

Prioritizing Our Values: A Case-Study Report that Examines the Efforts of a Group of University-Level, Communication Design Educators to Collectively Construct Inclusive and Equitable Design Teaching Practices in a (Post-) Pandemic Era

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A Positionality Statement

As university-level design educators—and, more specifically, women and women of color—who represent groups that have been systematically marginalized in the U.S. and in many other so-called developed and developing nations, and who experience the impact of sexism and racism in our daily lives, the authors recognize that equitable design teaching practices are essential to the effective sustenance of their pedagogy because they fundamentally affect how they interact with others, especially their students. Specifically, they define *equitable teaching practices* as those that equip all

students with the tools, resources, and quality of instruction and learning environments necessary to foster and sustain effective design learning, such that each individual learner in a given design classroom has the opportunity to thrive as a knowledge seeker and builder within that setting. Each student comes into a design classroom informed by a unique set of life experiences, socio-cultural biases, and distinct levels of expertise. The authors bear witness to the impact and results of *inequitable* teaching practices (also known as debilitating teaching practices ¹) when these result in students being disadvantaged and losing opportunities to contribute and grow within given design learning environments. In this context, “*disadvantaged*” refers to a student or students being excluded from design learning activities due to their being unfairly and cursorily assessed as possessing knowledge acquisition, construction and synthesis abilities that are “less than” those possessed by other students of similar age and experience ². The authors believe that professional career development for all students preparing to embark on and sustain design careers should include the intellectual and emotional preparation and skill-building necessary for working in a diversely populated and rapidly evolving world, regardless of an individual student’s socio-economic and socio-cultural background.

The audience for the explorations and analyses described in this case study is diverse. Although the authors do not personally know all of the design educators who participated in and contributed to the pledge initiative chronicled in this article, they do know that these people represent a broad range of university-level institutions, programs, experiences, and students, and the data that was collected during this case study is framed by a shared viewpoint that diversity, equity, and inclusion are integral and essential to the effective facilitation of design education. The authors primary objectives as they formulated and operated the activities that inform this case study included determining whether or not this pledge initiative, which henceforth in this piece will be referred to as the *Value Design Education Pledge*, or, more simply as “*the pledge*,” was 1) sustainable and successful for design educators, and 2) meaningful, effectively consequential, and worthwhile for design educators and/or their students.

Additionally, despite the lack of data in the scholarly literature that currently informs design regarding the effect of virtual/remote learning on the efficacy of design education specifically, there is an abundance of data regarding the broader impacts of virtual/remote learning on many different types of students and disciplines. Consequently, this case study builds on existing trends (such as the increased emphasis on accounting for student mental health and maintaining awareness of and about multiple types of learners ³) that inform education research, while also contributing key insights into the specific field of inquiry that is framing this case study in design education.

Abstract

The *Value Design Education Pledge* was co-developed by the co-authors of this article: Associate Professor Anne H. Berry, Associate Professor Meaghan A. Dee, Assistant Professor Penina Laker, and Associate Professor Rebecca Tegtmeier, with contributions by Kelly Walters (Assistant Professor, Communication Design, Parsons, The New School, New York City, N.Y., U.S.A.), to develop and promote long-term, inclusive, and equitable teaching practices that could positively affect design

education. The pledge was initiated in the wake of events that transpired during the spring and summer of 2020—namely, the COVID-19 global pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests, both of which evolved across the United States during that time. It was also undertaken in recognition of 1) the changes and challenges that evolved as a result of remote and online learning having to be implemented across most U.S.-based, university-level and K–12 design education programs, and 2) the need for pedagogic accountability when decisions have been taken by faculty and administrators to commit to inclusive and equitable teaching practices.

This case study provides an overview of the timeline of events and the decision-making that preceded the development of the pledge, including the first AIGA (the professional association for design, and the primary funder of this journal) Design Educators Community (DEC) virtual roundtable in May 2020 that spawned a draft of actionable items and outcomes from educators (working at K-12, non-traditional, undergraduate, and post-graduate levels) who participated in the pledge initiative. As a key point of planning and emphasis, the *Value Design Education Pledge* was developed to meet two key goals. The first was to facilitate manageable and sustainable commitments to students and communities for design educators already overburdened by the strain of adapting curricula and the course materials that support them. The second was to encourage remote and online learning in ways that could effectively provide emotional and academic support to design students throughout the progression of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the social, political, and cultural upheavals that accompanied it. The authors research fueled the generation of ideas for further exploration of initiatives that could effectively support these goals, including:

- developing mechanisms for measuring design students’ learning before and after they leave particular classes and programs;
- identifying ways to emphasize that the outcomes of design processes can provide humanistic, tangible, and positively transformative products, services, experiences, and systems; and
- building better mentor models that could be facilitated inside and outside of a variety of types of design classrooms.

While the disciplinary focus of the pledge as it was initially developed was centered on design education, the authors believe that several items and ideas that emerged from operating it can be adapted to benefit education across a broader array of disciplines.

1 Subini, A., Handy, T., Miller, A.L., & Jackson, E. “Animating Discipline Disparities Through Debilitating Practices: Girls of Color and Inequitable Classroom Interactions.” *Teachers College Record*, 122.5 (2020) pgs. 1–46.

2 Ibid.

3 Abramson, A., “Capturing the benefits of remote learning: How education experts are applying lessons learned in the pandemic

to promote positive outcomes for all students.” American Psychological Association, 1 September, 2021. Online. Available at: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/09/cover-remote-learning> (Accessed February 1, 2023).

Prioritizing Our Values:

A Case-Study Report that Examines the Efforts of a Group of University-Level, Communication Design Educators to Collectively Construct Inclusive and Equitable Design Teaching Practices in a (Post-) Pandemic Era

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Introduction and Contextualization

In the spring of 2020, as the infectious disease Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) began making its way across the United States, the science around what the American public could do to protect itself from the rapid spread was evolving in real-time.⁴ The subsequent spike in COVID-19 infections and deaths was marked by a nationwide shut-down of schools, organizations, and businesses, as well as the perpetuation—and politicization—of misinformation and disinformation^a across social and some mainstream media. The pandemic erupted on the heels of the publication of the U.S. Department of Justice’s *Report on the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election*, which identified the roles of misinformation and disinformation in influencing the 2016 U.S. presidential election, exposing vulnerabilities within American society⁵ that later manifested themselves in the rejection of science and the results of scientific research with respect for many U.S. federal and state-based organizations issuing calls for masking mandates and widespread vaccination.⁶ During this time of fear, economic uncertainty, and mass death, concerned educators teaching at all levels across the country rallied to provide support and stability for their students who were struggling with isolation, mental health challenges, physical health challenges, and family loss.

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “CDC Museum COVID-19 Timeline,” [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html). Online. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html> (Accessed April 28, 2022).

^a Although the terms “misinformation” and “disinformation” are used somewhat interchangeably and both refer to incorrect, false, or misleading information, disinformation is distinguished from misinformation by its definition as a deliberate attempt to deceive and is “often covertly spread” (Merriam-Webster, 2019; Wardle, 2017).

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U.S. Department of Justice. “[Report on the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election](https://www.justice.gov/storage/report_volume1.pdf), 2019. Volume I.” Online. Available at: https://www.justice.gov/storage/report_volume1.pdf (Accessed July 23, 2019).

6

Bolsen, T. & Palm, R. "Politicization and COVID-19 vaccine resistance in the U.S." Progress in molecular biology and translational science, 188.1 (2022): pgs. 81–100. doi:10.1016/bs.pmbts.2021.10.002.

7

Nazempour, R. and Darabi, H., "Nelson, P.C. Impacts on Students' Academic Performance Due to Emergency Transition to Remote Teaching during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Financial Engineering Course Case Study. Educ. Sci., (2022):p. 202. Online. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030202> (Accessed April 19, 2023).

The response to the sudden changes necessitated by the public health crisis resulted in most American educators—from early childhood education to the doctoral level—having to pivot from in-person teaching modalities to ones that required the rapid implementation of remote and online learning. This occurred despite most of them not having adequate training and the resources necessary to do this efficiently or effectively, regardless of their disciplinary associations.⁷ Design educators were suddenly having to confront many of the same challenges regarding their abilities to effectively facilitate learning among their students as educators in most other disciplines. In May of 2020, the AIGA’s Design Educators Community (DEC) held a virtual roundtable discussion to address this crisis that was hosted by Associate Professor Anne H. Berry, Assistant Professor Penina Laker, Associate Professor Meaghan Dee, Associate Professor Rebecca Tegtmeier, and Assistant Professor Kelly Walters.

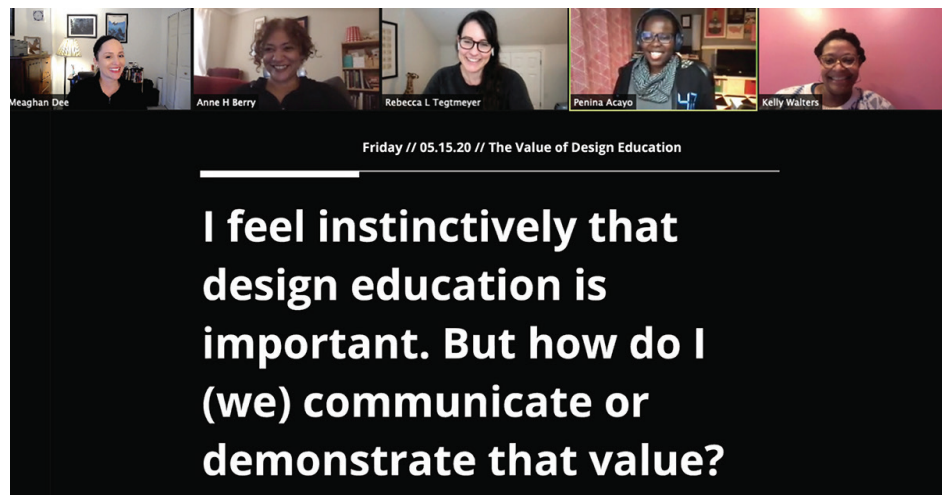


FIGURE 1: This image depicts a virtual roundtable facilitated in May of 2020 by the AIGA’s Design Educators Community (DEC) during which the co-authors of this case study—Professors Meaghan Dee, Anne H. Berry, Rebecca Tegtmeier, and Penina Laker—hosted a variety of critical discussions among about 35 university-level design educators that addressed how they might begin to effectively alter their teaching practices to accommodate pandemically induced restrictions on in-classroom, face-to-face learning. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

It was shortly after this event, as many American design educators paused to reflect and catch their collective breath after having dealt with the sudden disruption of teaching schedules, learning plans, assessment responsibilities, as well their research, scholarly and creative agendas, that the Black

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Mahdy, M., "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Academic Performance of Veterinary Medical Students," *Front. Vet. Sci.*, 06 October, 2020, Sec. Veterinary Humanities and Social Sciences. Online. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2020.594261> (Accessed April 19, 2023).

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Goyal, N., Abdulahad, A., Privett, J., Verma, A., Foroozesh, M., and Coston, T., "Student Grade Evaluation, Survey Feedback, and Lessons Learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Comparative Study of Virtual vs. In-Person Offering of a Freshman-Level General Chemistry II Course in Summer at Xavier University of Louisiana," *Educational Sciences*, 12.3 (2022). Online. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030226> (Accessed February 24, 2023).

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ADL. "ADL Debunk: Disinformation and the BLM Protests." Online. Available at: <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/adl-debunk-disinformation-and-the-blm-protests> (Accessed April 27, 2022).

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Corley, C. "Black Lives Matter Fights Disinformation to Keep The Movement Strong," *NPR*, last modified 25 May, 2021. Online. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/25/999841030/black-lives-matter-fights-disinformation-to-keep-the-movement-strong> (Accessed April 2, 2022).

12

Chin, J. "Covid fueled anti-Asian racism. Now elderly Asian Americans are being attacked," *Washington Post*, 9 February, 2021. Online. Available at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/02/09/attacks-asian-american-elderly/> (Accessed April 25, 2022).

Lives Matter (BLM) protests began in various locations across the country. They served as a painful reminder that even a global health crisis could not stymie the pervasiveness of American racism. The murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police, as well as the subsequent increase of anti-Asian violence in the U.S., required additional socio-cultural, economic, emotional, and intellectual responses. Trying to conduct "business as usual" in many American design learning settings in the midst of several waves of social, cultural, and political upheaval became unrealistic.⁸ On top of this, for many college students across the globe, "the COVID-19 pandemic [had] induced a variety of negative emotions, including frustration, anxiety, and isolation."⁹ Compounding this, there began to be a flood of misinformation and disinformation that sought to undermine the peaceful intent of many BLM protests^{10,11} which also began to fuel anti-Asian hate in many areas of the U.S., and fomented false ideas about how several unfounded conspiracies had caused the outbreak and exacerbated the rapid spread of the virus.¹² Many of these efforts also disputed the efficacy of vaccines that U.S. government Center for Disease Control (C.D.C.) had certified as safe and recommended for broad public use as a means to prevent further spread.^{13,14} During the transpiration of these tumultuous events, there was a high demand for American design educators to demonstrate unequivocal support for their students as they struggled to sustain the levels of engagement in their coursework necessary to build the knowledge and skills they would need to advance their careers. As the pandemic grew in severity and the BLM movement simultaneously increased its momentum, there were calls for these efforts to be coupled with inclusive and equitable learning experiences. Questions remained, however, about the ideal methods for doing this effectively. How could design educators address these growing challenges without creating additional burdens for weary students and faculty?

