

How to Apply

Complete the registration form at uli.org/hines2026 by November 19, 2025, to register a team. Create a free ULI account in order to register. Read the instructions below and view a [Sample Registration Form](#).

Please note that the deadline to register is Wednesday, November 19, however we ask that you start and complete your registration as early as possible! The application includes requesting various approvals depending on your status in school, as well as approval from your department or program head.

ULI invites teams from accredited educational institutions worldwide to participate in the ULI Hines Student Competition - Americas. However, while the competition is open to teams around the world, ULI does not have limited funds for student travel in the finalist phase. Students in Europe have the opportunity to compete in the [ULI Hines Student Competition - Europe](#), and students in Asia Pacific can also compete in the [ULI Hines Student Competition - Asia](#). For details about team composition requirements, visit the How to Apply section on this [page](#).

How the Competition Works

Registration

Through the fall semester, students form teams and register those teams with ULI. ULI staff review all application materials and confirm whether teams meet the eligibility requirements to compete.

First Round

ULI announces the host city of the 2026 ULI Hines Student Competition - Americas on October 1st, 2025. On the first day of the competition in January, ULI sends the challenge brief and competition site to all team members. The challenge brief describes the specific challenge and deliverables for the competition. You can find an example of a challenge brief [here](#). For the next 14 days, team members work together to create a proposal for the site that meets the requirements in the challenge brief. Teams meet in person or virtually if team members are remote and consult with their faculty and professional advisors. Teams must submit all required documents by the deadline. ULI staff review all submitted materials to confirm whether submissions are complete. You can find examples of past submissions online by clicking on [Previous Winners and Finalists](#) on the ULI Hines Competition [homepage](#). There are no live presentations during this round.

Finalist Round

In February, a jury of ULI members evaluates all complete entries and selects those teams that will receive an honorable mention and the four finalist teams that advance to the second phase of the competition. All submissions are anonymous to the jury; they do not see team members or school names before making their selections. ULI alerts all teams of their status by late February. Finalist teams refine their original proposal with feedback from the jury, submit revised documents, and prepare to present their proposals live to the jury in April.

Site Visit

One member of each finalist team receives an all-expenses-paid trip in mid-March to join a tour of the competition site and receive a briefing on it from local stakeholders.

Finals

Typically, all finalist team members receive an all-expenses-paid trip to meet in the host city in April for two days of live public presentation of their proposal and Q&A sessions with jury members. In 2026, we are planning to hold the finals in person. After jury deliberations, the jury chair announces the winning team the same day. The winning team will receive \$35,000 and all three finalist teams will receive \$10,000. Another \$10,000 will be allocated to honorable mention teams.

A note on the 2026 competition

In 2026, we will not require teams to send physical copies of their submission to ULI. And, while the registration deadline is November 19, 2025, we will consider extending the deadline only to teams that have one or more team members who were not enrolled during the fall 2025 semester but will be enrolled full-time in the spring 2026 semester. Please reach out to us via HinesCompetition@uli.org to discuss and we will make allowances on a case-by-case basis.

Application Overview

Teams that wish to compete must submit the following information via an online application:

- Name and contact information for all five team members;
- Degree program information for all five team members;
- A one-page résumé for each of the five team members;
- Names and contact information for the team's faculty advisors (at least one required; if you have two, please share contact information for both of them, and we recommend they come from different disciplines);
- Names and contact information for the team's professional advisors;
- Signature of the department head of the sponsoring school; and
- Verification forms for each team member who is a part-time graduate student or a fourth or a fifth-year eligible undergraduate student.

Application Instructions

Review the eligibility requirements below, form your team, and complete the online application at uli.org/hines2026. We will discard any applications submitted by email.

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST WEEK TO APPLY! The submission form requires a lot of information and asks you to submit faculty references so that ULI can determine the eligibility of your team. You will receive quicker responses to your questions and have an easier time if you start the application process early. You can save the form and come back to it.

Eligibility

Ineligible to compete are members of the jury; the competition faculty and professional advisers; all officials, current employees, and recent former employees of ULI; the employees, students, and immediate family members of any of these parties; and those whom ULI deems to present a conflict of interest; and all students from the finalist teams in the 2024 and 2025 competitions.

