Trash or treasure?
Design students join biology peers to clean up the Skunk River and transform collected junk into art
When the Skunk River Navy slogged down river on its annual cleanup patrol last fall, the participants weren’t looking for trash. They were looking for art.

And instead of the typical grim mood brought on by the sheer volume of junk in the Skunk, the Iowa State University students were absolutely buoyant. Because when they looked at the rusted metal, twisted springs, broken bottles and punctured inner tubes, they envisioned funky sculptures, intricate mosaics and graceful jewelry.

The Skunk River Navy is a service project in ISU’s freshman biology learning community. And this semester they added new dimensions to the trash patrol: Student artwork and a commissioned sculpture all created from the collected junk.

To make things interesting, freshmen from the College of Design’s two learning communities were invited to collaborate. They could participate in the trash cleanup, learn about river biology and transform the found objects into art alongside the biology freshmen.

And an anonymous donation floated in, pumping some funding into the project and clearing the way for a commissioned sculpture for the navy’s home base in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology (EEOB). Sculptor Michael Stanley, a lecturer in integrated studio arts, also helped the students navigate the art studio. Jim Colbert, the EEOB associate professor behind the navy, steered them through their river-biology experience in which they collected more than 6,000 pounds of discarded stuff.

Making connections
The art-meets-science-at-the-river project was the brainchild of Denise Hix, academic adviser and coordinator of the biology learning community of about 150 freshmen. She sees a connection between biology and art, is a “big believer” in being well-rounded, and thought creating art would be a unique way for the students to reflect on their river experience.

“This collaboration with design is a way to emphasize that biology students can enhance their study of science with humanities,” Hix said.

From the College of Design’s perspective, “it was a great way to introduce a service-learning activity to our first-year design majors and bring together students from different disciplines on campus,” said Malinda Cooper, academic adviser and coordinator of the Design Exchange and Design Collaborative learning communities.

Turning trash to treasure
Stanley met with the students before the river patrol and during two studio work sessions afterwards. He made a presentation about found art, laying out in basic terms ways to make things out of nothing.

“I told them that anything they did would re-purpose the object or keep it around a little longer,” Stanley said. “I suggested they look for unique items or multiples, which are easier to make something out of.

“They had a preconceived notion that their artwork had to be beautiful, but I told them it’s starting as trash—it can’t look any worse, so relax and have fun with it! After that, they ran with it. And they did a great job,” he said.

J.C. Renteria, a biology and animal ecology major from Lakeside, got involved because “art and ecology are my two favorite things. So when I heard about this opportunity, I definitely wanted to be involved,” Renteria said. “It’s been an
amazing experience to make art from things found on the river cleanup.”

Renteria used sheet metal and plastic to create three masks—a deer, an owl and a salamander—each signifying “something we should learn from nature.”

He paired the masks with printed quotes attributed to Irish political philosopher Edmund Burke, Scottish-born American naturalist John Muir and an unknown source, commenting on the connection between humans and the environment and the importance of acting to protect our collective home.

“[The Skunk River Navy experience] sent a clear and profound message to me, and I wanted to make sure everyone else could hear that message through my work,” Renteria said.

Kaitlin Ungs, a pre-graphic design major from Marion, had always enjoyed biology in high school and took part in a number of volunteer activities with her family.

“I will definitely participate in the Skunk River Navy again. It’s a great way to help the community. And I had tons of fun doing this,” she said. “I love the fact that it’s normally a biology activity that opened up to the design students this year.”

For her art project, “Deep Greens and Blues,” Ungs collected fragments of glass from along the riverbank and broke them into even smaller pieces, which she then adhered to a white canvas with epoxy.

“I did an abstract work because I loved the colors I found and wanted to focus on them and the shapes that came from smashing the glass. I wanted to leave a lot up to the imagination,” Ungs said.

**Continued collaboration**

“Looking at the finished art, I don’t think you can tell which pieces were created by biology students and which by design students,” Hix said. “And when we were out doing field identifications, you couldn’t tell who was who either.

Christy Butler, a pre-graphic design major from Nevada, used an eclectic mix of found materials to represent ideas "exploding" from "The Bobble Head." Photo by Bob Elbert.

