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News

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Philadelphia University Industrial Design Students Design Back-To-School Products for Target



PHILADELPHIA, July 22, 2015--In a collaboration with Target and product design firm Umbra, four Philadelphia University industrial design students are having their products manufactured and sold as part of the mega-retailer's back-to-school line.

Target announced the sale of the student designs, winners of a design competition in collaboration with Umbra, on July 22. The items, under the label Loft by Umbra, are now available online and on the shelves of Target's almost 1,800 stores.

The winning PhilaU industrial design students and their products are:

Nick Friez: Bunky, a bedside stand to hold electronics and books that slides under mattress

Chloe Muller: Roo, over the door laundry bag that converts to shoulder tote

Sam Pawlak: Cacti, a multi-surface desktop organizer

Anthony Maladra: Trig, a graphic pegboard to hold multiple items

The students and PhilaU's industrial design program will share royalties on sales of the items, which range in price from \$9.99 to \$19.99.

The students, now rising seniors, tackled the design project as part of a fall 2014 design studio co-taught by Lyn Godley, associate professor of industrial design, and Mike Leonard, academic dean of the School of Design and Engineering. Godley, who has known Umbra co-founder and Vice President for Inspiration Paul Rowan professionally for many years, helped advance the project.

"This is an incredible opportunity for our students to have their products manufactured and on the market at a mass retailer the caliber of Target," Godley said. "This level of visibility and volume is huge for any designer, let alone a student, and will open many doors for them in the future."

Target and Umbra sought out the student collaborators because, in addition to bringing top design skills to the table, the students know first-hand the challenges of living in dorm rooms and small spaces and the need for innovative solutions.

"Our students did a remarkable job translating consumer needs into great products," Leonard said. "The Target products in collaboration with Umbra are exceptional and will perform well in the market."

About 25 industrial design students at PhilaU participated in the project. Rowan and members of the design team at Umbra, a Toronto-based home products design firm, worked with students throughout the fall, offering feedback and advice in person and via videoconferencing.

"Today, schools understand that industry relationships are crucial to professional development," Rowan observed. "The opportunity to work with the Umbra team, to design for their own peer group, was recognized to be a huge benefit to the students. For our part, we're thrilled to help student designers begin promising careers."

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.