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News

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Philadelphia University Launches First North American Design Factory, Joining Global Innovation Network

PHILADELPHIA, September 11, 2015 – Philadelphia University launched the PhilaU Nexus Design Factory on Sept. 11, in collaboration with international partner Aalto University in Finland. It is the first Design Factory in North America.

With the opening of the new Design Factory, Philadelphia University joins an international partnership—the Design Factory Global Network (DFGN)—designed to foster innovation across cultures, continents and industries.

“The Design Factory gives Philadelphia University students the opportunity to engage in a global network by forming creative partnerships with innovators around the world,” said Philadelphia University President Stephen Spinelli Jr. “Becoming the first Design Factory in North America speaks to the quality of our transdisciplinary education and the entrepreneurial spirit of our students and faculty.”

Kalevi “Eetu” Ekman, Aalto Design Factory founder and professor, warmly welcomed the newest member of the Design Factory network. PhilaU, Ekman said, “shares the same passion for educating the best designers in the world. An interdisciplinary approach, problem-based learning and close partnerships with industry and society are the key components that help us to challenge both academic and practical conventions in an unequalled and powerful way.”

In addition, he said, “We already share experiences from a joint entrepreneurial education program, and PhilaU students have successfully participated the Aalto University product development course.”

The official opening of the PhilaU Nexus Design Factory in its new home in Hayward Hall 012 included a ceremonial ribbon-cutting by Spinelli, Ekman, PhilaU Vice President for Innovation D.R. Widder and Philadelphia Deputy Mayor Rich Negrin.

The PhilaU Nexus Design Factory will create new opportunities for PhilaU students to collaborate internationally with students and industry partners, Widder said. As one of the first steps, this year six PhilaU students will be selected to participate in global projects with Design Factory partners on projects with 12 industry sponsors.

The DFGN, which began at Aalto University in 2008 and now includes 10 universities and one research organization, brings together research, education and business practitioners to create a new learning culture and opportunities for continuous development. The shared understanding and common ways of working enable the universities to collaborate efficiently across cultures and create radical innovations.

Philadelphia University's signature Nexus Learning approach – active, collaborative, connected to the real world and infused with the liberal arts—and commitment to transdisciplinary project-based learning and connections with industry partners makes it a perfect fit for the Design Factory model.

In addition to PhilaU and Aalto, other Design Factory locations include Sino-Finnish Centre in Shanghai, China; Swinburne Design Factory in Melbourne, Australia; Duoc UC Design Factory in Santiago, Chile; IdeaSquare@CERN in Geneva, Switzerland; Design Factory Korea in Seoul; Porto Design Factory in Portugal; and the soon-to-open RTU Design Factory in Riga, Latvia and Frisian Design Factory in Leeuwarden, Netherlands.

Philadelphia University, founded in 1884, is a private university with 3,700 students enrolled in more than 70 undergraduate and graduate programs. As the model for professional university education, the University, through its award-winning Nexus Learning approach, prepares students to be leaders in their professions in an active, collaborative and real-world learning environment infused with the liberal arts. Philadelphia University includes the innovative Kanbar College of Design, Engineering and Commerce; the College of Architecture and the Built Environment; and the College of Science, Health and the Liberal Arts. For more information, go to www.PhilaU.edu.