Stanley cut the pieces into seven-and-a-half-inch sections and experimented with attaching them, using rivets because adhesive wouldn’t stick. Once he started cutting the separators apart, he saw positive and negative shapes that resemble cellular structure in biology, reflecting the sculpture’s semi-permanent home in Bessey Hall. The sculpture is dedicated to the 1,700 volunteers who have served in the Skunk River Navy since 1998.

**About ‘Cellular Debris’**

Stanley created the commissioned sculpture, “Cellular Debris,” to be too big to be stolen, but portable enough that two people could move it to different campus locations. The sculpture is six-by-five feet and weighs about 80 pounds.

A steadfast proponent of re-purposing found objects as art, “so they’re not going to a landfill,” Stanley chose to work with an abundance of identical black plastic objects. He knew as soon as he spotted them, they’d be integrated into his commission.

“We found a huge field full of separators that trucks use to keep round pipes square for stacking,” he said. “These are perfect for this project because they’re manmade, hard plastic and really bad for the environment. Even metal will eventually erode and degrade, but plastic and Styrofoam never will.”

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Pleased with the success of this first biology-design learning community collaboration, Hix and Cooper hope to introduce the Skunk River Navy art project to a new group of freshmen this coming fall.

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Forty/twenty: It's a ratio that rattles around in the heads of architects like Danielle Hermann, Erin Olson-Douglas, LaDan Omidvar and Ann Sobiech Munson.

Nationwide, over 40 percent of architecture program graduates are women, according to the National Architectural Accrediting Board, but the percentage of licensed women architects hovers at about 20 percent. And when it comes to women in leadership positions in architectural firms, the numbers drop even further.

Why the disparity? What happens to women to make them leave the profession in droves? And if there are no role models to look up to, how can women in architecture school find mentors to model their own careers after?

Those questions, and the struggles those four women faced in their own careers, were the genesis of a new group, Iowa Women in Architecture. Each of the four Iowa State University graduates has taken a slightly different career path.

Hermann (BArch 2001 / MArch 2008 Architecture) wrote her graduate thesis on the profession’s non-family-friendly work environment; she is now an architect with OPN Architects and head of the AIA Iowa Diversity Committee. Olson-Douglas (BArch 1997) is an urban designer with the city of Des Moines.

Omidvar (BArch 1982 / MArch 1996, MCRP 1985 Community & Regional Planning) worked at Brooks Borg and Skiles and is now a lecturer in architecture at Iowa State. Sobiech Munson (MArch 2000), who formerly was an assistant professor of architecture and Core Design Program director in the ISU College of Design, is now an architect and specifications writer with Substance LLC.

Education vs. practice

A now-discarded line of thought—the pipeline theory—used to hold that as more women chose architecture as an academic pursuit, there would be more and more women in managerial positions. That has not been the case: While the gender ratio has become more balanced in education, a 2008 survey found that only 16 percent of managers are women.

“The results of studies seem to suggest there’s some sort of cultural paradigm in the profession that is not friendly to anyone who wants to do something in any alternative way,” Sobiech Munson said.

That may be the crux of the problem. Architecture—with the long hours, the male-dominated construction sites, the lack of role models—has always been a particularly precarious career for women. It becomes even more so as women start families and struggle for a manageable work-life balance.

The group’s founders’ own tales are a good illustration of the search for equilibrium as life and career goals change. Sobiech Munson worked full time before joining the ISU faculty in 2004. She consulted at the same time and decided to leave the university in 2011.

“One of my motivations for shifting my focus back to practice was the dearth of women role models in the profession and the responsibility I felt to be a strong advocate for women in the profession,” she said.

“We get women into school, but lose them about the time they start having children, which is about the same time they would start to think about becoming licensed and becoming a project manager.”
That lack of a practice role model has certainly been the case for Hermann, who had an interesting perspective—starting a family while working full time and pursuing her graduate degree. She took longer to finish her master's thesis—four years—because she was juggling work and family commitments. Since graduation, she's continued working and has taught studios at ISU, too.

“I never had—and still don’t have—a woman in a management position in a firm as a role model. But I’ve had the benefit of seeing lots of good and lots of bad managers and also seen women in leadership roles in other professions,” Hermann said. “I’ve worked at places where I wanted to be the role model or mentor that I didn’t have.”

