AIGA DEC
AN OVERVIEW

November, 2018

AIGA DEC MISSION

The AIGA Design Educators Community (DEC) seeks to **enhance the abilities of design educators and educational institutions** to prepare future designers for excellence in **design practice, design theory and design writing** at the undergraduate and graduate levels while supporting the fundamental mission of AIGA.

OBJECTIVES

AIGA DEC was established in 2004 to **support the unique activities and responsibilities of the design educator** at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels in a wide variety of institutional settings.
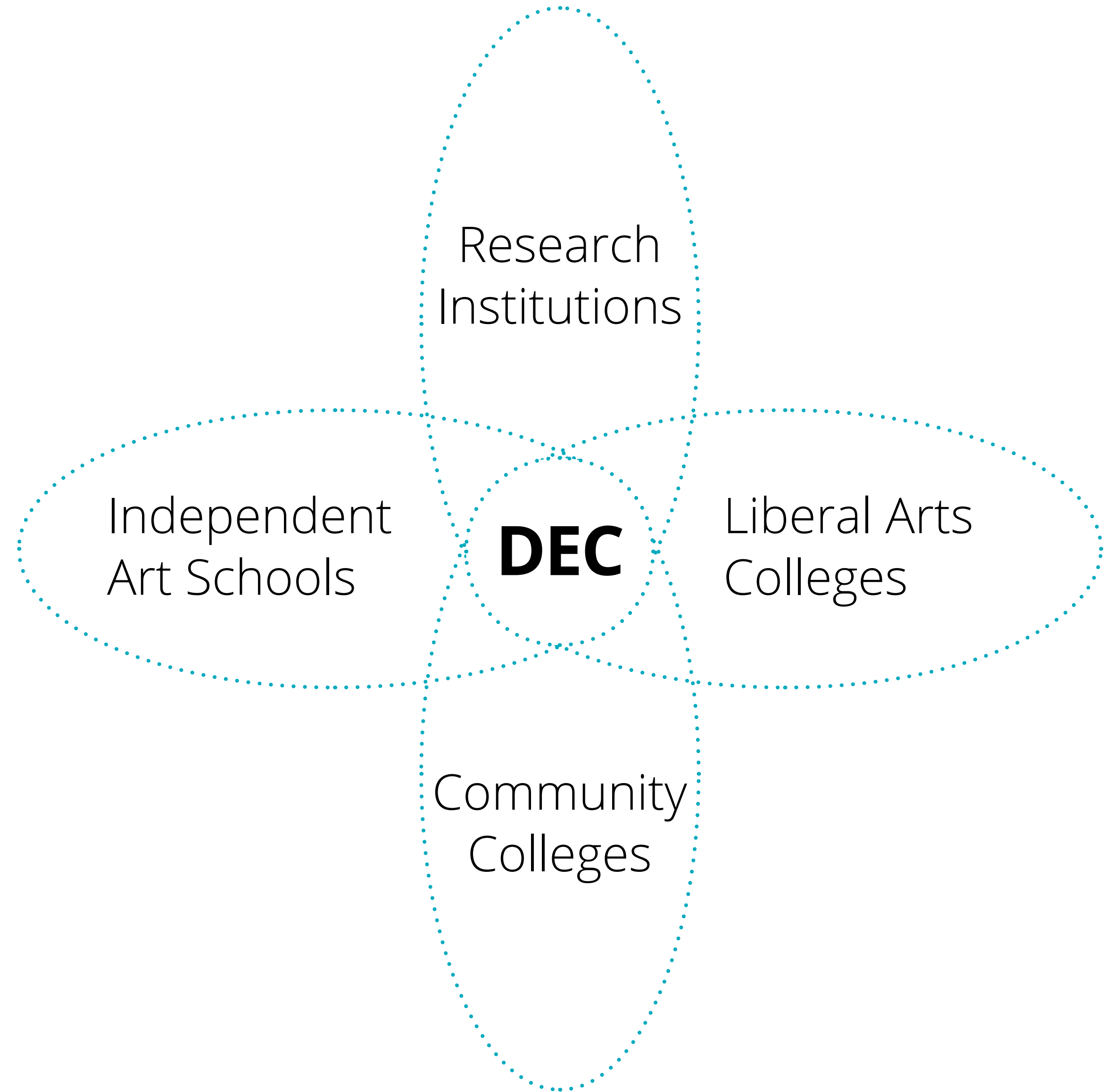
AIGA DEC
VALUE PROPOSITION

