approved by the Board.

At the same convention, it was announced that Henry Adams (1838–1918), a historian, journalist, and scholar, had donated the royalties from his 1904 book Mont St. Michel and Chartres to the AIA. He requested copies be given to “...draughtsmen who might otherwise not be able to read it...” and so the book was included with the School Medal to the top students in 1915.

Adams, born into a prominent Boston family (grandson of President John Quincy Adams and great-grandson of President John Adams), wrote the book for the education of his nieces. It was a meditative, reflective piece, in which he referred to the reader as a “tourist” and hoped to embed the reader in the context of the times in which the Abbey at Mont-Saint Michel and the Cathedral at Chartres were built. He wrote:

...we have set out to go from Mont Saint Michel to Chartres in three centuries, the eleventh, the twelfth, and the thirteen, trying to get, on the way, not technical knowledge; not correct views on either history, art, or religion; not anything that can possibly be useful or instructive; but only a sense of what those centuries had to say, and a sympathy with their ways of saying it.

For more than 100 years, the School Medal/Henry Adams Medal has been awarded to thousands of top architecture graduates in the US and Canada. We are proud to continue to sponsor this recognition program.