

IPRO 335 in Haiti: days 4 and 5

By Simon Brauer
TECHNEWS WRITER

After the previous night and its eight-legged surprises, we were at last happy to wake up refreshed and ready to check back with our potential trial schools. We had time to walk around the now well-lit hotel and relax. By mid-morning, our drivers arrived and we returned to the second school in Lascabobas. We decided not to visit the first school, as we felt that we had already discussed many of our current questions with the administrators during our first visit. We looked over the other two schools, however, as we wanted to see what they truly offered, both benefits and challenges.

We greeted the sisters of Ecole Saint Gabriel for the second time that week, as we began to probe deeper into the structure and culture of the school. Many aspects we discussed were promising: the teachers were already utilizing the laptops in their daily curriculum and clearly were very positive concerning the value of technology in their school. They were also excited to utilize teaching materials that would help the children understand what solar installation does and how. All in all, the teachers seemed willing to work with us not only in bringing their students power but also in conveying the value of the solar installation and expanding their education. The roof, upon further inspection, was still rather weak but at least could be braced properly for installation.

We then headed on foot to the third school we had visited. Walking through the town was amazing, seeing the open side-walk shops and groups of people gathering together as a community. Children would stare as we passed, or run by, not even giving us a second glance. Others saw our cameras and came up to pose. One little boy would sit still just long enough for us to raise our cameras, then dash away, only to return again. It was only about a 12 minute walk, but soon we were standing before the outwardly demolished but deceptively sturdy Ecole Baptiste. Much like the previous school, the teachers here had encouraged usage of laptops in the classrooms and were more

than willing to help us teach the children about our installation. We also learned that the flat concrete structure would be perfect for a solar array.

To our surprise, we were then led to a fourth school which we were not familiar with. More of a showcase of what all Lascabobas schools face (ours were not the exceptions), Ecole Mixte was very similarly built to Ecole Baptiste. However, we did not have enough time to discuss the project with the school officials and so Ecole Mixte left a big question mark in our analysis. Once we had finished, we returned to the middle of the town for a traditional Haitian meal in the home of the Lascabobas school district superintendent (or the rough equivalent thereof) and then left for Port-au-Prince.

After three days of riding in the back of their tiny 90's Honda, we knew something wasn't right with the car. If the smoke released from the air conditioning wasn't bad enough, the car finally came to a stop outside of town. After much frustrations trying to tow it (our rope broke, as did its replacement, a severed seat-belt), we finally got it back into Mirebalais where it could be repaired... except this meant that nine (by my count) full-grown adults would have to squeeze into the cabin and bed of the truck, all the way over the mountain and into the city. Needless to say, after several intoxicating rides in the fume-filled SRT, I happily took a cabin seat and let the women enjoy the truck bed.

From there, our work was complete. One more night in the Prince Hotel and another great meal with the Haitian team members the next day closed out our trip. We did visit the Ministry of Education Friday morning, just to give them an update on our work and what we had been planning. Other than that, though, we took our final drive to the airport, caught our flight, and landed safely back home in the Windy City, ready for another semester of IPRO 335.

For more information on IPRO 335, please check out <http://iitempoweringhaiti.org/> and the IIT Empowering Haiti facebook page for updates, events, and pictures of our work.



(Photo courtesy Simon Brauer)

Potential cuts to Pell Grants

By The Office of
Financial Aid

Hello everyone! This week, the Financial Aid Department would like to talk about the Pell Grant, which provides financial aid to families and helps send their children to great colleges like IIT. Unfortunately, current events in Congress may threaten Pell grant disbursements.

The Office of Financial Aid would like to raise student awareness to what is currently happening in United States Congress with regards to funding for the Pell Grant. Approximately 40% of undergraduate students receive Pell Grant funding at IIT. The Pell Grant provides opportunity for lower income families to afford an education at an institution like IIT and we want to see this program funded to the maximum extent possible. The original Pell Grant was created in 1965 and was then called the Basic Educational Opportunity Grant. The Higher Education Act of 1965 was formed to guide the basis of awarding student aid programs. This act still stands today and the amendments to it guide our current award practices at IIT.

The Senate is currently debating whether or not to cut some of the Pell Grant funding for the 2011-2012 academic year. The House of Representatives already voted on this budget and approved it with the Pell Grant cuts. If you receive the Pell Grant or would like to advocate on behalf of your fellow students who do, please consider taking action by contacting your senators. To find out who your senators are, you can visit: http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm. This website allows you to search by your home state and then links you to a senator's web form, where you can write a letter expressing your concerns. If you have any questions about this process or how federal student aid works, please don't hesitate to contact our office at finaid@iit.edu.