AIGA DEC **connects a diverse group of design educators** to one another and to industry so that they might **generate and receive guidance, support and vision** via pedagogy, scholarship/research and career advancement/pivots.
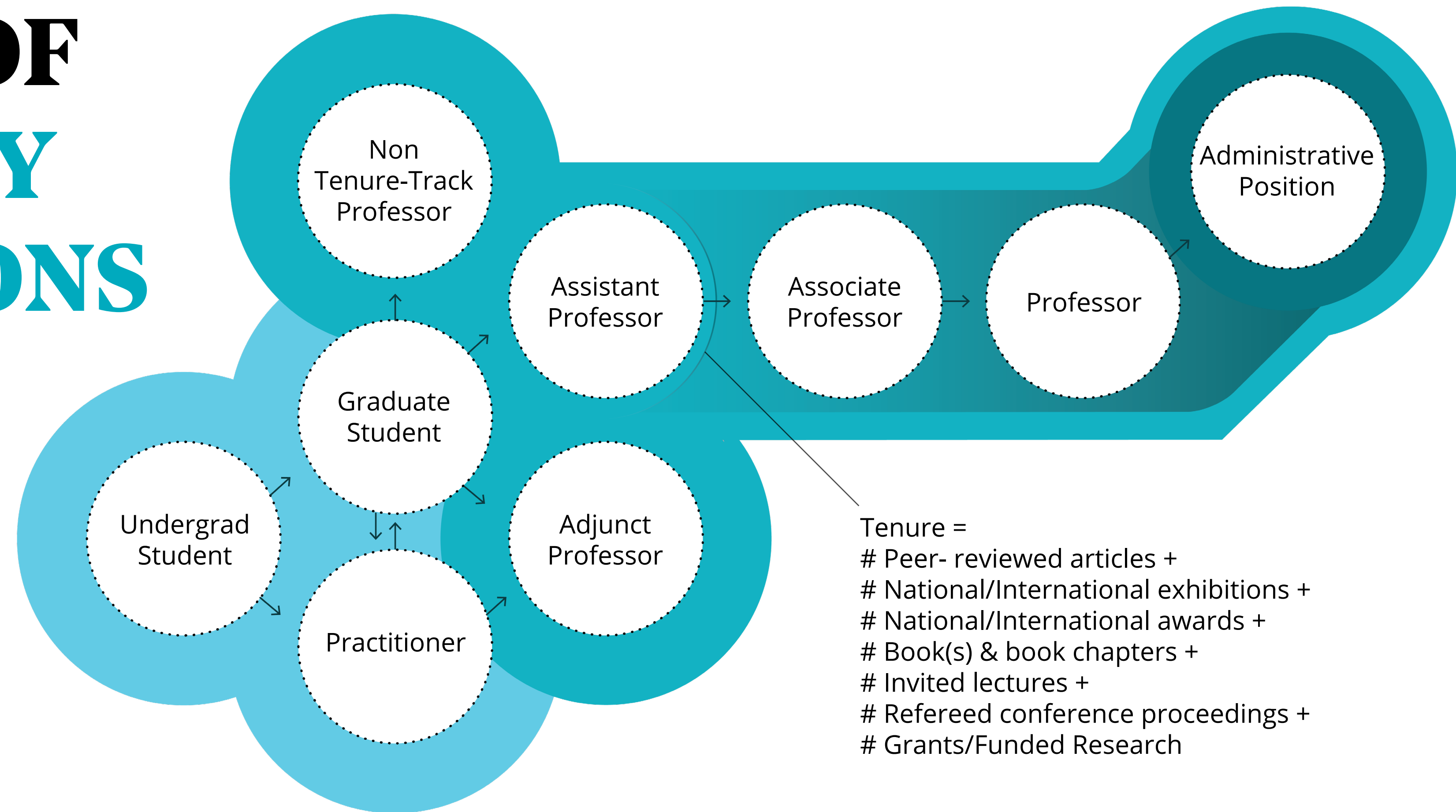
WHO ARE THE TARGET USERS OF THE DEC?

Full-time design educators in higher ed—independent art schools, liberal arts colleges, research institutions, community colleges.

A new area of DEC focus is to be consistently inclusive of **Historically Black Universities** and **Hispanic Serving Institutions** where there is a large population of under-served faculty.

