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Their Classroom, the World

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

By Matt Lazier

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

Run by two Cal Poly alums, Journeyman International connects architecture students to 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, schematic and final designs, and project logistics for buildings that will be constructed by the NGOs.

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

Since its creation in 2009 as part of founder Daniel Wiens' senior project, Journeyman International has managed half a dozen project designs, in places such as Mexico, Belize, Zambia, Ghana, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Haiti. Projects have included orphanages, schools, and a safehouse for children escaping human trafficking.

"We connect students with projects that allow them to fill critical needs all over the world," said Wiens (B.S., Construction Management, 2010). "We're tethering an untapped labor force with the desire to create a real, lasting impact in the world.

"During the academic year, our students provide cultural and site research, design mock-ups for review by in-country partners, budgeting, scheduling and much more depending on the project circumstance. Once the final design is complete, the students and J.I. act as advisors to the construction process while the partnering organization, and community, construct the facility."

Anna 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 an organization called Disaster Volunteers of Ghana (DIVOG).



Cal Poly architecture student Anna Nagasugi visits the site of her Journeyman International project in Ghana. (Photo courtesy Anna Nagasugi)



Journeyman International founder Daniel Wiens (second from left) and several students look 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 their students' lives."

Getting to visit the project site in February, she said, was an invaluable opportunity to experience the culture of Ghana and understand how her design would impact the residents there.

"I chose this project because I wanted to spend my year working on a design that would actually be put to use," Nagasugi said. "Also, my main career goal is to work in a sustainably minded firm in the humanitarian sector."

A similar sentiment fueled Wiens to create Journeyman. He had taken part in several international mission projects while growing up. When he came to Cal Poly to major in construction management, he knew he wanted to use his training in service work.

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

"When we finished, I said 'That was great. We should do that again,' " Wiens said. "I just knew we had to keep building more facilities," Wiens explained. "I was graduating, but I knew other students would want to work on similar projects."

As his own senior project was wrapping up, Wiens filed paperwork to create a nonprofit organization. Journeyman International was born.

Wiens ran the nonprofit as a part-time operation while he worked with a local construction company. But he soon decided to focus on Journeyman, leaving his day job and hiring friend and fellow alum Steph Fellows in January as Journeyman's first full-time employee.

Now, say Wiens and Fellows, Journeyman is preparing to dramatically increase its output, giving students — not just at Cal Poly, but elsewhere in the West — a chance to take part.

"Working with Cal Poly students has been very effective," Wiens said. "We've done so much through informal collaboration, but now we're working with the Architecture Department to formalize the relationship. And we're using this Cal Poly model and negotiating with some other universities with renowned architecture and construction programs."

In the near future, Fellows said, they hope to expand the Journeyman interdisciplinary model to university programs across the nation.

"We've proven that Journeyman is a sustainable model for students to gain hands-on experience and provide economically feasible, green construction fundamentals to the developing world," Fellows said. "We are empowering students, professionals and communities to take small initiatives that yield huge impacts. And we are just getting started."

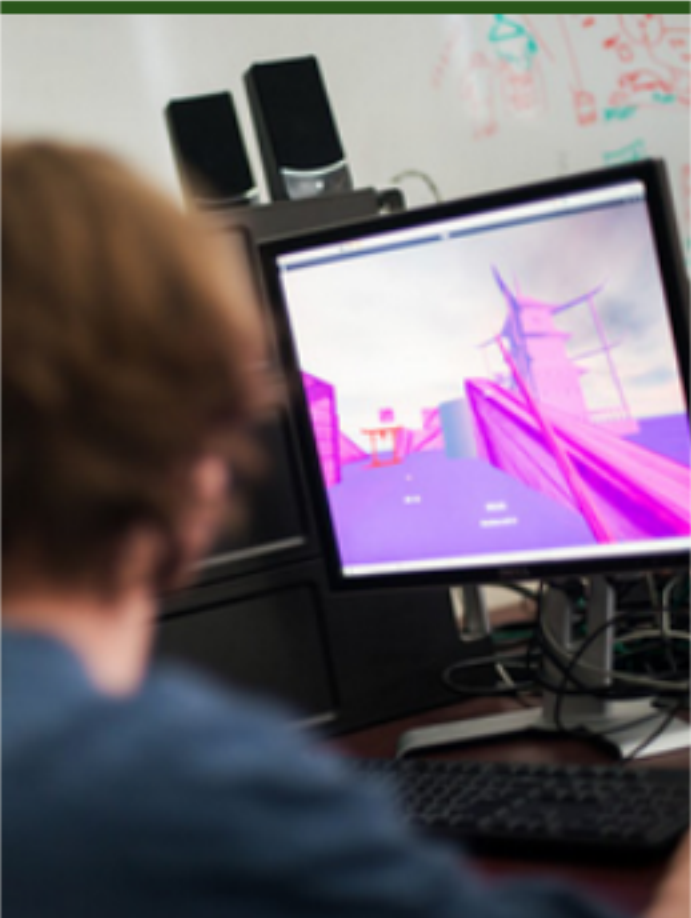
For more information on Journeyman International, visit <http://www.journeymaninternational.org/>.



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