SUCCESS
Grand Rapids is fertile ground for making ideas reality

CREATIVITY
A KCAD education prepares entrepreneurs to handle anything

PASSION
The drive to start a business goes beyond simply chasing profits
More than a college, we want to also be an essential component of the vibrant arts community here in West Michigan”

— Nicole DeKraker, Director of Student Engagement at KCAD, speaking about KCAD’s partnership with Grand Rapids’ Festival of the Arts

There’s no such thing as black and white. Our lives have color to them. At the end of your life, you’re going to want that color as proof that you were here, and that you lived.”

— Steven Kolb, CEO of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and honorary doctorate recipient, to KCAD graduates during commencement reception

ON ENTREPRENEURISM

How can KCAD teach our students to think like entrepreneurs? With a culture built around self-expression, we already have the first step needed to cultivate successful entrepreneurs: passion. Our students don’t just create work as a means to learn; they are fully invested in their ideas, which gives them the second most important characteristic of a successful entrepreneur: commitment. The third characteristic—objectivity—will be evident in the process we use to develop our ideas into art and design that matters. Everything we create is inspired by how we interpret and apply what we observe in the world around us. Creatives learn a heightened sense of perspective and are taught to approach problems in ways that traditional business owners may not have been exposed to. As entrepreneurs, they can use their creativity to help their business, product, or service connect with customers and users on an emotional level by solving for real, human needs. With these ingredients in place, we can motivate students to expand their thought process. We can inspire them to take a higher degree of ownership of their ideas and become entrepreneurs who are not only successful, but who can help build a stronger community as well.

Jin Hoony Lee, Chair of the Industrial Design Program

ON ENTREPRENEURISM

Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University (KCAD) has a simple mission: to develop artists and designers who make a difference, doing art and design that matters. KCAD believes in a market for creative talent. The future is an open book, and we must engage the community in our work. Entrepreneurism is a core component of our mission, and it wasn’t long before the concept gave way to creativity. We became very interested in the idea of Grand Rapids being “branded for life” by a number of creative individuals. In talking with alum Gregg Palazzolo (see the interview on page 14), we learned that he was interested in the idea of Grand Rapids being “branded for life.” Palazzolo described the concept as a way to showcase Grand Rapids as a place where people want to live, work, and play. He created a campaign to that effect, which earned him a place on the list of the 10 most Creative Minds of Grand Rapids.

ON A MISSION

Creative entrepreneurs generate positive social and economic impacts. Our students are taught to approach problems in ways that traditional business owners may not have been exposed to. As entrepreneurs, they can use their creativity to help their business, product, or service connect with customers and users on an emotional level by solving for real, human needs. With these ingredients in place, we can motivate students to expand their thought process. We can inspire them to take a higher degree of ownership of their ideas and become entrepreneurs who are not only successful, but who can help build a stronger community as well.

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ON ENTREPRENEURISM

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ENTREPRENEURISM

On Fertile Ground
How Grand Rapids Sows the Seeds of Entrepreneurial Success

Got an idea that could change the world? Good news: you’re in the right place.

by Mark Lannon

As the state of Michigan continues to breathe new life into its economy, Grand Rapids has assembled a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem with all the resources people need to transform their dreams into viable businesses. From city and state government to universities, businesses, and entrepreneurs who’ve failed, succeeded, and learned something worth passing on, this area is fertile ground for new ideas.

Mayor George Heartwell is an avid supporter of this culture, which is woven into the city’s fabric. He says, “It strikes me that we have a very rich entrepreneurial climate here. Dating back for well over a century, this has been a place where design, innovation, creativity, and business have been valued. Witness some of the great companies that have started and grown here. The Meijer Company, all of the small businesses, and family-owned businesses started because somebody had a good idea and was willing to take the risk and make the investment to turn it into a business venture. That really continues today.”

