

Warren J. Baker Endowment for Excellence in Project-Based Learning Robert D. Koob Endowment for Student Success

FINAL REPORT

I. **Project Title**

Encosi Africa: A multidisciplinary service learning design/build internship

II. **Student(s), Department(s), and Major(s)**

Rachel Pittman, CLA, Anthropology and Geography
 Jocelyn Deleon, CLA, Liberal Arts and Engineering Studies
 Rudy Perez, CAED, Landscape Architecture
 Annie Potter, CAED, Landscape Architecture
 Chad Evans, CAED, Landscape Architecture
 Camille Cherry, CAED, Landscape Architecture

III. **Faculty Advisor and Department**

David Watts, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture

IV. **Cooperating Industry, Agency, Non-Profit, or University Organization(s)**

KidLinks World
Watts Landscape Service
Avant Gardening & Landscape
College of Architecture & Environmental Design
Department of Landscape Architecture

V. **Executive Summary**

Encosi Africa 2014 was an opportunity to exercise Cal Poly's "learn by doing" motto on an international stage. We engaged in service learning projects that built on work done by previous Cal Poly students and completed new projects that benefited various communities throughout South Africa. We worked on four major project sites, one urban, two rural, and one small town. The urban project was conducted at Ratang Bana Aids Orphanage in Alexandra Township. This project included evaluating the condition and making improvements to the existing playground built by Cal Poly students last year as well as adding additional elements to improve the playground. The first of our two rural sites was Sewenfontein. There we partnered with the local farmers to brainstorm for future development in the area and future project sites for a subsequent group of students. The research conducted is being used in a studio class in fall quarter 2014 to design an eco-campsite. The second rural site is a small rural Xhosa village in KuManzimdaka. Here students conducted community workshops and design charettes with the residents to gain information to inform future work trips aiming to improve water security. The last project site was conducted in Kaysers Beach at a pre-school. Here students made improvements to the existing playground and built additional play

elements. Our work throughout these projects focused on the issues of improving child health, development, and well being through the advancement of play. Additionally, we contributed to building community resources and addressing issues of subsistence through enhancing economic stability, and access to clean water. We were successful at meeting all of our goals through our design, communication, and construction. This group of students was able to successfully complete proposed projects and develop vital relationships with the communities necessary to facilitate subsequent return trips.

VI. Major Accomplishments

(1) Post occupancy review and resource enhancements to playground project completed at Ratang Bana AIDS Orphanage the previous year. An assessment of the condition of the playground and the maintenance needs was conducted. Students prioritized the needs and engaged in repairs as resources permitted. New playground components were added including an arbor with a raised platform for seating for the “grannies” to supervise the children’s play and to lead cultural exchanges between the generations.

(2) Research collection for continued relationship and project building:

- At Sewenfontein, a farm in a valley region of the cape, students collected information from the farmers about life in the village and their needs. They also spent considerable time observing the farm and surrounding valley as well as getting to know the people who live there. This research is being used by the students to design an eco-tourism campsite to increase revenue for the farm. The campsite will be built next summer.

- Outside of Elliot, a Xhosa village in the Transkei region, students photo mapped the village with residents to visually record and understand village life. They also spent a day at the school working with teachers and students in the community garden to facilitate cooperation. Additionally, several in-depth interviews were conducted to gain better understanding challenges of living in the region. This research will be used by subsequent trips of students from the US to complete environmental restoration work. (This project site is being developed in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems)

(3) Completed design build at Kaysers Beach:

- Designed and built a bike track for the children
- Repurposed a slide donated from a high school into an age appropriate climbing structure
- Constructed a shade structure for the existing sandbox and replenished the sand

VII. Expenditure of Funds

Reimbursing students for personal travel expenses

VIII. Impacts to Student’s Learning

“My trip to South Africa has definitely opened my eyes to the potential impacts my major can have on people and even the world. Through my travels I have grown as a person and matured through being able to look at life through different perspectives. My education thus far has been somewhat practical, but not implementable. Throughout the four projects we tackled while in Africa I was able to understand how the site really worked and how many factors play into the success of a project. One of my favorite parts was how we were dealing with real people and that we were able to see our designs actually built. Seeing

a project from start to finish helped me get a better understanding of the design process and the construction process. Also I learned that plans change; I will no longer have my heart set on a certain design because so many implications can change it completely.

I never expected this to happen but my professional aspirations have changed. I used to look at my future as having minor changes to a small area. I never realized that landscape architects could have a hand in changes on a worldly scale. I want my future to have meaning and I want to affect people, if that is overseas or in my backyard I want to change lives. I am fortunate enough to be gifted with education and design skills, that I feel it is my obligation to share it with the unfortunate. I am excited to see where I will end up and what life is waiting for me to change”.

Annie Potter, Landscape Architecture

“Encosi Africa was such an enriching and incredible experience for my academic and personal life. The memories we made and the people we met there will forever hold an endemic mark on my life. The trip itself was a constant learning experience. Our time traveling around the country as well was filled with enriching information that brought our classroom knowledge alive. Also while working on projects in South Africa we received real world working experience. We would design our project beforehand and then take it to the site. However, while building at the site we would incur problems that required swift allocation and solutions. Our time in South Africa was a great asset for my academic career as well as helping to shape me as a global citizen for the future”.

Chad Evans, Landscape Architecture

“Traveling all over South Africa and working on so many different projects, I have gained a greater understanding of how history, culture, and environmental resources collide to create both challenges and opportunities for communities. This experience has not only solidified my belief in problem solving guided by comprehensive understanding and compassion, but it has shown me the possibility for that type of action oriented work to be actualized in the real world. Since returning, this service trip has invigorated me in my studies and excited me about the prospects of creating meaningful change in similar professional fields”.

Rachel Pittman, Anthropology and Geography

“As a liberal arts and engineering studies major it was a great opportunity to get real world experience on interdisciplinary work. I really enjoyed collaborating with students from different majors because it made me take a second look at everything I did. Coming from a more math and science based background it was interesting to listen to different outlooks and perspectives. It was a great opportunity to learn how to work more efficiently on a team and learn how to incorporate everyone’s strengths”.

Jocelyn Deleon, Liberal Arts Engineering Studies

“The trip to South Africa will forever have an influence over the things that I want to accomplish in my professional aspirations. It also hugely impacted the way I now think about my designs in my academic career. Experiencing the different cultures that we were exposed to broadened my knowledge of the world and how it functions and that knowledge is vital when designing for people at a large scale. I am very grateful that I got the chance to experience this once in a lifetime experience”.

Camille Cherry, Landscape Architecture

“South Africa has provided me with an irreplaceable educational experience. I feel this trip has allowed me to develop emotional intelligence and understand what making a change is like. This trip has given me an education that no classroom can ever provide. We were not only faced with academic challenges, but cultural ones as well. This trip began as a combination of emotions and developed into future goals. Goals that demand me to be a better person and use my knowledge not for selfish or egotistical reasons but to create places that will better a person's life”.

Rudy Perez, Landscape Architecture

