GREEN SOLUTIONS: NEW PROJECT TEACHES STUDENTS TO FIX RECYCLING CHALLENGE

Houston, April 29, 2011 – Determination has paid off for the College of Architecture Student Council. After two years of working to improve recycling in their building, the student council has found a solution with a grant to fund a new Industrial Design project. The new course will incorporate a real life design problem into the curriculum of the course and teach students to go green in the process.

The Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture is known for its green initiatives and design principles, and being open 24-hours, is a second home to many of its students. With so much time spent within the building, there was a high volume of trash accumulating as well. The Student Council, led by Lauren Roberts and Frank Martin, noticed that a lot of recyclable materials were ending up in the trash cans conveniently located throughout the building rather than in the recycling bins, which were located in only one designated area on each floor.

So the 2009-2010 Student Council took action placing three labeled paper bags in each of the studios to provide a convenient location for students to recycle. The bags were working as far as getting students to recycle more, however, there was one problem. Once they were filled, no one was taking them out to the side of the building to empty the recyclables. So the bags became soaked, damaged and eventually just an eye sore. But the Student...
Council didn’t give up on their mission.

This past year, the 2010-2011 Student Council found their solution. They came up with a proposal to take this problem to the classroom, eliciting the help from Emily Messa, Assistant Vice President of University Services and the dean of the college, Dean Patricia Oliver. The proposal was a success, and a grant was received to fund the recycling receptacles project in Industrial Design 3500 taught by Assistant Professor Adam Wells.

Students in the Industrial Design course will now work in teams to design a modular system that will allow students in the building to recycle more aluminum, paper and plastic. The team will have to make sure their concept has the data and statistics to prove it is more efficient and be able to hold a volume of recycling for a four week period. The modular system also must be able to fit into a three-square-foot box and withstand liquids.

“This project will help encourage the student to learn about material properties, as well as manufacturing processes. This will benefit the Industrial Design students by allowing them to design a simple solution for an actual problem,” as stated in the Student Council’s proposal.

The project will last six weeks and consist of three stages and critiques: research and conceptual sketches; scale models and full scale mock ups; and final prototype with statistics and production costs. The final prototype will be placed throughout the building and provide a quality and convenient receptacle to encourage recycling.

The 2010-2011 College of Architecture Student Council Representatives expressed their mission and motivation in bringing the new project to their curriculum stating, “The Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture Student Council is comprised of student representatives committed to the achievement, promotion and facilitation of a collaborative design community; therefore, we believe it is crucial to be a visible student organization in our college. As architects and designers in training, it is our responsibility to promote and be environmentally conscious. Thus, we decided to implement our skills, knowledge and resources to address the recycling problem at our college with an interactive and collaborative project that incorporates student involvement with functionality to create a design solution for the current problem.”

For tips on going green or for more information on green programs at UH, visit www.uh.edu/green.

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The University of Houston is a comprehensive national research institution serving the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. UH serves more than 38,500 students in the nation’s fourth-largest city, located in the most ethnically and culturally diverse region of the country.