



2027 ASTC/USITT STUDENT VENUE RENOVATION CHALLENGE

INSTRUCTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS

The goal of this challenge is for students to gain experience with performance venue design and renovation, and of potential career opportunities in the theatre consulting industry through an interactive process with a professional theatre consultant. Each student team must consist of at least one graduate or undergraduate student from a USITT member institution, a faculty advisor, and an ASTC theatre consultant as a mentor and resource. The teams will conceive a theoretical project based on an existing structure on or near the team's campus. They will survey and study the current conditions and develop a plan to renovate the subject space to meet the team's stated goals.

Potential projects include:

- Substantial improvements to an existing theatre including technical and performance capabilities for the venue.
- Adaptive re-use of an underutilized space into a new performance space.
- Significant changes to the form and/or function of an existing theatre.

Applications are due by **September 25, 2026 by 5:00 PM EDT** to renochallenge@theatreconsultants.org

The application forms, along with examples from previous challenges, are available from ASTC <https://theatreconsultants.org/astc-usitt-challenge>

Interested faculty advisors or students should email the above email address to express interest and/or with any questions prior to submitting an application. If no ASTC member is connected to the project, one will be selected to work with the team in crafting concept statements.

Along with the application, each team will submit a Preliminary Concept Statement, outlining the basic scope of the project. This scope shall be reviewed by the ASTC Challenge Committee in advance to ensure the applicant's project is of sufficient substance to merit completion.

Preliminary Concept Statements are to include:

- Name of academic institution.
- Name of team participants including role, year in college, and major.
- Name of subject space.
- Brief description of scope of the project.

We strongly encourage teams to review previous concept statements and example projects before submitting.

ASTC Mentors

Once a team is paired with a mentor, they should begin meeting regularly as soon as possible. If the team does not have a mentor, the Renovation Challenge Committee will work with the ASTC membership to find a willing Mentor. The teams are encouraged to meet with their Mentor regularly, and *their mentor must review all submissions prior to turning them in.*

Final Concept Statements and participant list

The Team's Concept Statement should:

- present the project goals, or the Project Program as it is known in the architectural world.
- Use common language that will be familiar to university decision-makers, such as their College Administration or Board of Directors. For example, phrases like "A fully-functioning modern fly system" should be avoided as they may not be clear to non-theatre people.
- Consider Feasibility – some past projects have received presentation to and consideration by college administration for capital planning.

Samples of past presentations including concept statements can be viewed on the [ASTC](#) and [USITT](#) websites.

Faculty Advisors shall submit a Final Participants and Faculty Advisor List which shall include Names, Addresses, and email contacts. Travel Stipend and Prize checks will use this list. Please review the list thoroughly as ASTC or USITT cannot be responsible for misspellings or errors. Prize checks are mailed to the Faculty Advisor of the winning teams at the address given.

Final Concept Statements, along with final participant list are due by October 30, 2026 by 5:00 PM EDT

renochallenge@theatreconsultants.org

The Concept Statements will be reviewed by the Renovation Challenge Committee, and comments will be provided to help craft a successful project. Committee Members' comments will be returned to the Team and Advisors by **November 13, 2026**, so they can be reviewed prior to the next phase of work.

Paper Project Submittals – Due Friday, February 5, 2027 by 5:00PM EST

Project submittals must be provided in the form of PDF files or Power Point presentation. Submittal materials may consist of narrative and imagery of physical models, renderings, hand sketches or drafting, photographs, modeling software or AutoCAD, REVIT or other digital design platforms. Video may be included but must be incorporated into the final presentation. Submissions must show a minimum of the following:

