



Thank you for your nomination.

Thank you for your nomination to the 2023 AIA Nebraska Honors & Awards Program.

Important Dates

Nomination Deadline: June 12, 2023, 11:59 pm CST

Submission Deadline: July 10, 2023, 11:59 pm CST

Submission Requirements

Submitted electronically as a single PDF, maximum file size 10MB, 14 pages

- This Electronic Nomination Form
- Nomination letter from sponsor
- One-page biography of the candidate
- One-page statement of contributions
- Other supporting material, up to 6 pages (exhibits, publicity releases, articles, etc.)
- Two letters of reference by those who know the quality of the nominee's products; letters should be explicit in their recommendation and contain specific reasons for support.*Only one letter from nominee's employer may be nomination or reference.

- Photograph of the nominee
- No Registration fees (Unless noted in award description)


Upload Submission

Upload your completed candidate submission on the [AIA Nebraska Box folder here](#).

Questions

Please contact Tyler Patterson, tyler@aiane.org with any questions.

2023 Award Nomination	AIAS Student Award
Name	Elise Benson
Company	UNL College of Architecture
Phone Number	+16156179588
Email	ebenson9@huskers.unl.edu
Address	1850 P Street APT 3504B, Lincoln, NE 68508 US
Name	Kevin Baitey
Company	Carlson West Povondra Architects
Phone Number	+14027079783
Email	kbaitey@cwparchitects.com
Address	5060 Dodge St., Omaha, NE 68132 US
Registrant ID	01H0NR96GQ0X4SWGNUMB



Billing Information

Order Number	2023NBRSKHNRSYHC0003
Date	05/17/2023
Name	Elise Benson
Address	
Email	ebenson9@huskers.unl.edu
Total	\$0.00



Secure Online Registration Powered by RegFox



**CARLSON
WEST
POVONDRA**
ARCHITECTS

5060 Dodge Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68132
402.551.1500

cwparchitects.com

July 1, 2023

2023 AIA Nebraska Honor Awards Jury
AIAS Student Award
AIA Nebraska
335 N. 8th Street, Suite A
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: 2023 AIA Nebraska | AIAS Student Award Nomination of Elise Benson, AIAS

Dear AIA Nebraska 2023 AIAS Student Award Jury Chairperson and Jury Members,

It is my pleasure as a member of the AIA Omaha Board of Directors, AIA Nebraska Board of Directors, and past Chairperson of the AIA Nebraska Emerging Professionals Committee to be the nominating sponsor of Elise Benson, AIAS for the 2023 AIAS Student Award.

I first met Elise when the AIA Nebraska Emerging Professionals Committee partnered with AIAS to implement a mentorship program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Architecture. Elise stood out among her peers through her strong advocacy for student involvement and her sheer enthusiasm for serving others. Perhaps the most evident display of those characteristics is her high level of involvement. Starting as a freshman, Elise quickly became the AIAS Events Director, a position she has held for three years. Furthermore, Elise has served as a College of Architecture Ambassador and, more recently, has been appointed as a New Student Enrollment Orientation Leader and will serve as a Peer Mentor within the College of Architecture for the upcoming academic year.

Through getting to know Elise, it became apparent that her ambition to serve her community came about prior to college. As early as high school, Elise was making an impact through her involvement with various organizations, most notably Girl Scouts of America where she established a community service program connecting high school students with nursing home residents to positively impact the living conditions of seniors. This project earned her the Gold Award from the Girl Scouts of America. Her efforts were featured in the Lincoln Journal Star and in a segment on Channel 8 News.

Having reviewed her studio work, I have found that Elise's commitment to excellence also extends well into her traditional academic pursuits. She possesses a high degree of curiosity, ingenuity, and rigorous work ethic, all of which are trademarks of a talented designer in the making. Whether she is working on an individual project or within a group, Elise makes considerable effort to consistently grow as a student and a designer. This is evidenced by her willingness to seek additional project criticism outside of the classroom and a desire to expand her knowledge through independent research. These are traits that translate well to the professional environment and will surely set her up for future success.

