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Designing for Clients Around the World

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Designing for clients around the world



International design challenges

Kansas State University students design business kiosks in South Korea that must:

- Follow standards for an international electronics company
- Be located outdoors
- Incorporate a green power system
- Be movable and capable of disassembly
- Consider diversity of human size as represented in another country's population
- Use the country's unit system

A businessman walks out of the subway in South Korea and notices his cellphone battery is dying.

Outside a mall, he sees a large LCD screen advertising a business station. He charges his phone, downloads a few apps and buys some phone accessories — strengthening the bottom line of the electronics conglomerate that owns the station.

Kansas State University interior design students are designing for such imaginary international clients while they gain global competency. The exercise is to help prepare students for the global world of the interior design industry. Kansas State University researchers are studying low-cost methods to expose students to global design issues and international design practice.

Each fall Kansas State University students partner with their counterparts at Sangmyung University in Seoul, South Korea. Students in Kansas create a kiosk for COEX Mall in Seoul, while students in Korea create a kiosk for the Crown Center shopping mall in Kansas City, Mo.

The kiosk must be designed to strict specifications. The outdoor kiosk can be disassembled for storage at night, and it has to produce its own power. Students consider cultural differences, noise levels and accessibility.

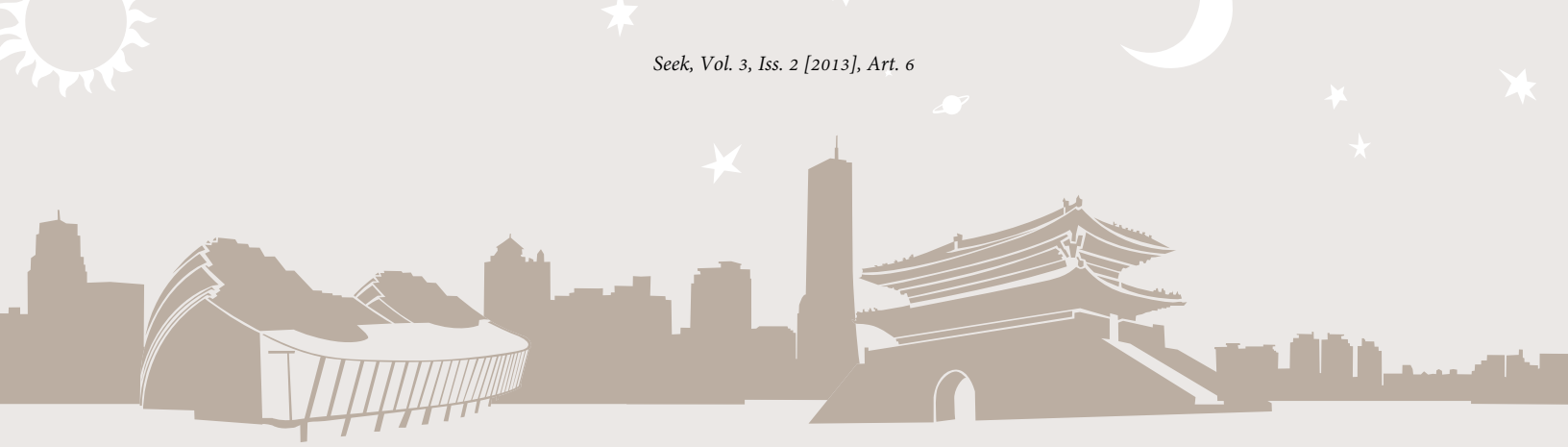


Students sketch designs and build models using the standard brand graphics for the global company, learning about marketing strategies for clients. They research the countries and exchange information, communicating through email, social networking and videoconferencing. There is a 14-hour time difference; at the beginning of the videoconferences, it's 7 p.m. in Kansas and 9 a.m. the next day in South Korea.

Time isn't the only difference. Students must deal with a different measurement system, language and even body size. These variations help students understand cultural differences and issues of global professional practice, said Barbara Anderson, head of the department of apparel, textiles and interior design.

"You may be working here in the states collaborating with someone in an office in Shanghai, but they're in a totally different time zone than you, so you'll be up late at night working with them," she said. "The market our students are going into is incredibly diverse and global, so they need to learn how to be flexible and accept challenges."





International growth has been increasing within the interior design industry, according to Interior Design magazine, and 25 percent of all firms were working on foreign projects in 2012 — an all-time record. They're working on global projects such as office towers, shopping malls, hotels and hospitals.

Results show that Kansas State University students perceived themselves as getting more global experience, said Hyung-Chan Kim, assistant professor in apparel, textiles and interior design who teaches the senior-level interior design studio. In post-evaluation surveys from the last project, 73 percent of students

said the project made them more willing to understand diversity, while 77 percent said it expanded their willingness to understand a different culture.

“Students grow from working with each other during the design process, learning about approaches that each country uses, and by facing challenges,” he said. “They have to figure out the differences and similarities within the cultures, but we hope that this gives our students confidence when they work on international projects.”

By Trevor Davis, Communications and Marketing