Along with the many other design educators (in the U.S.¹⁵ and internationally¹⁶), the co-authors of this piece, found themselves having to address the effects that a bevy of new social and economic challenges were having on their students that began with the global onset of the pandemic in March of 2020 (and would last until roughly May of 2021). These were the direct and indirect results of U.S. government-mandated school and workplace closings, and the subsequent losses of income, disruption of familial and other support networks, and (for some) an inability to consistently

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Vaccines & Immunizations: How to Address COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation," [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-departments/addressing-vaccine-misinformation.html). Online. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/covid-19/health-departments/addressing-vaccine-misinformation.html> (Accessed April 25, 2022).

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Alba, D. "Virus Misinformation Spikes as Delta Cases Surge," [The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/10/technology/covid-delta-misinformation-surge.html), 11 August, 2021. Online. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/10/technology/covid-delta-misinformation-surge.html> (Accessed April 26, 2022).

15

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). "CDC Museum COVID-19 Timeline," August 16, 2022. Online. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/timeline/covid19.html> (Accessed February 16, 2023).

16

United Nations. "The virus that shut down the world: Economic meltdown," December 30, 2020. Online. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1080762> (Accessed February 15, 2023).

access the internet. Together, these students' abilities to effectively engage in their coursework, access university facilities and resources, and maintain the social and cultural networks that many of them were relying on to bolster their educational and emotional experiences were disrupted. This confluence of events emphasized the responsibilities that many design educators the world over had to assume if they were to effectively facilitate the kinds of learning that had suddenly become essential and went beyond the need to educate emerging designers about the formal and theoretical underpinnings of visual communication design.

The primary responsibility the authors felt they had to assume under the circumstances was—and remains—to empower emerging designers to develop their skills and bases of knowledge in ways that actively create the cultures that contextualize and fuel theirs' and others' perceptions and actualizations of the societies within which they live, or to shape and positively sustain their creations. The authors contend that *culture* is made up of the values, beliefs, underlying assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors shared by a group of people, and they define *creating culture* as the intentional commitment to developing and maintaining sets of community standards that afford equitable opportunities for all community members to advance their lives and careers. The authors further contend that it is essential to provide an ideologically open and inclusive space within which their diverse constituencies of students can plan and engage in a wide variety of positive learning experiences. Additionally, the authors believe that participants in a community create a positive culture within it by favoring and satisfying the good of the many rather than favoring and satisfying individual desires, and that the co-creation of classroom values is essential to reaching this goal. The authors have learned that fostering a sense of belonging among those who constitute a given culture is imperative to creating and sustaining it in ways that achieve the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of those who live and work within it.

Additionally, the authors contend that this can be accomplished most effectively and efficiently by ensuring the facilitation of a collective sharing and distribution of knowledge that reflects our common values as design educators. This was a primary goal of formulating, operating, and analyzing the results of the case study. The authors acknowledge that design students are informed by a multitude of intelligences and learning styles, and, as such, knowledge should be disseminated and constructed among

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van den Hooff, B., & de Ridder, J. A. Knowledge sharing in context: The influence of organizational commitment, communication climate and CMC use on knowledge sharing. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 8.6 (2004): pgs. 117–130; (p.119).

18

Maxwell Lane, M. & Tegtmeier, R. *Collaboration in Design Education*. London, U.K.: Bloomsbury, 2020, p. 16.

19

Dewey, J. *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York, U.S.A.: Henry Holt and Company, 1938, p. 140.

20

Conklin, S. & Garrett Dikkers, A. “Instructor social presence and connectedness in quick shift from face-to-face to online instruction.” *Online Learning*, 25.1 (2021): pgs. 135-150. Online. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.24059/olj.v25i1.2482> (Accessed on September 5, 2022). “Empathic facilitation” is defined as “demonstrating an understanding of others’ situations through processes and practices” (p. 142).

them across multiple modalities (e.g. through discussion, writing, the iterative and heuristically informed creation of visual artifacts, systems, and products, etc.).

Sharing knowledge is described in this article as “the process where individuals mutually exchange their implicit (tacit) and explicit knowledge to create new knowledge”¹⁷ to leverage collective expertise and contribute new insights. In their book *Collaboration in Design Education*, Marty Maxwell Lane and Rebecca Tegtmeier (a co-author of this piece)¹⁸ posit that it is necessary to exchange and share knowledge in order to build on and expand it, an idea that can be traced back as far as John Dewey’s early work regarding teaching and learning.¹⁹ Establishing an environment for knowledge sharing in a given design classroom culture begins with creating trust and openness, which the authors hereby postulate are core values in design education. These values are the foundation that the authors believe is crucial to create the conditions that shape the development and sustenance of what they are defining as a positive classroom culture. Initiating these values at the beginning of a course of study in design, or in the early days of the operation of a particular design class, demonstrates the goals that the authors believe design educators should strive to attain as they attempt to guide learning activities and behaviors that benefit and inspire design students. Finally, the authors have learned and now believe that attaining these goals enables students to operationalize design processes that contribute to more equitable, inclusive, and holistically informed community cultures.

Examining the Effects of Virtual Learning Policies and Practices on Design Educators and Their Students

At the onset of the pandemic, educators teaching across many disciplines—including design—instinctively understood the need for patience—specifically, patience with the development and implementation of curricular initiatives, course- or classroom-specific teaching practices, and learning outcomes—on behalf of both them and their students. Reframing expectations, adopting “empathic facilitation” models that prioritized student wellbeing and flexibility,²⁰ and keeping a sense of community when many were feeling disconnected took precedence over keeping hard deadlines for project completions and exacting standards for particular student project deliverables. A study conducted by a group of four chemistry professors at Xavier University of Louisiana found that, “[a] lack of a sense of

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Goyal, N., Abdulahad, A., Privett, J., Verma, A., Foroozesh, M., and Coston, T., "Student Grade Evaluation, Survey Feedback, and Lessons Learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Comparative Study of Virtual vs. In-Person Offering of a Freshman-Level General Chemistry II Course in Summer at Xavier University of Louisiana," *Educ. Sci.*, 12 (2022): p. 226. Online. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12030226> (Accessed March 15, 2023).

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Verschelden, C. *Bandwidth recovery: Helping students reclaim cognitive resources lost to poverty, racism, and social marginalization.* Sterling, Virginia, U.S.A.: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2017.

community has also been reported in the literature as a weakness in virtual learning.”²¹ Relatedly, in *Bandwidth Recovery: Helping Students Reclaim Cognitive Resources Lost to Poverty, Racism, and Social Marginalization*, author Cia Verschelden states, “research consistently points to belonging as a critical factor in college success.” She goes on to note that, “belonging” comes with its own set of challenges for first-generation and non-majority students, and further articulates that peer support and “social connectedness” remain critical components for motivation and engagement, particularly for marginalized students.²² Knowing that being deprived of close contact with their in-classroom learning community could have detrimental effects on students and student engagement, many educators recognized the necessity of diligently cultivating virtual, remotely accessible learning spaces. By embracing and then sharing new virtual communication and teaching technologies, tools, and methods for creating as much stability on behalf of their students as they could, some design educators whose practices are described in this study were able to effectively adapt their teaching practices to meet the new, virtually facilitated learning needs of many of their students. Two years later, design educators returned to in-person class meetings, utilizing some of the same tools and resources that had become a crucial part of remote instruction, including a renewed push for inclusive and equitable teaching practices that they had learned could positively contribute to the establishment and sustenance of a positive classroom culture.

The May 2020 AIGA (American Institute of Graphic Arts) DEC (Design Educators Community) virtual roundtable was initially organized to help design educators critically discuss what might become best practices for planning and facilitating remote/virtual teaching across the design education landscape. This event became the catalyst for guiding a broader discussion and an initiative that was centered around determining how a specific array of approaches and methods for framing and facilitating contemporary design education should *and should not* affect the learning experiences of design students preparing to enter professional practice in the 2020s and beyond. These efforts then evolved into an initiative that would come to be known as the *Value Design Education Pledge*. Though the move to online teaching was temporary (six months to a year, in most cases) for most American and internationally located design educators, the impact of the disruption on educational systems and the individuals that develop, design, and utilize them has required additional thinking and planning

Abdrasheva, D., Escribens, M., Sabzalieva, E., Vieira do Nascimento, D. & and Yerovi, C. Resuming or Reforming? Tracking the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education after two years of disruption. Paris, France; Caracas, Venezuela: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022.

about issues that include the following: how to structure curricula and the courses that constitute these, and how to conduct assessments of students' work output and learning over time.²³ Most importantly, many of the design educators initially involved in this roundtable exchange expressed that they were being affected—in some cases profoundly—by a pandemic-induced fatigue. As the group discussed this phenomenon more deeply, the exchange spawned a series of ideas rooted in the need to re-imagine and re-shape how some aspects of design curricula and the learning experiences that constitute them, particularly in the U.S., should be structured and facilitated in new ways. Of particular interest and importance were ideas that could effectively address how design and design education *were affecting and being affected by* the sweeping socio-cultural, political, and economic changes that had transpired—and were still transpiring—since the onset of the pandemic. The group also quickly reached a consensus that any changes they might suggest regarding curricular structures and classroom learning experiences would have to be implemented in ways that could satisfy two key criteria. The first was that they would have to be formulated and implemented in ways that ensured that they would be effectively and efficiently *manageable* and *sustainable* for those who would be charged with doing this. The second was that this would have to be accomplished without adding to what many in the group felt had become an undue and almost unbearable set of burdens imposed upon them since the onset of the pandemic that involved incorporating new types of planning, teaching, and documenting their and their students' activities.

Articulating the Principal Rationales for Instituting the Value Design Education Pledge Initiative

The *Value Design Education Pledge* is a set of working principles that evolved into an initiative to construct a foundation for enacting long-term, positive changes in and around how the learning experiences that constitute design education are planned, operated, and assessed. Specifically, these involve a commitment to demonstrating accountability for the direct and indirect effects that design decision-making has on given societies writ large, and the varieties of population groups that comprise them, as well as professional designers, design educators, design researchers, design scholars, audiences, user groups, student bodies, specific classroom populations, and even individual students. This initiative was instigated with the participation of and

contributions from 100 design educators that represented university-level design programs in the U.S., as well as Spain, Iran, Canada, and India in the Fall of 2020 (diagram 1). Two years later, in the Spring of 2022, national attention in the U.S. was once again focused on discussions involving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in a wide variety of educational environments as national, “mid-term” elections there took place. This also occurred in some countries outside the U.S., such as France, Italy, the U.K., and Germany, where issues such as wealth disparity, rising energy and food costs, and immigration all contextualized discussions around these kinds of initiatives. (Some of these efforts sought to increase the number of faculty and research positions in institutions of higher education that could be filled by people who would advocate for the planning and facilitation of DEI initiatives, police reform trainings, reframing admissions policies according to DEI principles, etc.). Resources that highlighted the contributions of members of marginalized communities to a wide variety of social, technological, economic, and public policy endeavors that were broadly perceived as effective were

Institution Types Represented by the 100 Design Educators

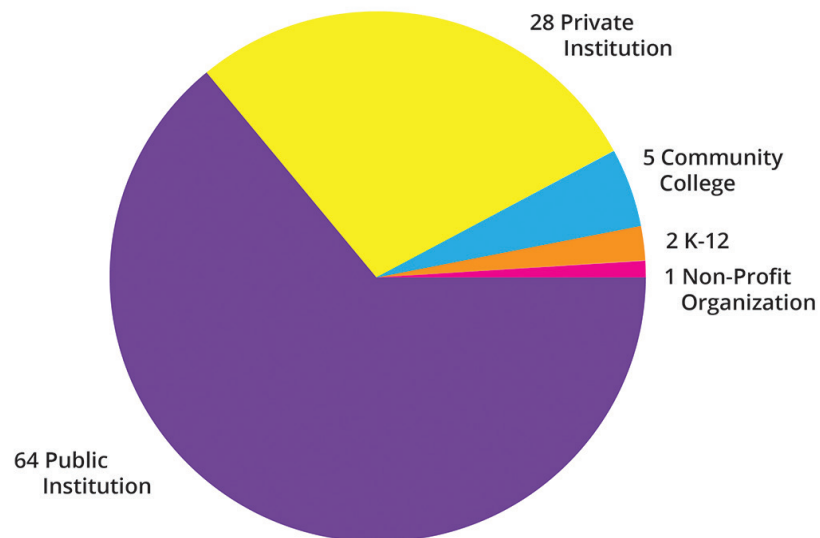


DIAGRAM 1: The AIGA DEC (DEC = Design Educators Community) is comprised of educators teaching within K-12, non-traditional, undergraduate, and post-graduate levels. This diagram depicts the various types of teaching and learning institutions represented among the constituency of the 100 educators who participated in the initial *Value Design Education Pledge* initiative (93 were from the United States, and the remaining seven hailed from countries outside the U.S.). *Source: Diagram provided by Rebecca Tegtmeyer.*

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American Library Association. "State of America's Libraries Report 2022," 1 April, 2022. Online. Available at: <https://www.ala.org/news/sites/ala.org/news/files/content/state-of-americas-libraries-special-report-pandemic-year-two.pdf> (Accessed March 29, 2022).

