# RMIT University

**Learning and Teaching Investment Fund 2009**

**Final Report**

Due date is February 19, 2010 to your LTIF College Coordinator

## Project title

**BUILDING THE COMMUNITY (STAGE-3): DEVELOPING A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY, ‘LIVE’ TEACHING MODEL FOR DESIGN AND PROPERTY STUDENTS AT RMIT MELBOURNE AND RMIT VIETNAM**

## Project leader

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## Team members

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## Funds approved

$53454

## Funds acquitted (attach financial statement)

Tbc (16 March)

## Introduction

The course was based upon an integrated practice studio model using a ‘live project’, in rural Vietnam to deliver real world teaching, research and community service outcomes for RMIT design and construction students and staff – and a tangible outcome for an external client. The studio centered around – a “design and construction” proposal for a day-care centre for physically-disabled children in Dien Ban, central Vietnam for project client the Kianh Foundation in Hoi An.

## Detailed project description and outline of what was done

This project involved working with 4 key partners in working towards a final design proposal for a disability day care centre in Dien Ban, Vietnam. The partners included:
- RIUV;
- The Kianh Foundation;
- BURO architects;
- Architects Without Frontiers

### Background

The Kianh Foundation are a UK registered charity who have been running successful programs for children at the Hoi An orphanage since 2002. To meet pressing health and educational needs in the province, the Kiang Foundation have secured land in Dien Ban, 6km from Hoi An, to build a purpose-designed facility to provide day-care services, such as physio and occupational therapy, for children living with their parents. Following three meetings with RMIT staff in 2008, the Foundation was very keen to work with RMIT staff and students to develop a design proposal for implementation in 2010. Based on RMIT (DVC) support for the construction of the project in mid 2009, the project will be completed early in 2011.

The Building the Community course involved:

1. Pre-fieldwork teaching modules taught at RMIT Melbourne and for students at RIUV on:
   - Adaptation of construction technologies and sustainable design principles for design and construction in the Asia Pacific Region
   - Development of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary principles for working on community-based design projects
   - Vietnamese History and Culture (Melbourne campus) and Australian Design Culture (Vietnam campus)
   - Principles of Humanitarian Design
2. An intensive 10-day community fieldwork trip to Hoi An for RMIT and RIUV students who engaged in community/client consultation and multidisciplinary design workshops to prepare designs for a Day Care Centre.

3. A two-day workshop at RIUV to:
   - refine and present design concepts to non-design audiences.
   - preparation, design and publication of a scoping report on the design proposal and preparation of an ‘RMIT Guide to Live Projects in Vietnam’

4. Follow up workshops with RMIT (Melbourne) students to produce the final exhibition and publication of design work for a May 2010 exhibition to be launched by the Vice Chancellor (tbc)

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**Project Outcomes**

**Improved student learning experiences, outcomes and employment opportunities**

The project builds on 2007 and 2008 ‘Building the Community’ design studios. This year’s project led to the following outcomes and suggestions for improving a 2010 program:

1. Evaluations of the 2009 program indicated that students gained enormously in their development of Work-Integrated Learning skills, cross-disciplinary understandings, problem-solving skills, professional ethics, group work and cross-cultural appreciations. (evaluations and group and individual ‘learning contracts’ are attached to this application)

2. Development of an innovative multi-disciplinary teaching and cross-campus design studio-based model, developed across the design, construction and multimedia disciplines at RMIT (Melbourne and Vietnam campuses);

3. Development of ‘integrated practice studio’ teaching model that uses design to assist communities in need and enable students ‘real world’ learning outcomes through immersion in rural community development projects and with the opportunity to see their design projects actually built;

4. Integration of cross-cultural, stakeholder communication and consultation skills with student’s project-based learning;

5. All students are now working closely with external organizations, the Kianh Foundation and BURO architects to complete the design proposal for the day care centre.

6. Five of the total 19 students are now considering careers in the international development field.

**Innovation**

Currently there are no elective or studio courses available in any university in Australia that bring together design (architecture, landscape architecture, interior design and industrial design) and property construction students through international studio-based programs. However, there is a huge demand from local and international design students wishing to get involved in volunteer projects abroad where they can actually see the results of their efforts and can genuinely contribute to helping communities in need. This was evidenced by more than 50 students applying for only 12 places in the 2009 Building the Community, studio. The ability to actually realise the studio project into a completed building (by Jan 2011) is also a key innovation in undertaking design studio projects at RMIT.

