

Curriculum

Each semester, students develop individual and team solutions to a variety of economic and social challenges using design techniques (such as user-centered research, prototyping, critique, and iteration) as well as business metrics.

Solutions are evaluated according to how well they meet user and market needs as well as their clear business or organizational value. Sponsored projects allow students to work with leading businesses.

Seminars address traditional business and organizational issues, such as finance, economics, operations, and marketing, always incorporating design approaches and processes. Students work individually and in teams to research and present findings in discussions, group projects, and presentations.

In addition, students may take advantage of graduatewide electives—seminars available to those in any program.

First Semester Courses

Live Exchange

More than just learning the right vocabulary, effective communication relies on an understanding of how words structure thought, action and outcomes. Design thinking is best played as a team sport. Live Exchange is an inquiry into learning group dynamics: how teams constitute and sustain themselves through an awareness of their communicative repertoires.

This course constructs a specific new asset based language for business that serves as a foundation for building and repairing trust, strengthening leadership and developing listening, assessing and speaking skills to move constructive action forward.

Students learn the ethos of equivalency underscoring powerful communication -- even within highly competitive environments. Using this approach throughout the program students learn techniques to create healthy, respectful work environments engendering innovation and improving overall performance and prevailing mood.

Innovation Studio

This studio course gives students the opportunity to put theory into practice by designing product or service solutions that incorporate innovation theory and design and user research. Students learn to use professional design tools and techniques that will enable them to successfully communicate solutions verbally, visually, and experientially.

Each semester, the theme for the course will change, allowing students to investigate new domains that are current and challenging and that build on their knowledge of customers, materials, solutions, and organizations.

Managerial Economics

This course is designed to help business leaders increase their effectiveness by learning the fundamental principles that underlie market economics. The course begins with an overview of neoclassical microeconomic theory, such as supply-and-demand theory, market capital, profit and production maximization, types and structures of organizations and markets, market failures and inefficiencies, and the economic understanding of "the public good."

It also explores new approaches to integrating and measuring economic impacts for human and natural capital—not only financial capital—and examines how design and innovation can drive strategic value for an organization, as well as for the market as a whole.

Financial & Managerial Accounting

An overview of the principles and procedures of managerial accounting, this course prepares students to interact with the accounting professionals they will rely on to operate a business effectively. Accounting is a critical tool for assessing an organization's financial and resource opportunities as well as the effectiveness of market and operational decisions.

This course will look at this essential function from the perspective of both the designer and the manager, as it examines traditional and nontraditional accounting areas. Topics including understanding financial statements, bookkeeping, budget techniques, and measures of corporate performance are discussed alongside issues such as accounting for and measuring social and environmental values, creating integrated bottom lines, and brand value.

Students learn how to evaluate the performance of an organization, whether for-profit or nonprofit, and use this understanding to shape more sustainable organizational decisions.

Second Semester Courses

Leadership by Design

Leadership is much more than exercising authority. It is the ability to create a compelling vision that others want to follow. A strong organizational leader respects individuals, delegates work, and enables others to perform to the best of their abilities. This course illuminates the traits of effective leadership and demonstrates a variety of approaches to enable students to become leaders themselves as well as to help other leaders in an organization to emerge.

Students discuss leading in both entrepreneur and intrapreneur contexts and explore some of the key tasks of a leader, including creative brainstorming, evaluating business opportunities, and communicating these opportunities to a variety of stakeholders. This course also gives students the opportunity to practice techniques of negotiation and sales.

Market Insight Studio

A critical element of any good marketing strategy is the insight gained from the market, especially customers. The most successful companies use market insight to shape strategies of what to produce, not merely how best to produce it. This studio addresses both traditional and cutting-edge approaches to marketing, promotion, and advertising, focusing on market research that drives valuable, actionable, and accurate insight of customers, competitors, and markets.

Students learn how to conduct effective research that illuminates unseen opportunity and enables a deep understanding of customers. They apply theories and techniques learned in the course to a project that runs the length of the semester, culminating in an insightful, successful, sustainable business solution and a professional marketing strategy.

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Sustainability Studio

While sustainability is a theme throughout every course in the program, this studio focuses exclusively on developing solutions that directly affect financial, natural, and human capital as well as the systems that govern them. The course takes an in-depth look at various frameworks and approaches to sustainable development, using both historical and contemporary examples.

Throughout the semester, students use practical tools and techniques for identifying issues, developing solutions, troubleshooting problems, and measuring progress. A semester-long project challenges students to apply sustainability skills to a refined solution; at the end of the semester, they present their results along with a sustainability analysis and implementation plan.

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Business Models & Stakeholders

A business model describes the rationale of how an organization creates, delivers, and captures value. It is like a "blueprint" for a strategy implemented through organizational structures, processes, and systems. In essence, how a company intends to make money and survive.

This course discusses effective for-profit, non-profit, and other types of organizations in terms of their business models, stakeholders, and organization design. Competitive advantage is achieved through focused and innovative business models. Companies in the same industry will have different business models-and different success levels.

Business models often spring from the unsatisfied needs of customers, new technology innovations, or new and unique value propositions. In order for companies to operate effectively and competitively they need good business models that create virtuous cycles.