Finding a voice
Olson-Douglas and Sobiech Munson, together with Rob Whitehead (BArch 1993), a lecturer in architecture at Iowa State, formed the very first Diversity Task Force for AIA Iowa in 2006, presenting a program at the convention and a report to the board of directors.

Their findings didn’t gain much footing, until 2008 when Hermann was asked to revive the group. That was eventually turned into a committee that completed a diversity survey, which prompted convention workshops in 2009 and a roundtable that’s become an annual event.

Early in 2011, the four women alumni began meeting to create Iowa Women in Architecture as a nonprofit group. Their time may be right, more so than it would have been decades ago when women were less likely to draw attention to their gender and more likely to insist they felt no distinct pressures that were different from their male colleagues.

The goal of the group is to create a forum for women to have the opportunity to ask questions they couldn’t ask in their own firms. “Most of us feel somewhat alone, so we wanted to give them and ourselves a voice,” Omidvar said.

The group also hopes to spotlight role models and create networks that haven’t existed before.

“We want to talk about some of the shifting attitudes or challenges facing the profession,” Sobiech Munson said. “Our clients and owners and users come from a broad range of backgrounds. We want to try to talk about the best practices, human resource issues, business skills and educational programming.”

The group hopes that it also appeals to women still in school—not to discourage them from the profession, but to create awareness in a way that no other group is able to.

“Students might come in thinking the profession is more progressive, or think that it is going to be more like school was, but the longer they are in it, they start to realize there are more issues,” Hermann said. “We hope that we are accessible to young professionals and women.”

To keep up to date on Iowa Women in Architecture, “like” them on their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/iawomenarch, or email Sobiech Munson, acsobiech@gmail.com, to join the email list. The group meets about once per month in Des Moines. It hopes to sponsor programming in the near future and is planning its first joint research initiative to study family-leave and flex-time policies.

“One of my motivations for shifting my focus back to practice was the dearth of women role models in the profession and the responsibility I felt to be a strong advocate for women in the profession.”

— Ann Sobiech Munson, chair, Iowa Women in Architecture

What the numbers show
Gender in architecture isn’t something that’s studied regularly, but here’s what the most recent data show:

• In March 2008, the American Institute of Architects found that 16% of firm principals and partners were women, up from 12% in 1999.

• Women occupy 40% of all managerial positions, but only 6% of the most highly paid executive positions are held by women.

• When it comes to wages, a male architect with more than 15 years’ experience can expect to earn about 25% more than his female counterpart, according to the book Designing for Diversity.

• According to statistics compiled by the National Architectural Accrediting Board in 2003 and AIA in 2000, women in the profession are
  • 13% of registered architects
  • 17% of tenured faculty
  • 40% of students

• In a 2006 AIA survey, women listed personal/family circumstances and inflexible hours as their primary reason for not practicing at a rate nearly three times that of male respondents. In that same survey, 73% of male respondents were licensed/registered, while only 45% of female respondents were licensed/registered.
A family vacation in Florida led Jennifer Irey to her dream job—a decade later. Irey, who was 12 at the time, recalls entering the 50’s Prime Time Café at Disney’s Hollywood Studios theme park and thinking, “This is cool!” Followed by, “This had to be designed.” And then, “Who does this?”

“I had this epiphany moment in which I realized someone had to create this space and this experience. I never thought it would be an interior designer,” Irey said. “I didn't really put two and two together right then, but I soon realized that this is what I wanted to do.”

Irey grew up visiting Frank Lloyd Wright houses with her parents, who “showed me different types of design and helped me understand that it’s a profession. I’ve also always been interested in art.”

That combination of background and interest led the Davenport native to enroll at Iowa State University, where she graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in interior design in May 2009.

That same spring, Irey and classmate Anna Anderson (BFA 2009 Interior Design) were finalists in the Hospitality Design Awards national student competition with a hotel/spa concept they developed in their senior studio.

Through a connection she made at the HD Awards banquet in New York City, Irey worked at a hospitality design conference in Virginia, where she met a designer from the Walt Disney Company. “I was allowed to put my resume in the gift bag for the designers at the conference, so they were able to contact me that way,” Irey said.

