



A First-Person Account of the Student Design Competition

By Simon Wilson

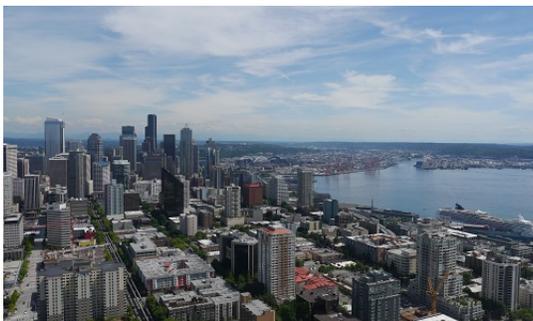
My name is Simon Wilson and I was co creator (with Kate Jackson) of “doc,” or Dementia Organisation Care. [\(To see an explanation and pictures of the design, click here.\)](#) Both of us are from the UK and attend Coventry University studying Industrial Design. Our product got shortlisted into the RESNA student design competition and then placed as a finalist. The experience was unlike any other.

It all seemed to happen very fast because we had only 6 weeks to get our paper fully written and product fully designed. Then about two weeks later we received the email telling us we had been shortlisted and to prepare ourselves. Around a month after that we were on the plane flying to Seattle, so within 3 months we made a product and then were in front of a panel of judges in Bellevue, which is nothing I ever expected would happen.

It was our first time in America and we didn't know what to expect, but we were pleased that everyone was so welcoming. After our presentations in front of the judges we had a lunch with all the other students and a few highly regarded members of RESNA. Kate and I went up to our room looking to dress smart and try to make a good first impression for potential networking opportunities, acting almost like a job interview. But when we saw Alex Mihailidis walk in wearing jeans and a t shirt and staring at the food, we soon realised everything is much friendlier and it took away our nerves and made us feel at ease.

Later that day the First Timer’s forum gave us more of a chance to chat with members and to make some good friends with the other student designers. It was excellent seeing how diverse the nationalities were. We thought we had traveled the furthest to get there, but we were soon corrected after meeting the Swedish team who also informed us there were students from Columbia, too.

The next day we went to see Graham Pullin give his talk about *Design Meets Disability* which was truly inspirational. As a designer myself, it was very interesting to hear all about his thoughts on how to design for those with disabilities. After his talk I got a chance to talk to him in person, which was great. The fact that he had come to RESNA just goes to show the quality of respect the organisation has. I soon after bought his book and read it thoroughly.



In the afternoon we got a chance to go into Seattle to go sightseeing. The beautiful clear skies meant that we

View from the Space Needle



got a chance to view Mount Rainer from the Space Needle, which was amazing. Back at the conference, we then gave a poster session open to members and got face to face feedback on how to develop our product. All who saw it gave us some very useful tips and a great positive reaction.

The final day of the conference arrived. Everything had seemed to go so fast. We had the awards dinner to attend in the grand ballroom of the hotel, and we got to see just how many people came to visit the conference, and listened to a little talk about the history of the conference, which was fantastic. So many people clearly care an awful lot about the well being of others to give their time to help out organisations like RESNA. There were some student teams who were flying out early, so goodbyes came a lot sooner than we thought. A lot of business cards were passed around and many photos taken just trying to keep as many memories as possible.



The whole experience has helped me take my own products to the next level, from being a student project to becoming something that is well liked by many. The networking opportunities are brilliant. The chance to meet so many professionals all interested in the same style as work as you cannot be beaten. The trip has helped me achieve a new standard for my Portfolio and CV and will surely be something to tell all potential future employers.

Simon & Kate with Alex Mihailidis

I recommend entering the student design competition because it gives you a great opportunity to impress others with truly helpful products.

See our product Doc here- www.coroflot.com/simonwilsondesign