That supportive atmosphere is made possible through two resources every entrepreneur needs: people willing to share their experience and funding. In Grand Rapids, Heartwell says, “There are mentors and role models for young entrepreneurs. There are people they can turn to, who are willing to help them get started. We have a culture in which people who have made their fortunes have not abandoned the community but stayed here and continued to invest. They’re not unique to Grand Rapids, but we have them in great measure, and that does distinguish us from other cities.”

Among those reinvesting in the city today is Rick DeVos, grandson of Amway founder Rich DeVos and CEO/Founder of Start Garden, an entrepreneurial seed accelerator in Grand Rapids. Looking at all the innovation and experimentation in the city today, he says, “Entrepreneurs and startups are interesting to people, especially in the last five years, and I don’t see that diminishing. There’s a free agent mindset with the younger generation. Everybody’s asking, ‘what’s the thing you can do to move the ball?’”

As it happens, there are many places you can go and people you can turn to, depending on how you like to work and where you are in the entrepreneurial process. “Just getting started?” The Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation (SEI), backed just a few blocks from Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University (KCAD) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), is designed to support community members at any stage of the business building process. It hosts an Entrepreneur in Residence, an experienced business person who can review business plans, provide coaching, and help people get connected to the resources they need to take their ideas to the next level—like those available through GR Current.

GR Current manages the Grand Rapids SmartZone, a cluster of tech-based firms, entrepreneurs, and researchers stretching along the Grand River and across the life science corridor on Michigan Avenue. Anchored by the Van Andel Research Institute and wet lab corridor on Michigan Avenue. Anchored by the Van Andel Research Institute and wet lab and that does distinguish us from other cities.”

GR Current’s support continues in the SmartZone can find the prestige, support, and guidance to evolve into organizations that can contribute to the area’s economy. Office space and state-of-the-art equipment are available at affordable prices, and startups can connect to a family of mentors that lets the newest members of the community learn from the most experienced. GR Current can also link startups to millions of dollars in state funding, along with support from private investors, including the regional investment group Grand Angels.

What the SmartZone accomplishes with several city blocks. The Factory does so on a more intimate scale. Housed on a single floor of a downtown building, this co-working community is designed to bring like-minded designers, technicians, and entrepreneurs together, letting them mingle naturally to expand their networks, contribute to each other’s projects, and support each other’s business ventures. The Factory also hosts an annual Startup Weekend, part of a global network of events designed to help entrepreneurs hone their ideas and prepare to launch their businesses.

For dreamers and doers who are ready to test their ideas, Start Garden offers the support to take them to the next step. The organization was designed as a platform for ideas to grow into projects, projects into startup businesses, and startups into big businesses—one step at a time. Prospective entrepreneurs can apply for a $5,000 in funding to scale their idea to attract conventional investors. DeVos says, “At the earliest stage, we’re very willing to experiment and partner with people. In our experience, you’re better off starting with the seed of an idea, trying something, and getting into practice as soon as possible.”

Start Garden nurtures its entrepreneurs with events where members and the public can mingle, along with open advisor hours when startups can connect to people with the knowledge, skills and collaborators they need. DeVos says the organization is based on two concepts that are important to get an ecosystem going: support to each other’s businesses in the more early-stage companies visibly, on a continuous basis, so you create a constant flow of ideas.” Monthly reports track the progress of each project and give entrepreneurs the chance to see how far they can get on a small budget. “You don’t need hundreds of thousands of dollars to start something,” says DeVos. “You can get quite far in terms of evaluating an idea and finding customers with a pretty small investment.”

Private businesses are getting in on the entrepreneurial spirit, too. The law firm Varnum launched its MiSpringboard program to give entrepreneurs access to free legal services during their startup phase. Businesses are referred by economic development and other organizations across the state, and each participant receives a minimum of $2,500 in services tailored to their needs, including business structuring, counseling on financing matters, contract drafting or review, or employment law advice. By making these services available at no charge, Varnum hopes to help entrepreneurs establish the firm footing they need to succeed, while funneling funds to other essentials.

