

Caboose Gets New Design



Kelly Specht displays the binder showing fabric and finish selections for the caboose interior.

BNSF's caboose has reached the end of the line as far as rail service, but it is getting new life as a conference center thanks, in

part, to JCCC's commercial design students. The retired 1963 caboose was moved to the east side of the National Academy of Railroad Sciences, housed in the Industrial Training Center in June 2006.

"BNSF wants the caboose to serve as a small, intimate place for lunch or a business meeting and also a landmark for the BNSF Technical Training Center and NARS," said Geri Christian, director, administration, BNSF TCC.

Students in Darla Green's *Commercial Design* class took on the project during the spring semester. Their assignment was to transform the 30-foot by 9-foot caboose into a state-of-the-art BNSF conference center with seating for eight to 10 people.

"Because of the size limitations and ADA requirements, this project was a challenge," said Green, assistant professor, interior design. "Students will be able to include this project in their portfolios and have the accolade of saying it was submitted for actual design implementation."

The project required seating in a casual conference style, a writing surface for all persons, dry bar, audio/visual equipment such as a flat-screen television, white board, lighting, layout for electrical outlets and telephones, and an exterior platform and door widths to meet ADA requirements.

Each of the six students put together a professional binder for BNSF consideration including the above details; floor plan for furniture and equipment; and sample fabric and finish selections for carpets, paint, countertops, wall coverings, cabinetry, window treatments, light fixtures and hardware.

"We went to the caboose and took field measurements before starting the project," said student Tahira Baig. "It was a good experience, especially learning to stay within codes."

"The caboose is a very small space. A lot of times we'll be going into design jobs with space constraints so this was a good learning opportunity," Elizabeth Starcke said. "It was good to design for a real client."

Students added distinctive details above and beyond the basics – plants, ceiling fans, train photographs for wall art and outdoor wooden benches. Lynn Van Mol said she went for "color, color, color."

"It was a fun project because we know it could actually happen," Kelly Specht said.

"I think the students' designs are very imaginative," Christian said. "We may use a combination of several of the ideas."

Christian says the exterior of the caboose is scheduled to be painted by the end of May and the interior completed by the end of summer.



Commercial design students (left to right) Meryl Mayer, Elizabeth Starcke, Tahira Baig, Lynn Van Mol and Kelly Specht submitted interior designs for the BNSF caboose.