

## RULES for NEXT 2026

1. Students must work on this project individually.
2. This competition will be a faculty-sponsored part of program curriculum in the 2026 fall term or an independent study project that has a faculty sponsor we can correspond with.
3. When submitting an entry, it should be able to open or launch as a complete presentation for the judges, including the concept statement. **This should be one PDF.** It should not be individual files for the judges to navigate through. No videos, Prezi's, Mural, or PowerPoint formats will be permitted; however, embedded QR codes are acceptable to take judges to additional content if the student wishes to provide.
  - **PLEASE NOTE:** Judges will be viewing on a computer screen. It is easier for judges to navigate multiple pages vs. creating a presentation "board" that is on one or two pages that requires the judge to zoom in on the screen to navigate/evaluate the content. That is not a good user experience for the judges. **Also note**, if you embed QR codes for the judges to navigate to additional content, consider not putting the most compelling content here as it requires a discretionary additional step by the judges. Consider this content to be supplemental.
4. All student participants must be currently registered as juniors or seniors in their design program, 5<sup>TH</sup> year students enrolled into a 5-year Master's program, or in a master's program where there is no bachelor's degree offered or a master's program where the students have no bachelor's degree in design or other previous design experience.
5. **FOR FINAL SUBMISSION OF PROJECTS:** Each submission (2 per program\*\*) must be emailed separately to [design4next@gmail.com](mailto:design4next@gmail.com) (please note: **this is a different email address than has been used during the competition (this is going to a gmail account and is a third party email address to ensure identity of program is not revealed)**)

*\*\*Please note 2 per program = 2 per individually taught studios/classes. Example: one studio with two professors may submit a total of two entries. Two different studios with different class schedules and/or different instructors/students can submit two entries for each studio.*

6. Naming of entries shall be **"SCHOOL NAME – STUDENT LAST NAME, STUDENT FIRST NAME".pdf**. Your student's name or name of school should **NOT** be listed within the presentation itself - only in the name of the file.
7. Submissions must come **FROM THE PROFESSOR** no later than 5pm PT on **Wednesday, December 9, 2026**.
  - Submissions received directly from students will not be accepted to ensure these are the approved submittals from each program.

- If you are a professor that is sponsoring students who are participating through self-study (not part of your class curriculum) – the submission must still come from YOU as the sponsoring faculty.
8. **The body of the email needs to contain the student’s best contact email address during the judging period (December 18, 2026 – January 22, 2026).**
  9. **BEFORE SUBMITTING YOUR 2 SUBMISSIONS, please verify your students are available to travel on Feb. 22-24, 2026, for the in-person final judging/presentations at our headquarters in Grand Rapids if they are chosen as one of our five semifinalists.** All travel arrangements and expenses will be made and covered by Steelcase (only flights originating and returning domestically in North America - U.S./Canada/Mexico); however, the **student must be present to be considered. Failure to attend in person will disqualify your student.**
  10. The submission is to be the equivalent of a design development presentation to your client, NEXT.
  11. The student’s goal, through your submission, is to convince NEXT that your design will provide them the work environment they need to meet their goals.
  12. Students will receive information about the client, general program requirements, client’s mission and interests via the competition website: [NEXT Website](#)  
From this, students will know the type of space the client desires, what excites them and what their goals and needs are.
  13. Students must use products (furniture, technology, and architectural solutions) available from the variety of all **Steelcase Brands in our portfolio (including any Partner Brands)** for the project. Students are allowed to have up to 20% of the project be “custom” as applicable for feature areas. However, custom applications should remain economically feasible as most clients do not budget for a completely customized project.
  14. Questions must be submitted **by professors only** via email at: [design4next@steelcase.com](mailto:design4next@steelcase.com)  
Response times may vary; however, our goal will be to respond within 48 hours. The Q+A period begins on **September 21, 2026**, and the deadline for submitting questions is **October 2, 2026**.
  15. All submissions are due at 5pm PST on **December 9, 2026**. Late submissions will not be considered.
  16. All submissions need to be self-explanatory for the judges to evaluate. Only the semifinalists will have the opportunity to present their project to the panel. Judge’s comments will only be provided to the semifinalists and honorable mention recipients.
  17. Files should be in **PDF format** and be sized for easy review by our judges on a computer screen **(FILE SIZES SHOULDN’T EXCEED 24MB)**. **It is a better experience for the judges to review as a series of slides (in landscape format) versus submitting as one or two page “virtual boards” that must be zoomed in on for review.**
  18. **PLEASE NOTE**, the examples of prior projects (semifinalists) shown on the NEXT website are both their original submission into the competition for (blind judging) and their final submittals for the (verbal) presentations delivered in person to the judges.