Joan Andrew, Director of Business Development at Varnum, explains, “Our attorneys identified that many times, to avoid legal expenses, people try to do it themselves or turn to a relative who may not have the right kind of legal expertise. But how a business is set up in this beginning can have real implications down the road. We thought if we can take away that hurdle, get people set up correctly, and put good contracts in place, then that’s a way that we can help. In the process, we’ve met lots of great new people and businesses.”

This fertile, supportive environment for new ideas is not only good for startups—it’s a valuable asset for attracting new talent, too. Christian Gaines recently left his home in Los Angeles to take a position as Executive Director of ArtPrize. “What I like about Grand Rapids is that it’s unencumbered,” he says.

“We are in a privileged position as an incubator of innovation. What we can do is get people out there, experiment, and test their ideas. It’s a city that is able to do that in a relatively easy way.”

And talent that comes here tends to stay here. With a seemingly inexhaustible support system that includes, in addition to the entrepreneurial resources, GR Makers, Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women (GROW), The Right Place, Local First, the Grand Rapids Urban League, and LINC Community Revitalization, among others, entrepreneurs in Grand Rapids aren’t just succeeding on their own—they’re feeding a startup culture that’s driving rapid innovation and creating boundless impact.

“There’s definitely an ability to be able to gather and build excitement here. It’s an exercise that everyone’s involved in.”

> Christian Gaines, Executive Director of ArtPrize

“If you have an idea, you can bring it to people who can make it happen in a relatively easy way.”

Read about the experiences of KCAD students at Start Up Weekend on the iPad version.
Creativity as Capital

The road to entrepreneurial success is filled with sudden detours and unforeseen challenges that can send even the best-laid business plans awry. But KCAD entrepreneurs are prepared to handle anything that comes their way, and they have their creative education to thank for it.

by Kyle Austin

After working in art galleries for a number of years, alumni Katie Moore ('11, MFA Painting) and Magdalene Law ('10, Graphic Design) noticed that smaller galleries were having trouble selling art and promoting artists. So the pair created ArtLustr, a website that doubles as a promotional tool for exhibitions and an e-commerce tool for the artists.

"As a creative... you're taught in school that there's no limit to anything." - Katie Moore ('11 MFA Painting), ArtLustr

From the outset, Moore and Law wanted to shape ArtLustr in a way that would add value to the gallery experience instead of eliminating it entirely. The idea is that most viewers will see the exhibition and the artists promoted in detail online, go to the gallery to experience the work in person, and then head back online to purchase their favorite piece, with profits being divided between the gallery, the artist, and ArtLustr. "We want to help artists and galleries, but we also want to help people to see art as an investment that can really add a lot of value to their lives," said Moore.

Using local exhibitions as a forum for beta testing, Moore and Law have been steadily honing the site’s design to balance engaging aesthetics with a seamless user experience. They know that they’ve only scratched the surface of ArtLustr’s potential, and they’re excited to begin connecting with galleries and artists all over the country. "As a creative you can think outside the box because you’re taught in school that there’s no limit to anything," said Moore. "Translating that mentality to your business is what makes it successful.

Many startups enjoy a successful launch only to see the momentum eventually fizzle out. Alum Kate Hamney ('09, Interior Design) utilized her design talents to ensure that Denity, the clothing store she recently opened on the West Side of Grand Rapids, wouldn’t suffer the same fate. Prior to launching, Hamney spent months researching what other retailers were doing, establishing relationships with major brands, and scouting numerous locations until she found one that aligned with her needs and vision. She also worked with a local marketing and design firm to brand Denity as a store that brings a more personal and welcoming feel to upscale retail fashion.

"That spark and drive is where it all starts when it comes to being an entrepreneur, but as a design student, you’re taught to go through the whole creative process from beginning to end in order make your creative vision a reality," said Hamney. "I’ve tried to bring that same approach to starting a business.

By injecting creativity into a measured design strategy, Hamney has the ability to problem solve on the fly without disrupting the customer experience she’s committed to delivering. The result is a young business that already has a solid customer base and seems positioned for sustainable success. “It takes patience,” said Hamney. “You can’t just get wrapped up in the excitement and make hasty decisions, and you can’t get frustrated when things don’t go according to plan.”