The DEC's secondary audiences:
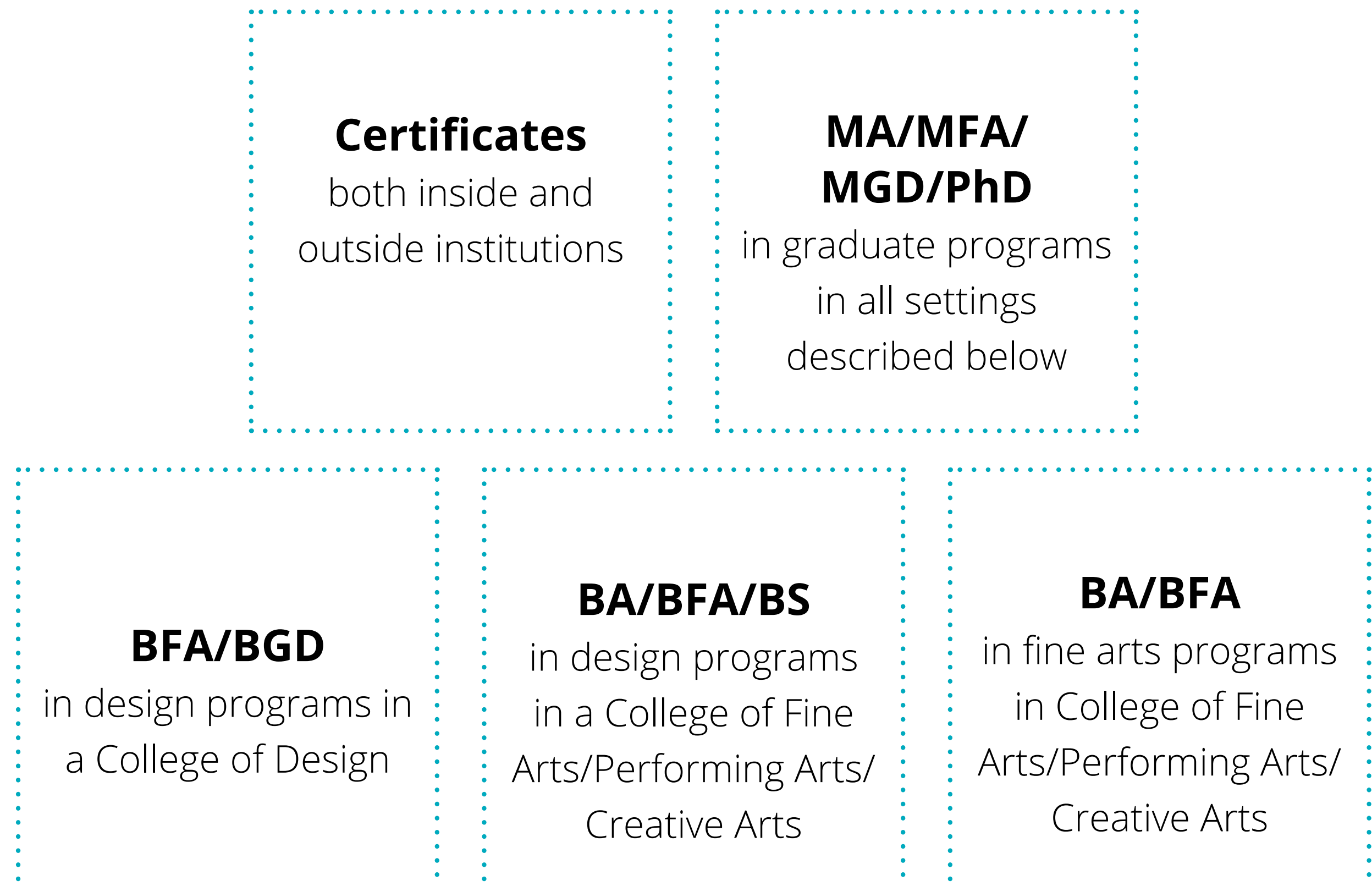**Adjunct faculty, Graduate design students** pursuing a career in higher education, and **K-12 design educators.**

TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Research Institutions

Independent Art Schools

DEC

Liberal Arts Colleges

Community Colleges

TYPES OF FACULTY POSITIONS

Non Tenure-Track Professor

Assistant Professor

Associate Professor

Professor

Administrative Position

Graduate Student

Undergrad Student

Adjunct Professor

Practitioner

Tenure =
Peer- reviewed articles +
National/International exhibitions +
National/International awards +
Book(s) & book chapters +
Invited lectures +
Refereed conference proceedings +
Grants/Funded Research

Diagram of Design Careers by Eric Benson with amendment by Helen Armstrong

TYPES OF DESIGN DEGREES

Certificates
both inside and
outside institutions

MA/MFA/ MGD/PhD
in graduate programs
in all settings
described below

BFA/BGD
in design programs in
a College of Design

BA/BFA/BS
in design programs
in a College of Fine
Arts/Performing Arts/
Creative Arts

BA/BFA
in fine arts programs
in College of Fine
Arts/Performing Arts/
Creative Arts

*In addition, there are a handful of programs located inside business schools
or elsewhere within a university,

AIGA DEC
EDUCATOR PERSONAS

SUSAN

45 years old
Associate Professor at an independent art school
3/3 Teaching Load

Degree offered: BFA in Graphic Design

About Susan

Has a contract that is renewed every 5 years with evaluation metrics similar to fine arts.

Works with 4 full-time design faculty and a large pool of adjuncts.

Enjoys working with fine arts faculty generally, but relationship can be strained as they compete for resources.

Stays connected to local design scene and runs freelance design practice on the side.

Struggles with heavy service load (committees, advising, organizing events, recruitment).

Attends design conferences less frequently than she wants to because of a lack of travel funding by her institution. The only available funding for faculty development comes from internal grants. These grants are small and require a tremendous amount of paperwork.

She wishes for a more comprehensive plan to support independent learning.

Teaches a large number of international students which creates challenges around language barriers.

Worries about losing students to UX.

ZEKE

31 years old

Tenure-Track Assistant Prof. at a liberal arts college

3/3 Teaching Load

Degree offered: BFA Fine Arts w/ Design concentration

About Zeke

Works full-time in a liberal arts college. Program situated within a fine arts department.

Works with 2 other full-time design faculty and numerous fine art faculty. Design is the department cash cow with increasing enrollments while department struggles to fill classes taught by older, tenured fine arts faculty. Fine arts faculty control much of the curriculum during the first two years.

Struggles to develop defined area of research and find venues for publishing. Wishes he had had better writing courses in grad school to prepare for the rigor of scholarship.

Attends DEC conferences each time submission is accepted for presentation (only funded if presenting). Applies to many conference to achieve tenure-driven goal of presenting at 2-3 conferences each year.

Actively solicits collaborative projects with professors from other disciplines across campus. Under pressure by administration to facilitate industry partnerships for sponsored studio projects but has no idea how.

Worries that he is "not keeping up" with new developments in technology. Bases his curriculum on the project structure he experienced in undergrad. Wishes for more sample projects and case studies.

Business school just started offering a "Design Thinking" course that is diluting the value of the design methods he teaches in his own courses. He's not sure how to defend this territory from the encroaching, much better funded business school.

