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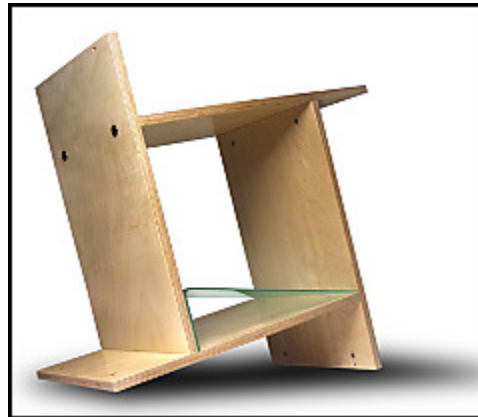
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Metro State class goes global with start of Net campaign

By Amy Bryer, Special To The Rocky
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A student-run furniture company that grew from a senior-level marketing class at Metropolitan State College of Denver is going global with the launch of its first Internet marketing campaign. Brand Spankin New - a collaborative effort between the marketing and industrial design departments - started as a class project but is drawing interest from outside investors.

"We wanted it to be more than just a baked goods sale, with a -real brand that could be mass-produced," said Brand Spankin New founding faculty adviser Mick Jackowski.



"Eileen" modular shelves "Lupe" magazine rack



Student designers create the high-end contemporary furniture, which goes through a competitive selection process. The marketing students choose one piece per semester to sell on their company Web site, brandspankinnew.org, and at partner retailers like Mod Livin in Denver.

"When I went to school, we didn't have anything like that," Mod Livin owner Jill Warner said. "The students are leaving school knowing they can do something . . . it's better than traditional work experience."

The furnishings, such as the "Lupe" magazine rack or the "Eileen" modular shelves, range in price from \$60 to \$480. The Eileen was a best seller last semester and appeared in *Colorado Homes and Lifestyles* magazine.

Consumers can find descriptions of the furniture and biographies about the student designers on Brand Spankin New's Web site.

To beef up their marketing efforts, the students are working with Bayard Advertising in Denver to learn about Google AdWords and other Internet marketing tools.

There are about 200 million adults on the Internet, and 90 percent of them use a search engine, said Eric Holwell, Bay-ard interactive services director and Metro graduate.

"When you have a Web site, you have to drive relevant traffic to the Web site and convert that into some type of sale," Holwell said. "Companies can spend millions on this, but since it's a student-run project, they're learning how to do this on a limited budget."

Besides getting real-world marketing experience, the Brand Spankin New students use results from their search engine marketing to attract angel investors to their venture.

Students also are learning all aspects from start to finish of the manufacturing and marketing process. Last semester, Ken Phillips, industrial design department chairman and co-faculty adviser, took two students to China for a conference and to tour manufacturing facilities.

"We wanted to give these guys the reality of globalization, and the reality is they are going to be working with China," he said.

The Brand Spankin New project accepts about 34 students per semester - 20 from the design discipline and 14 from marketing majors.

Students find the course intimidating but highly rewarding.

"Students are scared to death in the beginning," Jackowski said. "There're no tests, and the report is due in the middle of the semester, and then they spend the rest of the semester trying to see if it works."

Metro student Deidra Brooks, 23, knew nothing about the class before she signed up.

"I'm used to textbooks and mundane lectures, but this is unlike any class I've ever taken," she said.

Brooks enjoys the interaction with Jackowski and her involvement in the marketing process.

"I can make a suggestion and see it implemented on the Web site," Brooks said. "I can directly contribute to the success of (Brand Spankin New)."

She's used lessons from the course to help market her own business as a personal assistant and shopper.

"It's not just a regular class," Brooks said. "It's something I can apply to the rest of my life."