Several weeks later, Irey was called for an interview with Walt Disney Imagineering, which creates and constructs Disney theme parks, resorts and cruise ships worldwide. She moved to California in August 2009 and worked at the company’s Glendale headquarters as an intern for a year before being hired as a full-time interior design associate in October 2010.

Research and teamwork

Since then, Irey has helped design the Adventureland Suite on the top floor of the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim, Calif., which has garnered rave reviews. She also worked on the New Fantasyland expansion at Disney’s Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Fla., which will open in phases throughout 2012 and 2013.

“These projects allow us to do a lot of research to dive into these buildings and create the Disney version of a specific time and place. It’s not necessarily historically accurate, but it puts you into that immersive environment that I think we do so well.”

Creating that kind of environment requires a high level of detail—“most of our work is custom; we design for the specific space”—and collaboration with multiple disciplines. Depending on a project’s scale and time line, it may require a team with several members or several teams all working on different aspects of the whole.

For the hotel suite, Irey worked with another interior designer as well as several coordinators, architects, and civil and construction engineers, she said. “For Fantasyland, there were five interior designers just for our small portion of the much larger project. We worked closely with the research-and-development team to integrate a new set of special effects,” she said. “There’s a lot of push and pull, but our end goal is always the best guest experience possible.”

Designers also frequently “hop on and off different teams,” Irey said. She recently
moved from the Fantasyland team and is now immersed in planning for the Shanghai Disney Resort, scheduled to open in China in 2016.

“Many of the concepts are new for this park,” she said. “We’re working with consultants from Shanghai and other areas of China to help us stay true to their culture and ensure that what we’re creating is what they will find amazing.”

Irey hopes to spend some time on site in Shanghai before the project is completed. Long fascinated with Chinese art and culture, she took a number of Chinese history classes in college and traveled to China for two weeks in 2009 with Professor Paul Shao’s Field Studies in Chinese Architecture class.

That experience, in addition to a semester in Italy on the College of Design Rome Program, further fueled Irey’s interest in international work and travel.

“I was lucky to be at a school that provided those opportunities to go beyond the regular curriculum and enrich my design education,” she said.

**Professional development**

At Walt Disney Imagineering, Irey has further opportunities to enhance her skills and explore new interests. She’s working toward LEED certification, and she recently attended Autodesk University in Las Vegas. The company offers classes after work on a wide range of topics like Photoshop, drawing, and effective presentation strategies. And it brings in speakers from around the world to share the latest design trends and technologies.

Disney also provides opportunities to return to school or to work with a mentor in the company.

“I’ve made connections with a lot of the lighting designers and hope to pursue that area with my next mentorship. You can kind of loan yourself out to different departments and work on what interests you,” Irey said. “It all depends on how the Shanghai project unfolds and how much time I’ll have to devote to other activities.”

Beyond the professional development that her job offers, Irey pursues a wide range of hobbies. She took an improvisational comedy class through Disney and now does regular improv performances for fun. She started running and hopes to join the Disney triathlon team to compete in the Nautica Malibu Triathlon in September.

“Running is just part of the culture at Disney; people are really active out here,” she said. She also travels regionally with friends from work.

“My coworkers are definitely the best thing about my job,” Irey said. “It’s humbling to work with such talented and unassuming people. The knowledge I’ve accumulated from them is immense. We also have our own traditions at work, and it feels like a family.”

That family includes Irey’s first project team leader, Barb Dietzel—the Imagineer behind the Disney World restaurant that inspired her to become an interior designer.

“I’m not a big believer in fate, but everything kind of lined up for me,” Irey said. “It’s my ideal job.”

Irey drafted all the drawings for the hotel suite, designed the custom casework, developed the pole-and-panel system for making the kids’ bedroom a safari tent and aided with all the finishes and fabrics. She is especially fond of the reading nook, seen here, which doubles as an extra bed with drapes that pull back. All photos © Disney Enterprises, Inc.
In an effort to better prepare College of Design graduates for the professional world, the graphic design program has introduced a senior capstone course this spring. The class will engage in thematic projects with broad scope while faculty offer general guidance on expected results, so students must plan and organize their work accordingly.