Constantly asked by administration and various departments to either do free design work himself or recommend students to do free design work.

Wants to create an inclusive classroom environment that deals with sensitive socio-political issues and/or neurodiversity but lacks the time to attend institutional events/ training that support this goal.

KAYLA

37 years old
Tenure-Track Assistant Professor
Tier 1 research institution
3/2 Teaching Load

Degree offered: Bachelor of Graphic Design

About Kayla

Works full-time in a Tier 1 research institution. This program situated within a College of Design.

Works with 4 other full-time design faculty, as well as faculty from Architecture, Interior Design, Industrial Design and Landscape Architecture.

Enjoys facilitating sponsored studio projects with various companies. Uses these projects, as well as her own research area, to stay at the forefront of the field.

Teaches in the grad, as well as undergrad, design program. Serves on 5-6 master's level committees each year with no compensation.

Publishes around 1 journal article each year.

Attends and presents at 1-2 conferences per year, both nationally and internationally: AIGA DEC Conferences, DRS (Design Research Society) Conferences, as well as the occasional CAA (College Art Association) conference. Networks actively with fellow educators. Travel is funded by sponsored studio projects.

Under tremendous pressure to bring in grant money. Needs to be PI (primary investigator) on at least one big grant before going up for tenure.

Wishes for more expertise writing grant proposals and finding grant opportunities.

Struggles to balance heavy research demands with teaching responsibilities.

Confused about the tenure process at her institution and worried she won't make it through the university level committee review.

Struggles to communicate the value of design to non-design collaborators inside academia. Other academics often view designers as a pair of hands to come in at the tail end of their large research projects.

NATE

40 years old

Tenure-Track Assistant Professor at Comm. College

3/4 Teaching Load

Degree offered: AAS Degree in Graphic Design

About Nate

Works full-time in a community college. Program situated within Fine Arts department. Teaches with 2 other full-time graphic design faculty and a large adjunct population.

Enjoys watching students—as many as 65%—transfer from his 2-year degree and then thrive at 4-year programs. Yet, he often feels dismissed by 4-year program colleagues who don't recognize the value of the 2-year degree program.

Wishes there were more options for membership and contact with AIGA for his students of low-socio-economic status—the current cost and time commitment for student members make it prohibitive.

Works to communicate to students and other programs that design is more than knowledge of software products. Often successful in this regard.

Wants to attend national design conferences but often lacks time, and sometimes funding, to do so. There aren't enough faculty to "sub" for one another during conference attendance and there isn't a strong emphasis on professional development in his program.

Class size has nosedived due to population decline but is now starting to move up again. Classes are often in flux—added and staffed with adjuncts when needed.

Required to participate heavily in college service, outreach, etc. which often conflicts with time for scholarship and/or freelance design work.

Struggles to keep a balance between basic design courses/foundational technical tools and newer curriculum in only 2 years. Often has to backtrack and teach skills that adjuncts failed to teach.

Labors to teach students basic skills because students either don't possess their own computers, have antiquated computers, and/or can't afford Creative Suite or have family commitments that prevent them from practicing the basic skills outside of class.

JULIA

51 years old

Tenured Full Professor at Tier 2 Research Institution

Department Chair for Graphic Design Department

1/1 Teaching Load

Degree offered: BFA in Graphic Design

About Julia

Works full-time as a department chair for a Graphic Design Department at a Tier 2 Research Institution.

Went into administration because it was her only path for career advancement in higher education. As a full professor she would have maintained the same rate of pay throughout her career.

Has to develop leadership skills on the job as she transitions from faculty to administration. There are few affordable options for academic leadership training and even fewer for leadership within design.

Enjoys making a real difference at the policy level. As a new administrator, she is learning on the fly how to write (grants, proposals, evaluations), build and balance budgets, fund raise, cultivate partnerships, manage operational functions, plan for growth, promote programs and more. The university offers some training and orientation but the learning curve is steep.

Struggles to fill holes as her stellar faculty are promoted to admin roles, taking great teachers out of the classroom. Needs to find ways to make sure the senior faculty that remain in the department stay current within the discipline and can relay that information effectively to the students.

Feel disconnected from her field and the ability to deliver relevant content to her students due to the workload and learning curve of being an administrator. As a department chair she wears both hats of educator and administrator. Struggles to leave time for her personal growth and development while advocating for peers. Misses her relationship with peers prior to her tenure as a department chair.

Feel daily pressure from above and pressure from peers, but receives low financial reward and has little real authority. Frequently has to make the case for recurring funds to be allocated to have industry standard tools and resources available.

Spends huge swaths of time on recruitment and retention because university level counselors and recruiters rarely feature or speak about design as a career choice to prospective students.

FACULTY
PAIN POINTS

Note: Institutional expectations for faculty vary widely, even within same categories. NASAD is accrediting body, but not all programs accredited.

Pain Points for Full-Time Design Faculty

Heavy teaching and service loads along with increasing scholarship/research demands

Lack of mentorship in these areas: writing/publishing skills, grant proposal writing, facilitating industry partnerships, developing new research areas, advancing in administrative roles, clarity in tenure strategy

Fear of not keeping up with technology

Struggle to communicate the value of design to non-design collaborators

Lack of venues for publishing/disseminating/exhibiting work

Larger studio sizes and increasing reliance on adjuncts in concert with reduction of faculty lines

Lack of guidance regarding pedagogy (grading, keeping up with and managing technology, managing classroom climates,creating properly situated projects)

Struggle to connecte with educators/researchers outside of design for collaboration

Lack of resources and expertise for creating an inclusive classroom (lack of diversity in design history, lack of expertise in dealing with sensitive socio-political issues and/or neurodiversity).

