

Global, Local Connections Impact Classroom

Professor Nickolson fosters professional relationships between students and industry.

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Transcript

[D. Nickolson] I am the interim director of the Interior Design and Technology Program, and in that program we focus on professionally training our students to be interior designers. And that interior design student, when they are done, they are prepared to work 90 percent commercially in design and collaboration with architects and engineers to design commercial buildings and spaces.

Often times the communication that I've had with people in industry comes in handy in my classes because I can invite them into classes to do peer critiques. We can go out and have offsite class meetings at some of the places that I've had professional interactions before, as well as the interaction with clients is the most important thing because I have the ability to have clients come in and work with my students, as well as my students have more professional experiences outside of the classroom.

Global Design Studio is a studio that was developed by one of my colleagues, Dr. Jan Cowan, and in that studio we were able to study buildings and spaces from all over the globe. We are also able to interact with universities from all over the globe, so we've studied buildings and spaces from as far away as Thailand and as close as Indianapolis. We've worked with architectural schools from Indonesia. We've worked with architectural schools at Tulane University.

We've also worked with some local design universities. We've worked with an architectural school in Canada, a design school in Canada as well, and that has allowed us to have our students outreach more than just what they see locally, so there is a global aspect to their design.

Part of what we did in Global Design Studio under Dr. Cowan's leadership was take students to New Orleans and in the aftermath of Katrina and not only just provide a service as far as rebuilding certain areas, but also provide a design expertise in some areas where professionals may not have had either the time or the capacity to study certain renovation ideas for some of the homes that may have been impacted in the Katrina areas.

Junior Achievement was an organization that I had done a lot of design work for before I left the industry and joined the faculty here full time, so with that, when I joined the faculty, the president of Junior Achievement reached out to me and asked if I would be interested in doing any more design work for them. And so I used that relationship to bring some of my students on board to do some design proposals for Junior Achievement, and then we collaborated with a local design firm and a local architecture firm and from that, those two firms were able to see some of the ability of our students. They actually rolled that into hiring two of our students as interns for their design companies specifically working on Junior Achievement's design projects.

I think internships at our school are growing abundantly, because what we've found that with the location of our university being in a large urban environment, this is one of the environments where all of the university's that teach any type of design from around the central Indiana area come for those internships, so our students have immediate access to a lot of these companies, a lot of project sites and a lot of the clientele that they're going to be competing for in their internships, so our school's strategic

location gives us a little bit of a foot forward on having our students have direct access to those industry partners.