Student Spotlight: The Shape of Eye Candy to Come

Lisa Boyes
On the quest to develop an organic gummy candy as a healthy alternative in a sugar-glutted marketplace, Pure Fun!™ is working with food scientist Winnie Chiu in the Centre for Hospitality and Culinary Arts.

Natural tastes and colours are key for this product line, but food marketers know that candy shape is also important to a candy’s appeal. That’s why Mike Doell of Ross + Doell, an industrial design and brand development company hired by Pure Fun!, came to George Brown’s School of Design looking for help in surveying Toronto’s retail stores. The goal was to find out what’s there and what might be missing shape-wise.

Supported by a GBC Proof of Principle grant, two design students, Kimberley Pereira and Amy Wong, scoured 40 Toronto candy, grocery and convenience outlets in summer 2008, amassed extensive photo footage and catalogued 200 candy shapes and their packaging. “Research is the most important part of designing,” says Pereira, “and the most challenging part of this project was organizing large amounts of information.”

Pereira and Wong showed their design stripes when it came to presenting the survey to Doell. The students mounted a detailed, tantalizing flash presentation, complete with interactive maps of the neighbourhoods and stores they visited, along with the relevant data. “I can’t imagine having worked on the project without the students from George Brown,” says Doell. “They gathered information and formulated a presentation that was both visually impactful and provided key insights for the development of our marketing strategy.” For Pereira and Wong, the summer job was as close to pure fun as a design student can get.

George Brown College, with 30,000 full- and part-time students and more than 900 faculty in more than 150 programs, aims to be a top community college of choice for applied research investment by industry and other partners. Its applied research strengths include advanced engineering and microelectronics; nursing and the social sciences; health informatics; IT; and design and new media. George Brown is currently allied with nine other Ontario colleges in the Colleges Ontario Network for Industry Innovation, started with a $3.5m grant from the Ministry of Research and Innovation. CONII is building college capacity to bring research to the marketplace.