The fall-semester senior studio provided a perfect test case. An alumna’s design firm had just completed a community outreach project that met the criteria for the new capstone experience. Faculty invited her to present the project and serve as the “client,” challenging students to tackle the same design problems her firm had.

Elizabeth Murphy (BFA 1987 Graphic Design), president of Emspace Group in Omaha, and her firm joined with the Douglas County (Neb.) Health Department and Live Well Omaha: Douglas County Putting Prevention to Work on the Healthy Neighborhood Stores Initiative to help make healthy food more accessible in neighborhoods where it’s not readily available.

Their recent collaboration focused on La Guera, a small Latino grocery in South Omaha and one of eight “corner stores” identified as potential partners. The health department provides physical upgrades like new refrigeration and lighting, while Emspace Group helped design signage and packaging, and identify incentives for store owners and ways to involve the neighborhood.

“It’s a really grassroots effort. How do you introduce the idea of healthier eating and make it easy for people to make better food choices?” Murphy said.

The studio
Murphy introduced this project to the fall 2011 ArtGR 470 studio taught by Associate Professors Paul Bruski and Lisa Fontaine and Lecturer Bev Krumm (BA 1981 Advertising Design / MFA 2011 Graphic Design).

While a limited project budget was a big consideration for her firm, Murphy and the faculty agreed that a budget would restrict students’ thinking.

“We wanted to give them a big, loose problem to solve: How does a designer get into this process, what does a designer offer, what is your obligation as a designer? Students had to identify who they’re working with and come up with deliverables,” Murphy said.

“Students often think more at the tactical level, more about applications—developing a logo, letterhead and business card—than about strategy, like determining what are the best communication vehicles for their message,” Bruski said. “This project required them to think more strategically.”

Twelve student teams from the three studio sections developed design proposals. Following are three projects that represented the teams’ distinctive approaches.

O,N.E. Market
The O,N.E. Market team—Jordan Becker, Avoca; Kyle DeDecker, Geneseo, Ill.; Lisa Engler, Dyersville, and Kaitlin Severson, Ankeny—“wanted our name and logo to be unique and modern,” Severson said. “And the colors we chose are more vibrant than you tend to see in health markets.”

The logo incorporates an abbreviation for “Omaha, NE” with a check mark in the “O”. The bold color palette includes an orangy red, warm gold, apple green, purple, brown and cream.

Becker and Engler visited La Guera to gain a deeper understanding of existing product placement and labeling, store layout and
The team developed an exterior window display and community mailer advertising La Guera as a O,N.E. Market member store; a small in-store booklet on healthy eating with a sample grocery list of healthy but affordable foods and tips for preparation; and shopping cart signage to promote the O,N.E. Market initiative.

“This team did an enormous amount of research, including a site visit, which really helped inform their design,” Murphy said. “They really focused on the target population and integration of the neighborhood into the store.”

Eat Smart Omaha

“This was the first project where we had an actual client to design for,” said Maggie Goldsmith, Iowa City. “We had to focus on what works for the demographic of La Guera, as well as how our design could transfer to different stores within Omaha.”

Other members of her team were Krystal Kopp, Solon; Justin Scavo, Des Moines, and Alex Zatizabal, Omaha, who knows people from La Guera’s neighborhood and interviewed them informally about their views.

The group’s Eat Smart Omaha initiative places “less emphasis on getting people to change their ways than on encouraging them to make smart choices,” Goldsmith said.

The team carried this concept throughout its materials, including a “smart points” program with “smart member” cards for frequent buyers, “smart steps” (leaf-shaped floor decals) leading to “smart pick” markers denoting healthy product choices on the shelves, and outdoor advertising for bus stops and benches.

“We wanted to get children on board at an early age, so we brought in fun colors based on fresh produce” and placed the floor decals “like footprints to lead kids to healthy choices away from the pop and chips,” Goldsmith said.

Murphy found this project “really charming,” she said. “The hand-lettered type in the logo is appealing, and the transparent dividers in the dairy section are a great idea.”

