AIA
COTE Top Ten
for Students

2026 Competition **CRITERIA CHECKLIST**

COTE TOP TEN FOR STUDENTS COMPETITION
Framework for Design Excellence: Checklist

Successful submissions will embody a cohesive and beautiful architectural understanding. They will demonstrate how to achieve a healthy, sustainable and equitable future. The jury will focus on submissions which meet individual requirements while achieving overall design excellence. Teams are encouraged to use the following checklist to self-evaluate the success of their own submission.

Framework for Design Excellence: Ten Questions	Not Met	Met	Commendable
1: INTEGRATION Does the submission clearly identify the big idea behind this project, its purpose, and how its separate pieces fit together into a coherent whole?			
2: EQUITABLE COMMUNITY Does this project benefit both its users and its community? Has the community been engaged to shape the design? Does its location and design promote equitable access to its benefits, strengthen its community, and reinforce means of transportation that support health and reduce emissions?			
3: ECOSYSTEMS Does this project benefit the earth? Does it impact the living systems around it positively?			
4: WATER Does this project work with and delight in water, and does it use water wisely?			
5: ECONOMY Does the project provide abundance with an economy of means?			
6: ENERGY Does the design work with, rather than fight, local climate to provide a comfort place for people with the least energy use and carbon emissions?			
7: WELL-BEING Does the project promote health of its inhabitants?			
8: RESOURCES Does the design show that materials were selected thoughtfully, addressing where they would come from, their impact during manufacture and transport, and their safe re-use after the building is gone?			
9: CHANGE Is the project designed for a long life yet allow adaptation to changing needs? Does the design anticipate a changing climate and recovery after disaster? Does it build social, economic, and community resilience in the face of climate change and natural disasters?			
10: DISCOVERY Does the design allow the building to learn from its users, and allow its users to learn from the building? Does the submission identify what lessons have been learned from the project, where the project has fallen short, and lessons that can be carried forward?			