

LOS ANGELES, CA, September 19, 2013 /**24-7PressRelease**/ -- Woodbury University architecture student Michael Sotona's next project very well may be designing a gallery where he can display his awards.

Sotona, a senior, recently was named winner of the American Institute of Architects, California Council's (AIACC) annual Mel Ferris Scholarship Award competition, which honors the state's top student architects based on submitted design portfolios, academic achievement, financial need and service to their school and community.

Sotona was selected from among students from the state's accredited architectural schools. In addition to Woodbury University (www.woodbury.edu), they include Art Academy of San Francisco, California College of the Arts, Cal Poly Pomona, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, New School of Architecture and Design, Southern California Institute of Architecture, UC Berkeley, UCLA and the University of Southern California.

The competition asked student architects to design a project that utilized a minimum of six of AIA's 10 measures of sustainable design and performance metrics while addressing a number of other requirements. Sotona's design of a monitoring and land treatment facility that doubles as a visitor's center at the former Santa Susana Field Laboratory in the west San Fernando Valley is an extension of the landscape, topology and ecology of the site. The jury of five called Sotona's entry, "... modest, beautiful and well resolved with a balance between not being overly heroic and its sensitivity to the site."

"Michael Sotana's design fully enlists 'green' architectural practices while addressing a series of complex environmental challenges and creating a way for the community to experience the effort to restore this critical ecological habitat," said Norman Millar, AIA, Dean of the School of Architecture at Woodbury. "It demonstrates the kind of creativity and leadership we seek to nurture in our students and that are at the foundation of our architecture program."

In June, a Woodbury School of Architecture team comprised of Sotona, Gabriela Colmenares and Jennifer Pope was named winner of the Julius Shulman Emerging Talent Award at the 43rd Annual Los Angeles Architecture Awards. During the three-day competition, students designed a continuing care retirement facility promoting social interaction and community on the MLK Medical Center Campus in Willowbrook. The Woodbury team's design was selected from among seven participating schools of architecture in the Los Angeles area. They were honored at an awards presentation hosted by the Los Angeles Business Council and held at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

"These two prestigious awards demonstrate the creative and intellectual capabilities of Woodbury University students and our commitment to helping to cultivate the next generation of leaders in the field of architecture," said Luis Ma. R. Calingo, Ph.D., president, Woodbury University. "The future is bright indeed for students like these who are able to leverage both their natural talents and the breadth of their Woodbury education to design solutions to complex problems."

Woodbury University School of Architecture is a network of hubs strategically sited within the Southern California megalopolis: Los Angeles, Burbank, Hollywood, and San Diego. Together, these sites form a critical infrastructure for architectural investigations. The school's undergraduate and graduate programs in architecture and interior architecture train students as entrepreneurs, architect citizens, and cultural builders.

About Woodbury University Founded in 1884, Woodbury University is one of the oldest institutions of higher education in Southern California. Woodbury offers bachelor's degrees from the School of Architecture, School of Business, School of Media, Culture & Design, and Institute of Transdisciplinary Studies, along with an MBA program, Master of Architecture (MArch), Master of Science in Architecture (MSArch), and Master of Organizational Leadership. A San Diego campus offers bachelor of architecture, Master of Real Estate Development for Architects (MRED), and Master of Science in Architecture, Landscape, and Urbanism degrees. Visit <http://www.woodbury.edu> for more information.

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Note to editors: high-resolution images available on request.