



Design Emphasis is widely acclaimed as one of the foremost furniture design competitions for students in the U.S.

Who May Enter

Any undergraduate student enrolled in an accredited tradeschool, college or university and enrolled in an undergraduate furniture design course at the time the entry is designed may enter a project in the competition. Projects completed in the Spring, Summer, or Fall Semesters of 2025 or Spring Semester of 2026 will be accepted.

The competition is intended for full or part-time undergraduate students, and is not appropriate for continuing education students who have established design shops or careers. Students will need their instructors endorsement to enter the competition.

Project Requirements

- Design Emphasis 2026 must be the first competition in which the piece has been entered.
- Projects must be 70% complete at time of entry and 100% complete prior to shipping to IWF 2026.
- Students may enter more than one design, but must complete a separate entry form and use a separate thumb drive/email for each entry's materials.

Student Registration

All students who wish to enter a project must register online no later than May 1, 2026.

To register for the competition, go to the [Design Emphasis](#) page on the [IWFAtlanta.com](#) website and click on the Student Entry Form button. You will need to ask your instructor for their unique code in order to register. Complete and submit the form. Confirmation of receipt and acceptance to the competition will be sent to the email address you submit within 7 business days.

Awards and Prize Money

Best of Show:	\$1,500
Winner in each category:	\$1,000
Merit in each category:	\$ 500
Honorable Mention in each category:	\$ 250

Categories for Judging

Seating - To include upholstered and non-upholstered seating. Style, function, comfort, and stability must be addressed

Commercial/Office/Hospitality Furniture - Furniture designed specifically for use in office, hospitality, health care, college and university markets. Functional and design considerations, as well as adaptability/integration of computer and/or communications technology (when applicable) must be addressed.

Case Goods - Bedroom, dining room, wall systems, display/storage case goods designed for residential or business use. Stability (ant-tip), style and function are important.

Accent Furniture - Traditional tables and small accent pieces. Lighting, coffee tables, etc.

Design Creativity - A furniture item that expresses uniqueness in design, use of materials, construction technique and/or creative solution to a functional need. Design execution and craftsmanship on a high order is expected in this category.

Judging Criteria

Criteria for judging entries and the value of each criteria:

DESIGN	(40%)
Originality or improvement of an existing design. Adaptability or interpretation of furniture from other periods. Development / refinement of function, use and construction issues. Creative use of materials.	
MANUFACTURING	(25%)
Is the design reasonably adaptable or suitable to volume production methods? Possibilities and ease of packaging for distribution.	
MARKETABILITY	(20%)
Does the product meet a need of the market for which it is designed? The product must effectively perform the function for which it is designed (ergonomics, stability, durability).	
WORKMANSHIP	(15%)
Attention to construction and finishing. Design / product execution and craftsmanship must be complete and fully functional.	



Project Entry

- All registered students entries submit 4 unaltered high resolution digital photographs of the project (without props and on a blank background - preferably white or light colored) showing front, back and any distinguishing features of the project. Do not submit schematics or 'life-style' settings. If the project is incomplete, you may include 1 CGI of the completed project.

Photographs must be in a PC compatible format: TIF, JPEG, EPS or PNG. Zip file are acceptable.

- Students must submit a written description of the project - 50 words minimum and 100 words maximum in a MS Word or PDF format. The dimensions of the finished piece must be included in the description as well as the materials used in the construction. Please give your project a name or title and indicate the category you are entering.
- Entry materials must be emailed to LCH@iwfatlanta.com no later than midnight, May 8, 2026. Late entries will not be accepted. No exceptions.**

IMPORTANT:

- Projects must be at least 70% complete at time of entry
- Resolution must be 600 DPI or higher
- Seperate entries must be submitted in seperate emails labeled with student name and project name and/or number.

Prescreening Entry and Judging

All projects entered by the deadline of May 8, 2026 will be pre-screened by a limited judging panel in late May. Judges will review all slides and determine finalists in each of the categories.

The prescreening judges may determine that an entry is better suited for a different category than the one to which it was submitted.

Finalists will be notified by email within 7 days of the completion of prescreening.

Finalist Entry Requirements

Final entries must be accompanied by an **Illustration Board**. This must be 22" x 28", show the function of the piece, and be self-explanatory. To enhance the project, the illustration board should be as informative and attractive as possible. Use the illustration board to identify features which may not be readily apparent. Design schematics and lifestyle settings are appropriate here. The board itself is not judged, but is a submission requirement.

Student's name and school must not be written on the illustration board, but should be written on a card attached to the back of the board which can be removed and placed on the front after the judging at the Fair. **Please email a picture of your board to LCH@iwfatlanta.com before including it in your shipping container.** Please

include a description of where the board is packed within the shipping container in this email.

Finalists must ship furniture, assembly instructions, and illustration boards to Atlanta in July of 2026, or deliver in person to the Georgia World Congress Center on August 24, 2026.

Shipments must be made through the freight handler designated by the Fair or delivered personally by the student. IWF will prepay the freight costs for shipping finalists' projects to Atlanta. For those who personally deliver, reimbursement will be based on zones rather than actual mileage. Detailed shipping instructions will be provided to all finalists.

Security is provided throughout the Fair. However, IWF and its sponsors assume no responsibility for damage or loss during shipment to and from Atlanta or display at the show.

Additional Information:

Finalist projects will be judged onsite at IWF 2026 by a panel of experienced professionals associated with the furniture industry, including manufacturers, designers, trade press and retailers. Winners will be announced and awards presented in the IWF Design Emphasis Gallery during show hours on Wednesday, August 26, 2026.

IWF provides **two nights complimentary lodging** at a hotel selected by IWF staff for finalist students and their instructors who wish to attend IWF 2026. Travel to and from the fair and expenses while attending are at the student's or instructor's expense.

For interested students, there is opportunity to receive additional complimentary hotel nights in exchange for assistance with the IWF Educational Conference. Details on this opportunity will be shared with finalists along with the shipping instructions. Space is limited in this opportunity.

Disclaimer:

IWF and its sponsors reserve the right to photograph projects for use in publicity without compensation and shall not be responsible for any copy-right or design infringement. While the design remains the property of the student, commercial transactions should be avoided during the Fair.

For more information contact:
Liz Hosp at LCH@iwfatlanta.com or 404-693-8336