

DRAFT FOR APPROVAL

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**DESIGNBUILDBLUFF LAUNCHES TWO NEW, INNOVATIVE
ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTS FOR 2008**

Graduate Students Put Their Education to the Test

BLUFF, UTAH - DesignBuildBLUFF, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide architectural students with a real-world educational experience in physically connecting on-site to both the experimental and standardized aspects of design, announces its 2008 projects. Founded by professor Hank Lewis in 2000, DesignBuildBLUFF is affiliated with the University of Utah's College of Architecture + Planning and designs and builds low cost, off-grid houses on the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation. Because of organizational needs, a Navajo home will not be built in 2008. Instead, a workshop/student housing dwelling and bathhouse will be built and DesignBuildBLUFF is fundraising to provide design/build assistance for the construction of a medical housing center for AIDS-orphaned children in the Ugandan village of Bira in Uganda.

UTAH

For the past eight years, DesignBuildBLUFF has worked with the Navajo Nation to create homes for Native American families in need. Thanks to a steady increase in enrollment, the student participants themselves are now faced with a housing shortage. To ensure that DesignBuildBLUFF is able to sustain itself and continue to grow, the focus this year will be on creating a new student housing facility.

Designed around three discarded steel shipping containers, the structure will incorporate a workshop, kitchenette, bathroom, and sleeping quarters for eight. Not only will this new facility create needed housing for students, but it will also facilitate DesignBuildBLUFF's long-term goal of being able to prefabricate pieces in the workshop (such as passive solar rammed earth and trombe walls and water reclamation roofs) that can easily be transported to building sites on the reservation.

Also, the students are designing and building a bathhouse. Made partially from the sandstone earth that covers the reservation, this quiet retreat will provide two additional showers and toilets for students, as well as a warm, relaxing sauna and saltwater tub that will help students to ease their aching muscles after long, hard days of construction.

UGANDA

In an unprecedented partnership, the students of DesignBuildBLUFF will extend their helping hands from the western United States to the east African nation of Uganda through a partnership with the Ssejinja Foundation, a Utah-based charitable organization.

The foundation's director David Ssejinja approached the College of Architecture+Planning seeking assistance in both designing and building a medical center for AIDS-orphaned children in the Ugandan village of Bira. "The students' commitment to socially conscious projects and their ability to 'build out of nothing' made them natural partners for this project, which seeks to provide much needed structural solutions to this ravaged community," said Ssejinja.

Students have begun to develop innovative solutions to the limited supply of construction materials in Bira; initial ideas include combining the abundant rubber trees and sandy earth to form an adobe-like, rain-resistant material. DesignBuildBLUFF and Ssejinja are in the process of fundraising for this venture now, and with the assistance of DesignBuildBLUFF's graduate students, expect to have the first center completed by December 2008.

ABOUT DesignBuildBLUFF

As architecture students prepare for their careers, they rarely have the opportunity to learn about the practicalities of their profession. The studio culture prevalent in most academic institutions focuses on theory and design, with little consideration given to the hands-on application of architecture and its impact on communities. DesignBuildBLUFF seeks to remedy this by providing graduate students from the University of Utah's College of Architecture+Planning with a real-world, educational experience that allows them to physically connect, on-site, both the experimental and standardized aspects of design. Through this process students become the architects of their own education, and gain an unrivaled educational experience.

designbuildbluff.org
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