Budding entrepreneurs are often so focused on generating buzz around their startup that they neglect what’s really important—the actual product, service, or business itself. Creatives, however, understand that without the steak, there’s no sizzle to sell. Alum Brandon Satterlee ('09, Graphic Design) was offering something that few others in Grand Rapids were when he started The Forest, a creative agency specializing in bridging the gap between print and digital media, in 2011. But rather than crafting a traditional PR narrative, Satterlee kept his head down and focused on creating great work that would speak for itself.

"I like to think that we do it in a bit of an old school way by just being authentic,” he said. “It’s interesting to hear how other people have perceived [The Forest] as a culture-forward shop, which is the way we feel about it, so that’s validating.”

As The Forest’s client base grew, so did the complexity of the challenges Satterlee faced as he tried to grow his business as well. He knew he needed a more versatile workspace and additional staff, but he also wanted to stay true to his original vision. Using a design thinking approach, Satterlee was able to mold The Forest into a kind of co-creative agency where collaborators rotate in and out of projects and the focus remains on the quality of the creative process and the ability to solve problems.

“It’s all about looking at a problem systematically, identifying the various causes, and then asking, ‘If we attempt to solve it in this way, how does that affect everything else?’” he said. “Looking at systemic problems in new ways is something I wouldn’t have been able to do without a creative design background.”

Success also comes from the human-centered approach creatives bring to entrepreneurship. When alum Tim Murphy ('02, Industrial Design) started AirDrop Gaming, a company specializing in making video game accessories that improve users’ performance and experience, he found that developing a product and a business plan was only the beginning. The hard part was forging the emotional connection that would get his products off the shelves.

AirDrop Gaming’s first flagship product, an attachment called the Hip Shot Dot that gives players of first-person shooter games a competitive advantage by improving their accuracy, caught on quickly. To date, the company has sold 100,000 units and has secured deals with several brands to add the Hip Shot Dot to their product lines. "As an entrepreneur you have to be creative in every aspect—your PR narrative, Satterlee kept his head down and focused on creating great work that would speak for itself.

"As an entrepreneur you have to be creative in every aspect— the way you network, in the way you get investors, in the way you keep their support, in the way you grow your customer base, and in the way you develop your brand—because ultimately, entrepreneurship is not a math problem," he said.

In fact, the most important calculation any entrepreneur can make is whether or not their idea is worth the risk. And for creatives like these who believe fully in what they’re doing, the answer is always yes.

“There are things that people will say are impossible that are not impossible,” said Satterlee. “They’re just impossible for those people.”

Looking at systemic problems in new ways is something I wouldn’t have been able to do without a creative design background.” - Brandon Satterlee ('09 Graphic Design), The Forest
Passion Meets Profit

A new American Dream is on the rise, one that isn’t defined by status or material wealth, but by the ability to do what you love. So when it comes to building a business, many creative entrepreneurs are following their hearts and finding their own definitions of success.

by Kyle Austin

After years of working to pay the rent, alums Chris (’07, Photography and Digital Media) and Malissa (’06, Digital Media) Tack decided to start living smaller and thinking bigger. In early 2011, the couple built the Tiny Tack House, a 140 sq. ft. solar-powered eco-home. By dramatically lowering their living expenses, the house has also given them the financial freedom to only take on projects that they truly believe in. “We think of it as trading stuff for experiences,” said Malissa. “We can travel a lot more and we have a lot more freedom.”

While earning a living primarily through freelance work, the Tacks have also made a business out of sharing their enthusiasm for tiny house living, creating and selling custom blueprints and a book of unique tiny designs.

“It’s important to feel a connection with your work, not only as motivation to excel and improve your craft, but also simply for the enjoyment and fulfillment it provides,” said Harrison. “It’s very important that we don’t view our work as a job, but as a calling—our passion into a successful destination wedding photography business.”