Not enough access to case studies and curricular resources

Lack of funding to attend expensive design conferences

Lack of training for mental health disorders and disabilities that are increasingly showing up in the classroom

Not enough formal training in grad school for how to disseminate research/scholarship via written papers.

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Pain Points for Faculty at Research Institutions and Liberal Arts Colleges

Lack of mentorship in these areas: grant proposal writing, facilitating industry partnerships, developing new areas of research, clarity in tenure strategy

Need advocates for design educators within tenure process

Need to "protect" design from other areas on campus

Pressure to generate funded research and lack of guidance for doing so.

Struggle to convince other disciplines to take design faculty seriously as project investigators or co-project investigators.

Seek greater understanding of research theories and methods/processes

Struggle to educate non-design faculty and administration on the value of design scholarship

Lack of funding for equipment and software updates.

Loss of tenured lines. Increase in non-tenure track faculty.

Lack of dedicated research time for pre-tenure faculty (sabbatical, course release, etc.)

Need help navigating heavy service loads.

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PAIN POINTS

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Pain Points for Faculty at Art Schools & Teaching Schools

Lack of travel/development funding

Need advocates for design educators within the tenure process

Strained politics between graphic design and fine art faculty over competing resources and curriculum.

Less and less students: beginning downside of population bubble along with decreasing number of international students

Need more comprehensive plan to support independent learning.

Teach a large number of international students creating challenges around teaching across language barriers.

Worry about losing students to UX/UI programs.

Increasing enrollment in transfer students compared to "traditional freshman." Dramatic inconsistency in transfer students' preparation but articulation agreements force institutions to give credit for competencies they don't have.

Struggles to educate non-design faculty and administration on the value of design scholarship

Lack of support and low pay for assistant and adjunct professors.

Challenge of continually creating new tutorials/assignments/quizzes for new software and technologies.

FACULTY
PAIN POINTS

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Pain Points of Faculty situated within
Fine Art Departments

Strained politics between graphic design and fine art faculty over competing resources and curriculum

Lack of respect and understanding of the field by others in Fine Arts Departments

Fine Arts faculty sees Design as the competition not as a part of the department.

Studio Art uses Design numbers to gain more studio faculty while design gets no traction. Lack of equitable support.

Design faculty often expected to meet the same exhibition-based tenure guidelines as fine arts faculty.

Pain Points of Faculty teaching in Graduate Programs

Need to "protect" design from other areas on campus

Often not compensated for work on graduate committees

Less and less students (beginning the downside of population bubble along with decreasing number of international students)

Need guidance on articulating the distinction between graduate curriculum and undergraduate curriculum via curriculum structure, as well as mentorship of students.

Need more training for teaching research skills to graduate students

Lack of quality grad students who come with design experience. More and more applicants have no prior experience so grad school becomes more like an undergraduate program.

FACULTY
PAIN POINTS

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Pain Points of Faculty at Community Colleges

Struggle to balance design courses/foundational technical tools with newer curriculum in only 2 years

Wish there were more options for membership and contact with AIGA for students of low-socio-economic status

Want to attend national design conferences but lacks time, and sometimes funding, to do so. There aren't enough faculty to "sub" for one another during conference attendance

Often feels dismissed by 4-year program colleagues who don't recognize the value of the 2-year degree program

Want to create an inclusive classroom environment that deals with sensitive socio-political issues and/or neurodiversity but lacks the time to attend institutional events/training that supports this goal

Required to participate heavily in college service, outreach, etc. which often conflicts with time for scholarship

Class sizes took a nosedive due to population decline but starting upswing.

Seek knowledge around creating multidisciplinary programs to reflect current state of design practice or opportunities to partner with companies to build "real-world" projects.

The technological literacy gap. Many students enter classes with no experience using a Mac or a other basic tools. Faculty must teach basic navigational skills before beginning core curriculum.

Time-consuming challenge of continually creating new tutorials/assignments/quizzes for new software and technologies.

FACULTY
PAIN POINTS

Note: Institutional expectations for faculty vary widely, even within same

categories. NASAD is accrediting body, but not all programs accredited.

Pain Points of Administrators

Feel daily pressure from above and pressure from peers, but receive low financial reward and have little real authority

Struggle to leave time for personal growth and development while advocating for peers

As a new administrator, learning on the fly how to write (grants, proposals, evaluations), build and balance budgets, fundraise, cultivate partnerships, manage operational functions, plan for growth, promote programs and more. The university offers some training and orientation but the learning curve is steep

Frequently have to make the case for recurring funds to be allocated to have industry standard tools and resources available

Spend huge swaths of time on recruitment and retention because university level counselors and recruiters rarely feature or speak about design as a career choice.

Have to develop leadership skills on the job while transitioning from faculty to administration. There are very few affordable options for academic leadership training and even fewer for leadership within design.

Feel disconnected from the field and the ability to deliver relevant content to students due to the workload and learning curve of being an administrator

Struggle to fill holes as stellar faculty are promoted to admin roles.

