Legacy of a Legend

BUILDING THE DON NORMAN DESIGN LAB ENDOWMENT
In many fields, Don Norman’s name is synonymous with a way of looking at the world. Not for the way it is, but the way it can be.

Don’s bestselling guide The Design of Everyday Things has been much more than a commonly assigned text for students in various design-related disciplines, it is a staple in the results-obsessed world of work, where personal satisfaction often comes second to profitability. His perspective is one that blends both, developing thinkers and doers who care about the quality of the world we’re making. We live here, after all.

UC San Diego has the double privilege of bookending Don’s extraordinary career, including recruiting him as a member of our founding faculty in 1966. He went on to chair the Department of Psychology and then to co-found and chair the Department of Cognitive Science. He retired in 1993 and went to Apple, where he became VP of Advanced Technology. He has helped build design centers across the world.

In 2014, Don returned to campus at Chancellor Pradeep Khosla’s request to establish the Design Lab, where he exemplifies the nature of cross-disciplinary design by being a member of the Departments of Psychology, Cognitive Science, and Electrical and Computer Engineering. He devotes substantial energy to efforts in the Rady School of Management, UC San Diego’s Health Sciences, and the Division of Arts and Humanities.

At the end of this academic year, Don will retire from the Design Lab, concluding this latest chapter in his extraordinary, singular career. Dedicated friends, supporters, and beneficiaries of Don’s incomparable wisdom have the opportunity to honor his legacy by building the Don Norman Design Lab Endowment.

This permanent funding resource for Design Lab activities is targeted to reach $10 million, a size sufficient to sustain the vital educational, research, and community-building activities characterizing the Design Lab’s success and Don Norman’s indelible impact.
The UC San Diego Design Lab treats design as a way of thinking. It can be applied to any problem, including everyday events, industrial organization, products, services, routines, and structures. We focus on the interaction of people and technology, treating issues as systems.

Traditional academic disciplines reinforce great depth of knowledge, which naturally results in extreme specialization, often working primarily with similar expertise. Outside of academics, fields of practice are different — such as management, law, journalism, and medicine — where a broad range of knowledge is necessary, tapping disciplinary specialists when necessary.

Design is a field of practice. It is a way of thinking, and as a result, any practical result of design is not contained within the field of design but must by necessity cut across other disciplines. Working with groups, working with real problems, and ensuring that what we produce makes a difference in people’s lives is a critical component of what we do.

Sustaining our momentum

» Centers of excellence divide our research activities into opportunity clusters, spanning the campus. Centers include Activity-Centered Visualization; Design-Driven Transformation; Health Design; Large-Scale, Individualized Learning; People-Centered Automation; Social Computing; and Work, Technology, and Society.

» Because design is a discipline of synthesis, building and testing ideas, we are able to work collaboratively with industry. Our Design Lab Collaborative Program works with industry partners to move forward areas of common interest.

» From across campus, students join in Design Lab activities through individualized experiential learning projects and by participating in student-led groups and organizations like Design at UCSD and Design for America.

» Community partnerships on and off campus — namely Design Forward, region-wide design challenges and mentorship of student groups — emphasize the real-world application of design, the foundation of our evidence-based approach.

Below are the primary programmatic planks of the Design Lab. Your support of the Don Norman Design Lab Endowment will assure a continued baseline of stable operation and a solid foundation for growth and innovation.
Your tribute to a life of service

Thank you for considering a gift to the Don Norman Design Lab Endowment at UC San Diego.

The impact of your gift will take shape in the dynamic and community-minded activities of the Design Lab. It will be recognized in an aptly innovative medium in the Design Lab’s new space in UC San Diego’s exhilarating Design and Innovation Building, where the Design Lab will relocate upon the building’s completion in 2021.

Perhaps most important, your gift of any size will play an important part in the success of a program representing Don Norman’s legacy of making human-centered design flourish at the heart of human progress. It is the ideal way to celebrate Don and to celebrate innovation. Together we can assure the recognition commensurate with Don’s achievements, honoring a true icon of American culture and ingenuity.

For more information or to support the Don Norman Design Lab Endowment at UC San Diego please contact:

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