In closing, it is with complete confidence that I nominate Elise Benson for the AIA Nebraska 2023 AIAS Student Award. Elise exemplifies the standards by which our profession should be measured and her efforts at such an early stage of her career are worthy of recognition.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Baitey, Assoc. AIA
Carlson West Povondra Architects

2022 AIA Nebraska Associates Award Recipient



EDUCATION

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Major: Architecture

Fall 2021-Present

PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT

UCARE Student Researcher under David Karle, Present

New Student Enrollment Orientation Leader, May
2023-Present

College of Architecture Student Ambassador, August
2023-Present

AIAS Events Director, August 2021-Present

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Girl Scouts, 2010-2021

Salvation Army Bell Ringing, winter of 2021

Assistant Counselor at Camp Sonshine NE, 2018-2020

Elise Benson is a third year student in the Architecture program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Elise has always shown a passion for helping those around her, and after finding her calling in the field of architecture, she is now helping incoming students feel confident in their academic pursuits. For the past three years, Elise has held multiple leadership roles through the College of Architecture and around the Lincoln community. Since freshman year, Elise has held the Events Director position of UNL AIAS, where she organizes social and networking events for students in the college. Additionally, Elise spent her second year serving as a College of Architecture Ambassador, showing prospective students and their families around the college, informing them about coursework and helping them feel welcomed to the campus. Elise's drive to serve others led her to pursue a position as a UNL Orientation Leader, which she obtained after a competitive application and interview process. As the only upperclassmen representing the College of Architecture in New Student Enrollment for 2023, she makes it a priority to encourage new students to follow their passion for design. Elise's mission is to be a resource for incoming architecture students whenever they face challenges throughout college.

Her high level of involvement in the profession, service to the community, and numerous leadership roles at such an early stage in her career make Elise Benson a worthy candidate for the 2023 AIA Student Award.

Commitment to Helping Others

Elise has felt comfortable in leadership positions throughout high school and college. While in high school, she served as the president of her DECA chapter as well as creating her own program for the Girl Scout Gold Award. She formed a group called Generations Connect where she and 13 of her classmates volunteered at local nursing homes and participated in games and activities with residents who didn't receive visitors. After completing 80 hours of community service through Generations connect, Elise was awarded the Girl Scout Gold award along with three other high school Girl Scouts in the state of Nebraska. Although her leadership positions in high school came to a close after graduation, Elise decided she wanted to continue her passion for helping others in college.

Leadership Roles

When Elise started her undergraduate degree in architecture in 2021, she immediately wanted to become a member of AIAS (the American Institute of Architecture students). After showing the executive team her previous experience with planning volunteer events, she was elected as the Events Director of AIAS. As a freshman, Elise gained hands-on experience organizing activities for College of Architecture students, brainstorming fundraising ideas, and helping AIAS gain membership numbers. Now, entering her third year as Events Director, Elise has helped orchestrate a multitude of AIAS sponsored events and membership opportunities. In sophomore year, Elise was asked to be an Ambassador for the College of Architecture. By being an Ambassador, Elise meets with prospective students and their families and informs them about her experience being an architecture major while giving them a tour of the college. This job requires Elise to be comfortable communicating with strangers as well as being knowledgeable about the College of Architecture's academic expectations. Through being an Ambassador, Elise discovered her passion for aiding incoming students with their college transition. To take this passion a step further, she applied to be a New Student Enrollment Orientation Leader for the summer of 2023. Being an Orientation Leader is one of the highest leadership roles at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After multiple interviews with hundreds of applicants, Elise was one of the 32 students selected to be an Orientation Leader. As an OL, Elise serves as a resource for parents and their students during their orientation day at UNL, while showing them different locations on campus.



Becoming a Mentor

As an Ambassador for the College of Architecture, Elise strives to provide incoming students with clarity as to what they might be doing as an architecture student. During her sophomore year, Elise filmed a "week in her life" video for the college's Instagram, showing followers what studio projects could look like, and how tight-knit the architecture program is. Since she has been heavily involved in the College of Architecture for the past two years, Elise was recently accepted as one of the college's Peer Mentors for the upcoming academic year. As a Peer Mentor, Elise will be partnered with 10-12 freshmen in the Smart Start Course and serve as their resource for any problems or questions they may have in college. Through these experiences, Elise has realized that even early in her career, she can make an impact on the next generation of designers.



Before Elise attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she was heavily involved in her leadership role through Generations Connect. Elise created Generations Connect in High School to serve as a volunteer program to help connect high schoolers with elderly residents in nursing homes that didn't receive visitors. As the creator and leader of the program, Elise was in charge of organizing and facilitating activities, fundraising for the supplies, and recruiting student volunteers. Even during Covid, Elise and her volunteers managed to work around the lockdown by calling their residents and drawing sidewalk chalk messages. In the span of a year, Elise completed 80 hours of community service and was awarded the Girl Scout Gold Award, the most prestigious award and highest achievement in Girl Scouts where only 6% of members receive the award. Elise's project sparked her interest in community service and leadership throughout college.