Miss former relationship with colleagues

Went into administration because it was the only path for financial advancement in higher education

Need to find ways to make sure the senior faculty that remain in the department stay current within the discipline and can relay that information effectively to the students

Lack of support from department to attract and keep diverse students.

FACULTY
PAIN POINTS

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Pain Points of Adjunct Faculty

Often straddling multiple institutions or splitting time between professional practice and teaching.

Lack of community and advocacy for themselves

Isolated from full-time faculty.

Lack of guidance regarding pedagogy (grading, keeping up with and managing technology, managing classroom climates,creating properly situated projects)

Not enough access to case studies and curricular resources

Never know exactly what content the students already know before entering their class. Little access to the curricula of pre-requisites.

Treated as substandard with no voice/no rights.

Job insecurity

Lack of mentorship toward becoming tenured faculty

Low pay with no benefits

How does the DEC respond to the pain points of these personas?

i.e. How are the benefits of the value proposition currently delivered?

DEC BENEFITS:
EACH MAPS TO USER PAIN POINTS

Conferences
The act of hosting/facilitating, delivering and/or moderating presentations and workshops, reviewing submissions, or attending events. Two annually.

Dialectic
A scholarly journal of thought leadership, education and practice in the discipline of design. Submitting, reviewing, editing, reading, discussing, and citing.

Faculty Research Grant
Submitting, reviewing, receiving, learning from outcomes.

Website & Newsletter
Decalog. Newsletter has 7500 subscribers.

Social media
Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Online discussion groups
Facebook (robust conversational space for members and non-members) (263 members)

Design Teaching Resource (DTR)
Submitting educator projects, promoting educator and institution through submissions, and benefiting from examples of high quality projects, access to archive of information (i.e. Designer 2025)

AIGA DEC
CONFERENCES

Funded by $10,000 in seed money that is matched financially and in-kind by a college/university and then organized and staffed by educators.

Conferences tend to make a small profit.

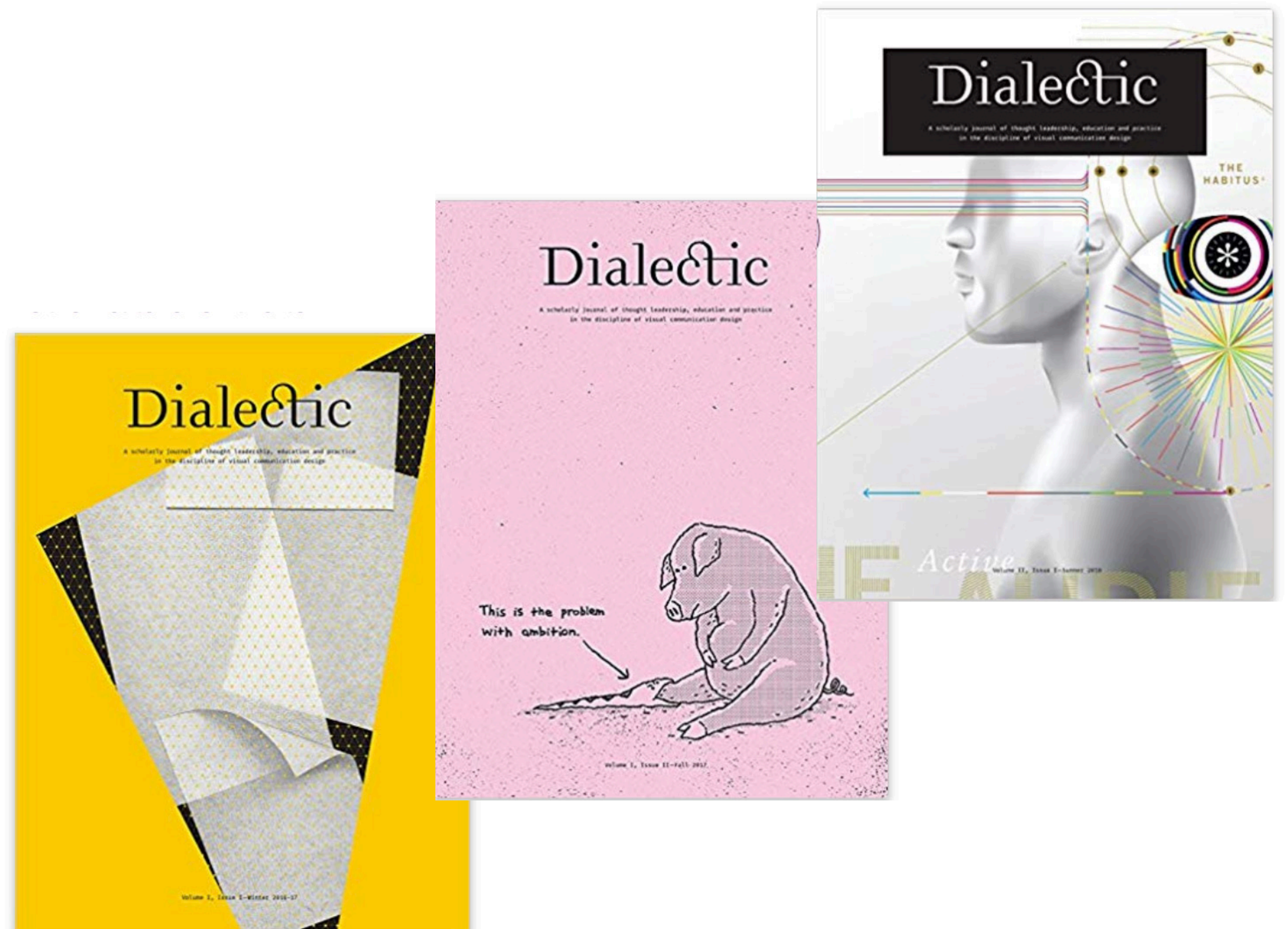*1 stand-alone conference and 1 paired with national conference annually.*