1. Location of subject space
2. Year constructed
3. Project size or scale in square footage
4. Current use
5. Existing plan(s) and section
6. Photos of the existing venue, including the exterior
7. Review of external factors such as access for audiences and production materials
8. Scale plans and sections illustrating building improvements
9. Sightlines to the performance area
10. Auditorium/stage relationship including performer access to the audience.
11. Improvements to the technical and performance support capabilities
12. Improvements for the audience such as parking, building access including any ADA improvements that will be addressed, ticketing, and audience spaces such as lobby and restrooms.
13. Pertinent detail or supporting data
14. A written statement of the intended goals for renovation including:
 - a. The goals of the renovation.
 - i. Examples might be Greater audience capacity, improving intimacy, expanding scenic capability, fully accessible spaces, etc...
 - b. The scope of work required to achieve those goals.
 - c. Identification of parties who benefit from the improvements and describe how they benefit. (i.e., technicians, operations staff, performers, directors, designers, and/or audience etc.)

Final Project Submittals are to be sent to renochallenge@theatreconsultants.org

Paper Project Reviews

Each Paper Project Submission received by the deadline will be reviewed by the ASTC Judges. Comments from the Judges will be returned to the Team and Advisors by **February 19, 2027**. Teams will be permitted to revise content to respond to judges comments prior to public Presentations at the USITT Conference.

USITT Conference – Public Presentation:

The public presentation portion will be during the USITT 2027 Annual Conference in Baltimore, MD- March 17-20, 2027. The exact day and time will be determined by the Conference schedule.

The Public Presentations must include two parts:

1. Required: An in-person live presentation by the school's team, acknowledging their school and introducing all team members. Some remote participation can be considered, but teams need to be in touch in advance to make arrangements for this.
2. Required: Visual support materials using still images, video, PowerPoint, and/or visual renderings created to bring the team's goals, ideas, and work to the assembled Judges and USITT Session audience. The team may use the video to help those who do not know the existing space understand what the 3D issues are with the selected facility. Presentation files will be loaded onto a single laptop provided by ASTC for the presentations.

At least one student member of the team is required to present the team's work at the conference session in person, but all team members are encouraged to join this valuable public speaking experience. Judges understand that the materials to be presented at the USITT Conference may be re-worked to fit a public presentation but must consist of the same essential elements submitted at the Paper Project submission. The ASTC member judges will make their final selection for Awards based on both the submitted design and the live presentation.

One team will be presented with the ASTC - Edgar L. Lustig Award with \$3,000.00 prize. A second prize, the USITT - Director's Award for \$1,000.00, will be presented to a team that showed extraordinary merit.

Student Travel Assistance – Stipends:

In order to encourage participation in the team's live presentation, and attendance at the Conference and Stage Expo, five \$600 travel stipends are available for financial travel assistance. After the start of the Spring Semester a travel assistance stipend can be requested by the team's Faculty Advisor beginning on **October 30, 2026**. The stipends will be awarded on a first-come basis until all five are claimed. Stipends are limited to one per team. The request will be based upon the email date and time received. Travel Requests are to be sent along with Final Concept Statements to renochallenge@theatreconsultants.org.

Judging Criteria:

The following criteria will be used by judges to assess both the paper project submittals and the public presentation.

Sample judging sheets will be provided to each team prior to the public presentation

Paper Project – 100 points max

1. Do Materials address the stated problem and clearly show solutions?
2. Is the problem difficult and will solving it make a difference? Is the solution achievable and Creative?
3. How did the team evaluate and consider the problem, what ideas were not pursued and why?
4. Do the materials address any missing pertinent details/materials (e.g. lack of building drawings)?
5. How does the identified problem and proposed solution affect users?
6. Overall quality of work and presentation, level of detail.
7. Is credit given to work in the presentation not created by the team (e.g. photo credit, videos from equipment manufacturers)?

Public Presentation – 80 points max

1. Organization quality, and clarity of presentation. It should stand alone without needing to read the paper submittal.
2. Explanation and understanding of need for renovations
3. Presentation of problem solving approach(es)
4. What does the oral presentation add that wasn't apparent in the paper submittal?
5. Responses to Judges comments on paper submittal.
6. Conclusion and Summary of the project.