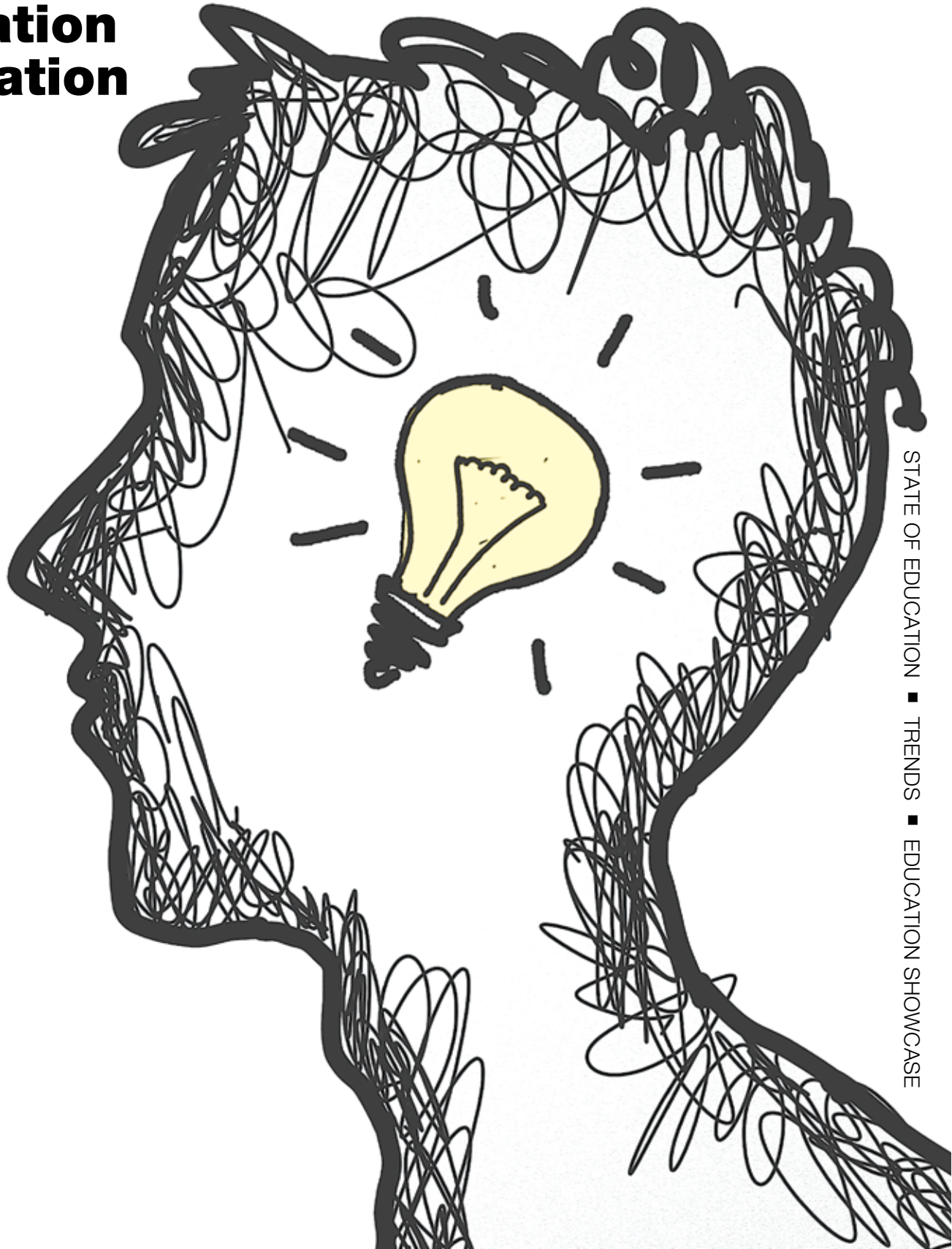


QUARTERLY OF THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA **WINTER 2014**

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**Education
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STATE OF EDUCATION ■ TRENDS ■ EDUCATION SHOWCASE