The new success then, involves more than identifying a market opportunity. Alum Ben Harrison (’08, Photography) had already turned his artistic passion into a successful destination wedding photography business, but when his son Jonas Paul was born with a rare vision impairment, he and his wife decided to channel their energy and emotion into shaping a better world for their son and others like him.

Their company, Jonas Paul Eyewear, offers stylish, vintage inspired eyewear designs for children, helping those who have to wear glasses stand out and feel like a natural extension of us,” said Harrison. “It’s very important to us to have a sense of our creativity and ingenuity, so it feels like a natural extension of us,” said Harrison. “It’s very important to feel a connection with your work, not only as motivation to excel and improve your craft, but also simply for the enjoyment and fulfillment it provides.”

Profitability may be vital to entrepreneurial success, but that sense of fulfillment is priceless, alum Sue Burns (’83, Graphic Design) learned his father was dying from pancreatic cancer, his charge the plane ticket home to a credit card because he knew he had to be there. “The experience inspired him to create The Extra Mile, a non-profit that collects unused frequent flyer miles and donates them to those in desperate need of help travelling to a dying loved one’s bedside.

Recently, Dimmer was able to accompany a man named JJ Rolle on a flight, completely funded by The Extra Mile, from Washington to Georgia to see his own dying father one last time. “That passion goes forward to our customer,” she said. “When people purchase our products, they’re happy.”

Most of all, people who love their work do so because they’re able to feel its impact directly and deeply. When alum Matt Dimmer (’97, Visual Communication) learned his father was dying from pancreatic cancer, he charged the plane ticket home to a credit card because he knew he had to be there. The experience inspired him to create The Extra Mile, a non-profit that collects unused frequent flyer miles and donates them to those in desperate need of help travelling to a dying loved one’s bedside.

Ultimately, Dimmer said, the difference between having a passion and following one comes down to understanding what you’re working for and how hard you have to work for it. “You can’t just have a big notebook full of ideas and thoughts. You have to try to make something happen.”
My fascination with the dichotomy of the seen and unseen in human existence has been a conceptual cornerstone for most of my career as a figurative artist. It is in the moment of hesitation when one moves into the interior space of thought, that I find inspiration. I strive to paint not only the delicate features of the external person but to capture the tender unseen presence that transcends understanding in the depth of a soul. In my experience in working with the people that I paint, I repeatedly discover the profound mystery of existence.

Cavanaugh is a 1994 KCAD alum. She is a working artist who resides in Santa Fe, NM.

Read more about her in the article on page 13.
Entrepreneurship for All

While there seems to be a never ending supply of innovative ideas, seasoned entrepreneurs will tell you that success hinges on access to capital, and for decades, that access was hard to come by. These days, accessible funding sources are changing the game and helping to transform would-be entrepreneurs from dreamers into doers.

by John Wisand

It used to be that getting a startup off the ground meant gaining the attention of a venture capital firm which would provide an influx of cash, often only to companies deemed to have high potential, in exchange for a portion of future profits. While the basics of capital investment haven’t changed much over the years, online crowdfunding platforms and progressive new venture capital firms are pushing the boundaries by fostering a community of entrepreneurship and encouraging support among their clients.

Grand Rapids-based Start Garden, for instance, has created an organic forum for investment wherein entrepreneurs can pitch their ideas in person for a chance to earn an initial $5,000 in seed money. What’s more, Start Garden utilizes community voting to help determine which projects get funded, which means that ideas aren’t just judged on their potential for profit, but on their ability to create real-human impact. If a project is chosen, the entrepreneur has three months to prove that the idea is feasible, after which Start Garden may choose to invest up to $100,000 in a project depending on its broader potential.

“[Entrepreneurs] are kind of the Wild West no matter what you’re doing,” says Benjamin Gott, Start Garden’s Entrepreneur In-Residence. “With a number of successful startups under his belt, including Board Water is Better, TheCommon.org, THE BRILLIANCE, and the clothing line BERNHARD EDGAR, Gott understands the changing landscape of entrepreneurship. “It’s not like they’re people who are ready to support each other, have fun, and experiment.”

