

2009/10 Worldstudio AIGA Scholarships

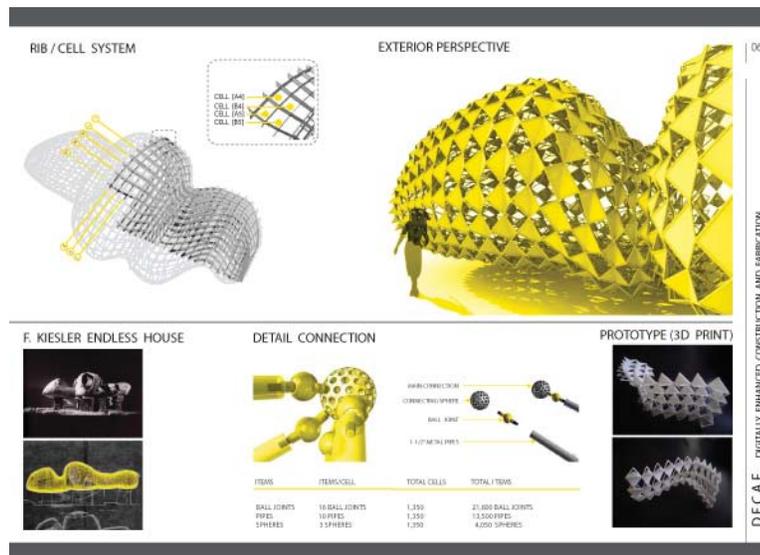
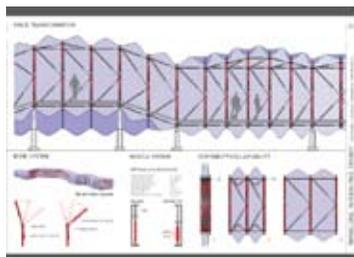
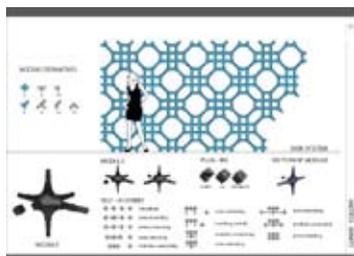
Two Twelve Associates Award



DIEGO URREGO
 Architecture
 Graduate student
 Columbia University

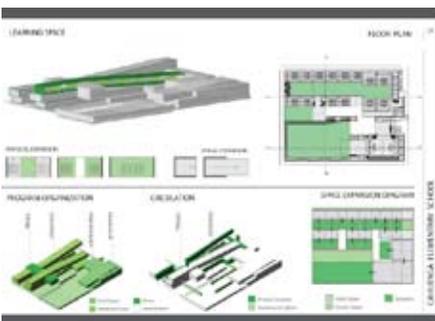
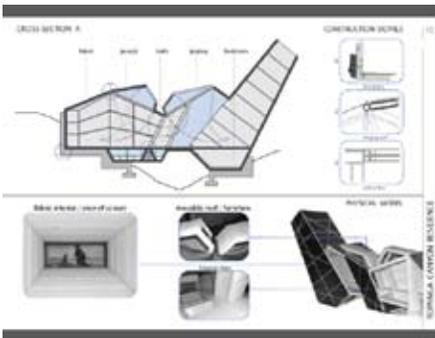
At a very young age, my mother and I immigrated to the United States from Colombia and together we embarked on a journey in a foreign land with an unfamiliar language and customs. I was raised solely by my mother and remember her constant struggle to get jobs that paid enough to cover the basic necessities. The brutal work hours and relentless desire to thrive were not sufficient. As a child I felt the continuous tension and I knew I had to do something different in my life to improve our situation. As life got harder, my drive to succeed became stronger and I quickly learned to take advantage of the numerous opportunities available to me. My mother's persistent emphasis that I do well in school became the foundation of my relentless efforts to excel.

I soon realized that decisions about my education would be a direct result of my success. After graduating from high school, I attended Santa Ana Community College, where I initially wanted to pursue a career in electrical engineering. Despite its interesting aspects, I realized that there was something more profound missing with this career; it seemed too technical and lacked a more personal



interaction with people. Through counselor advice I continued my education at Orange Coast College, where I found an enormous interest in architecture. I began to notice the amazing potential that this profession had to impact people's lives. I realized that the strategies that we use in design, the use of energy efficient systems, or the materials we use in construction, can begin to set examples to the community and other professions of the importance of sustainable living. These interests led me to complete the two-year architecture program at OCC and encouraged me to continue my education in the impacted architecture program at Cal Poly Pomona University.

I spent four years at Cal Poly taking a variety of courses that enlightened me as a student. A close look at my work demonstrates my continuous attempt to approach each design with new ideologies rather than from traditional ways of thinking. You can also begin to see my constant curiosity in emerging technologies. My latest work, the Traveling Interactive Exhibit, embodies my specific desire and interest to explore new ways of being more environmentally conscious and the importance of communicating the need of collective efforts to reach an ecological balance. This design was one of the many projects for which I received an award. I excelled throughout, remaining at the top of my class and further enriched my architectural education through a one-year study abroad program in Italy. My entire undergraduate experience was more than rewarding. I befriended brilliant professors that have opened my eyes to many novel concepts and exciting perspectives. Today, I am a first generation college graduate, currently awaiting responses of acceptance from the Master of Architecture programs at Columbia, Harvard, MIT and UCLA.



Upon finishing graduate school, I plan to work on acquiring my licensure as an architect. I will obtain my LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification while gaining experience by working for a firm that practices the integration of innovative technologies and sustainable design. I am interested in practicing architecture that has minimal impact on the environment, one which promotes better living for the community while pushing the boundaries of contemporary design and technology. As an architect I will be committed to setting an example for society through sustainable design and hope to convey the importance for society to be sensitive to global issues and to understand the positive impact of practicing it.