

## Section I:

### Project Goals:

The aim of *Puerto Rico Se Anima* was to use the teaching of 2D animations in order to inspire young individuals to become active agents of social change in their communities. To achieve this main goal, we had four smaller objectives: (1) raise awareness of everyday struggles of young Puerto Ricans; (2) teach participants practical computer, writing and communication skills; (3) encourage new creative thinking techniques; and (4) create a network of cooperation with the participants that will support their efforts to break out of poverty and seek long-term employment.

### Project Summary:

As with many projects proposals we had to modify some of our original plans due to the changing realities on the ground. Fortunately, we worked well as a team and we demonstrated a great level of flexibility throughout the project. One major factor that contributed to the successful implementation of the *Puerto Rico Se Anima* initiative was the active cooperation and support of *Nuestra Escuela*. Even though we did not have the eight volunteers for the project from the University of Río Piedras like we thought we would initially, we still completed the project. It is worth noting that we had one volunteer, Viviana Miret, who assisted us with housing and logistics tasks and the filming of the documentary.

While applying for the *Davis Projects for Peace* grant we realized that we needed additional funding to meet our living expenses and purchase the 2D animation software. Initially, we intended to use free and open-source software, but we realized that we could not find a suitable free alternative. We used our Bucknell connection to reach out to Kristin Ehrgood, founder of *Flamboyant Foundation*, a philanthropic organization that aims at reforming public education in Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. The foundation contributed \$2,200 for the purchase of 11 licenses of *Adobe Flash Professional CS6.0*. Moreover, we organized an art fundraiser at Bucknell University where we were able to secure \$2,369.40 to meet our living expenses for the duration of the entire project. In total we raised \$14,569.40 and used 55.9% of the funds (\$8,197.98) to acquire the necessary equipment for animation production.

As mentioned earlier, we faced several challenges that required us to modify aspects of the original proposal. The school suggested that we teach two four week sessions, one in June and another one in July, instead of one eight week-long session. This forced us to abbreviate the amount of material we could teach the students. The June session was open for the students from *Nuestra Escuela* while the July session was open to all members of the community.

We had two simultaneous groups in June (11 and 10 students each). The maximum number of students for each class was set to 10, due to the limited computer and software access. Given the students' backgrounds, we faced several challenges to motivate all the participants to complete their final projects. We had 7 out of 21 students completing their final animations (33% completion rate). Some of the factors beyond our control that affected student participation rate were the poor access to transportation to the school, the start of the summer holidays, serious family problems at home and lack of interest in the class. We had the impression that some of the students from *Nuestra Escuela* were expected to be in class. In the future, we will make more effort to ensure that everyone who attends the classes is there on voluntary basis and not due to external expectations. Another thing we can improve is to allocate funds or look for ways to secure transportation for those students who cannot afford it and make sure that the classes do not interfere with their summer holidays.

In the July session we faced fewer issues since we were able to learn from our mistakes, but also we had a different student population. We had 9 students in the 2D animation class and 9 out of 9 completed their projects (100% completion rate). These students represented different private and public schools from the community. Unlike the at-risk youth from *Nuestra Escuela*, the students from the July

session were probably middle class and could therefore provide for their own transportation. The July group was excited to take part of class because they signed up voluntarily. Even though we had fewer students from *Nuestra Escuela* completing their projects, in general, their animations were longer and addressed diverse social phenomena (armed robbery, cockfighting, human struggle, etc.) as opposed to the animations that we had from the students in our second group, which focused more on abstract art and video-game inspired projects. We believe this is a result of the different lifestyles and life experiences between the two student groups.

In summary, the main challenge that we faced during the project was lack of time. As a consequence the documentary we envisioned has not been yet developed, but we have most of the footage and we hope to be able to complete it in the next couple of months. The most important thing however is that the project's original spirit was preserved and we hope to continue collaborating with *Nuestra Escuela* through establishing a long-term relationship with the Bucknell community. While in Puerto Rico, we realized that our project evolved beyond the original idea that we presented to *Davis Projects for Peace*. For instance, we did not anticipate teaching *Experimental Arts* and *Programming of Video Games*. With the three courses we taught we were able to reach 42 students in total, 32 male and 10 female students ranging from ages 10 to 65. Most of the students were in the age-range of 14-18.

Through the *2D Animation Festival* that we hosted on August 15, 2012, we were able to bring together students, family members, school administrators and donors. The whole community was enthusiastic about the continuation of future projects. For the creation of the final animations, we did not award \$100 to each student group because we had to adjust our original curriculum. Instead, we used the \$1,000 for extra materials for the classroom such as tables, headphones, window shutter and the renewal of the project website. We hope that some of the students with whom we worked will take the initiative and use the skills they gained and the resources to implement their own projects in the future. *Nuestra Escuela* and *Flamboyant Foundation* would like to see us continue working in the future on education projects in Caguas and Puerto Rico in general. At the time of writing, we are still trying to understand in what capacity we can contribute to the development of the mission of *Nuestra Escuela* and the Caguas Education City project.

## **Section II:**

### **Peace:**

Peace is world state free of violence, oppression and exploitation where each individual and the community as a whole have the opportunity to develop their unique talents without threats from others. It is a world where people are not judged by their failures and weaknesses, but rather by their ability to grow after they have failed. It is a world where people care for their own well-being and that of others.

### **Short- and long-term impacts:**

In the short-term the project motivated the students to make better use of their time where they had to focus their energy on artistic creations rather than the potential of being idle or even worse, take to the streets to seek easy money. It is much harder to measure the long-term impact but we hope that the enthusiasm that we have built will continue to grow and inspire others to become active agents of social change.

### **Personal Quotes:**

"At times I felt like I was spending too much energy planning and trying to control the small unanticipated details of the project. I learned that sometimes it is best to let things run their course. With the right attitude, flexibility and sense of humor everything seems to fall in place." – Stefan Ivanovski

"We did not just teach about the process of making a cartoon animation. On the way we taught (and learned) about science, arts, history, music, creativity, leadership and friendship." - José Saavedra

*Puerto Rico Se Anima*

Puerto Rico

Bucknell University

José Saavedra Valdivia '13, Chile (UWC of the Atlantic '08) and Stefan Ivanovski '12, Macedonia

[www.latcreativa.org/prsa](http://www.latcreativa.org/prsa)



**Image 1:** José Saavedra teaching students how to make a 2D animation.



**Image 2:** The students are learning how to create multiple layers in the 2D animation class.



**Image 3:** The students are celebrating the completion of their projects at the *2D Animation Festival*.