Lincoln East grad helps high school students interact with elderly

"With that, I was able to see lots of communication between these people that were 70 years apart in age, which was heartwarming to see," Benson said."

October 22, 2021 7:09 am by [Andrew Ward](#)



LINCOLN, Neb. (KLKN) — Elise Benson has always found it easy to interact with older people. Her mom is a speech therapist at a Lancaster County Rehab facility.

So when she had the opportunity to apply for the Girls Scouts of America “Gold Award,” she didn’t waste any time.

She put in several hours of work in order to create “Generations Connect,” a program that connects high school students with nursing home residents.

“I just felt really comfortable around older people and making conversation even though with that huge age gap,” Benson said. “I just wanted the residents to find a friend, especially if they don’t have family already here to visit.

“I wanted them to get a visitor, but I also wanted my high school classmates to gain communication skills and feel comfortable.”

So Elise got many of her classmates at Lincoln East to volunteer. They were able to set up game nights with residents at local nursing homes. They were even able to work around the pandemic, writing letters to residents, making notes in sidewalk chalk and Facetiming each other.

“With that, I was able to see lots of communication between these people that were 70 years apart in age, which was heartwarming to see,” Benson said.”

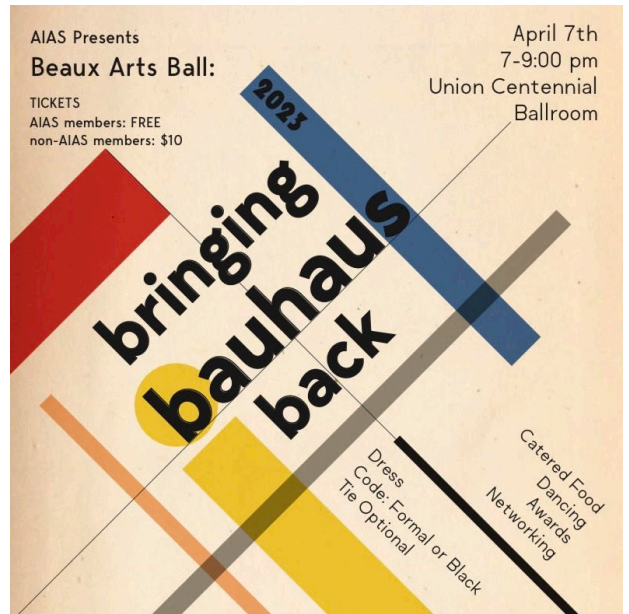
Elise, now a full-time freshman at UNL, no longer has control over “Generations Connect.” It was absorbed by the Key Club in Lincoln when she graduated from Lincoln East.

She says she’s a little sad she’s not as involved anymore, but she’s grateful for the experiences she had with her residents.

Categories: [Nebraska News](#)

Tags: [Elise Benson](#), [Generations Connect](#), [Girls Scouts Gold Award](#)

As the Events Director for AIAS, Elise is the main executive team member that is tasked with making their annual formal and awards ceremony happen. For their 2023 Beaux Arts Ball, Elise was in charge of creating the table centerpieces, picking out the decorations, designing the graphic and the photo backdrop, as well as making the individual handouts for the whole college. The dance was a success with its largest number of tickets sold post-Covid. Over 70 students gathered in the Student Union to dance, eat, and mingle. Towards the end of the night, Elise was voted by her peers to win the “Most Involved Student” Award.





Other than planning and hosting the Beaux Arts Ball, Elise has helped organize a multitude of other events this past year for AIAS. At the beginning of every fall semester, the Dean hosts an ice cream social where recognized student organizations can set up booths to inform students about what they do. In August 2022, Elise helped manage the AIAS booth and encouraged new students to attend their upcoming meetings.



