

*Another Advancement In*

# STEM Education



*Iowa State University informing decision-makers about research in Science–Technology–Engineering–Mathematics Education*

## **Student-powered business creates technology-driven training systems**

For many small businesses, non-profits, and government agencies, the practice of hiring consulting firms is virtually non-existent. Most simply can't afford it – until now.

Six Iowa State University graduate students in curriculum and instructional technology have created the Learning Design Solutions organization (LearnDS) – a student-run group that assists businesses with their instructional design needs at a fraction of consulting firm prices. LearnDS is quickly becoming the go-to group for how-to training.

Instructional designers improve education by analyzing learning needs, developing learning experiences, and evaluating. Instructional designers propose innovative uses of technology to facilitate learning and support effective teaching. A foremost experts in the field is Ana-Paula Correia, an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction also advises LearnDS.

“Through the advanced systems design class (C I 603), students work with businesses that need help in creating or updating instructional technology products,” Correia said. “Over the years, we have developed a high demand for our skills and to meet this need, students started LearnDS to provide these services year-round. It really helps the businesses and it gives our students an opportunity to keep their skills fresh and learn new techniques.”

Among LearnDS's clients is the Story County Coalition for Disaster Recovery (CDR). When LearnDS member Vanessa Prest attended a sandbagging volunteer workshop, she realized CDR's training system could benefit from her colleagues' skills. LearnDS members reorganized existing information, created illustrations and



*Jacob Larsen and Turkah Karakus discuss the redesign of a client's web site as part of their work with the LearnDS student business.*

quizzes, and produced instructional videos that help new volunteers learn the sandbagging process. Betty Boccella, volunteer coordinator for the Story County CDR, said the updated training materials ensure that the organization – and volunteers – will be more prepared than ever before.

“The LearnDS team produced a product that was very well done and well-received by the Coalition members,” Boccella said. “They were extremely thorough, detail-oriented, and had excellent follow-through, down to a written executive summary of the project. The first training, using the new curriculum, was very successful.”

The LearnDS team looks forward to working on a variety of other projects in the future.

“We come from an education background,” said Jacob Larsen, LearnDS member. “In the end, we want to design the best, most effective product that will help people become better employees, volunteers, and citizens.”

### **For more information:**

Check out other STEM education stories on the College of Human Sciences web site at [www.hs.iastate.edu/news/stem](http://www.hs.iastate.edu/news/stem).