ULI reserves the right to disqualify teams, limit the number of teams that can participate in the competition, and select teams for participation based on geographic diversity, team statements, team makeup, university diversity, or other criteria listed in the competition guidelines.

How to Form a Team

There is no limit to how many teams may be formed at a given college or university. Intercollegiate teams and teams with members in different states and countries are welcome and have been successful in the competition.

Team Composition

- Each team must be composed of five students. This program is primarily open to graduate students; however, undergraduates in their fourth year, or in their fifth year of a five-year pre-professional program, such as a BLA or BArch, also may compete. Currently, we do not have the capacity to allow more undergraduates to compete. Please do not email us to ask for an exception to this requirement.
- The team members must be pursuing degrees that represent a minimum of two disciplines that grant two different degrees, one of which must be a design discipline and one of which must be a non-design discipline.
 - Examples of design disciplines include—but are not limited to—architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design.
 - Examples of non-design disciplines include—but are not limited to—business, finance, real estate, and urban planning.
- ULI does not consider team members' past/undergraduate

degrees when determining whether the team meets the interdisciplinary requirements, unless the student is currently an eligible undergraduate student.

- We strongly recommend that your team members be pursuing degrees that represent a minimum of two disciplines, one of which is a design discipline and one of which is a non-design discipline. If you are pursuing a degree that is multidisciplinary in nature, we still encourage you to work with students who are not pursuing the same degree. The point and purpose of this competition is to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and understanding. You will learn more and get more out of the competition if you work with students who are pursuing other degrees and are focused on other disciplines.
- A well-rounded team will need two or more members with strong design and graphic production skills, and one member with real estate, finance, and/or business skills who can create the pro forma. It may also be beneficial to include someone with strong writing skills, to ensure that any narrative text is compelling and clear, and someone with project management skills, to help identify who will be responsible for various tasks and to keep the work on schedule. Market analysis skills and an understanding of urban planning also will be helpful.
- Each student team member must be a currently enrolled full-time as a student in a degree-granting program.
 - *Exception: Part-time graduate students may participate in the competition provided that they have completed one semester by the start of the competition, and they will be a part-time student during the entire competition period of January 5 to April 30, 2026. During team registration, they must submit to ULI a verification of their status from a director of their program. They can request this verification via the online registration form.*
- Students from different educational institutions may form a single team, if all other individual and team requirements are satisfied. For example, if your university does not offer a landscape architecture program and you would like to have that discipline represented in your team, you can work with another university to achieve the mix you seek.
- Students enrolled in dual-degree programs must designate which degree program they represent on the team for the purposes of the team composition requirements. For example, a student who is enrolled in a joint MRED/March program must state which discipline they are representing on the team.
- The only exceptions to these formulas for team formation are at universities where the graduate degree itself is considered a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary degree. This is very rare, but if you think this might apply to your team, please e-mail hinescompetition@uli.org before the application deadline.
- Once the team has registered, it must remain intact throughout the entire process. We allow you to replace a student team member only in extraordinary circumstances and with written approval from ULI if a member of a registered team decides not to continue, the team must replace the departing member and must still satisfy the requirements for team

composition.

- Team members—students, faculty, outside professionals—are not required to be members of ULI.

Communication with ULI

- Each team must designate one student member as the team leader who will act as a contact person with ULI.
- Please note that because of the volume of requests, and to guarantee the standards of the competition, ULI does not accept any phone calls related to this competition. Address questions and comments to hinescompetition@uli.org.