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Fortin, J. & Heyward, G. "Teachers Tackle Black History Month, Under New Restrictions," The New York Times, last modified 13 February, 2022. Online. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/12/us/black-history-month-schools-teachers.html> (Accessed April 3, 2022).

made accessible to a wider variety of student audiences. A significant uptick in the number of banned and challenged books by Black and/or LGBTQ+ authors also occurred during this time in many parts of the U.S.,²⁴ and these were accompanied by legislative efforts in several states that were designed to prevent teaching various aspects of Black history.²⁵ These were (and still are) examples of the effects that misinformation and disinformation can and do have on American learning environments, as well as those situated in many other parts of the world. They also provide evidence for why dedicated efforts for creating and sustaining socially and culturally healthy (i.e. inclusive and equitable) learning environments for educators and students continue to be necessary.

Each of the 100 design educators that participated in and contributed to the *Value Design Education Initiative* chose to focus on two or more socio-culturally rooted and guided endeavors that emerged from the following categorically organized list of six commitments. These were articulated as pledges that they promised to actualize and support in their respective classrooms and, more broadly, across the scope of the curricula they were responsible for shaping and teaching:

- 1) Commit to being anti-racist
- 2) Commit to upholding all (design) histories
- 3) Commit to distributing knowledge
- 4) Commit to demonstrating the broad impacts of design decision-making
- 5) Commit to creating culture
- 6) Commit to defining and promoting healthy student life experiences

These six pledge ideas, or commitments, have been articulated to address the needs and aspirations—from narrow to broad—of the increasingly diverse groups of students to whom we, as design educators, are accountable. This became the approach for further defining the essential principle or principles that each pledge sought to address. Actionable strategies were then created to serve as starting points to help the 100 participants effectively implement these endeavors, or “pledges,” across their various curricula, within individual courses, and as essential aspects of individual project or assignment parameters. A collection of resources, such as peer-reviewed articles from

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McIntosh, P., "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" first appeared in *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, July/August, 1989, pgs. 10-12, a publication of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A..

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Benson, E., Jennings, J., & Gibson, M.R. "Dezombies and the Coming Design Apocalypse: Confronting the Urgent Need to Increase Racial Diversity and Environmental Awareness in University-Level American Communication Design Programs." *Dialectic*, 1.2 (2017): pgs. 129-154.

scholarly journals^{26,27} and book chapters that inform design education and practice, AIGA *Eye on Design* articles (available at <https://eyeondesign.aiga.org>), and other web-based resources were amassed, curated, and shared to support the development of other possible undertakings that could improve the array of content that would come to constitute the *Value Design Education Pledge*. An online-facilitated, follow-up survey was also conducted for a period of 90 days across the AIGA Design Educators Community during the summer of 2020 to collect more suggestions for ideas and action items, and this was further augmented with information cultivated from an additional virtual discussion session facilitated by the authors.

A Description of the Timeline and the Decision-Making Processes That Guided the Development and Execution of the Value Design Education Pledge Initiative

The following section of this article articulates the timeline of events the authors formulated and operated and that allowed us to develop and execute this initiative (diagram 2).

March 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic began, which triggered a rapid shift to remote and online learning in and across pre-Kindergarten to doctoral-level learning environments around the world.

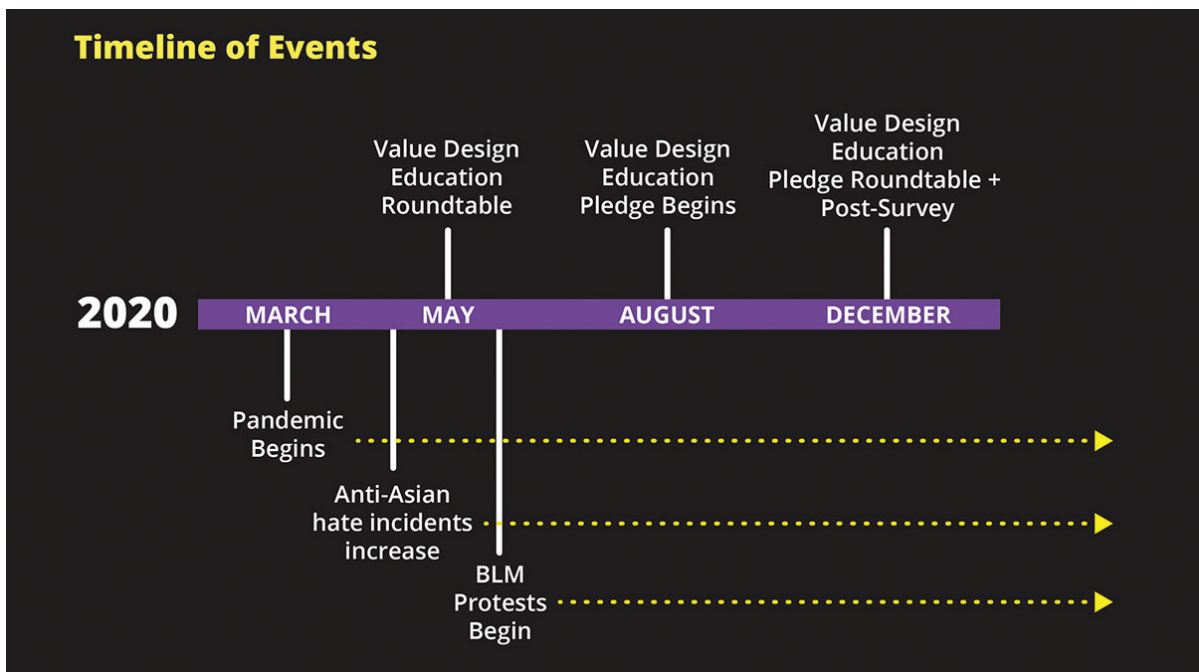


DIAGRAM 2: The *Value Design Education Roundtable* occurred as a critical response from a small group of U.S.-based design educators to a series of social, cultural, economic, technological, and public policy issues that proved to be challenging for many people around the world to deal with during the first few months of the pandemic. As the dialogue that began in the spring of 2020 evolved and expanded, it prompted the formulation of the *Value Design Education Pledge*. This timeline of events depicts the evolution of the *Value Design Education Pledge* initiative in relation to U.S.-based and global events that were affecting both teaching and learning across design education during this time. Source: Diagram provided by Rebecca Tegtmeier.

April 2020

Associate Professor Anne H. Berry of the Department of Art and Design in the College of Arts and Sciences at Cleveland State University in Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. contacted her colleagues on the national steering committee of the AIGA Design Educators Community (DEC) about the possibility of engaging other design educators across the U.S. and abroad in discussions about their efforts regarding making the transition to online teaching. She also raised questions to this group about how best to address what she was quickly learning were some of the most significant challenges to teaching design in the unforeseen circumstances that now faced design educators who were being challenged to teach effectively as the pandemic progressed. What she articulated at this time is expressed as follows:

How can we continue providing quality learning experiences for our design students when 1) we are accustomed to (and find value in) our in-person interactions with them, and 2) we don't necessarily know how long we will be teaching online?

May 2020

The Value of Design Education During a time of Online Teaching virtual roundtable discussion was hosted by the AIGA's Design Educators Community (DEC) ²⁸

AIGA DEC Steering committee members Associate Professor Meaghan Dee of Virginia Tech, Assistant Professor Kelly Walters of the New School at The Parsons School of Design and Rebecca Tegtmeier of Michigan State University coordinated a virtual event that involved hosting Anne H. Berry and Penina Laker (two of the authors of this piece) as they

²⁸ Design Educators Community. "Virtual Event Recording: The Value of Design Education," [AIGA.org](https://educators.aiga.org/virtual-roundtable-the-value-of-design-education/), 22 May, 2020. Online. Available at: <https://educators.aiga.org/virtual-roundtable-the-value-of-design-education/> (Accessed March 29, 2022).

What do you value?

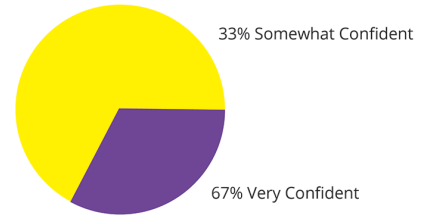
This pledge is a part of a larger commitment—to be responsible to society, graphic designers, design educators, audiences, class groups, and individual students. We hope you will commit and take actions that support your pledge.

Value Design Education Pledge // 2020

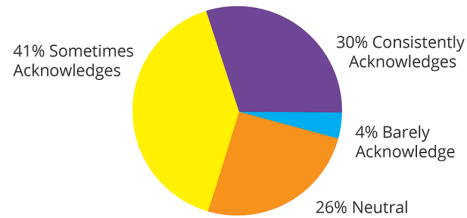


FIGURE 2: The *Value Design Education* virtual roundtable discussion was held on Friday, May 15, 2020, and was moderated by co-authors and design educators Anne H. Berry (Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.) and Penina Laker (Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.). Over thirty participants listened to Professors Berry and Laker share their perspectives and approaches to ensuring value and equity across the spectrum of their students' learning experiences in both their classrooms and in their interactions with community organizations. Group discussions included responding to the following questions: What value do we provide to our students, our institutions, and our collaborators as design educators? How do we measure and demonstrate that value? Additional questions were prefaced by the statement: we can't recreate in-person experiences online. Given this fact, what are some reasonable expectations we should set for ourselves? For our students? Source: *Image provided by the Authors.*

value I bring as a design educator.



My institution acknowledges the value that I bring as a design educator.



My students see value in their design

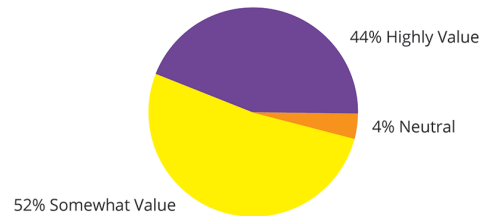


DIAGRAM 3: As led by the authors, the *Value Design Education* virtual roundtable opened with a short poll that queried the participants about how confident they felt in bringing value to their students and programs as a design educator. This diagram represents the poll results. *Source: Diagram provided by Rebecca Tegtmeier.*

facilitated the roundtable discussion about the value of design education (figure 2). The event began with a short Zoom-facilitated poll that queried the approximately 30 participants about how confident they felt in bringing value to their students and programs as design educators, as well as how their institutions acknowledged whatever they defined as value in and around the facilitation of design education (diagram 3). Reflections about how the value of design education could still be made manifest during COVID-19-induced classroom shutdowns formed the basis of this roundtable discussion, as participants discussed how the lack of in-person instruction, limited or no access to supplies and computer labs, and the lack of interaction within physical communities was affecting their abilities to teach and their students' abilities to learn.

Over 30 participants listened to co-authors and discussion facilitators Anne H. Berry and Penina Laker share the perspectives, approaches, and methods that have helped them to ensure that their students' learning experiences—whether these were occurring in their classrooms or in the communities that surrounded them—were imbued with equity and value. (A central focus of this initial conversation about the value of design education centered on defining what kinds of learning experiences could be facilitated most effectively as COVID-19 induced classroom shutdowns were being imposed. These included implementing and sustaining virtual connections with students and experimenting with new modalities of teaching.) After Professors Berry and Laker shared the knowledge and understandings they had constructed, smaller break-out discussion groups were formed that were asked to respond to the following two questions:

1. *As design educators, what value do we provide and can we provide to our students, our institutions, and ourselves during the evolution of the most severe disruption to our pedagogy and pedagogical practices that has occurred in the past 100 years? How do we measure or demonstrate various aspects of this value/these values? and,*
2. *Given that we can't recreate in-person experiences online, what are reasonable expectations to set for ourselves? For our students? For those we work with in the communities around us?*

The following key points surfaced as a result of engaging in these break-out discussion groups:

- We now have more and better ways to measure the efficacy of our teaching, particularly in areas like UX/UI; analytics and usability testing allow us to evaluate metrics in ways we couldn't before.
- As educators, we are providing mentorship, facilitating experiences, counseling students, and modeling behavior; we are also actively engaged in helping students identify opportunities to grow, develop, and build their skill sets (soft skills, design aesthetics, etc.) and the bases of knowledge and understandings that inform their critical thinking abilities.
- Students value the one-on-one feedback their faculty provide because it offers them a personalized response to their design

decision-making processes as well as undivided, critical attention from their mentors.

