‘Visionary’ designers
MIAD students design first-ever treadmill consoles for women, seniors as part of six project challenges for Vision Fitness

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Summary: Success of MIAD’s renowned industrial design program is illustrated on Nov. 16, 2 – 3:30 p.m. at MIAD, 273 E. Erie St. in the Third Ward

MILWAUKEE… Do women really have a “female touch?” Would a treadmill console that meets the physical, cognitive and sensory needs of this majority of treadmill buyers help them better achieve their fitness goals? How about senior citizens and the technologically challenged? The technologically advanced? Hotel patrons? Families with a range of treadmill users?

In a breakthrough project with Vision Fitness whose goals include marketing the first treadmills designed for women and seniors, teams of 25 industrial design seniors at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design will present treadmill console design concepts for the future on Nov. 16, 2 – 3:30 p.m. at MIAD. MIAD is Wisconsin’s only independent, four-year college of art and design.

Vision Fitness designs and distributes award-winning fitness products for the home and commercial markets. This is the Lake Mills-based company’s second project year with MIAD; its first resulted in three items that are being put into production in 2007.

“It’s no secret that women differ from men not only physically, but also in how they are engaged and motivated to exercise,” said Chris Cox, Vision Fitness’ director of product & marketing. “We also know that most people stop exercising because of boredom, so we are looking to innovate and develop programming and product features that specifically interest women and help them achieve their fitness goals. The same is true of senior citizens, who face the challenge of declining eyesight and physical stability. This is something the car industry, for example, has recognized for years.”

Leading the students is MIAD Industrial Design Professor Pascal Malassigné, FIDSA, named this year as one of America’s top 43 “Most Admired Industrial Design Educators for 2006” by Design Intelligence Magazine’s Seventh Annual Survey.

The student teams conducted research into competitor treadmills, interviewed users and developed 2D concept and 3D models of consoles that address the following challenges:

The Female Touch – A console just for women that addresses the physical, cognitive and sensory needs of this largest market segment of treadmill purchasers.

The Console of Confusion – A console that meets the physical and cognitive challenges of senior citizens and helps them to achieve their fitness goals.

The Interactive Solution – A console of the future using newer and future technologies that will keep the user engaged and working out longer.

The Generic Console – A console that addresses the needs of multi-age home users, from parents, to grandparents and teenagers who play varied sports. (MORE > > > )
The Health Clubs, Hotels, Apartment Console – A console that addresses the needs of diverse users.

The Interfacers – Identification of different visual impact and control devices (e.g., LEDs, LCDs, speed adjustment switches) that fit the varying users from all of the preceding groups.

Industrial design is MIAD’s largest B.F.A. major, with 84 students. Since its inception in 1984, the program has contributed many talented practitioners regionally, nationally and internationally to this multi-faceted profession.

90% of MIAD’s ID alumni are employed within their first year of graduation; many work as design leaders at such regional companies as Trek, Harley-Davidson, Buell Motorcycles, GE Healthcare and Master Lock. Grant Larsen ’79 designed the Porsche Boxster, and Brian Ellis ’02 designs LEGO at LEGO International in Denmark.

“We turned to MIAD industrial students again this year because they are able to look at problems from a different perspective and give us many options to deliver to our customers a better workout experience,” Cox said. “It is a breath of fresh air to work with such a creative group of individuals.”

“Collaborative projects with businesses provide a vital educational experience that allows MIAD college students to work on real-world design projects while receiving feedback on their ideas and concepts from marketing, engineering and other industry professionals,” said Malassigné. “In many instances, such collaborations lead to internships and design positions for MIAD students.”

From 1982-1995, MIAD ID students were taught and mentored by internationally renowned ID pioneer Brooks Stevens, who helped to found the program and whose product designs include the Hiawatha Train, first windowed clothes dryer, Jeepster and Jeep Wagoneer and the Excalibur automobile.

Malassigné joined the department in 1991 and has helped shape its development since then. Internationally known lecturer and author, he has been a research industrial designer at the Atlanta and Milwaukee Veterans Affair Medical Center since 1984 and devotes his non-teaching activities to designing with his team assistive and mobility products for individuals with disabilities.

Industrial design is the professional service of creating and developing concepts and specifications that optimize the function, value and appearance of products and systems for the mutual benefit of both user and manufacturer, according to the IDSA, the Industrial Designers Society of America.

For more information about Vision Fitness, originally a division of Trek Bicycle Company, visit www.visionfitness.com. For more information about MIAD, visit www.miad.edu.

MIAD is Wisconsin’s only college devoted exclusively to the education of professional artists and designers. Founded in 1974, it is accredited to award the bachelor of fine arts degree in 11 majors. With 80 percent of its 2,000 graduates living and working in Wisconsin, the college contributes a vital “brain gain” to the state that shapes its creative and economic future.