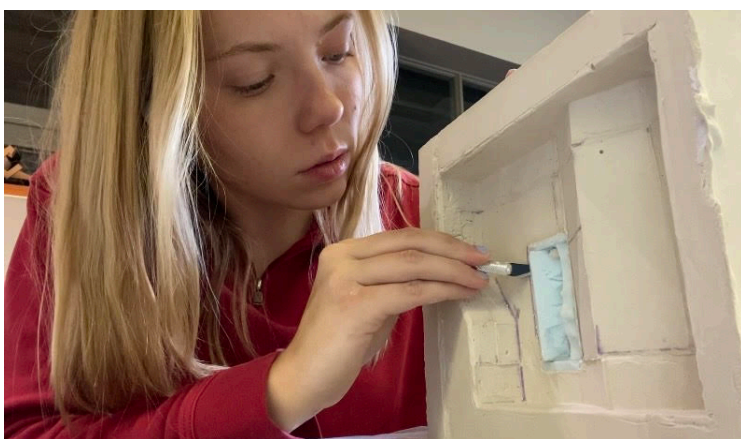
This February, Elise was in charge of the AIAS annual fundraising event for Beaux Arts Ball called Crush-4-Crush. Elise created and sent out the google form to all College of Architecture students where they could buy a can of Crush soda for a fellow classmate on Valentine's Day. Elise hand wrote all of the cards and hand-delivered them to each classmate. The Crush-4-Crush fundraiser not only helped raise money for the annual formal, but it also helped strengthen the studio culture and encouraged students to take time to appreciate one another.



Apart from AIAS, Elise was voted to be the representative for her graduating class on the Student Advisory Board. Twice a month, Elise met with the Dean along with other students and faculty members to discuss updates on the college's renovation as well as brainstorm finals week de-stressing events. Elise helped coordinate the first ever "Lawn Games with the Dean" event where she invited her fellow classmates to enjoy pizza and games before finals week.



For 22 days of the summer, Elise met with incoming students and their parents to share her experiences as an architecture major and inform them of on-campus resources that have helped her. This is the second year that the University of Nebraska has ever had an architecture major as an Orientation Leader. As the only architecture major among the 31 other leaders, she is representing all of the other architecture, interior design, community planning and landscape architecture majors in her college. Elise hopes that her interactions with the new students and their families help them feel comfortable and ready for this next chapter of their lives.



Elise has also taken social media viewers into a week in her life as an architecture major at UNL where she has showcased some of her projects from her second year studio. She has also written blog posts for the College of Architecture's Instagram page. Through these posts, Elise's goal is to provide insight as to what a student in the College of Architecture does, give students advice that has helped her, and to help them understand that they have a fellow student there to help them.

STUDENT FEATURE

WHO WE ARE NOW

ELISE BENSON

PROGRAM: 2nd-year, Undergraduate
HOMETOWN: Lincoln, Nebraska

WHY HAS UNL BEEN THE RIGHT CHOICE?

In the College of Architecture, I get one-on-one help from highly professional teachers and grow close relationships with my classmates. This has helped me quickly learn design software such as Rhino and made a huge impact on my designs. My most recent studio precedent project involved designing a building that has already been built but we had to recreate it in Rhino and making a volume out of its negative space. It was challenging, but I loved it.





COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE

July 17, 2023

AIA Nebraska

335 N 8th St A, Lincoln, NE 68508

RE: Elise Benson Letter of Support

Dear AIA Nebraska Committee Members,

I am writing this letter in full support of Elise Benson receiving the AIAS Student Undergraduate Award. I have known Elise for two years and am her UCARE faculty advisor. Within this letter, I will outline how Elise has shown exceptional leadership and made significant contributions during her time as UNL New Student Enrollment Orientation Leader and College of Architecture Ambassador. Elise is an excellent student and within the top 5% of all current undergraduate architecture students who consistently show leadership and impact. Elise's skills and abilities are similar to Geneva Sinkula, the 2020 AIAS Student Undergraduate Award recipient.

Elise has shown sustained and impactful leadership since high school. Those skills immediately translated to leadership roles in the College of Architecture, including being asked as a sophomore to be a College of Architecture Ambassador. As an ambassador, Elise has hosted numerous high school students and their families visiting the college. Elise makes every student and family feel welcome in the college and provides a student-centered perspective on the college. In addition to being an ambassador, last year Elise participated in an Architecture Program shadow day student panel discussion with a Junior and Senior level student. During this event, Elise answered questions from high school students about her experience in the program and specifically about her experience transitioning from high school to college. Elise is accessible, and students find it easy to ask her questions. I expect to continue inviting Elise to participate in the panel discussion during her Junior and Senior years.

Based on her experience as a College of Architecture Ambassador, Elise was selected for the highly competitive and important UNL New Student Enrollment – Orientation Leader position. During the summer of 2023, Elise helped welcome new students to the university. This was especially impactful for the incoming College of Architecture students, who were able to make a direct connection with someone in the college. It's rare for a College of Architecture student to participate in this UNL program, and the College benefited greatly from her participation.

The College and Architecture Program benefits greatly from Elise's leadership and contributions at several levels. The examples above provide an overview of Elise's impact on UNL, the College of Architecture, and the Architecture Program. I do not doubt that Elise will continue to be a leader, make meaningful connections, and impact the college and the profession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Karle".