The second key innovation of this project was bringing the RMIT Melbourne and Vietnam students together to work on the fieldwork component of the project in Vietnam to deliver the key outputs for the project.
Strategic alignment

Collaboration between RMIT Melbourne and RIUV students in 2009-2010, provided a highly dynamic cultural learning experience for both groups which fully embraced the ‘global passport’ aspiration of RMIT teaching and learning programs. The project thus achieves the following objectives:

- building links between the learning hubs of RMIT Melbourne and Vietnam through developing a robust platform for staff and student exchange between the 2 campuses;
- providing opportunities for RMIT Melbourne and RIUV students to enrol and study together in a common course that will be further developed through ‘Blackboard’ as an online learning platform for future ‘live’ design projects;
- developing curriculum innovation through the use of local examples (in Vietnam) as a context for ‘real world’ learning;
- enhancing creative use of informal learning environments through on-site immersion in a community based design project; and
- using a multi-disciplinary project-based learning model involving students from two RMIT campuses and two Colleges, to deliver a tangible ‘product’ for a not for profit client group.

University wide application

The 2009 Building The Community teaching model represents an innovative teaching program which had a wide application across three RMIT Schools (Architecture and Design, Applied Communications, and Property, Construction and Project Management) and two RMIT campuses, Melbourne and Vietnam.

Value for money

As evidenced through previous ‘Building the Community’ Studios, the 2009 project funded through the LTIF grant, this project has already delivered a wide range of teaching, design and client outcomes for a modest budget. The reports and videos prepared on the project will be used extensively to develop the final design for the Disability Day Care centre in Hoi An and to promote innovative teaching and community-based learning within RMIT and to external community and university partners.

Project Impacts

As detailed in the student evaluations, this studio had a profound impact on most of the students participating in the project. The main impact was for the students was the knowledge that their studio outputs will be used to realise an actual building for a marginalised group in Hoi An, the disabled children of the Hoi An orphanage.

Dissemination of project outcomes both completed and planned. This should include both within RMIT and externally.

- Dissemination across RMIT and the broader Australian university sectors of the ‘Building the Community’ teaching model through a workshop at RMIT Melbourne in 2009 (involving visiting RMIT Vietnam staff)
- An exhibition of the student work in May 2010;
- Production of a design report to BURO Architects assessing the sustainability of the proposed design for the Disability Day Care Centre
- Production of an ‘RMIT Guide to Live Projects’ synthesing student’s experiences across pre departure modules and fieldwork
- Video documentary on 2010 staff/student experiences and reflections
on project; (Iain McKay)

- Compilation of a project evaluation report detailing experiences by student, staff and client of day-care centre project through ‘learning contracts’
- Through the NING platform, an online social network to enable students to collaborate online. The platform hosts all course materials and fieldwork exercises and reflections have been compiled that can be made available in e-copies to future staff and students at the RMIT and RIUV (by June 2010)

### Summary of the project, outcomes, impacts and dissemination

The Building the Community Project (Stage 3) was based upon an integrated practice studio model using a ‘live project’, in rural Vietnam to deliver real world teaching, research and community service outcomes for RMIT design and construction students and staff – and a tangible outcome for an external client - a “design and construction” proposal for a day-care centre for physically-disabled children on behalf of the Kianh Foundation in Hoi An.

**Project Outcomes included:**

- An innovative multi-disciplinary teaching and cross-campus design studio-based model, developed across the design, construction and multimedia disciplines at RMIT(Melbourne and Vietnam campuses);
- Development of ‘integrated practice studio’ teaching model that uses design to assist communities in need and enable students ‘real world’ learning outcomes through immersion in rural community development projects and with the opportunity to see their design projects actually built;
- Integration of cross-cultural, stakeholder communication and consultation skills with student’s project-based learning;
- An exhibition of the student work in May 2010;
- Production of a design report to BURO Architects assessing the sustainability of the proposed design for the Disability Day Care Centre
- Production of an ‘RMIT Guide to Live Projects’ synthesing student’s experiences across pre departure modules and fieldwork
- Video documentary on 2010 staff/student experiences and reflections on project; (directed by Iain McKay)
- Compilation of a project evaluation report detailing experiences by student, staff and client of day-care centre project through ‘learning contracts’
- Through the ‘NING’ platform, all course materials and fieldwork exercises and reflections have been compiled that can be made available in e-copies to future staff and students at the RMIT and RIUV.

These materials will also be available on the RMIT Architecture and Design website by June 2010.

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**Weblinks**

Architectswithoutfrontiers.com.au
Ning (deb provide details pls)
http://www.kianh.org.uk/.

You should also attach pictures, presentation material, web site links etc that may be important. In particular you should provide an image that can be used in the 2009 LTIF Innovations publication.