

P.O.P DESIGN®

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE IN-STORE MARKETING INSTITUTE

NEWS

The Real World: Plastics

Students create P-O-P designs with material

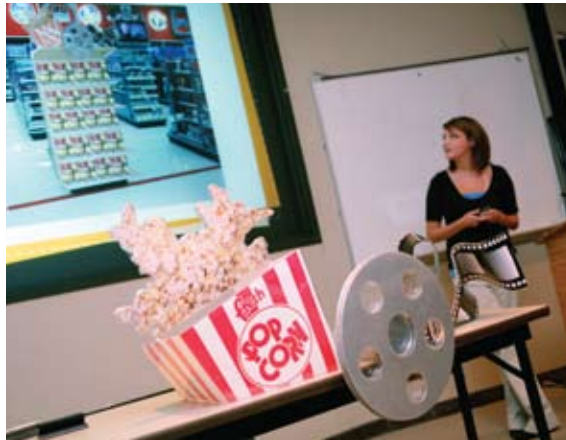
By Erika Flynn

KINGSFORT, TENN. – A semester-long course for industrial design students at **Auburn University**, Auburn, Ala., gives students a real-world experience in creating P-O-P displays. Co-sponsored by **Eastman Chemical** and **Sheffield Plastics**, Sheffield, Mass., the class is part of Auburn's Industry Collaboration program.

Chris Arnold, assistant professor in the industrial design department at Auburn, explained that students were instructed to do research on different types of on-shelf displays and shelving, knowing they would use the Vivak sheet product as their source material. "From an educational standpoint, my goal was to get them to work with the understanding that materials influence design, but also to look at the design needs and be able to mix those two together," Arnold says.

Students taking the course are in their first year of design. "These students have the freshest and youngest ideas but they really have no idea what it means when we talk about a copolyester sheet material," Arnold explains. "They dove into the project with no preconceptions about the product, so we had a clean, fresh slate to work from."

Eastman provided information on how to fabricate with the material, the students visited Eastman's facilities, and then both Eastman and Sheffield



Eastman Chemical and Sheffield Plastics partnered with Auburn University to provide students with store fixture design training. The students worked with Vivak sheet to thermoform and bend the material into P-O-P designs.



representatives attended two presentations at the school to give the students feedback. Design concepts were presented at the first one, and quarter-scale white models at the second. Each student finished the project by presenting one full-size prototype to both companies' representatives.

All design and prototyping work was done in the school's facilities, which includes two vacuum-formers. "The fabrication was up to them," says Arnold. "More than half were using our vacuum formers extensively but another large portion were simply cutting and bending the material itself."

"This kind of project gives us a perspective we would not get otherwise," says Gaylon White, manager, design industry programs, Eastman.

"The students are being grounded

extremely well in materials and are taking that knowledge into the professional world," White adds. "That's exactly what we were trying to achieve when we started this design initiative back in 2001."

Arnold agrees and says some of the feedback from the reps coming into the presentations was that "in large part we were doing things with the material that some of the professionals said couldn't be done." Some students used laser cutters for their projects, which again, they were told was difficult to do. "But we played with it long enough and many of the students actually incorporated that capability into their designs."

The project will be featured on Eastman's Innovation Lab website in a new section called "eZone" in the "Concepts" area. The space shows how materials can be used creatively in retail environments.