Faculty and Professional Advisors

- Each team must have at least one faculty advisor from its university. The faculty advisor can be from any program. This faculty member serves only in an advisory role; they may not be an active team participant or a direct participant in the production of any competition materials.
- Teams can have a second optional faculty advisor. If your team has two faculty advisors, we recommend that they represent different disciplines.
- Each team must have a program head to approve its application. The program head might be a program director, department chair, or dean. The individual who approves the application does not have to be the faculty advisor. By approving the application, the program head confirms that all team members are full-time graduate students enrolled for the spring 2026 semester (or part-time or undergraduate under the exceptions noted above) and that the university is committed to supporting the team's efforts.
- Each team has the option of using outside professionals who agree to act as additional advisors. Professional advisors, like faculty advisors, may not be active team participants or direct participants in the production of any competition materials. In the past, we have limited teams to two professional advisors. In 2026, teams are not limited in the number of professional advisors they can have. If you have a local real estate professional with whom you would like to work, please feel free to contact them directly. If you need help finding a local real estate professional, you may e-mail your local ULI district council for assistance ([see the complete list of District Councils](#)). If outside professionals are not available through the local ULI district council, we recommend you contact your local chapter of the [American Institute of Architects](#) or the [American Society of Landscape Architects](#).

Reasons for Disqualification

A team can be disqualified if:

- it does not have the proper number of team members or mix of students
- it does not have a faculty advisor
- it does not have the endorsement of its school/department/program head its application is late
- it does not include all the necessary documentation with the application

FAQs

If you cannot find the answer to your question below, please e-mail hinescompetition@uli.org.

What does Scheduling look like for the Hines Competition?

Team registration opens on September 1, 2025. ULI will announce the Host City of the site on Wednesday, October 1. Teams will be able to Register by Wednesday, November 19 at 11:59 p.m. PT. ULI will send confirmation emails to eligible teams by Friday, December 5. On January 2, 2026, ULI will announce the Site of the Competition and the first part of the brief. ULI will be announcing the full challenge brief at the start of the Competition on Monday, January 5. The Competition will close on January 19 at 11:59 p.m. PT. The jury will meet and select the finalists on February 6– 10. Finalists will be announced by Thursday, February 19. Please see the ULI Hines Student Competition – Americas homepage for more information.

Does my team have to receive our verification of eligibility from our department head before we can submit our registration form?

No. Verification from the university can be received through Monday, November 24. For more details, review [Sample Registration Form](#).

How does the jury evaluation process work?

ULI strives to conduct a thorough, fair, and rigorous jury evaluation process, yet teams need to consider the realistic constraints on and limitations of the jury. The jurors ULI selects are leaders in their fields and generously donate their time to the competition. They consider whether and how each submission meets the criteria. The following is a typical process; however, it might not be the exact process the 2026 jury uses. The jury meets twice, once in February to review all submissions and again in April for the final presentations. ULI will indicate to all jurors which subset of submissions they should review. To accomplish this task on such a tight timeline, the jury breaks into groups. Each group includes one juror from the host area, at least one juror who can review the financing proposal, and at least one juror who can review the design. Each small group selects the best submissions in its group to go to review by the whole jury. The full jury as a group discusses the merits of about one-quarter to one-fifth of all submissions. The jury will cast votes and select four finalist teams that it deems to have

best satisfied the Goals and Deliverables of the challenge and criteria. For more detailed information about the jury evaluation process, please review the challenge brief from last year, under [Jury Evaluation Process](#) on page 27 and for more detailed information about who will be reviewing your team's submission please see the [Previous Juries](#) page.

I don't live/study in the U.S. or Canada, can I still compete?

Yes. Students outside of the United States and Canada may compete. Students in Europe have the opportunity to compete in the [ULI Hines Competition - Europe](#), and students in Asia Pacific can also compete in the [ULI Hines Competition - Asia](#). For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can I form a team with students from different universities?

Yes, intercollegiate teams are welcome and have been successful in the competition (e.g., in 2021, the winning team was comprised of students from three different universities in Toronto). Teams with students from different colleges and universities have been successful even when those schools are in different states or provinces or different countries. Join the [ULI Hines Competition LinkedIn Group](#) and post if you are looking for team members or professional advisors!

Five of us in a graduate program in real estate studies want to form a team. Our undergraduate degrees are in three different real estate-oriented disciplines: planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. Does that qualify as a multidisciplinary team?

No. Previously earned degrees are not considered when determining whether a team meets the multidisciplinary requirements. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Will ULI require certification that student members of a team are enrolled graduate students in relevant programs?

