Through Journeyman International, Cal Poly Architecture Students Have
a Chance to Change the World Before They Even Graduate

By Matt Lazar

Journeyman International’s founder Daniel Wiens (center), left, and several students took over plans for a project. (Photo courtesy Journeyman International)

It’s been an unbelievable opportunity for me to apply the knowledge I’ve gained at Cal Poly to a real project,” Nagasugi said. “It’s taken me beyond the boundaries of the studio projects I’ve done in the past; I know that people are counting on me and hoping to use my design for a facility that will make a difference in these student lives.”

“An evening spent interacting with the culture of Ghana and understanding how their design would impact the residents there.”

“The apprentices become the masters.”

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In Guadalajara, Mexico, a home is being erected for orphaned and abandoned teens. A Cal Poly student, working through Journeyman International, designed the building, which will soon be a home for young men and women who have nowhere else to go but the streets.

The result is something to be proud of, Wiens said. “I knew other students would want to work on similar projects!”

“It was graduating, but I knew other students would want to work on similar projects!”

A Collective Vision

Run by two Cal Poly alums, Journeyman International connects architecture students from non-governmental organizations with plans to construct schools, clinics, and other vital infrastructure in developing countries. The students – in work that doubles as their senior project or other classroom credit – provide research, schematics and final designs, and project logistics for buildings that will be constructed by the locals.

The need to Learn by Doing is an opportunity for Cal Poly’s building professionals to gain real-world experience and make a positive difference for people living in some of the world’s poorest countries.

Not just a building

Since its creation in 2009 as part of seniors Daniel Wiens’ senior project, Journeyman International has managed half a dozen design projects. It plans services to Mexico, Zambia, Ghana, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Haiti. Projects have included orphanages, schools, and a safehouse for children escaping human trafficking.

“Students are interested in projects that allow them to fill critical needs all over the world,” said Wiens (B.S., Construction Management, 2010). “It’s an opportunity for students to make a real impact and see the difference they can make in their own lives.”

“A very unorthodox situation,” Wiens said. “I just knew I had to keep building more facilities,” Wiens explained.

“An evening spent interacting with the culture of Ghana and understanding how their design would impact the residents there.”

Anne Nagasugi, a fifth-year architecture student set to graduate this spring, has spent the last year designing a secondary school in Akatsi, Ghana, through Journeyman and one organization called Disaster Volunteers of Ghana (DIVOG).

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For his senior project in 2009, he partnered with an architect and selected a project through Global Outreach Mission to build a dental clinic in Belize. While to partner designed the building, Wiens handled scheduling, estimating, purchasing, soil testing, and other management aspects. Then Wiens went to the project site for three months, hired local crews, and constructed the clinic.

“In the near future, Fellows said, they hope to expand the Journeyman interdisciplinary model to universities across the nation.”

For more information on Journeyman International, visit http://www.journeymaninternational.org.