

VIP project creating waves

The Visualising Issues in Pharmacy (VIP) project is the first fully online international education initiative designed to link students and teachers in pharmacy and graphic design departments from universities and colleges around the world.



This two phase project will challenge a diverse body of students and educators is to address important global health issues by producing detailed research reports, and subsequent visual communication campaigns, for implementation in specific local hospitals and health centres in Kenya, Africa.

“One of the major issues in rural Africa is the lack of knowledge on how to deal with certain diseases,” say Dr Nataly Martini of The University of Auckland’s School of Pharmacy. “Patients are often abandoned by their families, simply due to this lack of education.

Over 50 pharmacy students and 50 design students will join forces for three months, with project convenors and teachers and special guests worldwide, to work collaboratively within a fully online learning environment. Using the Omnium Software™ and Internet as their sole communication tool, participants will form connections all over the world, receive regular feedback and support from peers, teachers and established professionals.

“This project will challenge students to really think about the issues in Kenya and get their ideas into a form that will be used on the ground and directly affect lives. By creating these awareness campaigns, we are hoping to not only increase knowledge in Kenya, but also promote social awareness and proactive involvement in students, pharmacists, graphic designers and educational bodies globally,” says Dr Martini.

The project will consist of online discussions and forums for pharmacy students to discuss their ideas and produce research reports on health issues of particular importance in Kenya. These issues include sexual transmitted infections; chronic disease; immunisation; adherence; malaria; and tuberculosis.

On completion of their research, the pharmacy students will use their detailed reports to brief the graphic design students to aid with the generation of visual health awareness campaigns for use in the Nyanza province of Kenya.

Phase one: Pharmacy research (Weeks 1-7; 2 April - 19 May 2007)

Phase one of the project takes place over a seven-week period and links pharmacy students and their teachers from a variety of universities and colleges around the world. Using the Omnium Software™ interface, participants interact in small working teams of five (with each student in each team residing in a different global location) to explore one specific health related health issue from their own geographic

settings and cultural perspective.

During this time, each team will be joined by an expert teacher/mentor to guide them through their working process.

In addition, all the teams will be visited online by established professionals and educators to provide their own feedback and ideas to the work taking place. Each group will collectively work to produce a detailed research report and final brief for the graphic design students to begin working from.

Phase Two: Graphic design (Weeks 6-12; 7 May - 23 June 2007)

Phase two will see the graphic design students join the project and initially link up with each pharmacy team for a period of two weeks. Having been briefed by the pharmacy students, who in effect will now be acting clients, the designers will form similar working teams of five to progress their own visual concepts and interpretations for a further five weeks. The graphic design teams will create concepts to visually communicate the health-related issues and promote awareness to the local community of Winam, Kenya.

The VIP project aims to:

- Challenge a diverse international body of students and educators to raise awareness of important global health issues through a series of detailed research reports and subsequent visual design campaigns for use in specific locations in developing countries.
- Realise World Health Organisation (WHO) initiatives for “Working Together for Health”, and align with International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) actions in sustaining the pharmacy profession in developing countries.
- Respond to agenda items identified by the International Council of Graphic Design Associations such as to raise the standards of design, professional practice and ethics and to contribute to design education-theory, practice and conduct.
- Extend Omnium’s reputation for high-level e-learning research together with its focus on practical online learning and teaching initiatives that aid communities in developing nations.

VIP is the second in a series of free, non-profit, international *Creative Waves** projects, produced, directed and funded by The Omnium Research Group at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales (Australia) and written in collaboration with the School of Pharmacy (University of Auckland, NZ). Sponsors include International Council of Graphic Design Associations – IcoGrada; International Pharmaceutical Federation – FIP; International Pharmaceutical Students’ Federation – IPSF; and Universitas 21 - The Network for International Higher Education.

For more project information, visit: <http://creativewaves.omnium.net.au/vip/outline/>