Thrive

Mario Davila, Denison; Sarah Hamilton, Carroll; Ryan Hubbard, Van Meter, and Bridget Wedemeier, Charles City, focused on individual consumers in their campaign.

“The idea behind Thrive is to get one person to make a change, then a household, then a community,” Hubbard explained.

Because “thrive” connotes action and energy, the team developed a warm color scheme and turned the “i” in the logo into “a lively person radiating energy,” Hubbard said. The graphics also incorporated photographs of friendly-looking people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds.

“La Guera was the case study, but really we were designing for several stores within Omaha and Douglas County, so we had to consider the Latino and African American communities and urban populations as well as rural areas. There was a huge variety of people we were trying to encompass,” Hubbard said.

In-store materials developed included VIP cards offering buyers a percentage off each “Thrive-endorsed” product, and a display of ingredients needed to make a healthy dish along with a recipe to take home.

Out-of-store applications included advertising signage for buses and billboards; a website for those already invested in the initiative; and reusable shopping bags.

“We wanted to help people establish a connection between Thrive and a healthy lifestyle,” Hubbard said. “They see vibrant, happy people in the ads, then come into the store and see the same material next to the healthy products and make the association that this is something good they want to be a part of.”

Murphy complimented this team’s strong presentation and observed that it “felt like a cohesive thought process. The brand is innovative and interesting, and the photography brings in the human element.”

Successful outcome

After the students’ final presentations, Murphy shared what Emspace Group had developed for the Healthy Neighborhood Stores Initiative. She noted that many applications were similar to what the students proposed, though her firm had to simplify some elements to meet the project’s limited budget.

Murphy was impressed by the amount of research most of the teams did and the fact that several students actually visited La Guera. And, she said, some teams offered “brilliant” solutions that showed off their “brain power.”

“Those are projects you can take right out of the gate and get hired with,” she said. “Specific skills can be honed later, but that kind of thinking is harder to find.”

“The Omaha project helped students learn the independent, strategic thinking that’s so important in the profession, the ability to think more laterally and make new connections,” Bruski said. “That’s what we hope to accomplish in the capstone.”
The “westernization” of diets in developing countries, including higher consumption of processed foods with more fat and sugar, is increasing the incidence of obesity in their populations. At the same time, many people are malnourished because their diets are less diverse, with fewer fresh fruit, vegetable and protein options.

An Iowa State University graduate student in community and regional planning and sustainable agriculture will spend three months studying the impact of this “nutrition transition” and changing food-distribution systems in Ghana, West Africa, this summer.

Shelley Oltmans, Sherburn, Minn., received a $2,000 Butler Travel Award for International Studies in Sustainable Agriculture from ISU to conduct research on “food deserts” and food security in the context of a developing country like Ghana.

“In the United States, a food desert is an area where residents have little or no access to affordable, healthy foods,” Oltmans said. “I’ll be looking at Ghana’s capital, Accra, and mapping where people in that city get their food from. Food security is not only about getting enough calories but about access to good, healthy, affordable food.

“If the trends continue, developing countries will suffer the same problems we have with heart disease, diabetes and other health concerns,” she said. “My goal is to help people find local solutions to healthier diets.”

After completing her dual master’s degrees, Oltmans hopes to work with nongovernmental organizations doing “participatory international development,” she said. “I’d like to work with small land owners and help organize programs and funding, but let them decide what they need and how to accomplish that.”

**International background**

Oltmans is no stranger to international travel and development issues. She studied German in high school and was an exchange student in Germany for a year between high school and college. She studied abroad in Holland for a semester during her senior year at the University of Minnesota, where she received a Bachelor of Arts in German studies and global studies with a minor in Dutch studies in 2006.

Oltmans went to Italy in 2008 and did marketing and translation work for a security software company. She also raised money for the international Save the Children organization.

Back in the U.S., Oltmans joined AmeriCorps and served an 11-month term as a Minnesota Conservation Corps crew leader. Through this program she worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on projects including wildland firefighting and invasive species removal.

These diverse experiences shaped Oltmans’ interests in environmental planning, food security and international development.

She enrolled in Iowa State’s new Master of Community and Regional Planning/Master of Science in sustainable agriculture dual-degree program to learn about planning strategies on the local, national and international levels, “and because I believe agricultural development—not necessarily modernization—is one of the most important things to improve the conditions of people in developing countries,” she said.