For Wes Keely, on Industrial Design student at KCAD, this kind of capital investment proved invaluable. After touring the world as a drummer, Keely created KBraakes, an attachment for kick drums that keeps them from sliding forward while being played, creating a better live music experience for performers and listeners alike.

Keely took KBraakes to Start Garden and won the community vote along with $5,000 which he used to put prototypes into the hands of professional drummers and generate buzz of Western Michigan. The boost worked, with KBraakes currently rushing to fill over 100 preorders and preparing for a global launch within a few months.

“To anyone that has zero dollars, five grand is a mint,” says Keely. “If you know how to stretch a budget, you can get some pretty good results, especially if you know how to do a lot of things yourself!”

Beyond venture capital, entrepreneurs can use online crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter and Indiegogo to connect with investors and promote their startup simultaneously from the comfort of their own homes. Keely chose Kickstarter, which requires users to set a funding goal for their project and allows people from across the globe to contribute in return for varying incentives, ranging from additional merchandise to early access to the projects release.

Locally, entrepreneurs can take advantage of the state’s new Michigan Invests Locally Exemption (MILE) Act, which provides the best of both worlds with investment-based crowdfunding. This hybrid concept expands access to capital by allowing startups incorporated or organized in Michigan to sell securities in its business to Michigan-based investors without having to register those securities with any regulatory body.

Brook Ruble (‘14, Industrial Design), co-owner of Woosah—a highly successful Michigan-based art and apparel company—was encouraged by her KCAD professors to immerse herself in West Michigan’s entrepreneurial community and embrace new avenues of financial support for her startup. She believes that unique and accessible forms of capital are antiquating the traditional concept of the 40-page business plan and creating conditions for innovative ideas to thrive.

“[New sources of funding] have opened a lot of eyes and have brought to light how times are changing,” says Ruble. “It shows that not everyone needs to follow that corporate path. You can do your own thing and throw your own ideas out there!”

Some, like Ali Cavanaugh and Kirby Fagan, have evolved their studio practices into sustainable businesses. Cavanaugh (‘95, Painting) discovered the value of her talents while still in school, earning money by teaching, doing custom sewing for interiors, and painting portraits and murals.Soon afterwards, she moved to Santa Fe and quickly enrolled herself as a working artist in the local gallery scene. “I discovered that all I had to do was persistently pursue galleries and then I eventually got represented,” she said.

Now more than ever, Cavanaugh believes, artists can control their professional destiny. “The art market is always changing and evolving, especially with the expansion of the internet. When I first started, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Ebay, etc... an artist can market, customize, and create their entire existence.”

Kira Fagan (‘13, Illustration) has found work in the publishing industry, creating book covers for middle-grade and young adult novels. She’s built her clientela by attending the Illustration Master Class workshop, joining the Society of Children’s Book Illustrators, and soaking up knowledge at conventions and workshops nationwide.

She’s also working at becoming a better businessperson. “It’s easy to focus on the part you love, but getting organized takes a lot of time, and I’ve had to seek help from other professionals—people who are so far beyond where I’m at have been so generous with their information.”

As a working artist, Fagan understands her own role in passing down information. “Wherever you are in your career, it’s your duty to pass on what you know, and helping others grow has been a big part of my growth too,” she said.

Meanwhile, Dwayne Sott (‘95, Fine Arts) was following a path that took him far from the traditional artist’s life he once imagined. Already experimenting with plotters, welding crawlers, and other art making machines, he developed the world’s first painting wheelchair with the help of an NEA grant. “I grew up in a foster home with children with disabilities,” he said. “That led me to the understanding that we needed to do more in the arts.”

Since then, Sott has created more adaptive art tools for people with disabilities, including a chalk drawing arm, a bubble machine, and special paints and chalks, which he supplies to schools. He compares his work to a sculptor who makes multiple castings of the same design, and he tours the country, organizing events where everyone can make art.