Third Semester Courses

Experiences Studio

This studio course introduces the development processes for products, service ecologies, and other experiences, and examines the relationships among them. Students develop rich product and/or service solutions to opportunities and present their solutions professionally.

Students gain experience working collaboratively in teams as they research, develop, and share their solutions.

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Operations & Systems

Operations involve the effective management of human, financial, and natural capital, as well as processes such as supply chain management, quality assurance, process design and improvement, service ecology management, facilities, and human resources.

This course explores strategies for optimizing both production and process, in addition to solution sustainability, innovative operational design, and systems design. Students' work in the course culminates in the development of a professional operations plan for a real or imagined company.

Managerial Finance

This course introduces concepts of corporate financial management for optimizing economic and social value, including asset management, liquidity, revenue models, measures of productivity, rates of return, net present value, and management of financial risks.

The course also explores the role of design in organizational management and system design. Traditional financial strategies are compared to newer models to assess project feasibility as well as the impact of design, development, and manufacturing decisions on budgets and returns.

Through assignments and presentations, students practice devising and communicating their own financial strategies. They also discuss models for measuring and reporting corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

***See also Electives below
Fourth Semester Courses***

Strategic Management

This course integrates themes and techniques from all previous courses in order to build students' knowledge and experience in crafting and managing corporate strategy. Students explore the differences between strategy and

tactics; market and societal trends that affect market performance and organizational responses; various management approaches; communicating organizational goals, measures, and structures; and the resounding impact of strategy at personal, corporate, and societal levels.

Students learn practical techniques for short- and medium-term management, as well as long-term insight and innovation tools such as scenario planning. Throughout the course, students develop a professional strategic plan for an existing organization.

Venture Studio

In this final studio course, students review and integrate all learning from the program into an individual thesis project. Through faculty critiques, project domains and solutions will be nurtured and evaluated from all aspects of the program's goals: design innovation; product/service/experience integration; meaningful application for customers; market competition; financial viability; and financial, social, and environmental sustainability.

Deliverables for this course include a critically examined market solution, a professional verbal and visual presentation, a founding-year annual report, and a fully developed professional business plan. Students exit this course—and the program—with a personal project portfolio of both solutions and business plans that demonstrates their knowledge and experience in applying design, innovation, and sustainability theory to realistic business opportunities with successful, meaningful results.

As the capstone in that portfolio, the thesis project exemplifies students' integration of all the skills they acquired in the program, as well as their innovative approach to communicating these skills, setting them apart from all others in the job market.

Business Law & Negotiation

An overview of corporate and government laws concerning corporate strategy, this course introduces existing U.S. laws and outlines recent and potential changes to those laws that may alter how business is conducted.

The course focuses on various forms of intellectual property, including trademarks, patents, and copyrights, as well as how new trends in the areas of open-source information and the collective commons affect innovation.

Students examine standard legal agreements, such as nondisclosures, contracts, and licenses, and explore how corporate charters can affect liability or enable new corporate values to emerge through organizational behavior, or both.

***See also Electives below
Elective Courses***

Capital & Markets

This course closely examines various sources for funding new organizations as well as new initiatives within existing organizations, whether for-profit, nonprofit, or hybrid. Through projects, assignments, and readings, students explore various capital markets, their workings, and their effects; different exit strategies; alternative and private markets; debt vs. equity approaches; and the ways in which established and new global financial systems function within global economies.

The course also discusses how innovation, design, and sustainable practices are valued within corporate markets (or not), and how they are communicated and validated.

Brand Strategy

This course offers students an opportunity to understand and explore the professional processes and techniques of building, transforming, and managing brands. It starts with the fundamentals of the development of contemporary brand experiences and, through projects and examples, helps students understand how to approach branding in a customer-centric way from both an internal and external organizational perspective.

Topics and techniques include measuring brand impact and equity, developing brand strategy from a holistic perspective, championing change within organizations, and working with a variety of stakeholders to synchronize brand elements and expressions through a range of media and customer touchpoints.

Strategic Foresight

Forecasting the future of culture requires specific tools that inform design and architecture. This project-based course uses practical, professional tools, used by large organizations to develop strategic plans 5-50 years into

the future, to explore alternate directions society may take to provocative interventions and develop designed, strategic responses.

Social Ventures (summer)

This course offers graduate students an immersive introduction into social issues and ventures in the United States and, potentially, abroad. Students explore a series of issues to gain an understanding of the field of social ventures, the stakeholders and business models, and the realities of starting a social venture.

In addition, students document and craft their experiences into marketing plans that can be utilized by local organizations. Through a combination of in-person and virtual courses, students explore key concepts in social entrepreneurship: cultural sensitivities, economic structures, business models, and social issues.

The goal of this class is to give students exposure to the social venture landscape and begin to understand and influence the factors that contribute to systemic social impact through the use of marketing and design thinking.

Organizational Culture (summer)

In this course, students learn how to identify different cultures and values in organizations and in customer markets and explore how they as leaders can navigate these differences in order to create successful, meaningful, and respectful offerings.

The course discusses how leaders can remain mindful of societal and organizational values as well as how they can manage shifting values to create more successful and effective organizations. Students explore how they can meld their personal values and strategies with those of their clients and companies in order to find "grand strategies" that satisfy all parties.

The course also focuses on developing cultural awareness and using cultural intelligence tools in order to manage effectively.