



# Integrated Design Program

A one-of-a-kind pilot project to provide campus-based startups with the tools and knowledge they need to make design an integral part of their product development process.

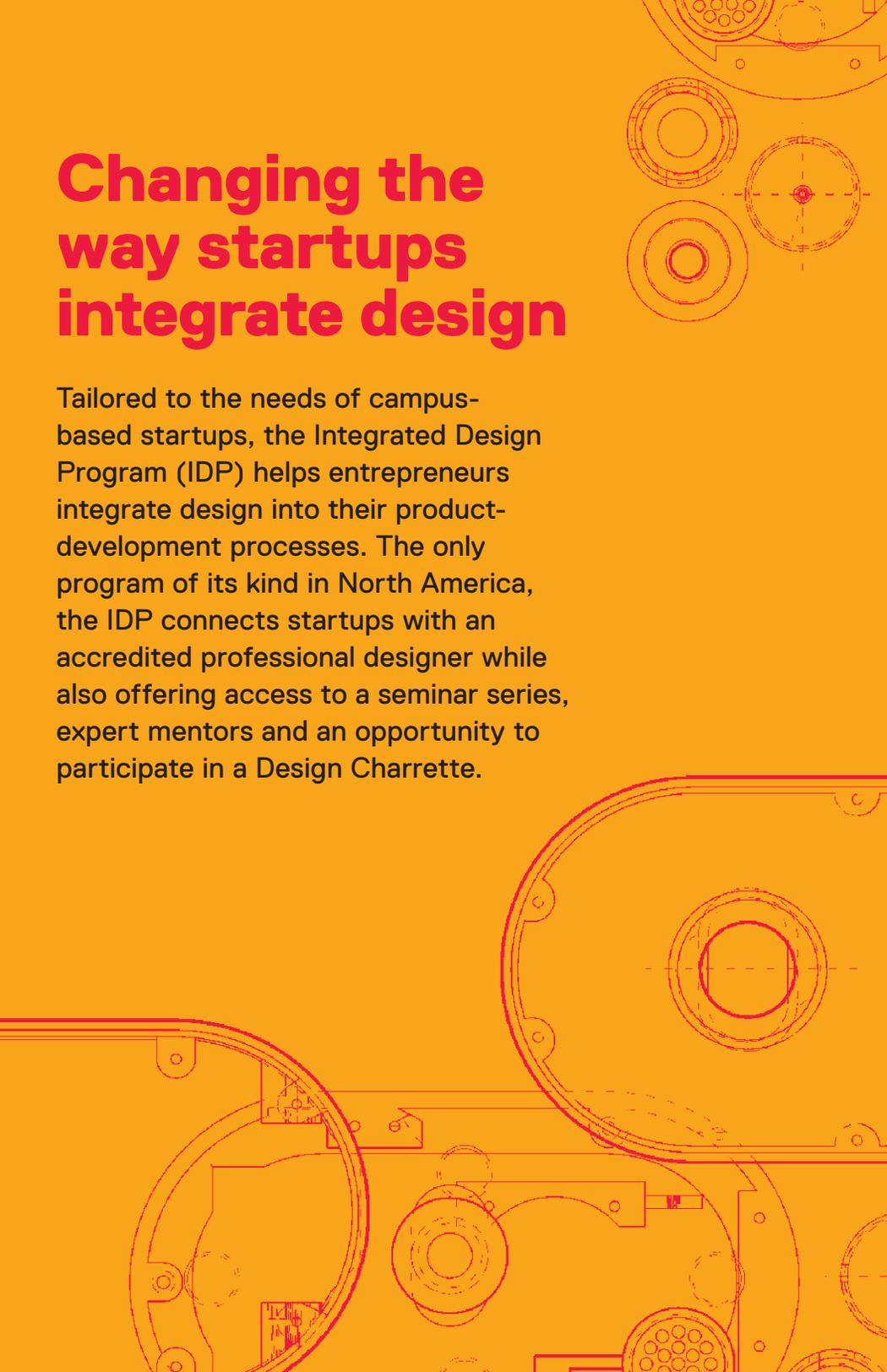
**Ryerson  
University**

**DFZ**

Design  
Fabrication  
Zone

[dfz.ryerson.ca](http://dfz.ryerson.ca)

# Changing the way startups integrate design

The background of the left page is a vibrant orange color. It features a complex technical drawing or blueprint in a lighter shade of orange, showing various circular and rectangular components, possibly parts of a mechanical system or a circuit board. The drawing includes lines, circles, and some text, though it is not legible. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, emphasizing design and engineering.