David Karle, Associate AIA
AIA Nebraska, Board member (Ex Officio)
Director of the Architecture Program
Associate Professor of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
College of Architecture
University of Nebraska



May 22, 2023

Re: Letter of Recommendation - Elise Benson 2023 AIA Nebraska Honors and Awards

Dear AIA Nebraska Honors and Awards Selection Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Elise Benson for the 2023 AIA Nebraska Honors and Awards. I first met Elise as a junior in high school when I presented to her photography class about the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Architecture. When she joined our architecture program two years later, I knew I wanted Elise to work for me as a College of Architecture Student Ambassador one day. I had to wait a whole year to ask her to apply since we only hire second year or higher students.

Even though Elise wasn't eligible to be a Student Ambassador until second year, she made the most of her freshman experience by living in the Responsible Design Learning Community and joining the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS). In my 13 years in the College, I hadn't seen so much excitement from a freshman to get immersed in the culture of the college and of an architecture student. Her first year, Elise actively participated as AIAS Events Director and recorded a podcast episode that talked about design challenges of first year students as well as stereotypes of architecture students.

As Elise began her second year, I was able to recruit her as a Student Ambassador for the College of Architecture. As a student ambassador this past year, Elise gave numerous tours where she was able to interact with prospective students and their families to share her experiences from her first and second years in the architecture program. She also shared her stories of involvement in AIAS and the Responsible Design Learning Community.

In addition to providing tours to prospective students, Elise assisted with college recruiting events like the College of Architecture Open House, Architecture Shadow Day, and Admitted Student Day. During the shadow day event Elise was one of three architecture students on a student panel where she was able to answer questions from prospective students and share her personal experiences and involvement.

All in all, I highly recommend Elise Benson be considered for the 2023 AIA Nebraska Honors and Awards. In her two years at UNL, she has immersed herself in the culture of the College of Architecture and has continuously shared her passion with others whether through the AIAS podcast or giving one-on-one tours to prospective students and their families. She is a true representative of architecture education, AIAS, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Sincerely,

Leslie Gonzalez
Admissions Coordinator/Advisor, UNL College of Architecture



College of Architecture | Dean's Office

210 Architecture Hall | P.O. Box 880106 | Lincoln, NE 68588-0106 | 402.472.9212 | FAX: 402.472.3806
architecture@unl.edu



June 27, 2023

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to write a letter of recommendation for Elise Benson, a compassionate and intelligent student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Elise worked as an Orientation Leader during the 2022-2023 academic year. She served as a valuable, irreplaceable, and resourceful leader among our staff working in New Student Enrollment (NSE). I recommend her to you all with the utmost confidence as a recipient for the AIAS Honor Awards.

Elise displayed an exceptionally high level of adaptability, servant leadership, and initiative over her time working in NSE at UNL. An orientation day at NSE is never the same as the day before. Our Orientation Leaders are expected to lead different groups of students or parents/guests, and Elise could quickly tailor her facilitation and leadership skills to the attitude of her group. Elise assisted in creating and facilitating a 'Life of a Husker' interactive and engaging presentation to help incoming first-year students transition into their upcoming collegiate life. These skills will transfer seamlessly into the role as an architect, which will force Elise to adapt on a regular basis.

When working with students, Elise demonstrated creativity, compassion, and empathy. At the beginning of the summer for orientation, Elise went out of her way to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all incoming first-year students at orientation. She was self-assured when leading her student groups but had the charisma to maintain a sense of trust and belonging between herself and the students in her group. She strived to develop students holistically by facilitating activities for over 250 students over the course of summer orientation, all while iterating her passion and knowledge for architecture. Through her role as an Orientation Leader, I have no doubt she has advanced the field of architecture.

In short, I give Elise my highest recommendation. She was one of the most self-motivated and driven individuals I have had the pleasure of working with. Her experience as a College of Architecture ambassador, where she works with students and their parent(s) to introduce them to UNL and its resources, will create a natural ease for her to work and inspire in the architectural field. I have absolutely no worries or reservations about Elise's dreams of pursuing architecture. She possesses the patience, passion, intelligence, and attention to detail to become a successful and exceptional architect. Her independent work ethic and humility to ask for help when it is needed, when combined, will come to fruition in the form of a successful career. Elise Benson has my highest recommendation for this award.

Sincerely,

Allie Woolworth

Allie Woolworth
Orientation Coordinator
New Student Enrollment
University of Nebraska-Lincoln