“Self-Made Successes

These KCAD fine art grads are proof that an art education can lead to success in business as well.

by Karin Lammon

There are very few rules in our field... and there is no limit to one’s success.” - Ali Cavanaugh (’95, Painting)

Another alum who turned her art into a unique career path is Andrea Eckart (‘98 Painting MFA). Eckart was working as a teacher when she took an abandoned building being auctioned off in Detroit. While the inside was “pretty much worst-case scenario,” extensive renovations will eventually transform it into Holding House, a non-profit organization that offers youth and family programming, workshops, and exhibitions along with working studio space.

“I’ve really enjoyed teaching but wanted to concentrate my efforts on something that would be more gainful for the Detroit community,” she said. “I always liked the idea of making art education accessible.”

Whatever path students take, Cavanaugh believes it’s a great era to be an artist. “There are very few rules in our field, and this is a great advantage to us,” she said. “The individual has control over themselves, and there is no limit to one’s success.”
They put me in charge of the brand design. With all these shows, countless clients across the globe at the helm of his design firm, Palazzolo Design. Lately however, he's been spreading his talents across the entrepreneurial landscape and is meeting success every turn of the block.

Q: You've been running your own shop for a while now. How did you get your start?
A: I guess I had some of my grandpa in me. He came from Italy and started his own dairy. I liked eating, and in college I was always on the lookout for the cheapest place to grab a bite, but I still needed cash. When I was a sophomore at KCAD I'd get the newspaper early in the morning, go right to the help-wanted ads and see to where people needed things done. Before long I realized that I had other designer friends who were hungry too. So I'd hire them, tell them how to do the job and make a little money. That was the ball that got rolling.

Q: How's the business treating you these days?
A: After doing this for thousands of clients all over the country, the industry has changed over the last 34 years. Now I'm building brands. We have so many clients in all different industries just to make it exciting. It's more of a closed loop when you bring back the brand and packaging into our lives, that will be growing fast. We'll go into huge multinational corporations and ask them how many hours they spend on branding. It's astounding how little they spend on it. That really opens our eyes to how we often know more than CEOs when it comes to branding's importance.

Q: You've been naming your own shop for a while now. How did you get your start?
A: Both Flat Lander's and Roadbelly were complete brand case studies. And if it flopped it was all me—that's a cool thing. Both ventures were “put up or shut up” moments. Having been on the other side, I know how much pressure we put on ourselves. We didn't do a half-baked job.

Q: From design and branding to publishing and bars, what advice do you have for potential entrepreneurs?
A: My whole life people have wondered how I've done things. How do you find that stuff that is ad that like that? How do you see this trend coming? It's because I'm looking for opportunities, always. For entrepreneurs I'd say that you need to get out of your own head and stop being like everyone else. That doesn't mean I've got to do the street and print yourself different colors every day, but ask yourself how are you contributing to your field?

Q: You seem like the type that always has your eyes forward. What's next for you?
A: For the last five years I've tickled at the idea of a house built in high school within Rockford Public Schools, used half of the Van Andel Institute's Purple Community initiative brought college- and high school students to design and create their own buildings. For the last five years I've tickled at the idea of a house built in high school within Rockford Public Schools, used half of the Van Andel Institute's Purple Community initiative brought college- and high school students to design and create their own buildings. Future plans include a hydroponics system. It’s a cool, new trend towards a “Hydroponics” style. I think that will be the wave of the future, not Redneck, but Hillbilly—there is something beautiful to that sort of simplicity, especially now. As we stubbed Flatlander's “Hillbilly chic” and people have loved it.

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A: I guess I had some of my grandpa in me. He came from Italy and started his own dairy. I liked eating, and in college I was always on the lookout for the cheapest place to grab a bite, but I still needed cash. When I was a sophomore at KCAD I'd get the newspaper early in the morning, go right to the help-wanted ads and see to where people needed things done. Before long I realized that I had other designer friends who were hungry too. So I'd hire them, tell them how to do the job and make a little money. That was the ball that got rolling.

Q: How's the business treating you these days?
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Sculpture and Functional Art
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Faculty & Staff

Photography professor Adam Drickrmer recently led another successful “URC/OAC Photography Student Transfer Seminar,” exposing 19 potential second-year associate degrees-seeking students at Grand Rapids Community College to the field of graphic design.