- As design educators, we tend to be good at talking about the value internally (i.e., to each other), but need to develop better ways of communicating our value externally to stakeholders, prospective students, and community partners; we articulate value beyond research funding, to encompass the overall student experience.

This roundtable event also generated other ideas for broader consideration among the design education community, such as developing mechanisms for measuring students' learning before and after they leave our classes and programs, and co-creating methods for mentoring design students inside and outside of the classroom.

Summer 2020

The discussions that occurred during the May roundtable event motivated the authors to think of ways to elevate the discourse they had helped initiate to a higher level of active engagement with a more diverse array of design educators. As so many across the design education landscape were facing the specter of having to continue teaching remotely in the Fall of 2020, the authors felt it was critical to sustain the conversation that they had started the previous spring that had been focused on course planning and teaching. They met frequently during the summer months of 2020 to analyze the data they had documented in notes from the roundtable, and to brainstorm ideas that could effectively guide what would be the best “next steps” that could be taken. As their discussions evolved, they decided that their primary goal should be to develop an initiative that:

- 1) would make it easy for design educators to participate and contribute,
- 2) was reasonably feasible to put into practice,
- 3) would leverage existing resources and tools, and
- 4) would facilitate continued growth, accountability, and adaptation as the various aspects of the social, economic, technological, political, and environmental forces that affect and are affected by design education continue to evolve.

August 2020

The authors launched the *Value Design Education Pledge*²⁹ across the online communication networks operated by the AIGA Design Educators Community (DEC).

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Design Educators Community. "Value Design Education Pledge," [AIGA.org](https://educators.aiga.org/value-design-education/), 20 August, 2020. Online. Available at: <https://educators.aiga.org/value-design-education/> (Accessed March 29, 2022).

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Design Educators Community. "Value Design Education Pledge," [SCRIBD](https://www.scribd.com/document/473018467/Value-Design-Education-Pledge#download&from_embed). Online. Available at: https://www.scribd.com/document/473018467/Value-Design-Education-Pledge#download&from_embed (Accessed April 1, 2022).

The call for participants was promoted and shared across all of the AIGA DEC social media channels (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook). This call directed those interested in participating to a webpage on the AIGA DEC website that articulated detailed instructions for participating. This included a video introduction that featured commentary and instructional language from Professors Berry and Laker (figure 3 and figures 7-14), as well as a downloadable PDF that articulated each of the pledges in clear and concise language.³⁰

In the call for participation, the authors posed the following preface question-and-response to help introduce the *Value Design Education Pledge* initiative to the AIGA Design Education Community (DEC):

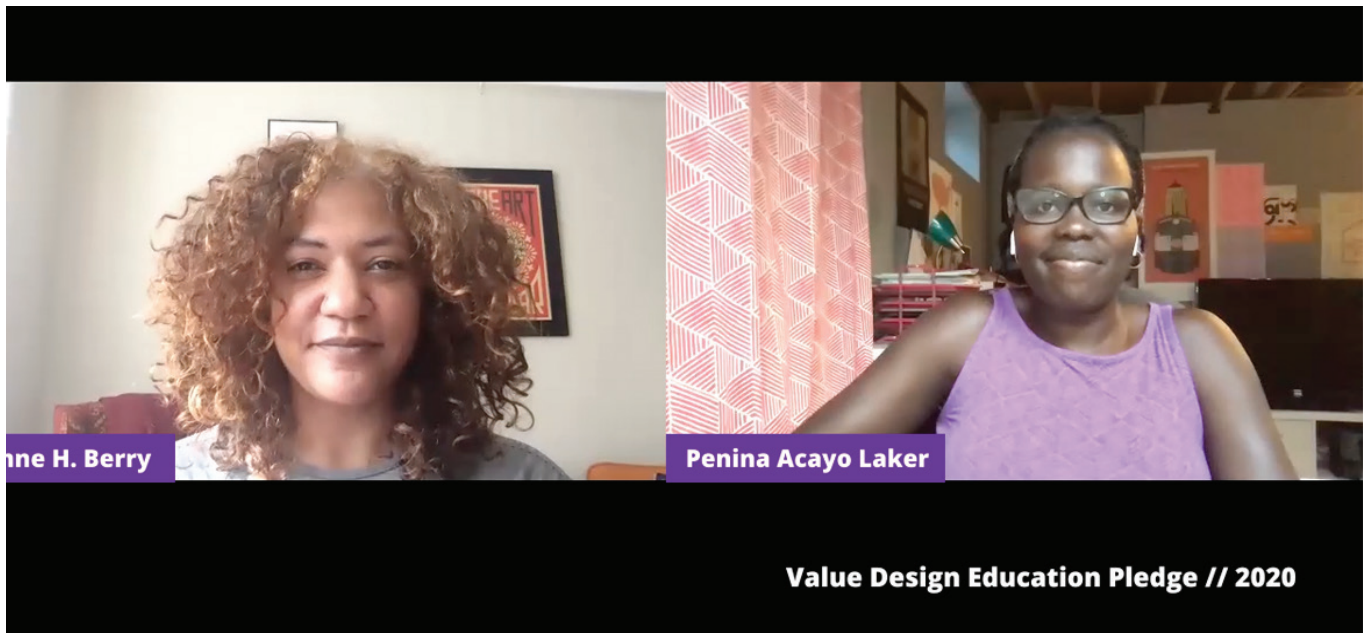
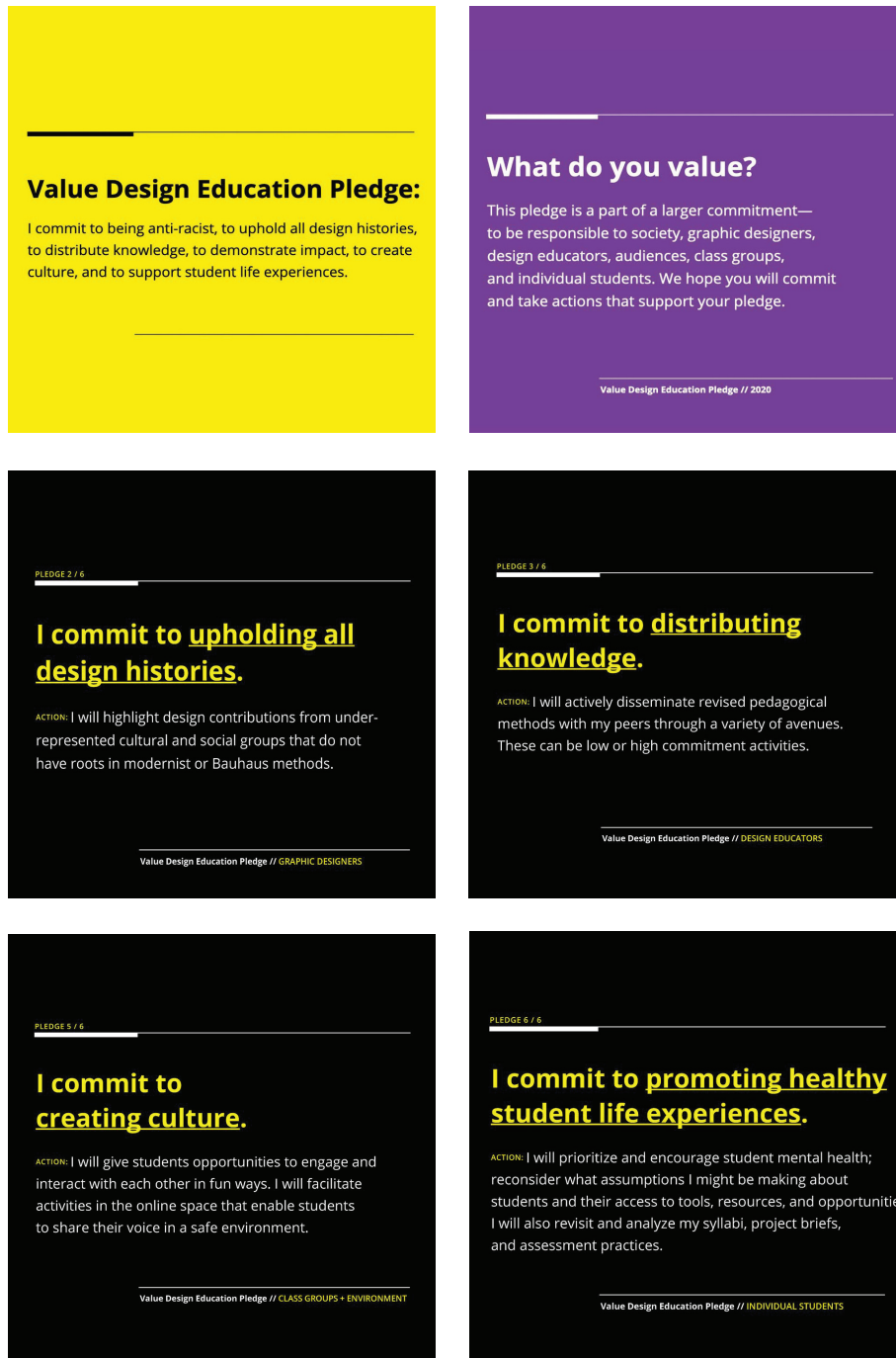


FIGURE 3: Still images taken from the video introduction to the *Value Design Education Pledge* that featured co-authors Professors Anne H. Berry and Penina Laker articulating instructions about how other design educators could participate in this initiative. This video was featured on the AIGA DEC website during the summer and fall of 2020, and was accompanied by the call for participation. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*



FIGURES 4-11: The authors met regularly following the initial *Value of Design Education* virtual roundtable discussion to brainstorm ideas and to develop a set of approaches to fostering and facilitating learning experiences for their design students and their collaborators that could eventually be adopted by other design educators. They initially discussed many possible goals, but in order to make what they were proposing manageable for a wide variety of design educators, they narrowed their ideas down to the six the pledge statements depicted here, and that were originally introduced on p. 19. The structure and content of these statements have been informed by many of the people and communities that they perceive as being affected by the

^b According to American educational psychologist Jere Brophy, classroom norms are “...a teacher’s stated expectations for student behavior...” and they constitute “... a dependable system of rules and procedures [that] provides structure for students. This structure helps students to be engaged with instructional tasks, and communicates to students that the teacher cares for them.” Finally, Brophy states that, “...authoritative implementation of rules includes communicating care and respect for students, teaching students what is expected of them and why this is of value, and responding to students’ actions and interactions in ways that help them to become more responsible self-regulated learners.” Brophy, J.E. *Motivating students to learn*, second edition. Boston, MA, USA: McGraw-Hill, 2004: pgs. 4-24.

work of design educators: the societies within which they teach and work, professional designers, other design educators, the audiences for whom they teach their students to design (and for whom they themselves design), specific social classes and other socially organized groups, the physical and cultural environments within which their and students’ work is perceived and acted upon, and the individual students that they teach. The images presented here were posted on Instagram to promote the *Value Design Education Pledge* initiative. Source: Image provided by the Authors.

What do you value?

Re-imagining and then re-building a given university-level design curriculum so that it can be equitable and inclusive within the timeframe of a single academic year, or at least more equitable and inclusive than it is currently, may not be feasible for many design educators in the U.S. and abroad. Many institutions require several types of approvals to actuate any major curricular overhaul, and these can occur at the department- or university-level, even requiring approval at the state-level or by one or more accrediting bodies (especially at the graduate level). However, incremental modifications such as 1) the inclusion of shared classroom norms^b and anti-racism statements to course syllabi, 2) broadening the scope of resource materials so that students can easily find credible references for design work created by and/or on behalf of underrepresented population can be an important part of implementing positive changes and then sustaining them over the course of at least a semester. In light of this, design educators are hereby encouraged to commit to one of the six pledge statements (as articulated on p. 19 of this piece), and then adopt one or two corresponding action items so that these can be incorporated into their Fall 2020 curricula, in either a single course or across several design courses in a given program.

A Google Form, which posed the following questions, was used to track interest and participation:

- Name + Email + Institution
- What courses are you teaching during the F20 semester?
- What mode of instruction are you using for the F20 semester?
- What *Value Design Education Pledge(s)* are you committing to during the F20 semester? (We encourage you to limit your pledge commitments to two)

- How do you plan to actualize the one or two *Value Design Education Pledges* to which you have committed with YOUR students in YOUR/ THEIR classroom settings?
- What resources do you foresee needing to make this happen?
- Are you willing to participate in a follow-up discussion mid-way through the F20 semester?

