

Masters Program in Sports Product Design Launches at OU. **By Kathleen Swantko**

Fostering Talent & Cutting Edge Research

The state of Oregon is a nationally recognized hotbed for sports product design activity. With more than 800 sports product companies located in the state, including Nike, adidas and Columbia Sportswear, all located in the Portland area, it's surprising no schools in the state offer a Masters in Sport Product Design.

The University of Oregon (UO) will change this in the Fall 2015. The UO's new Sports Product Design (SPD) graduate program will help to support the global aims of the university, as well as provide a resource for the sports product industry and for sports apparel professionals internationally.

"Sports product design is a growing market that demands highly skilled and talented designers," states Wonhee Jeong Arndt, assistant professor for UO's new Sports Product Design program. "Our research shows that our state's sports industry strongly supports the development of UO's masters program in SPD."

A Unique Program

The MS in SPD is part of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, and will be a collaborative venture with UO's MS in Sport Product Management (SPM), which is part of the Lundquist College of Business, which is already in place. An important component of the program will incorporate the use of the White Stag Innovation Lab to foster the creation of new products.

"The students of both masters programs share space and the use of the White Stag Innovation Lab, as students work on collaborative projects together," explains Kiersten Muenchinger, director and associate professor for the SPD program.

While the curriculum has not been finalized yet, it will take advantage of several graduate programs currently in place at



University of Oregon students working on sports projects at the White Stag Innovation Lab.

the school. There are plans for Design Studios, working in the various fields of sports products (such as footwear, sports apparel, and sports equipment), and collaborative relationships with athletes on new product developments.

Arndt explained, "Our Sports Product Design students will share curriculums with the SPM students, and conduct collaborative design lectures for learning about fabrics and materials, manufacturing processes, and marketing/communications. The students will also utilize interdisciplinary courses associated with various departments like journalism and human physiology."

Goals of the SPD Program

According to Arndt, "The short term goal is to produce the best talent in the world for the sports product industry. While this seems like a huge goal, we believe that we can make it happen! We have a great opportunity being in the Portland area, surrounded by great industries. We are developing a truly unique curriculum. Currently, there is no program like ours in the world!"

The long term goal is to produce and create cutting-edge research in the field of sports product design. The University of Oregon is also working with Georgia Tech, UMass-Lowell, and North Carolina State to submit a National Network Manufacturing Innovation Institutes (NNMI) proposal to win \$75 million in federal government funding for fibers and textiles.

Arndt explains, "The content for the program and curriculum is based on information gathered from work sessions and research with industry people. The UO will lead the West Coast hub for the NNMI, and will focus on research for high performance

sustainable products that can be created, designed, and manufactured in the USA." ●

For more information on the University of Oregon's SPD program, contact Wonhee Arndt, wonheea@uoregon.edu or Kiersten Muenchinger, kiersten@uoregon.edu.

Kathlyn Swantko, president of the FabricLink Network, created TheTechnicalCenter.com for industry networking and marketing of specialty textiles, and FabricLink.com for consumer education involving everything fabric.

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