AIGA National assists with online registration.
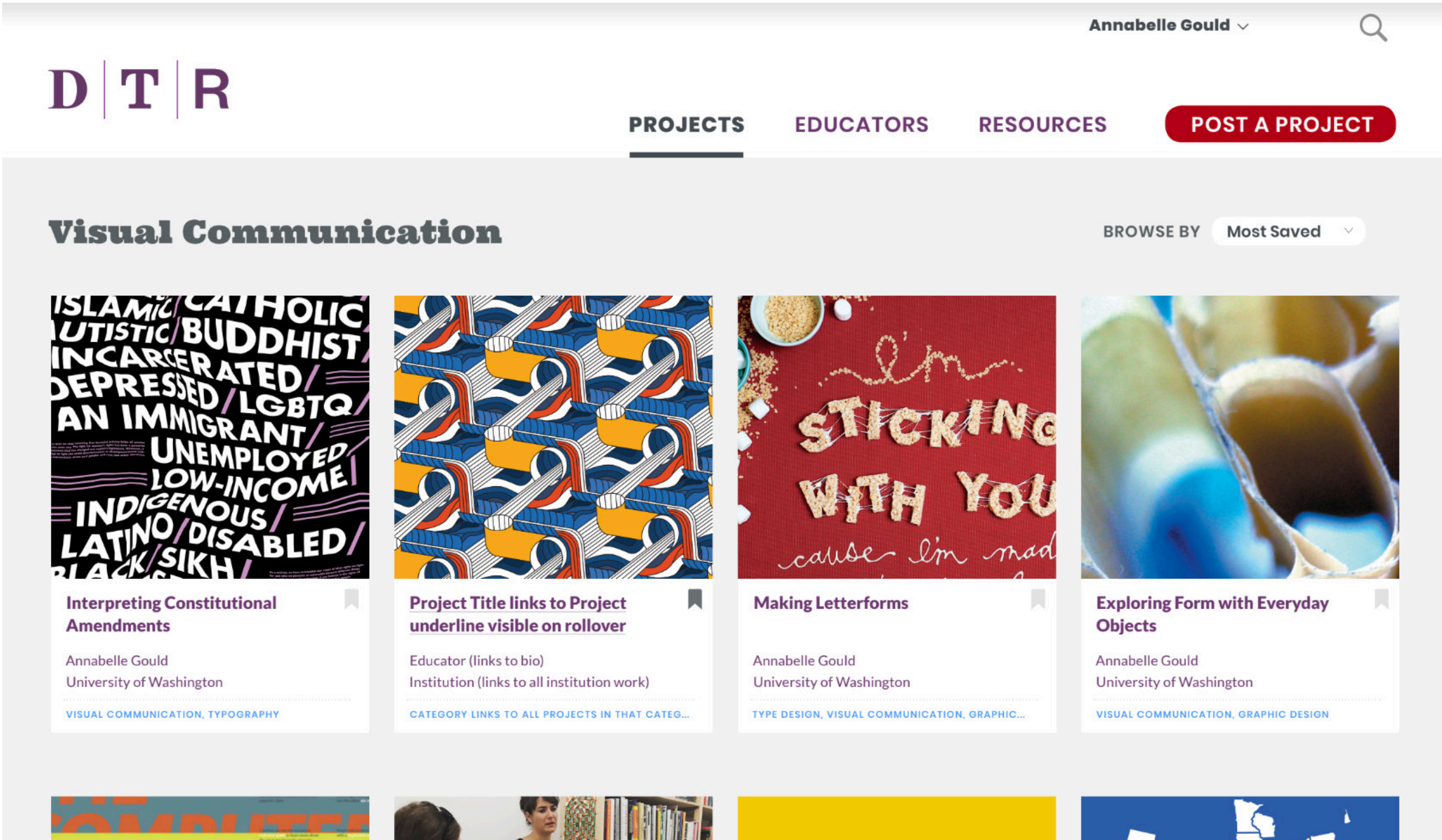
AIGA DEC
JOURNAL

Began in 2016

There are only around 4 U.S. scholarly graphic design journals, in comparison with hundreds for other disciplines. This puts our educators at a great disadvantage.

AIGA DEC
DESIGN TEACHING RESOURCE

Currently in the development stage. Hugh Dubberly's office is working on this now.

Educators submit their own projects, promote themselves and their institution through submissions, and benefit from examples of high quality projects and access to archive of information (i.e. Designer 2025)

IN SUM...

What main service is the AIGA DEC providing?

Access to a community of design educators facing similar challenges and high quality opportunities.