The authors used email to follow up with participants who filled out this form in order to confirm their participation. The authors also provided participants with a PDF that listed resources cultivated specifically to support each *Value Design Education Pledge* from existing articles in the AIGA DEC archive (table 1). Additionally, they emphasized accountability by encouraging educators to share their pledge(s) with their students and colleagues at the beginning of the semester. Participants could commit to the pledges through September 15, 2020.

The authors then used email to plan and announce a special virtual roundtable discussion to allow pledge participants to share their knowledge and perspectives that was to be held in December of that year (2020). Once participants completed the survey, the authors asked them to complete a Google Form that would provide us with content to guide and fuel the December discussion. The Google Form asked participants to respond to the following questions:

- Name + Email + Institution
- What pledge(s) did you commit to for the F20 semester?
- What actions did you take this semester in response to the pledge(s) you took?
- What actions + results turned out differently than you expected?
- What actions + results were successful? Why + how?
- Other comments, suggestions, or actions you took that you would like to share?

December 2020

The authors hosted a virtual roundtable discussion for approximately three-dozen participants. This event was dedicated to discussing participants' pledge commitments, the actions they took as a result of committing

Value Design Education Pledge

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
SOCIETY	Design educators must be anti-racist and challenge existing social structures.	I commit to <u>being anti-racist.</u>	I will be engaged (read + listen) and contribute to the current dialog. I will actively educate myself about the systems of oppression.
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS	Design educators must uphold all design histories beyond the Western influences.	I commit to <u>upholding all design histories.</u>	I will highlight design contributions from underrepresented cultural and social groups that do not have roots in modernist or Bauhaus methods.
DESIGN EDUCATORS	Design educators must distribute knowledge to their peers.	I commit to <u>distributing knowledge.</u>	I will actively disseminate revised pedagogical methods with my peers through a variety of avenues. These can be low or high commitment activities.
PEOPLE / AUDIENCES	Design educators must demonstrate tangible and intangible evidence of impact on audiences.	I commit to <u>demonstrating impact.</u>	I will define and determine what impacts are present from the get-go (tangible or intangible). I will document and share these with myself, students, and other stakeholders.
CLASS GROUPS + ENVIRONMENT	Design educators must create culture in the class community.	I commit to <u>creating culture.</u>	I will give students opportunities to engage and interact with each other in fun ways. I will facilitate activities in the online space that enable students to share their voice in a safe environment.
INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS	Design educators must support and promote the individual life experiences of their students	I commit to <u>promoting healthy student life experiences.</u>	I will prioritize and encourage student mental health; reconsider what assumptions I might be making about students and their access to tools, resources, and opportunities. I will also revisit and analyze my syllabi, project briefs, and assessment practices.

TABLE 1: After individual university-level design educators confirmed their individual willingness to participate in the *Value Design Education Pledge* initiative, the authors provided resources to support their contributions that were curated specifically to support their student's learning as they engaged in coursework rooted in ideas articulated in the actions/definitions that were correlated with specific pledges. Many of these resources were provided in the form of existing articles in the AIGA DEC archive. Additionally, this chart was shared with all participants. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

to actualize these with their particular groups of students in their respective classrooms, and to allow participants to recount what they felt were their greatest successes and struggles. Examples of some of the actions taken by participants as they operationalized the various pledges they had committed to supporting included modifying specific course syllabi and projects, hosting student discussions, and inviting guest speakers to address issues related to their chosen pledges. To better facilitate this roundtable discussion and to offer a viable means to capture the group's thoughts and reflections, the authors used a virtual messaging board created in *Padlet*, an online tool that enables collaborative content collecting (figure 12).

Analyzing the Outcomes That Resulted from Facilitating the Value Design Education Pledge

Each of the six pledge items corresponds to a specific group of people (various members of society, graphic designers, design educators, people/audiences, class groups/environments, individual students) that affect and are affected by the decisions that design educators and their students routinely make (table 1). Actionable items/strategies were created by the working group as starting points to help design educators effectively plan and then implement the principles articulated in each of the pledges in a variety of classrooms. A collection of resources from other AIGA articles was also shared, including the Design Teaching Resource,³¹ compiled Anti-Asian Racism and Violence Resources,³² and the AIGA Design Educators Community compiled Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion Resources.³³ Outcomes from the AIGA DEC community were collected through a follow-up survey and virtual discussions.

Of the 100 responses that the authors received from graphic design educators (again, 93 came from the United States, and 7 were fielded from international sources), 67% pledged a commitment to being anti-racist (within given societies), 56% pledged a commitment to promoting healthy student life experiences (on behalf of individual students), 53% pledged a commitment to creating and helping to sustain authentic cultures (in ways that benefitted particular class groups/social environments), 51% pledged a commitment to upholding all design histories (so that contributions from a broad, not necessarily mostly white and western group of designers could be critically examined), 45% pledged a commitment to distributing knowledge (between design educators and those who collaborate with them), and 32% pledged a

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AIGA, Resources. Online. Available at: <https://teachingresource.aiga.org/resources> (Accessed March 15, 2023).

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AIGA Design Educators Community, Anti-Asian Racism and Violence Resources. Available at: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17ME0tbKrmACUeLElrkt-71Dj07t1V0VX5YgpQMPfALEc4/edit#gid=0> (Accessed March 15, 2023).

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AIGA Design Educators Community, Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion Resources. Online. Available at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tpAhZ8xzXiEngDE5egzpuF-h3082KzbZglpgvknP7sno/edit> (Accessed March 15, 2023).

commitment to demonstrating the broad impacts of design decision-making (on a wide variety of people/audiences). (This information is depicted in diagram 4).

Design educators shared plans for how they intended to act upon the selected pledge(s) and action items within their respective classrooms, as well as within their own research endeavors and practices, and finally within their respective institutions. A brief summary of the

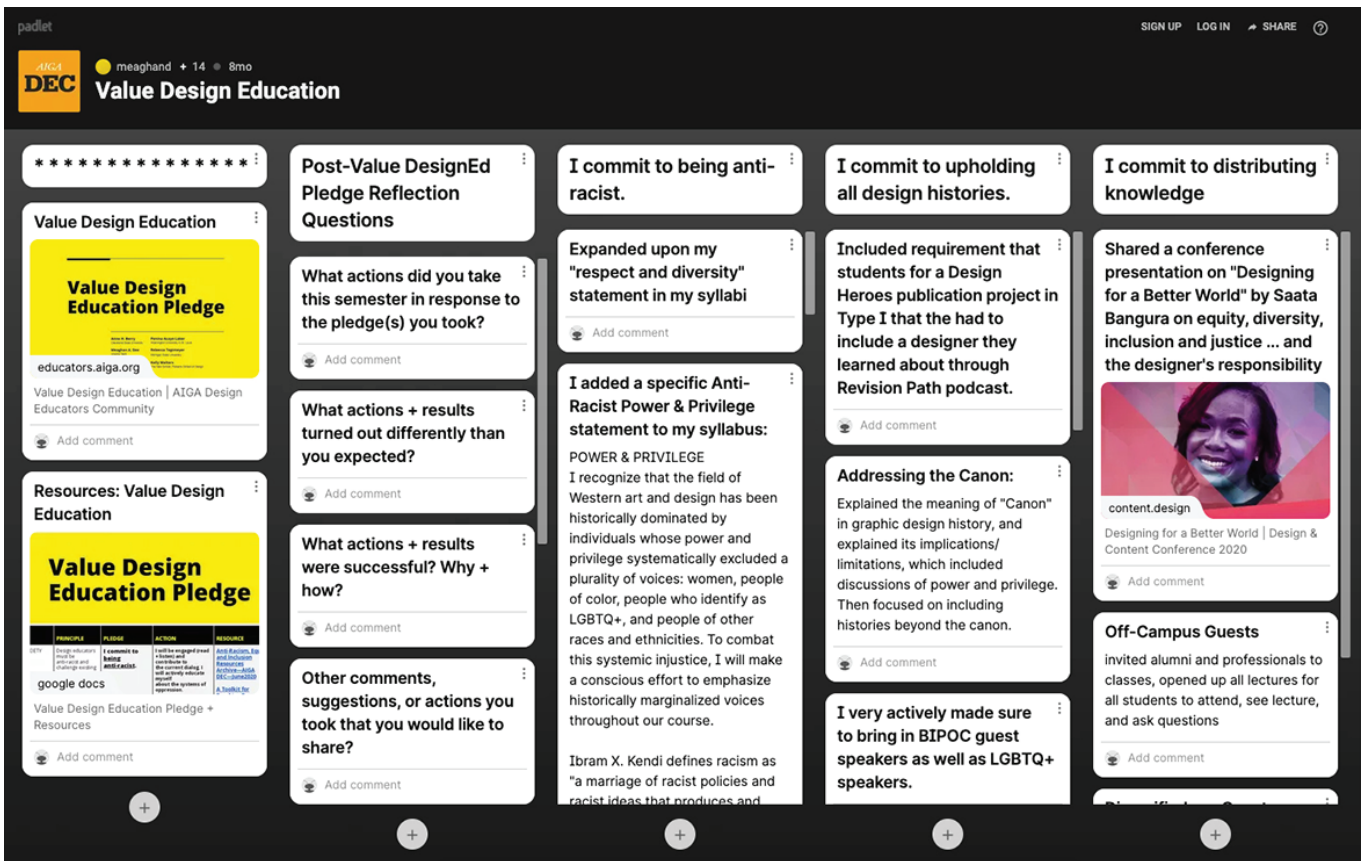


FIGURE 12: A virtual roundtable discussion that included approximately three-dozen participants who identified as design educators was held in December 2020. This event was dedicated to allowing individual participants' to present and discuss their experiences actualizing whatever pledges they had committed to addressing with their students in their classrooms, the actions that were taken as a result of engaging in the pledge, and the resulting successes and struggles that many participants experienced as they attempted to facilitate these as essential components of learning experiences during the height of the pandemic. A Padlet board was created to document this discussion that was populated with content generated by the roundtable participants. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

responses from participants to each of the six pledge items (diagram 4)—items which were proposed by design educators who contributed to the *Value of Design Education Pledge*—are articulated as follows:

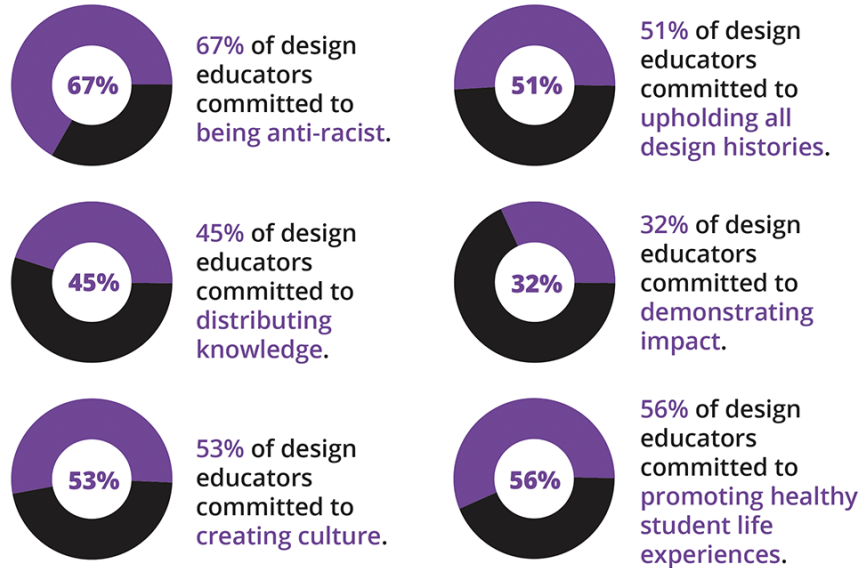
I Commit To Being Anti-Racist.

This pledge holds design educators accountable for the effects that their decision-making has on the well-being of one or more societies in the world (table 2) as they strive to identify racist policies, practices, and procedures and replace them with antiracist policies, practices, and procedures. It also calls for design educators to 1) promote understandings among their students about how racism is a systemic issue, 2) to sensitize them about the racist ideas that have been socialized across the American (and the South African, British, French, Japanese and many other socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-economic landscapes around the world), and 3) make them aware of the racist biases that these ideas have helped nurture in the minds of people the world over as a result. This pledge also more broadly posits that educators should strive to fulfill societal roles that question and, on occasion, challenge existing socio-cultural structures, as well as work to foster the awarenesses necessary in their students to respond to, and, as they deem necessary, challenge them. Meeting these challenges requires design educators to thoughtfully and diligently read and listen to anti-racist perspectives from a wide variety of speakers and authors from around the world and contribute to the critical dialogues that are evolving within and around this issue.

