



2026 Golden School Awards Planning Document

Overview: AACs is proud to announce the 2026 Golden School Awards. Our schools go above and beyond in so many ways and now is your chance to prove why your school does it the best. All entries will be judged by beauty, barber, and wellness professionals who are independent from the AACs membership. New this year is the Small School of the Year category! This category is exclusively open to schools at the Tier 1 level of membership.

Do you have the finest facilities, the best school culture, or does your school create a positive impact on the community? Are you “School of the Year” material? We know you are amazing, so go ahead and apply—you can’t win unless you enter!

Schools may submit applications for one or all ten categories, for just one flat fee per campus.

Submission deadline: September 4, 2026

Submission fee: \$149 per campus – one flat fee per campus grants unlimited submissions to enter as many categories as you like. The AACs Golden School Awards are open only to AACs member schools. To begin, [purchase your entry here](#). (You must be logged into your AACs member profile to purchase.)

Submission Planning

Before formally submitting your entry, carefully review the award category descriptions, criteria, details, and examples. Gather supporting documentation to accompany your submission. This can include pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc.

Purchase your entry and visit the submission portal by the deadline, to upload your submission.

Our questions are open-ended because we want to hear directly from you why you believe your campus is the best in the category in which you are applying. There is no one who knows your campus better than you. Do your best to describe what makes your campus better than the rest and be sure to address each of the category criteria. Your answers can be as long or as short as you need to fully paint the picture of why your campus deserves to win. While submitting pictures and videos with your entry is not required, it is encouraged.

Advocacy

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that are actively involved in advocating for the interests of the beauty and wellness school industry and its students.

- Why is advocacy important to you and your school?
- What is your school's history of government advocacy?
- What are your school's current advocacy efforts/activities?
- What impact has your school's advocacy efforts made on government policy?
- What do you have in place to educate your students about the importance of government advocacy?
- Please share with us specific examples of your efforts in advocacy.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school's advocacy efforts.

Community Involvement Award

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that make a significant impact on their community through volunteer work and charitable giving. The school should have a well-established history of community engagement and be able to demonstrate the positive impact their work has had on the lives of others.

- Why is community involvement important to you and your campus?
- What activities does your school engage in/support to impact your community?
- How do you encourage your students, staff, and others to get involved in your community?
- Please share specific examples of your efforts in community involvement.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school's community involvement efforts.

Facilities

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that have the best facilities for student learning and practice. Facilities should be clean, well-maintained, and equipped with the latest technology and equipment. They should be spacious enough to allow students to work comfortably and safely. The schools should be welcoming and supportive with knowledgeable and helpful staff.

- What do you think makes a great school facility?
- Describe your facilities and the processes you have in place to ensure students have access to the equipment, technology, tools, and other resources they need to be successful.
- Please share specific examples of your efforts to ensure your facilities meet or exceed industry standards.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school's facilities.

The Legacy Alumni Award

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that have produced successful alumni who continue to contribute to the school and the beauty and wellness industry.

- Describe your alumni program.
- Provide specific data on your graduates who have achieved success in the beauty and wellness industry.
- How do your alumni support your school and your community?
- How do your alumni support your current students?
- Please share specific examples of your legacy alumni successes.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school's legacy alumni.

Marketing Innovation

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that have the best marketing strategies to attract new students. Marketing should be creative, effective, and targeted to the right audience. It should be consistent with the school's overall brand and mission.

- What creative and innovative approaches have you used in your marketing campaigns?
- Detail the effectiveness of your marketing campaigns to attract students.
- How do your marketing campaigns reinforce your school's brand and mission?
- Please share specific examples of your marketing campaign successes.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your successful marketing campaigns.

Placement

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that have the best success rate in placing graduates in jobs in the industry. The school should have a strong network of employers and it should help graduates find jobs to match their skills and interests.

- Provide your current graduation rates, licensure rates, and placement rates.
- Describe what policies and procedures your school has in place to ensure student success from enrollment to graduation to licensure, and placement.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your placement successes.

