Nicole Nelson wins design award by hospitalitydesign

College of Architecture Interior Design student Nicole Nelson recently won the student project award of the fourth annual Hospitality Design (HD) Magazine Awards. Nelson’s project competed with more than 400 submissions in categories ranging from hospitality debut to student projects to luxury hotels. The awards were judged by a prominent panel of professional interior designers including Susan Nagle, from Bentel, Bentel & Bentel; Gonzalo Bustamante, from Seed Design; Kip Richardson, from Ankrom Moisan Associated Architects; Thomas Rossiter, from Jordan Mozer and Associates; and Tracey Sawyer, from Igloo Design Group.

Nelson’s project, the Larimar Spa, was created as an extra credit assignment for her interior design studio. The project required the students to select an appropriate site to design a 5,600 square foot spa within a five-star hotel, and Nelson’s chosen location for the project was the Dominican Republic. The project’s concept was based on the fact that the Dominican Republic is well known for its amber mines, as well as another precious rare blue stone called Larimar — found only there — which gave the project its name. The spa’s interior contrasts lush vegetation and sunny exterior with a cave-like interior recalling the precious stone mines and giving an intimate dwelling where one may relax. Cool tones of gray and black neutralize the space and contrast blue and amber elements. The Larimar Spa project uses natural materials, varying ceiling heights, and lighting to abstractly achieve its concept.

Nelson will be receiving her award in the HD Magazine award ceremony at the Millennium Broadway Hotel in New York City on June 5th. Nelson’s travel and accommodation expenses for attending the ceremony will be covered by HD magazine. The winning projects will be published in the May/June issue of Hospitality Design.

Originally from Corpus Christi, Nelson has been a student at UTSA since 2005 and will be graduating in Spring 2009. Following her graduation from UTSA, she plans to work in the hospitality field to gain real-world experience before beginning work on her Master of Architecture degree.

Asked what her first thought was when she found out that she won, she said, “First of all they called me on my cell phone while I was driving and told me I won and that they loved my project and were going to fly me to New York for me to receive the award. I stopped the car and jumped up and down then called my parents. My first thought was ‘Wow, they loved my project and I’m going to New York!...It really validated my design and my concept.’"