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
SOCIETY	Design educators must be anti-racist and challenge existing social structures.	I commit to <u>being anti-racist.</u>	I will be engaged (read + listen) and contribute to the current dialog. I will actively educate myself about the systems of oppression.

TABLE 2: An articulation of the content that constituted Pledge #1. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

A Depiction of the Value Design Education Pledges That Were Committed to by the 100 Design Educators Who Took Part in this Initiative



Pledges Committed to by the 100 Design Educators

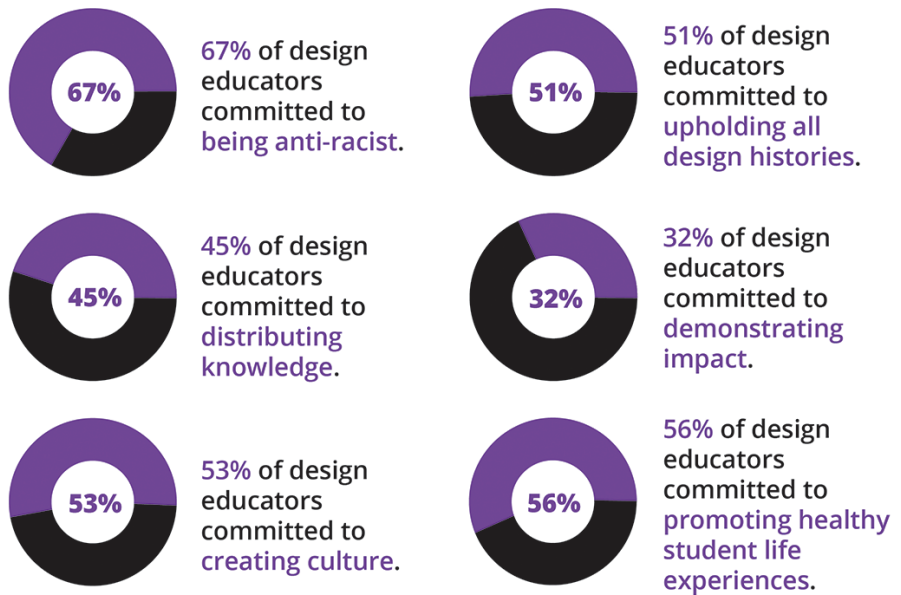


DIAGRAM 4: At the onset of the *Value Design Education Pledge* initiative, participants pledged a commitment to one or more of the six pledges. This infographic indicates the priorities of the 100 design educators who participated in the initiative. *Source: Diagram provided by Rebecca Tegtmeyer.*

Examples of actions taken as part of the commitment to being anti-racist:

- Including an *Anti-Racist Power & Privilege* statement in the course syllabi.
- Incorporating empathy-building exercises into class activities.
- Revising project briefs to be more inclusive of examples from underrepresented and minority groups.
- Uplifting the work of underrepresented designers from the US and beyond.
- Participating in and contributing to university and local school district diversity, equity, and inclusion committees and initiatives.
- Assuming on the role of mentor and counselor, particularly when working with first-generation or at-risk students who might be navigating the college experience for the first time and, as such, bearing a large amount of external pressure from home, peers, etc.
- Actively measuring (with evidence-based data) the value that design educators can and do bring to addressing and, as necessary, combatting this issue, and then broadly sharing credible, well-vetted information and sources.

I Commit To Upholding All Design Histories.

This pledge holds design educators accountable to the critical study of and about our discipline, both through the study and practice of graphic, visual communication, and, more recently, user experience and interaction design, as well as fashion, interior and industrial, or product, design (table 3). As educators, they are in a position to uphold and afford opportunities for our students to construct knowledge of and about the myriad of design histories that extend beyond western influences and the so-called western canon. Design educators do this by highlighting design contributions from underrepresented cultural and social groups whose traditions and bases of knowledge are not rooted solely in modernist or Bauhaus methods.

Some examples of actions taken by design educators who participated in the December 2020 discussion as part of their commitment to upholding the broadest possible array of design histories are articulated below:

- Addressing the limitations implied by the western canon and identifying the power and privilege dynamics that are and have been promoted by this limited and limiting view of design history.
- Broadening the canon of histories that examine and explore design that account for influences and ways of thinking that are inclusive of the widest variety of global cultures possible.
- Reevaluating the variety of project examples and outcomes of design processes that are shown to and critically discussed with students.
- Extending invitations to designers with disabilities and BIPOC/ LGBTQ+ designers to speak and work with students.

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
GRAPHIC DESIGNERS	Design educators must uphold all design histories beyond the Western influences.	I commit to <u>upholding all design histories.</u>	I will highlight design contributions from underrepresented cultural and social groups that do not have roots in modernist or Bauhaus methods.

TABLE 3: An articulation of the content that constituted Pledge #2. Source: Image provided by the Authors.

I Commit To Distributing Knowledge.

This pledge holds design educators accountable to their peers and their discipline(s) writ large by asking them to re-evaluate how and why they engage in the formulation and operation of research, as well as the dissemination of understandings and knowledge that stem from this as they affect (or could affect) how design education is taught and practiced (table 4). Design educators have a responsibility to contribute to the bodies of knowledge that inform their respective discipline(s) by sharing the outcomes of their research and pedagogic practices. These can be expressed as new ideas, insights, and examples of knowledge and understandings that they have acquired or constructed by engaging in these activities, and should be shared by publishing them in peer-reviewed and other, more broadly accessible publishing platforms.

Some examples of actions taken as part of the commitment to distribute knowledge are articulated below:

- Sharing outcomes of research and creative activities addressing issues such as design justice, environmental racism, and equity-centered design practices at credible, well-acknowledged academic and professional conferences.
- Hosting guest lectures and speaking opportunities from members of underrepresented groups that allow them to address issues rooted in equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Encouraging student engagement with invited BIPOC designers/guests.
- Seeking out, when appropriate, opportunities to collaborate with colleagues—from within the realms of design education and without—from other university-level institutions who have committed to working on similar topics.

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
DESIGN EDUCATORS	Design educators must distribute knowledge to their peers.	I commit to <u>distributing knowledge.</u>	I will actively disseminate revised pedagogical methods with my peers through a variety of avenues. These can be low or high commitment activities.

TABLE 4: An articulation of the content that constituted Pledge #3. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

I Commit To Demonstrating Impact.

This pledge holds design educators accountable to the various audience members and user groups with whom they work as co-designers, or on whose behalf they endeavor to create artifacts, products, systems, services, and communities (table 5). The authors recognize that building and sustaining trust with those with whom you work, and/or on whose behalf you work, involves developing strategies to define and measure what impacts look like from both the perspective of the designer and that of the audience or user group who are affected by the decisions made by the designer and his, her or

their collaborators (see table 5 for action item on demonstrating impact).

Some examples of actions taken as part of the commitment to demonstrate impacts are articulated below:

- Providing students with opportunities to create work that positively affects various aspects of the lives of those who live in their local communities.
- Designing “with” rather than “for” people living in specific communities that are proximal to them, or who are located farther away but may still be affected by decisions made by particular designers, design educators, and/or their students.
- Defining strategies that effectively measure the societal and community impact of a given project’s deliverables and/or outcomes.
- Prompting students to track the efficacy of the work they develop, design, and disseminate (e.g. via petitions, social engagements, online data collection and analysis, etc.) as a means to assess whether it improved a given situation or set of circumstances.
- Acknowledging and addressing how issues of power, positionality, and privilege affect the populations of those living in the vulnerable communities with whom they collaborate or engage in design processes on behalf of.

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
PEOPLE / AUDIENCES	Design educators must demonstrate tangible and intangible evidence of impact on audiences.	I commit to <u>demonstrating impact.</u>	I will define and determine what impacts are present from the get-go (tangible or intangible). I will document and share these with myself, students, and other stakeholders.

TABLE 5: An articulation of the content that constituted Pledge #4. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

I Commit To Creating Culture.

This pledge holds design educators accountable to the respective socio-culturally-based class groups/environments with whom they collaborate or work on behalf of, most especially their own students, and the need to create and facilitate the evolution and dissemination of the customary beliefs, social norms, and material traits of a given racial, religious, or social group, which are otherwise known as its *culture* (table 6). Design educators contribute to these endeavors by giving their students opportunities to engage and interact with each other in ways that allow them to broaden their bases of socio-cultural knowledge and understandings and, as necessary, deepen their critical thinking abilities.

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
CLASS GROUPS + ENVIRONMENT	Design educators must create culture in the class community.	I commit to <u>creating culture.</u>	I will give students opportunities to engage and interact with each other in fun ways. I will facilitate activities in the online space that enable students to share their voice in a safe environment.

TABLE 6: An articulation of the content that constituted Pledge #5. *Source: Image provided by the Authors.*

Examples of actions taken as part of the commitment to create culture:

- Facilitating activities in online and in-person spaces that enable students to share their respective social and cultural voices in a safe environment.
- Minimizing stress by initiating a consistent flow of communication with students, with particular respect to their social and cultural backgrounds, as adjustments are made to specific assignments and course expectations.
- Encouraging community building as a way to help students connect with their peers and with people who live and work in communities that are affected by their decision-making.
- Developing better methods and mechanisms for maintaining

- communications with alumni and following them throughout their careers.
- Serving as “bridge-makers” who make essential ideas and concepts clear in ways that have the potential to be understood by a wide audience.

I Commit To Promoting Healthy Student Life Experiences.

This pledge holds design educators accountable to the mental health and well-being of their students (table 7). The unique nature of design pedagogy—which requires introspection and self-awareness on the parts of design students so that their approaches to designing with or on behalf of those who are different from them are guided by empathy and understanding—tends to demand that the facilitation of learning experiences that support and promote the mental and physical well-being of our students. Design educators do this most effectively when they reconsider the assumptions that guide the planning and execution of their teaching strategies and tactics, when they model behaviors that their students can positively emulate, and when they prioritize student mental health by revisiting language in their syllabi and their assessment materials that could exclude or marginalize students.

	PRINCIPLE	PLEDGE	ACTION
INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS	Design educators must support and promote the individual life experiences of their students	I commit to promoting healthy student life experiences.	I will prioritize and encourage student mental health; reconsider what assumptions I might be making about students and their access to tools, resources, and opportunities. I will also revisit and analyze my syllabi, project briefs, and assessment practices.

TABLE 7: An articulation of the content that constituted Pledge #6. Source: Image provided by the Authors.

Some examples of actions taken as part of the commitment to promote healthy social and cultural life experiences on behalf of design students are articulated below:

- Encouraging working alliances among students as a means to foster and facilitate learning experiences that are socially and culturally informed from broad perspectives.
- Promoting a healthy, balanced lifestyle by demonstrating effective daily life planning and self-awareness activities.
- Seeking out community learning experiences from other faculty and on- and off-campus organizations that can be modeled in classrooms and curricula.
- Being aware of signs of mental, physical, and emotional fatigue among students, and then acting appropriately and empathetically.
- Being clear and direct about what is expected from students as given learning experiences/assignments progress according to a particular course schedule.
- Recognizing that different institutions and programs serve different communities of students, and that the learning experiences planned and facilitated cannot be “one size fits all”—for example, the challenges and needs a community college student faces may differ markedly from those faced by a student enrolled in a 4-year institution.

Institutional Support Opportunities For Value Design Education

Pledge Action Items

Although the primary audience for the *Value Design Education Pledge* is design educators, and administrators, the institutional guidelines they foster and promulgate can also support these pledges and initiatives.