School Culture

Recognizes beauty, barber, and wellness schools that have a positive and supportive school culture. The school should be a place where students feel comfortable and safe, and where they are encouraged to be themselves and to reach their full potential.

- Describe your school's mission for ensuring your school provides a positive and supportive environment.
- Describe how your school encourages and supports relationship building among students and between students and staff.
- Describe what opportunities you provide for students to get involved and be engaged with each other, the school, the staff, and the community.
- What policies and procedures do you have in place to ensure your school is committed to diversity, inclusion, and equality?
- Please share specific examples of your school culture successes.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school culture.

Student Salon & Spa

Recognizes the beauty, barber, and wellness school that has the best student salon and spa. The salon and spa should be a well-run operation that provides students with opportunities to practice their skills and gain real-world experience. The salon and spa should also have great sales numbers and great client reviews.

- Describe your mission/commitment to providing students with the opportunity to practice their skills and gain real-world experience.
- Detail your processes for ensuring your student salon and spa is a comfortable learning environment for students where they are supervised, guided, and coached by knowledgeable instructors to ensure their success.
- Provide information on your student salon and spa sales numbers and how this contributes to your school profitability.
- Please share specific examples of your student salon and spa successes.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your student salon and spa.

School of the Year

The most prestigious award that can be won by a beauty and wellness school. Recognizes the beauty, barber, and wellness school that has done the best job overall in providing its students with a quality education and preparing them for success in the beauty and wellness industry. The school should excel in all areas including advocacy, community involvement, facilities, legacy alumni, marketing innovation, placement, school culture, and student salon and spa.

- Describe your school's commitment to advocacy for the beauty and wellness school industry.
- Describe how your school makes a positive impact in its community and on the lives of others.
- Describe your school facilities and how you ensure your students have the best possible learning environment.

- Provide examples of your school's marketing efforts and how you ensure you are reaching your target audiences.
- Detail how your alumni network supports your school, your community, and your current students.
- Provide details on your graduation, licensure, and placement rates.
- Provide examples of how you create a positive and supportive school culture that encourages students to reach their full potential.
- Describe how your student salon and spa gives students opportunities to practice their skills in a real-world setting.
- Describe your school's overall impact on the beauty, barber, and wellness industry.
- Describe how you ensure your students receive a quality education that equips them to be successful in the beauty and wellness industry.
- Please share specific examples of why your school should be considered for the School of the Year award.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school's overall successes.

NEW CATEGORY: Small School of the Year

Open to schools at the Tier 1 membership level only.

The most prestigious award that can be won by a beauty, barber and wellness school. Recognizes an outstanding small beauty, barber, or wellness school that has demonstrated excellence in providing students with a high-quality education and preparing them for successful careers in the industry. This award celebrates schools that make a significant impact regardless of size, excelling in areas such as advocacy, community involvement, facilities, legacy alumni, marketing innovation, placement, school culture, and student salon and spa operations. Small schools often foster close-knit learning environments, personalized instruction, and meaningful student success, proving that excellence isn't defined by enrollment.

- Describe your school's commitment to advocacy for the beauty and wellness school industry.
- Describe how your school makes a positive impact in its community and on the lives of others.
- Describe your school facilities and how you ensure your students have the best possible learning environment.
- Provide examples of your school's marketing efforts and how you ensure you are reaching your target audiences.
- Detail how your alumni network supports your school, your community, and your current students.
- Provide details on your graduation, licensure, and placement rates.
- Provide examples of how you create a positive and supportive school culture that encourages students to reach their full potential.
- Describe how your student salon and spa gives students opportunities to practice their skills in a real-world setting.
- Describe your school's overall impact on the beauty, barber, and wellness industry.

- Describe how you ensure your students receive a quality education that equips them to be successful in the beauty and wellness industry.
- Please share specific examples of why your school should be considered for the School of the Year award.
- Upload any pictures, videos, data, testimonials, screenshots, etc. that highlight your school's overall successes.