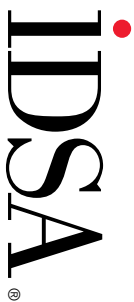
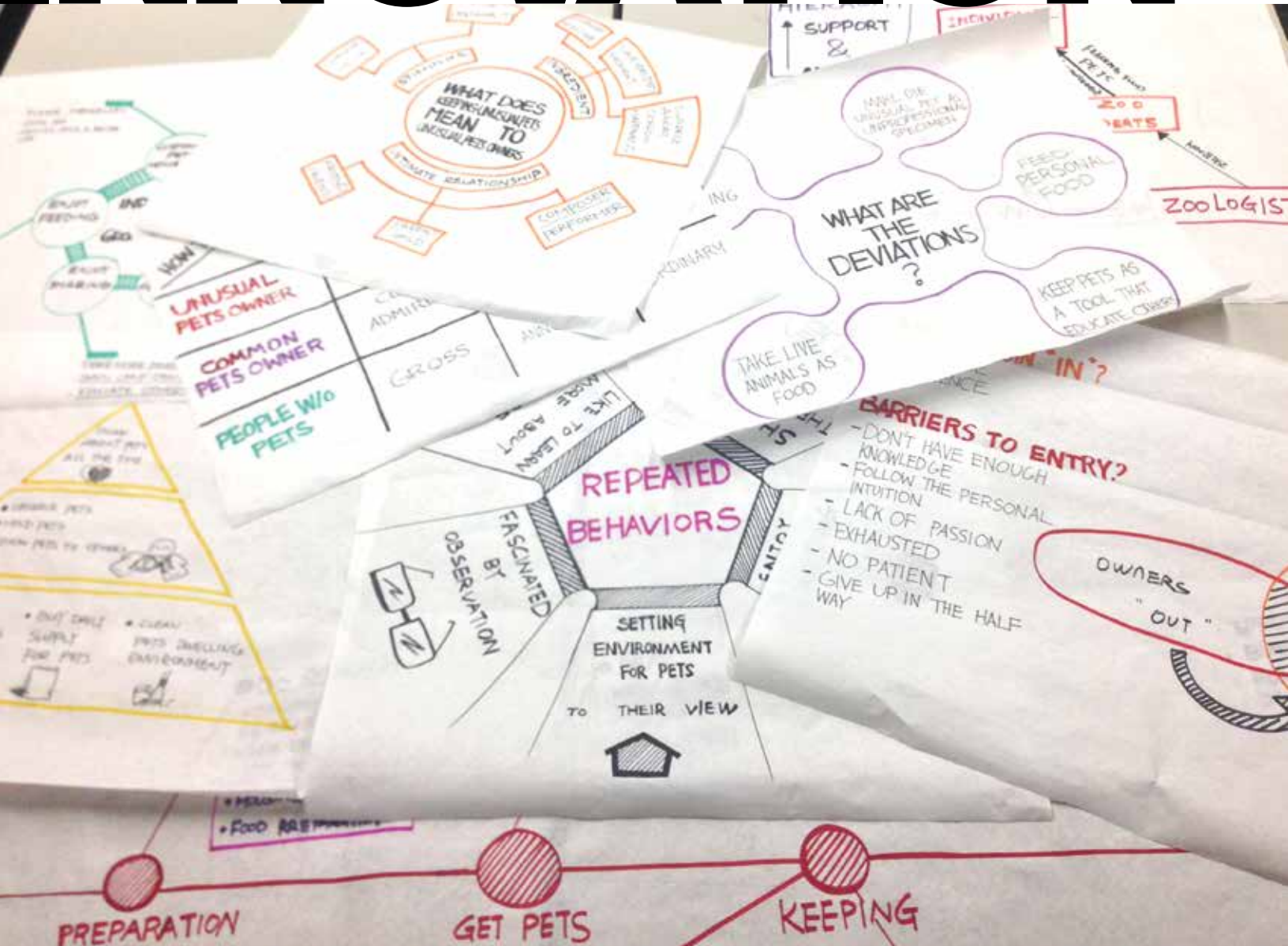


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 www.innovationjournal.org
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Executive Editor
 Mark Dziersek, FIDSA
 Managing Director
 LUNAR | Chicago
 mark@lunar.com

Advisory Council
 Gregg Davis, IDSA
 Alistair Hamilton, IDSA

Sr. Creative Director
 Karen Berube
 IDSA
 703.707.6000 x102
 karenb@idsa.org

Contributing Editor
 Jennifer Evans Yankopolus
 jennifer@wordcollaborative.com
 678.612.7463

Advertising
 Katrina Kona
 IDSA
 703.707.6000 x100
 katrinak@idsa.org

Subscriptions/Copies
 Jill Richardson
 IDSA
 703.707.6000 x118
 jillr@idsa.org

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POINT OF VIEW

It is a true privilege to present this issue of INNOVATION focused on the current state of design education. There is much to be proud of in the level of excellence in design education today. I speak as both a professional and an educator. I have been visiting and working with schools a lot lately in addition to adjunct teaching a graduate course on design for the last 12 years at Northwestern. This last year alone I attended three IDSA District conferences and visited six separate schools to lecture, advise and review programs. I watched each school's IDSA Student Merit winner's presentation—an empowering and optimistic experience, to be sure. In the process, I have made the following observations about design education.

