Innovation.

Its catalyst is passion—a combination of imagination and persistence that inspires certain people to look forward and go beyond what is.

It is the process of looking at the world through a different lens to find solutions to big problems.

It leads to new products and novel approaches to doing business.

Innovation is one of the most powerful societal and economic engines we have—and it needs a special type of fuel.
Fueling Innovation Through Design

Innovation is the last source of growth for many organizations. After using management strategies to remove elements of cost, businesses in particular face a crisis of how to move forward. Design offers them an answer, and IIT Institute of Design is the recognized thought leader in the field.

Annually listed as the #1 design graduate program in the United States by the journal DesignIntelligence, the Institute of Design is leading a small group of innovators who believe that through better design we can build a better world while helping businesses to innovate and succeed. With the right investments in people and facilities, ID will expand its role as global leader in design thinking.

With the help of alumni and friends, we will reach our goals. Please join us.

Why ID?

Stunning examples of innovation, ranging from Sony in the 1960s to the recent rise of Apple, Starbucks, and Nike, demonstrate that design can help a company rise to the top. But how are organizations not led by a visionary CEO like Steve Jobs able to emulate these icons of innovation?

ID addresses this challenge by developing and teaching rigorous methods that when embedded in an organization can produce innovative results.

Using human-centered design, ID believes in the simple act of observing how people interact with their environment and the things in it. By looking at patterns in peoples’ daily lives, designers help companies to make more useful products, offer better services, or improve customer experiences. By placing people at the center of design, ID’s students learn how to create value. And the Institute of Design is the leading graduate program in the world developing and teaching these design methods.

Actively Engaging the World

From civic catalysts such as the MacArthur and Gates foundations to world-renowned companies such as LG Electronics, Samsung, Microsoft, Yahoo!, and Steelcase, ID has partnerships that provide a working laboratory for how best to insert the user back into the development of products, information, and services to create true innovation.

By training global leaders for an emerging business paradigm, ID is building a case for a new set of principles that apply whether you are designing a new car or software to help increase school graduation rates. ID teaches methods that are embedded in an organization, allowing flexibility to ask the right questions and pivot in response to new realities.

A person would be hard pressed to pass an entire day without encountering a company or product influenced by ID and its alumni.

Patrick Whitney, Dean, Institute of Design

Innovation at IIT: Students, Faculty, and Alumni

The Institute of Design drives innovation in the university through its faculty and students. In 2010, ID faculty helped design the Idea Shop, a 13,000-square-foot space housing a state-of-the-art rapid-prototyping lab, collaborative teaching areas, formal classroom space, and more. The Idea Shop is home to IIT’s Interprofessional Projects (iPRO) Program, which joins ID students and faculty with IIT students from other disciplines to work on projects solving complex problems. In the field of design, teams of ID students have won virtually every major design award open to students and many that are open to professionals.

In addition, ID alumni are frequently recognized as some of world leaders in design. ID was the hub of one of the most influential groups of photographers in the United States. Alumni have been responsible for the corporate identity of Mobil, the design of BioSphere 2, and the creation of iconic furniture and toys. They have led design initiatives at Conde Nast, Toyota, Philips consumer electronics, Microsoft, Steelcase, and countless other companies. In 2010, Fast Company magazine named Denis Weil (M.Des. ’01) as a Master of Design for leading the ongoing makeover of McDonald’s restaurants. At the same time, Fortune identified Indrani Medhi (M.Des. ’05) as one of the 50 smartest people in IT for her pioneering work in developing a computer interface for people who cannot read; and Massachusetts Institute of Technology honored her as an outstanding innovator under 35.

Help Us Fuel Human-Centered Innovation

As the university enters a comprehensive fundraising campaign, ID looks to its friends and alumni for support to help fuel human-centered innovation.

To continue its growing body of research, ID seeks to fund new faculty positions that will add to a core group of researchers who are now at an all-time high level of productivity.

ID also seeks funds to support fellowships to attract the best students, who will become leaders in the field of design. In addition, getting full, endowed funding for the doctoral program is a vital goal of the campaign.

With a larger faculty, substantial doctoral program, student fellowships, and new relationships across the business community, ID will emerge from the campaign positioned to remain a global leader in design, and a source of immense pride for IIT and Chicago.