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Connor Fagan ('12, Painting) took part in a month-long competition and chose the plate as the world's best new plate. The License Plate Collectors Association recently designed the latest "Eliison Brickle" ("Eliison Bridge").

Eliott Copier ('12, Industrial Design) was a part of the American Society for the Arts Design/Decorating received the Red Lily college faculty, where the Museum of Contemporary Art. The artist shared his thoughts on the future of the field in the panel discussion. "Eliison Brickle" ("Eliison Bridge").

Josh McVey ('10, MFA Painting) had his work featured in a solo exhibition at Spire Gallery in Grand Rapids.

Dave Wile ('06, Digital Media) has been accepted into the prestigious MFA Sculpture program. She was also invited to co-teach a ceramics class at Ox College’s 106 Gallery.

Jake McVey ('14, Digital Media) was recently hired as a Web Designer by Kalamazoo-based advertising company Epic Games. He is also working on a book about his experiences with the company.

Alice Gadzinski (Photography, '10) was accepted into the prestigious MFA Photography program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago for her project entitled "Fender Headed".

Paul Eyewear. The company designs stylish and functional eyewear that is both affordable and accessible to everyone.

Ben Harrison ('08, MFA Photography) had his designs featured in the recently opened Black Eagle Trading Post in downtown Grand Rapids. The conference tables and conference chair are expected to be seen in many offices in the coming months.

Melissa Suchowolec ('11, Interior Design) contributed an article about the benefits of using sustainable materials in design. She also discussed the importance of sustainability in the design process.

Kirbi Fagan ('13, Illustration) was named one of the 50 Most Influential Women in Michigan by the Grand Rapids Business Journal for her work as Executive Director of the West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology (WMCAT).

Andrew Maguire (Photography, '09) recently assisted local film company Genica Pictures on a promotional ad campaign for Amway, rebranding images that were used in a previous commercial. Maguire also had his breathtaking shots of Colorado’s abundant natural wonders featured in a new ad campaign designed to highlight the state’s $2 billion in lottery revenue that’s been invested in protecting the state’s parks and conserving parks, pools, and recreation since 1983.

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HOMEWORK

ENTREPRENEURIAL IMMERION

Jon Moroney, Industrial Design professor

Have you always wanted to try your hand at becoming an entrepreneur but didn’t think it was possible? Now more than ever, creatives are finding that their skills aren’t just suited to starting a business; they’re vital to entrepreneurial success. Add in the fact that a vibrant startup culture exists all around us, and right now just might be the perfect time to make your entrepreneurial vision a reality.

Try these simple assignments to get the ball rolling:

Attend a Start Garden Update Night
If you live in the Grand Rapids area, head downtown on the last Saturday of each month from 5-7 pm to see local entrepreneurs who have received initial seed funding from Start Garden talk about how they’ve used the money to accelerate their startup. By seeing the kinds of ideas Start Garden supports, you can get a better sense of what it takes to attract funding for your own entrepreneurial endeavors.

Watch an episode of ABC’s Shark Tank
For those who live outside of Grand Rapids, Shark Tank is a show that can also give you a unique view into what makes a successful entrepreneur. The show features a panel of investors who consider ideas from aspiring entrepreneurs seeking financial backing for their startup. A number of episodes are archived on the show’s official website and can be viewed for free.

Go to the source
No matter where you live, go find a local small business and ask the owner how he/she got their start. This will give you valuable real-world context that will help you as you develop your own entrepreneurial idea.

Give shape to your ideas
Brainstorm ideas for a new product or service that would add value to the world. Then, think about how you would sell it, what you would sell it for, and who would buy it, and sketch your thoughts into a loose business plan. Who knows, maybe you have the start of a new business on your hands!

If you’d like feedback on your ideas, feel free to send them to me at jonathanmoroney@ferris.edu, and I’ll be happy to advise and point you to other resources you could take advantage of.