“Every experience has built on the previous to lead me into international development,” Oltmans said. “I want to be able to live my life traveling, learning about different cultures and people, to understand what they want and assist them in getting there.”
FROM THE DEAN

Luis Rico-Gutierrez

As dean of the College of Design, I consistently emphasize our central role in the Iowa State University mission—to "create, share and apply knowledge to make Iowa and the world a better place"—and the role of design education in advancing the land-grant mission—putting science, technology and human creativity to work for the public benefit.

Over the past year, led by our Liaison Council, the college has engaged in a restructuring process intended to maximize the impact of our current disciplines and several emerging interdisciplinary fields. At the end of November our faculty and staff voted to support the reorganization plan developed by the council.

While many details remain to be decided, we have created a proposal for seven departments: architecture, community and regional planning, graphic design, industrial design, integrated studio arts, interior design and landscape architecture. Approved by the provost, the plan now is under review by the Faculty Senate. It then must be approved by the president and the state Board of Regents. I believe this effort will be successful.

We are now poised to further our impact by becoming a platform to invest social capital in a future fueled by our collective innovation. The College of Design has forged new partnerships within and outside the university that illustrate how central design really is to our society.

In the short term, we are leading development of Iowa State’s exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution’s 2012 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which will commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act and highlight the achievements of land-grant and public institutions since 1862. Working with the Office of the Vice President for Research and Economic Development, ISU Extension and Outreach and other university partners, we will highlight design as a key contributor to the land-grant mission of improving the quality of life in the U.S.

Look for more on this project in a future issue of Inspire, and join us if you can on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., June 27-July 1 and July 4-8.

In a long-term initiative with the College of Engineering and other university areas, we are collaborating on a proposed Student Innovation Center to demonstrate how educational models that foster creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship among our students can build a strong foundation for future economic development in Iowa and the nation.

These ideas were tested in a daylong summit in January that brought together about 50 students from across the university to work on a design problem addressing the experience of animals and humans at local animal shelters. The event was facilitated by representatives from Cannon Design and faculty from the d.school: Institute of Design at Stanford and Iowa State. By any measure, the summit was a great success.

We look forward to building on this tremendous first experience and hope it will one day lead to a dedicated facility where such collaborative, interdisciplinary activity can flourish.

Sincerely,

Luis Rico-Gutierrez

Inspire

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Newsletter Staff
Editors
Heather Sauer, Charles Sauer

Writers
All stories by Heather Sauer unless otherwise noted.

Photographers
All photos by Alison Weidemann unless otherwise noted.

Contact Us
134 College of Design
Iowa State University
Ames, IA  50011-3091
designews@iastate.edu
http://home.design.iastate.edu

On the Cover
The Skunk River Navy collected 2.75 tons of trash in fall 2011. Freshman design and biology students turned some of that discarded junk into art. Photo courtesy of Denise Hix.

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Iowa State University's undergraduate programs in architecture and landscape architecture are ranked ninth and 10th, respectively, among accredited programs in the United States, according to the latest survey of practitioners by DesignIntelligence. The magazine's annual report, "America's Best Architecture and Design Schools 2012," is the only national college ranking survey that focuses exclusively on design. In mid-2011, the publication contacted leaders in more than 300 professional firms and organizations who have direct experience with the hiring and performance of recent graduates to ask which schools are best preparing students for success in the profession. Iowa State's undergraduate architecture program has ranked in the top 20 eight out of the past nine years. Other programs in the top 10 this year included Cornell University (1), University of Texas (2), Virginia Tech (3) and Rhode Island School of Design (6). There are 49 accredited undergraduate architecture programs in the U.S.

For 2012, Iowa State's undergraduate landscape architecture program tied for 10th place with California Polytechnic State University, Pomona, and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Louisiana State University ranked first, followed by Pennsylvania State University. Iowa State has ranked in the top 15 landscape architecture programs for seven of the past eight years. (DesignIntelligence began ranking landscape architecture programs in 2005.) There are 47 accredited undergraduate landscape architecture programs in the U.S.