

A Real World Lesson in Design Education



Joe Schwartz

One of the most common questions we're all asked as teachers is "Why do I have to know this?" From their perspective, most students have no concept of why the lessons we teach can be valuable tools later on in their academic and professional environments.

One way I address this question is by bringing working professionals into the classroom to show students how what they learn in my computer graphics and design classes has real-world applications.

I also use competitions as a way of introducing students to real-life art applications. Creating something for a competition that has parameters and a finite timeline is something that any working professional can appreciate, so entering competitions can be very informative from a career education standpoint.

FutureBrand Competition

One competition I chose was sponsored by FutureBrand, a design studio with headquarters in New York City. Specializing in creating identity programs

for geographic areas, they also create branding solutions for companies such as Intel. They often face the challenge of trying to convey the look and feel of an entire country in one compact message. This often starts with the creation of a logo or logotype which is then conveyed across multiple media, such as print, Internet, and video.

As a challenge, FutureBrand created Brand America, a competition that challenges participants to create a brand for America. The idea was to come up with a solution that conveyed what America has to offer as a

u s a m e r i c a



Brendan Parks.

AMERICA

Kyle Lacina.

AMERICA

Jackie Johnsen.

destination. While the competition was only open to college students, I thought it posed an interesting problem and assigned it to my students as a project. As I saw them develop their concepts, I got an idea. I contacted FutureBrand and asked if my students' work could be submitted under the same parameters as the competition, but not be judged as part of the competition itself. Mike Williams, the design director at FutureBrand, was intrigued and consented to accept the work for review.

We sent eight entries to FutureBrand. After waiting some time for a response, I went to FutureBrand's website and saw that they had posted the winner and runners-up of the competition—along with the honorable mentions, of which three of my students had received recognition!

An Invitation

I immediately e-mailed Mike, who responded saying that the judges were impressed with our submissions. He invited the entire class to FutureBrand's offices to see how an international design studio operates. Once

at the FutureBrand offices, we were greeted by a sign that read "Welcome Spotswood High School" and were shown to a conference room that was plastered with Brand America entries (including our own) and concept

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boards from other recent presentations. Students were offered food and beverages, as if they were VIPs arriving for a client presentation.

Mike and his staff walked us through some projects in various states of completion. They explained their conceptual processes, how they work with clients, and how the entire office works together as a team to tackle a project. They also discussed the various challenges that they face when working on international projects. We got to see the working space and students saw how we use the same tools in the classroom that

FutureBrand's designers use in the office.

Back at School

Using a worksheet, students were asked to write a report that reflected things they learned that day that they did not know beforehand. By far, the collaborative environment at FutureBrand was what struck students as the most intriguing part about the visit. They are used to working on most projects by themselves, with little feedback except from me. They saw that in the real

world, collaboration is the key to success. It was a good lesson to learn and one that I'm pleased to have been able to show them.

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NATIONAL STANDARD

Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

WEB LINK

www.futurebrand.com
schoolartsonline.com WEB