

CHICAGO ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

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Chicago Architecture Foundation unveils the new DiscoverDesign.org

Redesigned website provides a digital space for designers of all levels to educate, mentor and interact

Chicago, Ill.— Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) announces the relaunch of DiscoverDesign.org, an award-winning, online design education platform that brings students, teachers and mentors together to create solutions for real-world challenges. Originally launched in 2012, DiscoverDesign equips users to develop fluency with the design process by solving challenges. Throughout the process peers, teachers and mentors can provide feedback on their work. The website also hosts CAF's annual National DiscoverDesign Competition, a nationwide ideas competition which challenges participants to think outside the box and use the design process to create solutions to everyday design problems.

DiscoverDesign was created as a dynamic platform that brings teens from all over the globe together to share design ideas and inspirations, and learn from expert professionals in their fields of interest. DiscoverDesign.org enables teachers to teach what the National Education Association (NEA) identifies as the "Four Cs": Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration and Creativity. These skills are acquired when schools bring 21st century learning practices into classrooms, encouraging technological literacy, peer interaction and conceptualization of real-world challenges. Because many high schools have not incorporated modern, flexible learning programs into their curricula, it is particularly important that students and teachers have other resources that they can easily integrate into existing teaching practices.

Educators utilize DiscoverDesign in their classrooms to teach design thinking and problem solving through design challenges, and engage students to collaborate in an online space. The platform also connects students with volunteer mentors and design professionals who provide feedback and help motivate and direct teens through comments and discussion around their projects. With this new version, students can create projects, publish an online portfolio of work and earn digital "badges" that demonstrate the skills and competencies they have developed during the process.

"DiscoverDesign.org is in many ways, the only learning tool of its kind. It is collaborative, interactive and offers a multitude of creative applications," said Lynn Osmond, President and CEO of CAF. "We know that the traditional learning model is evolving. Opportunities for young people to use technology, consider practical design solutions to the world around them and work with experienced professionals, is what will best prepare them for success in the future. With this reimagined website, educators are able to offer the dynamic learning experience that will give teens an advantage, and keep them engaged and inspired."

Gabrielle Lyon, Vice President of Education and Experience, led the two-year long initiative, which was launched in time for the 2016 National High School Architecture and Design Competition. "The original fundamentals of DiscoverDesign are still in place: it is an authentic project-based platform that requires critical collaboration. It's also the home for our annual design competition that students and teachers look forward to every year," she explained. "The new version empowers educators to manage individual

and group projects, clone or “hack” existing challenges so they can personalize them for their own students, and lets young people curate and showcase their best work to each other and to the public at large. The changes we made were driven by our users’ requests; once we had clarity on what we needed the site to be able to do, we partnered with Caxy Code Creative to execute the platform.”

To develop a detailed plan for the user experience, Caxy interviewed users who had experience with the original platform, including students, teachers, mentors and previous winners of the design competition. The project team was then able to create a variety of personas and use needs upon which they could base the redesign of the site. The team then tackled the design. “We wanted the redesign to stay true to the core values of the site and the established style guide, while creating a cleaner, more user-friendly platform,” explained Rosamund Lannin, Project Manager of Caxy Code Creative. “We upgraded the current website from Drupal 6 to Drupal 8, which helped provide new functionality; this combined with the design, created an intuitive and useful experience. We love the idea of helping the next generation of designers discover their passion, and our work on discoverdesign.org was incredibly rewarding. The tools behind the site gave us opportunities to be creative with not only aesthetics, but also by innovating what could be done with the technology. We’re excited to see how the users interact and what the designers on the site will create.”

DiscoverDesign.org also hosts the annual National DiscoverDesign.org Competition, presented by the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Now in its fourth year, more than 1,000 students from around the country have participated in the competition to-date. On September 15, the 2016 challenge was announced: it asks students to address the lack of affordable housing across the country, a problem that architects, urban planners and designers are working to solve through data sets regarding location, population, average income and other information.

“This national design competition gives teens the rare opportunity to address design issues that impact communities around the country, and compete with their peers on a national level,” said Lyon. “The solutions are creative and sophisticated; many of the DiscoverDesign competition participants pursue, engineering and design in college and careers. We love being able to equip young people with the tools and experiences they need to pursue a professional path they’re passionate about.”

The deadline for submissions is December 7; finalists and winners will be announced December 16, 2016. Visit discoverdesign.org for more information.

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Chicago Architecture Foundation

The Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring people to discover why design matters. As an education organization, CAF offers tours, programs, exhibitions, field trips, curricula and online tools that are part of a dynamic learning journey for all ages. Proceeds from CAF’s shop and tours—as well as grants, sponsorships and donations—support this educational mission. For more information, please visit architecture.org or call 312.922.3432. For further information visit www.architecture.org or call 312.922.3432.

About Caxy Code Creative

Caxy Code Creative is an award-winning, web design and development firm in Chicago specializing in User Experience and Agile-driven software and technology development. Founded in 1999 by Michael LaVista, the firm creates digital experiences that tie brand experiences together and make them better

over time. User experience, design, strategy and execution come together to form products that clients and their customers love. Caxy Code Creative is committed to delivering value to clients with every interaction and output. Awards include Acquia's Drupal Entertainment Site of the Year for fieldmuseum.org to Hermes awards for outstanding design. For more information, visit www.caxy.com.