Tailored to the needs of campus-based startups, the Integrated Design Program (IDP) helps entrepreneurs integrate design into their product-development processes. The only program of its kind in North America, the IDP connects startups with an accredited professional designer while also offering access to a seminar series, expert mentors and an opportunity to participate in a Design Charrette.

## A gap between entrepreneurship and design

### Startups struggle when they don't integrate design into their product-development processes

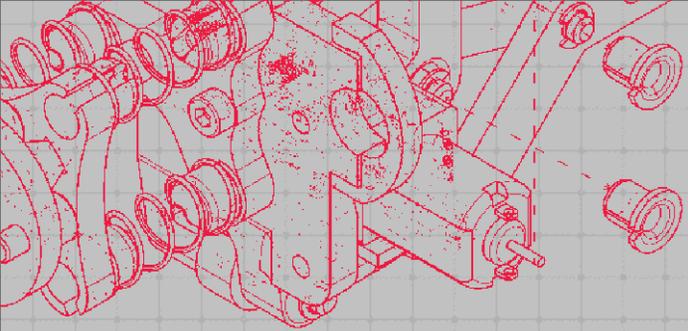
For campus-based startups, design tends to be an afterthought. And when they do want to think about it, they aren't sure how. This gap is partly a result of insufficient design-related experiential learning in engineering and business programs and campus-based incubators. Compounding the problem, campus-based startups have limited exposure to accredited professional designers and there is no existing network to facilitate these connections.

### Why design matters for startups

For the most successful products, design is almost always a core consideration of the product-development process. Yet startups generally neglect to approach design in a cohesive manner. As a result, they forego an opportunity to think through how the interaction of form and function will shape their user's experience.

It is rare for a startup business plan to allocate time or funds for design-related processes. In most cases, design is seen as something that can be outsourced because it applies to peripheral elements like logos and packaging.

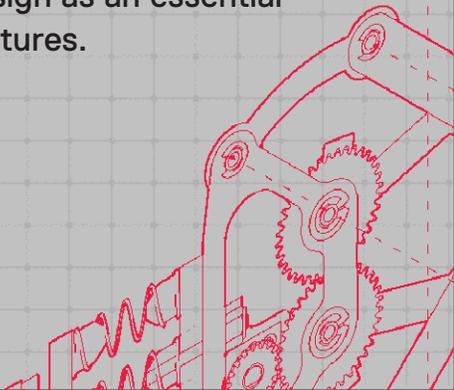
When a startup forges ahead without seriously considering design, it often hits a wall and has to begin again by consulting an expert like an industrial designer. Why? A lackluster product that doesn't work well, or hasn't accounted for materials and methods that enable efficient mass production, isn't going to attract interest from investors – let alone potential customers.



# Introducing the Integrated Design Program

The Design Fabrication Zone (DFZ) at Ryerson University has partnered with Design Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC), representing Ontario's six professional design associations, to develop a new program tailored to the needs of early-stage startups. The IDP applies best practices in experiential learning to support startup success and help entrepreneurs build their capacity for integrating design into product and service development.

The ultimate goal of the IDP? Start a wave of change that enhances startup success across Ontario by embedding design as an essential consideration for new ventures.



## Offerings, outcomes and future potential

### **Connecting startups with an accredited professional designer**

Every startup enrolled in the IDP is connected with an accredited professional designer who can offer input and advice at each stage, from design to prototype to mass manufacturing. By hiring a designer as a consultant and advisor, startups learn how to integrate design into product development. This ensures their products and solutions are compelling, user-centric, environmentally sustainable, resilient and cost effective to produce.