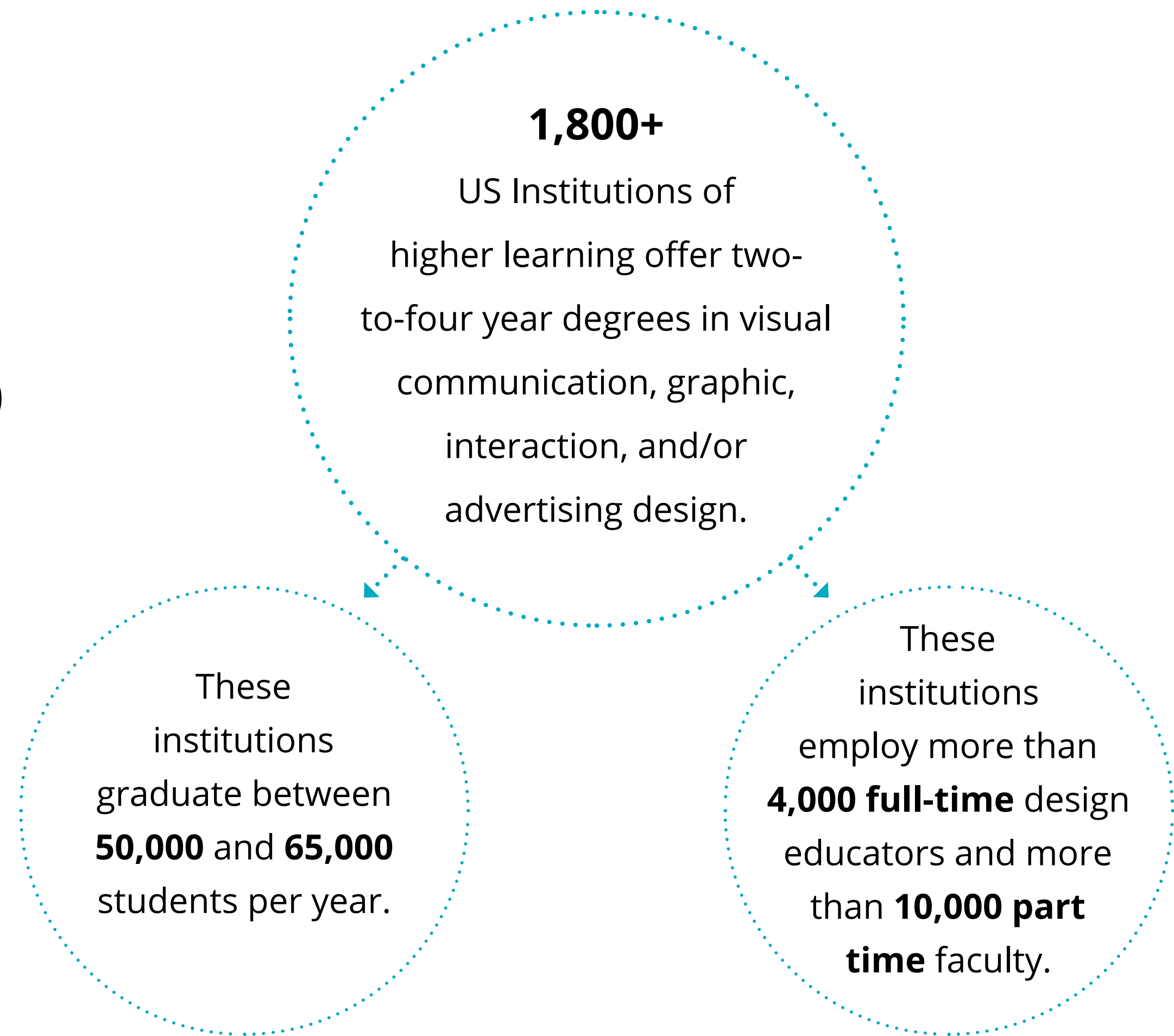**What is the end-benefit of using it?**

Participation in an active community as both experts and learners in the areas of pedagogy, scholarship/research, and career advancements/pivots.

WHAT MAKES THE DEC'S OFFERINGS UNIQUE?

The DEC serves as a **hub for the many sub-specialties of design education.**

As a part of a professional association, AIGA DEC helps **forge contacts and partnerships between industry and education.**

The DEC **enables faculty to engage** with the same organization, AIGA, which strengths the **synergy between education and industry.**

DEC MEMBER STATS

Current DEC newsletter subscribers: **7,500**

1,800+
US Institutions of higher learning offer two-to-four year degrees in visual communication, graphic, interaction, and/or advertising design.

These institutions graduate between **50,000** and **65,000** students per year.

These institutions employ more than **4,000 full-time** design educators and more than **10,000 part time** faculty.

Data from a University of North Texas study led by Michael Gib

LOOKING TO
THE FUTURE

The DEC has the potential to **reach a larger group** of educators (equity).

Education closely aligned with industry but not as an engine for creating workers but as a **partner addressing changes** in the discipline.

Investing in education would run counter to the **current political climate**, i.e. education needs AIGA's support.

The **DEC are volunteers** with full-time jobs without the benefit of membership and dues like local chapters.

The DEC can't take on more as only a volunteer board. The **community is stretched thin**. Would need staff and a **new model to organize and fund.**

DEC has a **clear value proposition**.

The DEC **needs access to better data on its current membership.**

The DEC is **interested in new organizational models** to expand operational capacity and generate more profit.

CITATIONS & CREDITS

Design by Alysa Buchanan. Data gathered via surveys and interviews of current subscribers of the Design Educator Community newsletter.