ULI requires that the director of a school, college, department, or degree program from, at least, the Sponsoring University, must verify the team members' eligibility to participate. If students from more than one university are participating on the same team, you may need to request verification from more than one person. When teams reach the finalist stage, ULI may take additional steps to independently verify each team member's eligibility. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Our team is composed of one MBA candidate, three MARCH candidates, and one candidate pursuing a joint-degree MARCH and MUP. Does that qualify as a multidisciplinary team?

Yes. Students enrolled in joint- and dual-degree programs must choose which of the programs they are representing on the team. That decision is entirely up to the students and team members. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Our university's graduate architecture and real estate programs are accredited by NAAB and AACSB, but our university's graduate landscape architecture program is not accredited by LAAB. Does that disqualify our team?

No. In the U.S. and Canada, only the university or college needs to be accredited by a nationally recognized U.S. or Canadian accrediting body. ULI will independently verify the authority of universities or colleges outside of the U.S. and Canada for any teams that reach the finalist stage. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

What are design disciplines?

For this competition, design disciplines include architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design. Other design-related programs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

I am a part-time student registered in a graduate program. Can I be part of a team?

Part-time graduate students may participate in the competition provided that they have completed one semester by the start of the competition and they will be part-time student during the entire competition period of January 5 to April 30, 2026. During team registration, they must submit to ULI a verification of their status from a director of their program. They can request this verification via the online registration form. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

I am a fifth-year student in a five-year degree professional program. Am I eligible to form or join a team?

Yes. You must complete an additional verification of your eligibility in the submission portal. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can a student be on more than one team?

No. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can I have more than four other members on my team?

No. Teams must be made up of five student team members. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can a landscape architect be a replacement for an architect on the team?

We do not require a team to include an architect, although we strongly recommend that a team have someone who is comfortable producing renderings, since this will be an important part of the proposal. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can more than one team from a specific university/college apply?

There is no limit to the number of teams that may be formed at a given college or university. Each team must have a program head to approve its application. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Under what circumstances will a team be allowed to continue after a team member resigns or is replaced?

Once the team is registered, it must remain intact throughout the entire process. We allow you to replace a student team member only in extraordinary circumstances and with written approval from ULI and will respond favorably if the team leader requests a waiver in writing and if the circumstances are exceptional and unavoidable. If a member of a registered team decides not to continue, the team must replace the departing member to satisfy the requirements for team composition. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

To what extent can other students, faculty, and professional advisors participate in the team's efforts?

Only in an advisory capacity. They may not draw or write anything that appears in the team's presentation at any stage of the competition. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can a faculty advisor for the winning team of a previous competition serve as a faculty advisor this year?

Yes. There is no restriction on the eligibility of faculty advisors from year to year. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can a faculty or professional advisor advise more than one student team?

Yes, as long as the teams are aware of the situation. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

What kind of resources will I have for the competition?

Please refer to the About the 2026 Competition page for updates about our data providers. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

Can a team replace a faculty or professional advisor?

Yes, you must share with ULI the name and contact information for the new advisor. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

I am graduating in June 2026, but my coursework should be completed by February 2026. May I participate in the 2026 competition?

Only if you are enrolled in the semester during which the competition is conducted (i.e., the spring semester). Enrolled means that you are registered in a degree-granting graduate program and that you are a full-time student, or a part-time student who is eligible according to the requirements for part-time students. If your program is structured as a work/study program leading to a graduate degree, you may participate. For more details, review [How to Apply](#).

What happens if my team makes it to the Finals in April?

All five team members will be invited, all expenses paid, to attend the Competition Finals in-person, on April 2, 2026, to present their team's proposal to the jury. This includes a presentation of a team's proposal and a Q & A session with the jury immediately following the presentation. The jury will discuss and then select the winning team of the Hines Competition that same day. The winning team will receive \$35,000 and all three of the finalist teams will receive \$10,000. Another \$10,000 will be allocated to honorable mention teams. Please see the [ULI Hines Student Competition - Americas](#) homepage for more information.

I am a fourth-year undergraduate student in finance. Am I eligible to join a team?

Yes, in 2026 we allow fourth-year undergraduate students to compete. For more details review [How to Apply](#).