### **Helping startups acquire design-related knowledge and tools**

Through a seminar series and ongoing mentorship, the IDP helps entrepreneurs learn to apply the design method. Participants also get firsthand experience with design charrettes, a primary design-industry tool for bringing diverse experts together to analyze a business or creative challenge and model possible solutions.

### **Building a new network of entrepreneur-designer connections**

As the only program that actively connects startups with accredited professional designers, the IDP represents the first time DIAC and its six professional design associations have entered into a formal arrangement with a university-based incubator. The IDP will lay the foundation for a province-wide network connecting entrepreneurs with accredited professionals such as architects, landscape architects, and industrial, interior, graphic and fashion designers.

### **Measuring success through research**

Known for its research excellence, Ryerson offers the IDP team access to the resources required to accurately assess project outcomes. From establishing metrics to conducting surveys, DIAC, Design Fabrication Zone and Ryerson researchers will thoroughly assess the impact of the program.

### **Enhancing the campus incubator model**

Ryerson's Zone Learning network is a robust ecosystem of incubators where startups access extensive mentoring, expert advisors and the resources required to succeed. A distinctive feature of the IDP will be to demonstrate the value of including accredited professional designers among the experts offering guidance and advice to startups.

# An ideal partnership in an ideal setting

## Why Ryerson?

As Canada's leading comprehensive innovation university, Ryerson engages in scholarly, research and creative (SRC) activity that addresses real-world challenges to drive economic growth and improve quality of life for Canadians.

**Below:** Ovandi is a cannabis technology company founded by Jeffrey Stewart and Rafael Khan. Together, they are developing innovative smart devices that curate experiences for cannabis consumers. Connecting with a professional industrial designer enabled Ovandi to develop devices that deliver an optimal user experience through branding, design, usability and function.

## Here's why Ryerson is perfect for the IDP pilot project:

- Experiential learning is in our DNA
- The zone Learning network is a thriving incubator ecosystem
- 10 on-campus Zones brimming with startups that could apply the IDP model once the pilot is complete
- A track record for establishing thriving industry-academic partnerships
- Specialization in multi-disciplinary collaboration between university researchers, students, entrepreneurs and industry leaders
- A research mandate and relevant resources

## Why the Design Fabrication Zone?

Known for helping startups and project teams apply best practices in design, the DFZ at Ryerson University strategically propels early-stage inventions, businesses and installations through the stages from concept to prototype and mass manufacturing.

As one of Ryerson's 10 on-campus incubators, the DFZ offers access to networking, mentorship, workshops, industry partners and cross-disciplinary collaborations. It also provides access to traditional and digital fabrication technologies so that members can prototype and evaluate their designs.

## The DFZ is the perfect home for the IDP pilot project:

- We specialize in helping startups integrate design into their product-development process
- Our network enables us to make connections between accredited professional designers and entrepreneurs
- The IDP is perfectly aligned with our Startup Stream programming
- DFZ startups tend to focus on prototypes, hardware and products, which are generally complex solutions with a high Minimum Viable Product (MVP) threshold and heavy reliance on design

## Why DIAC?

The Design Industry Advisory Committee is a not-for-profit cross-disciplinary think tank that conducts research and develops strategies for leveraging Ontario's design capability to improve economic, social and environmental outcomes.

DIAC represents all six of Ontario's accredited professional design associations. It includes representatives from ACIDO (Association of Chartered Industrial Designers of Ontario), RGD (Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario), IDC (Interior Designers of Canada), OAA (Ontario Association of Architects), TSA (Toronto Society of Architects), and OALA (Ontario Association of Landscape Architects) among others. DIAC was established by the City of Toronto in 2001.

As such, DIAC represents the primary disciplines in the design sector. This gives the pilot project tremendous potential to change the industry and promote the integration of the design method into startup culture.

**Below:** Could an exploration of curvature and complex geometry produce a lamp that delivers an entirely new experience of space and light? Led by Leon Lai and Anamarija Korolj, the designers of Svima Collective created Nubo Lamp, an iridescent light that is shapely, sloshing, undulating and pulsing.





Visit [dfz.ryerson.ca](http://dfz.ryerson.ca) to learn  
how you can get involved.

Offered in partnership with DIAC



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