

## Travel Grant Report

Prepared for: The Study Abroad Grant Committee

Writer: Shelley Johnstone, Graphic Designer, Communications and Public Relations

Date: January 22, 2013

---

From November 10 - 18, 2012 I participated as a volunteer instructor in a photography and graphic design workshop called *Design4Kids* ([design4kids.org](http://design4kids.org)) with a non-profit organization called *Fotokids* ([www.fotokids.org](http://www.fotokids.org)). *Fotokids* is working to break the cycle of poverty through training in visual arts and technology and provides educational scholarships to over 100 students, all of whom live in some of the harshest economic conditions throughout rural and urban communities in Guatemala and Honduras.

The *Design4Kids* workshop was held in Antigua, Guatemala and the participants were nine girls, aged 15-18, from Guatemala City.



Students learning photography skills.

---



Students concentrate during a blind contour drawing exercise.

---

There were five creative professionals who participated as mentors in the workshop; one photographer, two graphic designers and two copywriters. We worked in collaboration with the local staff of *Fotokids* and taught lessons in photography, graphic design and presentation skills. Specifically, the other designer and I taught lessons in design principles; shape, line, texture, typography and introduction to InDesign. We used a project-based learning model to foster collaborative problem-solving, project management, creative and strategic thinking.

The goal of this workshop was to have the students complete a number of design and photography pieces and to assemble a portfolio and present it to the instructors and their peers at the end of the course. This portfolio can be continuously added to, revised and improved

upon as they continue their work in photography and graphic design. A portfolio is an important tool for creative professionals to showcase their work and conceptual problem-solving skills to prospective employers and/or post-secondary institutions. The presentation and self-marketing skills that the students acquired will also aid in their search for employment, enhance creative opportunities and increase their self-confidence.

This experience has contributed to my professional development in a variety of ways. The understanding and awareness of design considerations for international audiences is important in creating successful marketing materials. Much of the materials designed by the design department at VIU are intended for international audiences. The more knowledge, understanding and awareness of different cultural influences, the more successful my designs will be.



Introduction to InDesign class.



Students working on a photography assignment in Antigua.

While in Guatemala, I collaborated with other communications professionals from around the world as well as the local Guatemalan teaching staff who work for *Fotokids*. Spending time with other professionals, seeing their work, hearing their problem-solving techniques, and challenges was a great learning experience. This will bring a fresh perspective to my work, renew my passion for creative problem-solving and inspire new ways of approaching VIU projects. I also learned a great deal from the Guatemalan staff working with *Fotokids* and their numerous programs that they offer to at-risk youth. This adds to my international perspective and sensibilities and increases my knowledge of project development in my own community and at VIU.