## **Submission Guidelines.**

### **19. Submissions must include the following (but not limited to):**

- Design concept statement (max 250 words). This should **clearly articulate** your inspiration for the design, how it is reflected in your solution and how it meets the client's requirements.
- **A (heading) must be provided on the concept pages(s) of the submission and the student must be able to describe their concept in (one-to-five words) – no more.** Please note, this heading is only 1-5 words, the overall concept statement (description) can be a maximum of 250 words.
- Inspiration images that impacted your final solution. Images shall be compiled on a labeled, digital board.
- Clear explanation and visuals of how your research informed your Evidence Based Design solution.
- Show concept development process (**authentic hand sketches, authentic/early bubble diagrams, concept models, etc.**) – **these are all VERY impactful for judges by communicating your iterative process to your final solution**
- Rendered floor plan with rooms labeled and furniture shown.
- Reflected ceiling plans are (**required**) for the **Community Hub – Reception & Welcome, Work Cafe and Reception areas**. Include a legend with ceiling heights identified.
- A **minimum of one elevation section** is required. We **suggest** you choose an area (not a room) that demonstrates your design intent.
- Perspective renderings (**minimum of 9, maximum of 15**). **A minimum of 6 renderings must be full bleed renderings. PLEASE NOTE THE SPACES THAT REQUIRE RENDERINGS ON THE PROGRAM DOCUMENT.**
- High quality digital images of furniture, finish materials and lighting selections per area. All selections must be labeled and coded back to the room location. Please place all images, with labels, on a digital board(s).
- Student developed graphic logo for NEXT will be incorporated holistically reflecting their brand and culture in the space as part of the submission.

20. **Prohibitions.** Submissions may not contain any illegal, offensive, or obscene subject matter and any such Submission shall be disqualified without notification to Contestant. Contestants may not use third party trademarks, designs, or trade dress in their Submission. Contestants may not copy or otherwise plagiarize the Submission from any source, nor may the Submissions include third party copyrighted or patented material. Sponsor is not responsible for legal protection or clearance of Submissions in any form. Contestants shall indemnify Sponsor against any and all claims from any third party for any use by Sponsor of any Submission, in whole or part. If, in the sole discretion of Sponsor, a Submission, in whole or part, constitutes copyright infringement, trademark infringement or otherwise violates the rights of any third party, the Submission will be disqualified, and the Contestant will have no recourse to be reconsidered. Sponsor may request

evidence that Submissions are an original work of authorship within the meaning of U.S. Copyright law at any time during or after the Contest Period.

**PLEASE NOTE: We advise the LIMITED use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) for concept development, concept statements, inspirational images, etc. for academic integrity and the evaluation of original work. ANY use of AI to influence any of the aforementioned MUST be clearly cited in the submission with the source and date of inquiry clearly stated. All final renderings, RCP, mood boards, elevations, axonometric drawings, etc. MUST be original work and NOT generated through AI solutions.**

## DESIGN CHALLENGE

**NEXT** is a lifestyle and apparel brand built around creativity, collaboration, community, authenticity, and social responsibility. The brand is more than a clothing company – it's a collective of people shaping style through real-life needs and personal expression rather than fleeting trends.