Firstly, perhaps stating the obvious, the faculty are the true core to every student's design education. The first strength of any program is the professors, and their engagement in and attention to lessons and the curriculum. Obvious deep concern for the students and the school is a must. Excellent representation of the school's philosophy and a demand for excellence from each student are necessities. The faculty are also expressions of excellence as ambassadors for the school in multiple domains, including among academics and within the design and business communities. Great faculty emphasize storytelling, celebrate the individuality of each student, put students first, are strong thinkers and continue to push students to excel across the board. Exceptional faculty go the extra mile in addressing student needs and being hands-on with teaching and nurturing and, at the same time, strongly uphold expectations about excellence. The clear commitment of the design faculty and interaction with the department chair help determine a program's excellence.

The learning environment is important as well. Facilities can define a school. Most of the schools I visited have terrific shared spaces for the teaching of design. That said,

most industrial design schools, especially those in cities, fight for premium real estate and can sometimes give the impression of industrial design learning spaces as transient and public, and not particularly attuned to the discipline. I think schools should also consider creating private areas, nooks and coves that can be used by both students and faculty as thinking spaces—places that allow for deep thought and contemplation. Such places would invite one-on-one interaction around research and design activities and allow project drawings and images to remain posted for a while to invite intimate discussion and sharing. Some schools I have visited have addressed this notion by being clever about customizing presentation spaces with easels that store and cubbies that students can own.

The programs I visited pretty much all had well-equipped industrial design studios, especially the computer labs. But what about the many other places on campus or in the surrounding city or town that might be used by design classes to allow students to experience different environments? Space affects learning, and too much time in any one building or place could narrow the point of view of students. A campus defines a school, and the design curriculum should fully leverage the campus, whether urban or rural, as much as possible. Use a beautiful or meaningful part of the campus to introduce an assignment or engage in a crit, for example.

Next comes what is taught. Sketching, model building and prototyping skills will always be at the core of design education. In this regard my visits did not disappoint. Everywhere student strengths were evident in model building, sketching, and exciting renderings and visualizations. That said, one thing I do see a lot of is a similarity in the way students present their work. The Apple-esque product as hero against white. The jumble of quick sketches meant to show process and sketching ability that also communicate,

“While collaboration has its role in design and business, it is important to remember that a deep expertise in design is the most important skill and the mastery of it, the most valuable achievement.”

well, really nothing. How do you see anything in that free-for-all? While processes and tools are helpful to achieve and present results, it is also valuable to think about promoting individuality in the students' approach to design and the presentation of their work. At IDSA District conferences, student posters are almost always formatted identically and are usually also full of too much imagery and consequently, ironically, are actually not very effective at presenting the uniqueness or essence of a student's work. To be fair, this formatted approach is found at many, many schools and at almost every IDSA District conference. Still, I find myself drawn more to uniqueness and less to codified techniques, although this is not to say that collaboration is in any way wrong.

The idea of designers as T-shaped people—deep in a discipline but with an understanding and desire to collaborate across all disciplines—is an important concept. But while collaboration has its role in design and business, it is important to remember that a deep expertise in design is the most important skill and the mastery of it, the most valuable achievement. In the business of consulting, we face the same equation—how to not lose the “I”-ness that makes a designer special when collaborating. Said another way—how to put more of the “I” back in T-shaped people. We do it by encouraging and rewarding individuality and some edginess in designs and presentations. Being edgy in college is especially important in that risk taking and progressive learning are such an important part of the experience. Sponsored projects can provide simulated real-world experiences with much to be gained, but they can also eat up valuable learning time in being engaged in activities that result in safer work that is acceptable to clients. In school, on both the technical and the aesthetic side of design, there is room for more unconventional exploration. It's a place and time to learn to be inspiring and unique, as opposed to engaging in everyday designing experiences. Every year in the design

class I teach to non-designers in the master's program at Northwestern, I tell my students one thing on the first day of class: no PowerPoint presentations. If you use PowerPoint you will flunk this course. After the initial fluster subsides, something brilliant happens: imagination. They rise to the task. The worst presentations from my students blow away 99 percent of safe and similar PowerPoint presentations. In my travel to various schools, I suppose I would have like to have seen more edginess.

It is my feeling that projects in college should also strive to create answers that help humanity as well as business concerns and that engage in projects of extreme social significance. School is a great place for students to learn about boundaries and be encouraged to push themselves far. You don't get those chances every day in practice. School should be a time for creating truly daring projects that defy the norm and putting them out into the world for all to see. Smart thinking that can change the way we live for the better.