Exploring the Most Common Challenges Faced by Design Educators

The data the authors collected from their surveys and from hosting the array of conversations they had with design educators as this endeavor progressed allowed them to identify several common challenges, or barriers, to

Pledge	Available Resources From The AIGA Design Educators Community	Resources That Institutions Can Implement
<p>I commit to being anti-racist. I will be engaged (read + listen) and contribute to the current dialog. I will actively educate myself about the systems of oppression.</p>	<p>Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion Resources Archive—AIGA DEC—June2020</p> <p>Anti-Asian Racism and Violence Resources</p> <p>A Toolkit for Breaking Down Racialized Design in the Classroom, Racism Untaught</p>	<p>Provide students and faculty with access to learning resources that feature BIPOC designers and their work</p> <p>Invest in tech resources for students and faculty to reach people in times of limited mobility — Such as through supporting legislation for universal access to WiFi</p> <p>Facilitate connections to communities of color (e.g. hosting conferences, promoting cross-collaboration and outside partnerships)</p> <p>Create more space and time for instructors to plan inclusive teaching</p> <p>Allocate funding to support these ongoing initiatives</p>
<p>I commit to upholding all design histories. I will highlight design contributions from underrepresented cultural and social groups that do not have roots in modernist or Bauhaus methods.</p>	<p>Beyond the Bauhaus</p> <p>Perspectives and Reflections</p> <p>Can We Teach Graphic Design History Without the Cult of Hero Worship?</p>	<p>Designate honoraria for guest lectures from BIPOC designers and underrepresented groups</p> <p>Expand access to more textbooks, articles, and information providing knowledge of design history</p>
<p>I commit to distributing knowledge. I will actively disseminate revised pedagogical methods with my peers through a variety of avenues. These can be low or high commitment activities.</p>	<p>Contribute to the DEC Website</p> <p>Submit a paper to Dialectic</p> <p>Share a project on Design Teaching Resource</p>	<p>Support student and faculty attendance at conferences and events</p> <p>Acknowledge and encourage academic research and pedagogy in this space</p>
<p>I commit to demonstrating impact. I will define and determine what impacts are present from the get-go (tangible or intangible). I will document and share these with myself, students, and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>A Blended Perspective: Social Impact Assessment in Graphic Design</p> <p>AIGA Design Futures: Core Values Matter</p> <p>Discursive Design and the Question of Impact: Perspective, Pedagogy, Practice</p>	<p>Provide training to faculty</p> <p>Establish models for evaluating and measuring impact</p>
<p>I commit to creating culture. I will give students opportunities to engage and interact with each other in fun ways. I will facilitate activities in the online space that enable students to share their voice in a safe environment.</p>	<p>Critiques + Community SHIFT Virtual Summit 2020</p> <p>Panel: Who Gets to Teach? SHIFT Virtual Summit 2020</p>	<p>Create safe environments for learning</p> <p>Make technological support readily available to better facilitate remote learning and teaching</p> <p>Fund purchases for students and faculty to make remote learning more equitable</p>
<p>I commit to promoting healthy student life experiences. I will prioritize and encourage student mental health; reconsider what assumptions I might be making about students and their access to tools, resources, and opportunities. I will also revisit and analyze my syllabi, project briefs, and assessment practices.</p>	<p>Value Design Education Checklist</p> <p>Confronting Stress & Anxiety: Mental Health Techniques for Design Educators</p>	<p>Hire counselors and mental health professionals to meet the needs of students health and well-being</p> <p>Offer training for faculty on how to manage mental health related challenges in the classroom</p> <p>Foster a culture of care</p>

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Neal, K. "College Students More Concerned About COVID-19 Than Ever, New Survey by TimelyMD Finds," *TimelyMD*, 12 January 2022. Online. Available at: <https://timely.md/college-students-more-concerned-about-covid-19-than-ever/> (Accessed March 27, 2022).

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Mayo Clinic Staff. "Job burnout: How to spot it and take action." 5 June 2021. Online. Available at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642> (Accessed February 8, 2023).

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Wexner Medical Center, "Survey: Anxiety, depression and burnout on the rise as college students prepare to return to campus," *The Ohio State University*, 2021. Online. Available at: <http://osuwmc.multimedia-news-room.com/index.php/2021/07/26/survey-anxiety-depression-and-burnout-on-the-rise-as-college-students-prepare-to-return-to-campus/> (Accessed March 28, 2022).

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Fidelity Investments, "On the Verge of Burnout: Covid-19's impact on faculty well-being and career plans," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2020. Online. Available at: https://connect.chronicle.com/rs/931-EKA-218/images/Covid%26FacultyCareerPaths_Fidelity_ResearchBrief_v3%20%281%29.pdf (Accessed April 2, 2022).

effectively facilitating design education experiences at the university level. These were—and are—primarily:

- Mental health-related issues as experienced by both students and faculty.
- Defensiveness and pushback when addressing socially, culturally, politically, or economically sensitive issues in the classroom.
- Working to equitably help people who are struggling with access to food, the internet, software, and computer access.

Mental Health-Related Issues

Throughout the pandemic, many design education and other university faculty faced an unprecedented array of mental health crises among their students—and this continues to be true. A survey of nearly 1,700 university-level educators conducted by *TimelyMD* in January of 2022 revealed that 88% of the students queried said that there is a mental health crisis at U.S. colleges and universities.³⁴ Burnout among students was also reported to be at an all-time high. The Mayo Clinic defines burnout as "a special type of work-related stress—a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity".³⁵ The Ohio State University conducted surveys of their student body in 2020 and 2021. The first responses they received and analyzed in August of 2020 reported student burnout at 40%, and by April of 2021, it was up to 71%.³⁶ However, students have been and still are not the only ones in university-level settings facing mental health challenges: faculty have also been and still are experiencing higher rates of mental health challenges and burnout. In October of 2020, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* surveyed 1,122 university-level educators from two-year and four-year institutions from across the United States and found that, since the start of 2020, 35% of faculty considered leaving higher education altogether, 74% said their work-life balance had deteriorated, and 82% said their workload increased.³⁷

At the onset of the pandemic, many faculty and students were operating in survival mode. But what at first seemed like a sprint that would last only a few weeks turned out to be—in some university-level settings around the world—a marathon that lasted five to seven months. Or, in some cases, for more than two years. As such, many strategies and tactics for

addressing pandemically induced challenges to teaching and learning have proven difficult to maintain. One contributing factor to faculty burnout, particularly in design education, is that the counseling services in many institutions were overburdened, which forced them to have to turn to others (often other faculty) for mental health support. Most university faculty are not trained mental healthcare professionals, nor is it a part of their job description to provide emotional support for their peers or their students. However, over the past two-plus years, many faculty, including design educators, have had to fulfill roles as first points-of-contact in these crises.

The authors also gathered advice from design educators about how to effectively confront the mental health struggles they and their students now commonly face. One suggestion included providing direct access to disability and mental health resources to students. This begins by faculty having to learn what disability, mental health resources, and reporting systems their institution provides, and then making this information readily accessible, while reminding students that this type of help is available and accessible on their campuses. Additionally, the authors learned the importance of identifying local and remote resources that are accessible to faculty at their respective institutions. Many institutions across the globe now require faculty to incorporate mental health resource information in their syllabi. However, a number of these requirements and resources came in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and were often developed by working faculty groups who were not subsequently asked to provide this information to students living in these now post-pandemic times. Some faculty, including several in the design education community, have integrated health and mental health statements into their syllabi. Co-author Rebecca Tegtmeier, a member of the design faculty at Michigan State University, used the following language, which is an adaptation of an MSU syllabi statement:³⁸

Almost all of us are struggling with a unique set of challenges these days, brought about by the remote start, COVID-19 pandemic, economic fallout, ongoing efforts for social justice, and other experiences.

While I am not a trained mental health professional, I am someone you can reach out to if you're struggling, whether or not your concerns pertain directly to this course. Our conversations will be confidential, though please

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Pyle, K., "Ideas for Inclusive Language for Course Syllabi," Michigan State University, 2020. Online. Available at: https://natsci.msu.edu/sites/_natsci/assets/File/Diversity/PDF/InclusiveStatement_syllabi_2020.pdf (Accessed April 10, 2022).

remember that all faculty are mandatory reporters if issues of violence, sexual harm, or harassment are disclosed. I do ask that if you are having any personal difficulties (that are affecting your participation) please notify me sooner than later so we can discuss options for you to move forward.

I'm a good listener, and I can help connect you to campus and other resources that are here to help you. As your course instructor, I am committed to helping you successfully complete this course, but it's even more important to me that you experience our classroom as a space that is open, inclusive, and supportive.

**I am a Mom and a commuter, and I do my best to make it on-time for class, however, sometimes situations do arise that cause me to be late to class. I will try to notify you all sooner rather than later if this occurs.*

Rebecca's statement made room for her students to share information about their needs for emotional support *and* revealed some of her own challenges (being a mom and a commuter) that are rooted in meeting her pedagogic responsibilities. This allows her students to be empathetic about her circumstances, and, in so doing, helps them build empathy for those who face both familiar and unfamiliar situations as they attempt to engage in their studies. The statement articulated above may be adapted for use by anyone reading this piece who wishes to include similar language in their own materials.

Addressing Issues Involving Defensiveness and Political Pushback Among University-Level Design Students

Another challenge some university-level design faculty reported as they tried to facilitate anti-racist activities in their classrooms was defensiveness and political pushback from their students. One faculty member offered that, "...one student unfortunately misunderstood racial justice as being racist against white people." Racial justice is *not* an attack on any one group or race, but rather, as defined by the *American Civil Liberties Union*, it strives to "...preserve and extend constitutionally guaranteed rights to people who have historically been denied their rights on the basis of race."³⁹ More broadly, especially in many places in the U.S., there has been and continues to be

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American Civil Liberties Union, "Racial Justice," [ACLU](https://www.aclu.org/issues/racial-justice), 2023. Online. Available at: <https://www.aclu.org/issues/racial-justice>. (Accessed February 18, 2023).

Legal Defense Fund, "Critical Race Theory," NAACP Legal Defense Fund and Educational Fund Inc., 2023. Online. Available at <https://www.naacpldf.org/critical-race-theory-faq>. (Accessed on February 18, 2023).

strong resistance to the teaching of “critical race theory,” (defined by the *Legal Defense Fund* as, “...an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is part of American society—from education and housing to employment and healthcare. Critical Race Theory (CRT) recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual bias and prejudice. It is embedded in laws, policies and institutions that uphold and reproduce racial inequalities. According to CRT, societal issues like Black Americans’ higher mortality rate, outsized exposure to police violence, the school-to-prison pipeline, denial of affordable housing, and the rates of the death of Black women in childbirth are not unrelated anomalies.”⁴⁰) Critical race theory is often misinterpreted and misunderstood as a strategy that can guide how one or more faculty members in a variety of types of learning environments teach their students about the history of racism, most particularly but not limited to the U.S. As such, it is often used in attempts to silence faculty with regard to how they teach a wide variety of race-related issues across disciplines in the K-12 sector. In the U.S., and in most other so-called G20 nations around the world where design education is taught at the university level, those in higher education generally have more freedom of speech and action, and some university-level institutions are much more supportive of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives than others, especially in American states and nations around the world with legislative bodies that are not dominated by various right-wing political factions. To effectively address the kinds of pushback and defensiveness described above, the authors encourage utilizing broadly available printed and online resources that suggest ways to address these (well-edited newspapers tend to be a good place to start looking...), as well as participating in workshops facilitated by educational organizations and non-government organizations (NGOS) that support socially, culturally and politically inclusive approaches to teaching and learning. Well-vetted academic lectures offered within university-level institutions can also be great sources of inspiration and credible information, and often afford attendees opportunities to gain knowledge and understandings from outside their disciplines.

A few ways design faculty in the U.S. and abroad have worked to positively frame anti-racist work in design classroom settings are rooted in the collective generation (along with their students) of one or more sets of guiding classroom principles, or “classroom norms.” Sharing these between students and those who teach them has been shown to be effective. For example,

co-author Penina Laker, of Washington University in St. Louis, co-created the following principles regarding engaging in anti-racist approaches to teaching and learning in design classrooms with her students:

“We are committed to the ongoing work of anti-racism and we ask you to do the same. To move forward, we must acknowledge the role that designers have contributed to the creation and perpetuation of unjust systems and institutions. We also realize that this work takes time and sustained involvement; let us all work together and approach new knowledge with a learning mindset.”

Co-author Meaghan Dee of Virginia Tech provided a list of anti-racism resources available through her institution and more broadly (in the form of podcasts and books), and included a *Respect & Diversity* statement in her syllabus that reads as follows:

“Students in this class are encouraged to speak up and participate during class meetings. The class will represent a diversity of individual beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences—and every member of this class must show respect for every other member of this class. Additionally, if you have a preferred name or pronoun, please let me and your classmates know. And please do not hesitate to correct me if I make a mistake. My preferred pronouns are she and her. All are welcome here.”

Acknowledging that student perspectives are not homogeneous can be an important step in facilitating broadly informed classroom discussions. Additionally, faculty can provide ground rules for debate and discussion, and then actively foster them. Just as it takes time and thoughtful, concerted effort for a design educator to become skilled at facilitating critical discussions about the outcomes of his, her, or their students’ work, it will likely also take time and thoughtful, concerted effort to foster these abilities among given groups of design students.

Exploring more diverse ways to provide help equitably

The pandemic amplified many university students’ personal struggles. With the abrupt shift to remote and online teaching and learning, students and faculty often lacked computers, or access to them (internet access was much

less reliable, especially in more rural or mountainous areas), as well as software, and other crucial resources like library materials. Students who moved “back home” often had to share computers with younger siblings who were also attending virtual classes. Inconsistent computer or internet access led to many students having to resort to using their cell phones to call into Zoom-facilitated class sessions, which proved problematic for many.