The **NEXT Brand Essence** can be distilled into three very important themes:

- Fashion inspired by real people
- Fast response to customer demand and affordable style
- Social responsibility to employees, customers, and communities

**NEXT's** brand positioning creates versatile, high-quality activewear and wardrobe essentials designed for everyday life. We focus on comfort, artistry, longevity, and pieces meant to be worn repeatedly rather than discarded seasonally. **NEXT** clothing appeals to people seeking clothing that feels creative, adventurous, handcrafted, expressive, and authentic. At **NEXT**, we emphasize making getting dressed enjoyable and building a lifestyle around the brand, not just a wardrobe.

### **NEXT Brand Values:**

- Creativity – Encourages innovation, artistic expression, and boundary-pushing ideas
- Excellence – Focused on high-quality products, craftsmanship, and exceeding expectations
- Transparency – Open about practices, processes, and sustainability efforts
- Collaboration – Views customers and community as co-creators who influence the brand's evolution

**NEXT** is committed to ethical and social responsibility. We are committed to ethical labor practices, fair treatment, safety, and respect for workers. **NEXT** frequently conducts direct factory visits and works with

facilities that have achieved recognized third-party social and ethical compliance standards. At **NEXT**, we have a responsibility to our employees, customers, and the communities we serve.

### **Our Workplace Vision for NEXT:**

The proposed Miami headquarters is envisioned as the heart of creativity and connection—a place where ideas grow, relationships deepen, and the **NEXT** culture comes to life through intentional collaboration and innovation.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The company brand and culture is up to the interpretation of the student and is completely up to the student's discretion. It is important that the **NEXT** team has a place that supports the work that they do, enhances collaboration with teammates and external partners, and a place where they are proud to invite business partners, prospective ones, as well as family and the surrounding community.

**NEXT** has decided they will be partnering with Steelcase to provide the furnishings for this new location, because of Steelcase's commitment to innovation, diversity, equity, inclusion, and sustainability. The leaders of **NEXT** value the research Steelcase has provided for hybrid collaboration and inclusive design principles and want you to learn more and incorporate these ideas in the design of the new space. We feel strongly that we want to partner with companies that match our brand values.

## **JUDGING CRITERIA**

Judging will be based on a 100-point scale:

1. **CONCEPT (10 POINTS):** Did the student provide a clear concept statement with proof of how research informed design process as well as how the concept links to solving the client's needs. Did the student provide a heading that describes the concept in (1-5) words?
2. **RESEARCH (10 POINTS):** Is it clear the student exhibited evidence-based design reasoning with their design solutions.
3. **PROCESS (15 POINTS):** Was the student's iterative design process clearly shown? Did their concept development process have supporting graphics with sketches, bubble diagrams, concept models, etc.?
4. **PLANNING AND DESIGN (30 POINTS):** Did the student optimize the use of total built environment into their design solution, and did they incorporate their research? Are all of the program requirements met and are there any ADA code issues that were overlooked?

5. **PRESENTATION/GRAPHICS (25 POINTS):** Overall presentation quality: visual submission and quality formatting and flow. Graphics, visuals, renderings, and sketches are well developed with no typos and easy to read.
6. **WILDCARD SPACE (10 POINTS):** Uniqueness and creativity demonstrated in the addition and development of the wildcard space and communicating specifically how it benefits NEXT's objectives and the community.

Note: It is expected that **all** submissions will comply with regulatory guidelines, adhere to green building principles and maintain the integrity of the building structure. As part of school jury process, **professor must review all plans to ensure they comply with planning guidelines/codes.**

**Disclaimer:** By entering the Steelcase "NEXT" Student Design Competition, Entrant (and their university) agrees, acknowledges and understands that all Submissions may be posted on the Steelcase Inc. website, within Steelcase Work Better publications or used in future promotional campaigns for viewing by the general public and grants Steelcase Inc. in perpetuity a royalty-free, worldwide, non-exclusive license to publish, display, reproduce or otherwise use the Submission for Steelcase Inc. and its designees in its sole discretion whatsoever and without further notice or compensation. Steelcase Inc. does not guarantee the posting of any Submission and reserves the right not to post a Submission for any or no reason.

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