Believe me when I say that there is plenty of evidence of smart thinking going on. If there were one word I would use to describe what I have seen from the current state of design schools it would be *impressive*. Work is achieving professional standards, classes are robust and full, and department chairs have their hands full on every account.

This issue was guest edited by a dean and department head, Lorraine Justice, FIDSA of Rochester Institute of Technology, who has her hands full but nevertheless generously donated her time and expertise. Lorraine, who I have known and admired almost my entire design and IDSA career, has assembled an enormously talented group of writers and contributors who will no doubt prove that design in America today is engaged, healthy and thriving. IDSA thanks Lorraine for her tireless efforts to both this issue and design education.

—Mark Dziarsk, FIDSA, INNOVATION Executive Editor
mark@lunar.com



Lorraine Justice, PhD is currently the dean of the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Prior to joining RIT, she was the director of the School of Design at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, taking it into the top 30 design schools in the world. She is the author of *China's Design Revolution* (MIT Press, 2012). She has presented at TEDu and TEDx and consults for some of the top firms in the country.

THE EXPANDING ROLE OF DESIGN EDUCATION

In this issue, Mark Dziarski, FIDSA points to three basic needs for a quality design education: faculty and their passion for teaching, a teaching space that is conducive to learning, and a curriculum that is flexible enough to allow students room for risk taking. I am sure many of us will agree with his criteria. We also know that the content in the design classroom today is more complex than even five years ago. Augmented online classes, 3D printers, flipped classrooms, new software, more cross-disciplinary subjects, expanding professional practice work options for students, and more have our design professors and students trying many new avenues to see what works best with the basics. For certain, design education is going through yet another phase that will strengthen and expand the reach of design content; business, computing, engineering and sociology programs have heightened their interest in design and have begun to adopt some aspects of design education that are relevant to their discipline.

Also in this issue, a few of our passionate faculty in the US share their latest insights that have come from years of teaching design content. Jim Budd, IDSA, chair of Georgia Tech's School of Industrial Design, has taught in the area of design and technology for many years, engaging his students, and now faculty, in his program. Embedded sensors, 3D printing and psychology are brought together to make life-changing products. Eric Anderson, FIDSA, associate professor in Carnegie Mellon's School of Design, shares his wisdom on teaching cross-disciplinary classes. He stresses the need to educate potential employers about the distinct value of designers so that companies won't try to fit them into rigid organizational structures. Katherine Bennett, IDSA, associate professor at Art Center, and Liz Sanders, an associate professor at The Ohio State University, have spent years finding the best ways to deliver design research content in the classroom. (Hint: It involves more than just a few lectures.) Warren Ginn, FIDSA, assistant professor at North Carolina State University, finds that making materials and processes enjoyable is one of the best ways to teach this content. He also warns that designers must remain engaged in materials and processes choices throughout the entire process or "someone else will end up doing it." These short articles are from just a very few of our passion-

ate professors teaching in the US who are creating the new generation of graduate and undergraduate designers. While we could not include everyone, we hope to hear from more design educators in the coming issues of INNOVATION.

The designers and design educators of today stand on the shoulders of those who came before us—those dedicated, passionate, informed design faculty who urged us onward into our first jobs and maybe later through the morass of university tenure systems or competitive private art school teaching positions. Many design educators are also practitioners as well, consulting or working with local and international companies to provide their particular areas of expertise, keep their skills current or create relationships to support design co-ops. Other faculty members engage in design research grants related to the automotive, business, computing, engineering, medical and other fields, giving them an interdisciplinary edge in the classroom.

Let's not forget our corporate partners, such as Autodesk, GE, Microsoft, Steelcase and more, who have supported design education and research for many, many years. These corporate friends have played a tremendous role in helping design students make the transition from design education to design practice.

So where are our design students going? Everywhere. There are still great corporate design jobs available, even in an economic downturn. Every year a new crop of design students want to market their own product or grow a new company. Some choose to freelance or feel lucky enough to work with one of their "dream" design firms. And some feel the call to get a higher degree so they can eventually teach design and support "the cause."

In a Core77 interview, Craig Vogel, FIDSA, associate dean of the University of Cincinnati, said, "The role of design continues to expand horizontally and vertically as design processes and ways of thinking are seen as valid for strategic planning as well as product implementation." As the role of design continues to expand, we need to fill and refresh the number of design educators in our public and private universities so we don't lose precious ground for our discipline. If you feel the call to teach, pick up your phone and call the closest design program. Teaching just may be the best years of your design life. ■



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