Design faculty around the world responded to these challenges by modifying their attendance policies, increasing flexibility with project deadlines, and emphasizing a wider variety of types of student engagement than they had in pre-pandemic times. For example, Meena Khalili, a professor of design and interaction at the University of South Carolina in the U.S., adjusted the attendance statement in her course syllabi to focus on project completion as follows: “Attendance in this in-person and remote course will be assessed through on-time delivery of all work including but not limited to all projects, blog posts, feedback, surveys, reading responses, sketches, and uploads of any kind pertaining to [the operation of] this course.”

Many university students, from lower-level undergraduates through the doctoral level, also faced increased food insecurity during the pandemic, which was amplified when cafeterias and food venues on campuses the world over shut down, and community food banks that serve university students saw sharply increased demands. Additionally, countless design students and faculty had to add the responsibilities of increased childcare and eldercare to their teaching and learning loads. Some institutions responded by providing extra resources to support these efforts, but others did not or could not, and if they were available, they were not always widely advertised. For example, one American university-level design educator had a student come to her when they were struggling to pay their rent. The educators asked around and found out about a pandemic relief fund, which provided several hundred dollars to help the student in crisis pay her landlord.

Though the pandemic exposed widespread disparities regarding access to resources for educators and students across numerous campus communities worldwide, many of these had existed before the pandemic, and have continued to exist afterward. However, the disparities involving access to these present opportunities for design educators to imagine and create new pathways forward for learning and skill-building. Course and curricular modifications—such as highlighting design contributions from underrepresented cultural and social groups, prioritizing student mental health, and making

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Cameron, M., Lacy, T.A., Siegel, P., Wu, J., Wilson, A., Johnson, R., Burns, R., and Wine, J. (2021). 2019–20 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:20): First Look at the Impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic on Undergraduate Student Enrollment, Housing, and Finances (Preliminary Data) (NCES 2021-456). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Online. Available at: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsearch.asp?pubid=2021456> (Accessed September 5, 2022).

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Moody, J. “Most Colleges Resume In-Person Classes,” Inside Higher Ed, 6 January, 2022. Online. Available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2022/01/06/colleges-resuming-person-classes-amid-omicron> (Accessed February 26, 2023).

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Bartlett, T., “The Antiracist College: This may be a watershed moment in the history of higher education and race,” The Chronicle of Higher Education, February 15, 2021. Available at <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-antiracist-college> (Accessed on September 7, 2022).

course resources and activities more accessible—address barriers to student success, and help achieve greater educational equity across the most broadly populated cross-sections of student populations universities around the world have ever seen.

Conclusion

Within the United States, “...87 percent of students, [from pre-K through the doctoral level of study]... experienced a disruption or change in their enrollment, with 84 percent having some or all classes moved to online-only instruction” at the outset of the pandemic during the spring of 2020.⁴¹ By January of 2022, the vast majority of American colleges and universities had returned to in-person instruction.⁴² The aftermath of these disruptions has allowed university-level design educators to shift their collective thinking about they will plan and operate the increasing variety of learning experiences they are now called upon to facilitate on behalf of their students, and how they might improve in areas that account for far more than effectively dealing with the threat imposed by having to teach during a public health crisis. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently published the following about teaching and living in a watershed moment on the timeline of university-level educational history, particularly in the U.S.:

“It would be easy to downplay the significance of any particular announcement: a renamed auditorium here, a workshop there. After all, nearly all the topics highlighted in these many statements—diversifying the faculty, improving graduation rates for students of color, examining bias in the curriculum—have been bandied about on college campuses for decades. At the same time, the number of changes and the scope of the commitments made in recent months are striking. Some critics see these moves as pandering to student activists, or perhaps buying into a particular ideology. But supporters and detractors alike may come to see the summer and fall of 2020 as a watershed moment in the history of higher education and race.”⁴³

The forced adaptation to online learning that began occurring in design programs in the U.S. and around the world in the spring of 2020 has caused hundreds of them to either begin or continue to implement hybrid forms of educational instruction that involve blending in-person instruction with

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Cubbison, E., Nobre, P., Sellers, K., and Bullgart, A., "5 Considerations for Designing the Future of Higher Education," Gensler, August 9, 2021. Available at <https://www.gensler.com/blog/5-ideas-for-designing-the-future-of-higher-education>. (Accessed on September 5, 2022).

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Abdrasheva, D., Escribens, M., Sabzalieva, E., Vieira do Nascimento, D. & and Yerovi, C. Resuming or Reforming? Tracking the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education after two years of disruption. Paris, France; Caracas, Venezuela: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2022.

learning experiences that are facilitated online. According to the international global architecture, design, and planning consultancy Gensler, "68% of students and 74% of educators [now] want a hybrid approach."⁴⁴ Worldwide, institutions of higher education have become better equipped to respond to future emergencies because the experience of rapidly shifting to online teaching and learning during COVID-19 created a viable and sustainable foundation for facilitating models upon which they could build. Although in-person teaching and learning will likely not be replaced, virtual and hybrid models have and will continue to be a more significant part of higher ed.⁴⁵

Many of the participants from the discussion sessions the authors moderated shared that they thought the discipline of visual communication design is moving away from a focus on engaging in design processes that yield artifacts and moving toward engaging in design processes that yield experiences or services, or new ways of making, thinking, doing, or shaping public policy. Richard Buchanan's *Four Orders of Design* is one model that reflects how this kind of thinking is now affecting how design education is planned and facilitated, so that "...[it moves] from critically exploring that which is tangible and visible to that which is abstract and invisible, yielding interactions and experiences as outcomes of design processes and systems."⁴⁶ As such, design education is evolving; students are challenged to work in teams and to plan and engage in identifying and framing opportunities that yield various types of benefits to their communities, empowering individuals and groups living and working within them, and allowing them to discover or re-discover, or, as necessary, invent their social and cultural identities. These approaches to designing educational experiences for emerging designers are proving valuable as a means for them to better to assess the wide variety of effects their decision-making processes now have.

Some design faculty who participated in the discussions also reported that the changes they made to their course plans (such as creating socio-culturally inclusive and validatory principles and norms for their classrooms) and broadening project parameters (to encompass underrepresented populations/designers/communities) increased critical discussion in their classrooms. Additionally, some participants also revealed that their students came to value sustained interactions with their peers more highly than they had during their pre-pandemic learning experiences, and that they felt a greater sense of connection to them. Other faculty found themselves assuming roles in their classrooms that involved much more active listening.

Educators observed that sharing real-life examples and personal stories can be powerful ways to connect with students, but could also leave them feeling vulnerable by exposing a side of themselves that they often choose to keep out of the classroom. Some faculty said they struggled with “how personal to get with their students,” and how available to their students they thought they should be outside of their classrooms. The changes that the pandemic imposed on many long-practiced design classroom teaching practices broke down many traditional boundaries between faculty and their students (such as the mutual sharing of cell phone numbers), as their students came to rely more heavily on their instructors for emotional support than they might have during pre-pandemic times. As a result, many faculty felt as if they were able to “bring their whole self into the classroom” (including sharing their own experiences, that often extended beyond sharing their knowledge of design strategies and principles), and found that their students were newly empowered to learn differently, which led them to operate a more proactive and engaged approach in the classroom, and by developing deeper connections with their communities.

Incorporating the *Value Design Education Pledge* items into their teaching, course-planning and curricular planning and facilitation inspired some of the university-level design faculty that participated in this initiative to fundamentally restructure some of their classroom activities. Many included activities that afforded students opportunities to be more self-reflective, and that involved them having to take time to think more broadly and deeply about their respective levels of social awareness, and the responsibilities they have to assume on behalf of their audiences, user groups and clients as designers. Many students also focused on critically examining more contemporary issues in the design classroom, which infused their work outcomes with heightened levels of social, cultural, and political purpose, awareness, and impact. When faculty provided a more welcoming classroom environment, students faced tough questions and explored current events with higher levels of respect and kindness. Karin Jager, Associate Professor of Graphic and Digital Design at the University of the Fraser Valley in Abbotsford, BC, Canada, opined that “...I was deeply moved by the issues students chose to focus on. [They] began to connect with purpose, awareness, and impact in their work.” Nancy Wynn, Associate Professor of Graphic Design and Chair of the Department of Visual and Performing Arts at Merrimack College in North Andover, MA, U.S.A., shared that “...[my]

students would embrace tough questions and current events with respect and kindness. Their thoughtfulness, exploration, conversation, and critique of each other’s work went beyond my expectations.” Many educators shared that while some students were indifferent or resistant to the discussions and projects, others became much more involved. Additionally, as Professor Jason Tselentis of Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC, U.S.A. stated, “...students felt proud about the work that was ‘more personal’ to them, but were also a tad more private about that work.” Inspiration drawn from students’ own experiences positively influenced their engagement, despite a degree of reticence in sharing those ideas. And though receiving critical feedback can still present challenges for many design students, particularly when they are emotionally invested in work that is deeply personal to them, providing guidelines for (and fostering) classroom respect between students (both toward one-another and their instructors) can ensure that critiques of student design work are constructive and meaningful (i.e., they strive to improve each participants’ design knowledge and abilities as well as elevate them emotionally).

In reflecting upon the essential ideas that were developed to support the instantiation of the *Value Design Education Pledge*, the authors strove to place increased focus on promoting faculty well-being and mental health.^c Additionally, although the authors viewed hybrid and remote learning as a temporary challenge, an EAB (Educational Advisory Board) report on “The Pandemic Ripple Effect” cautions about the long-term effects of “Social Disengagement, Mental Health, Availability of Transfers, and Unfinished Learning in K12” on the overall preparedness of students for college education.⁴⁷ The authors believe that it is crucial for design educators to strive to ensure that students learning in these virtual spaces are able to effectively construct knowledge and gain new understandings while working within them. During the pandemic, virtual learning among all student populations in the U.S. jumped by 97% (from 2019 to 2020), with 75% having to take at least one distance-learning course, and 44% taking exclusively online courses.⁴⁸

The authors research fueled the generation of the following key ideas:

- reminders about the need to accurately measure design students’ learning before and after they leave design classes and programs, particularly in the midst of and in the aftermath of a global

^c Venit, E. “The Pandemic Ripple Effect: Four Potential Long Term Impacts on College Enrollment and Student Success.” EAB, 2022. Online. Available at <https://eab.com/insights/blogs/student-success/pandemic-ripple-effect/> (Accessed 6 February 2023). According to an Active Minds Survey, which was reported in the EAB white paper, “three quarters of students reported that their mental health worsened during the pandemic, with 18% saying that it ‘worsened significantly.’”

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Buchanan, R., “Wicked Problems in Design Thinking,” *Design Issues*, 8.2 (1992), pgs.5–21. Online. Available at https://web.mit.edu/jrankin/www/engin_as_lib_art/Design_thinking.pdf?utm_campaign=Explorations%20in%20Design&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Revue%20newsletter (Accessed 20 February 2023.)

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Ibid.

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National Center for Education Statistics, “Postbaccalaureate Enrollment. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences,” 2022. Online. Available at: <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/chb> (Accessed September 7, 2022).

- pandemic when outcomes and methods for measuring outcomes may have shifted;
- identifying ways to emphasize to campus and community stakeholders, academic administrators, and prospective students, that the outcomes of design processes can provide humanistic, tangible, and transformative products, services, and systems; and
 - building better mentor models inside and outside of the classroom.

While the authors primary goal for planning and operating the *Value of Design Education Pledge* initiative was to improve the scope of ideas and approaches that frame and guide contemporary design education, they believe that the *Value Design Education Pledge* items can be adapted to education more broadly. In the book *What Inclusive Instructors Do: Principles and Practices for Excellence in College Teaching*, the authors, representing a range of academic fields—including education/teaching and learning, biology, nursing, and public policy—speak to the efficacy of these same values in the classroom. In short, inclusive teaching practices are necessary to make education more accessible to more students. Additionally, inclusive practices provide a sense of belonging which has been shown to contribute to higher achievement, “particularly for students from marginalized groups.”⁴⁹

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 Addy, T. M., D. Dube, K. A. Mitchell, and M SoRelle. What inclusive instructors do: Principles and practices for excellence in college teaching. Sterling, Virginia, U.S.A.: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2021.

Regardless of how design faculty are faring in the aftermath of a demanding two- to three-year period imposed by the COVID pandemic during which they were forced to teach design processes using virtual means, design educators must remain committed to creating positive learning experiences on behalf of their students. The experiential knowledge the authors constructed for success helped ensure that they felt safe, supported, and included. For some, this might mean including equity and inclusivity statements in course syllabi and making sure that the work of a diverse range of designers are featured in various design classrooms and the assignment parameters that guide the learning experiences that transpire within them. For others, it may mean engaging with communities, locally and on-campus, by forging and sustaining partnerships and continuing journeys of self-education by reading broadly—including in disciplines outside design—and/or by building long-term relationships with other university faculty, activists, and community advocates. As one faculty member responded in our survey “I certainly have more work to do,” as do we all.

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