



## *Design Brief - April 2025*

### **Dear Design Science Community,**

We are excited to bring you the April edition of the Design Brief, which is a platform to connect and inform members of the Design Science community at the University of Michigan. As always, we welcome your feedback and suggestions to help us improve future issues.

## **Design Science Program Upcoming Events**

### **April 25, 6pm - 8pm | DESCi End-of-Semester Social**

The final social gathering for students in the Design Science PhD and Master's cohorts. More Information to Come!

[\*\*RSVP\*\*](#)

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### **May 2, 1:30pm - 3pm | DESCi Graduation/Community Reception**

Venue: SI-North 2nd Floor

Hot appetizers will be served!

Save the Date for the DESCi Community/Graduation Celebration! We will be celebrating the ending of the academic year as well as the Spring 2025 graduates! This event is open to all DESCi students, advisors, graduates, and the families of the graduates. Look out for a follow up Google Form!

## Upcoming Rackham and IC forums addressing graduate students' questions about current issues:

**April 18** | International Center Friday Forums ([Link](#))

**April 18** | Graduates on Post-Completion Optional Practical Training or Academic Training ([Link](#))

## Design Science Program News

### Portfolio Design Insights with DESCi PhD Alumna Ilka Rodriguez-Calero

Dr. Ilka Rodriguez-Calero is a social impact-driven engineer, design researcher, facilitator, and U-M alumna (Design Science MS '19; Ph.D. '22). She hosted a Portfolio Design Workshop focused on helping students craft and present their professional narratives through strategic portfolios.



The session began with interactive exercises and reflection tools to help students explore their personal and professional identities. Using these methods for self-

discovery, participants were encouraged to think critically about how their experiences, skills, and values align with their career goals.

Building on this foundation, Ilka guided students through approaches to organizing their work and storytelling, emphasizing the importance of aligning portfolios with specific goals and target audiences. Students had the opportunity to sketch out key elements of a strategic and purpose-driven portfolio, leaving the workshop with actionable insights and a clearer direction for showcasing their work effectively.

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## DESCI Student Advisory Committee: Program Ideation Workshop



The DESCi Student Advisory Committee (DSAC) recently hosted a collaborative ideation workshop to help define its mission and future priorities. The DSAC leadership team shared key insights from the recent community survey, facilitated group discussions, and led an engaging session focused on shaping the direction of the committee.

Participants were invited to reflect on their journeys in the program, sharing memorable moments and personal experiences from each stage since being accepted. Students also actively contributed by offering advice, insights, and solutions based on their own experiences and challenges. These valuable contributions will help the DSAC team shape a mission that better reflects the needs and aspirations of the Design Science community.

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## DESCi Student Center Canvas

The Design Science Student Center on Canvas serves as a central resource for important program updates and helpful materials. It includes dedicated information for both Master's and PhD students, such as **curriculum guidance**, **capstone and research requirements**, and **advisor resources**.

You'll also find updates on **upcoming events, career and wellness resources**, and **Design Briefs archives**. We encourage you to visit the page regularly to stay up to date and take full advantage of the resources available to support your academic and professional journey.

[Design Science Student Center](#)

## Design Science Spotlights

### Master Student Spotlights:



### **Youngeun (Young) Yu** (she/her)

Youngeun (Young) Yu holds a BFA and MDes in Media Interaction Design and is currently pursuing an MS in Design Science at the University of Michigan. Her expertise lies in **Human-Centered Design, UX/UI design and research**, and the intersection of **AI and big data analytics** for impactful outcomes.

As a research assistant at the Ross School of Business, Young is working under Professor Nigel Melville on a

project that involves **designing and testing an AI-driven chatbot interface**. The goal is to help finance students more efficiently access and interact with company insights. This project integrates **UX research, UI design, front-end development, and usability testing**.

What she enjoys and values most is engaging with and empathizing with users to deliver joyful, human-centered experiences through her expertise.

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## **Brian Richards (he/him)**

Brian Richards is a master's student in the Design Science program. In 2020, he received his BS in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Design Thinking from Brigham Young University. After graduating from BYU, Brian worked as an **Experience Development Engineer** at Ford for three years. Throughout his academic and professional career, Brian has also volunteered or worked for several K-12 STEM educational programs. Brian is passionate about creating **innovative STEM educational**

**experiences** and decided to study at the University of Michigan to link together his interests in education, design, and engineering.

As a Design Science student, Brian has taken courses in **educational technology, UX design, design theory, and public policy**. For his capstone this summer, Brian plans to develop and evaluate educational content for a local high school robotics team.

Outside of school, Brian likes to be outside, work on home improvement projects, watch BYU basketball and Florida Panthers hockey, volunteer at church, and spend time with his wife, Katrina.



## **Tanisha Agrawal (she/her)**

Tanisha Agrawal is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Design Science at the University of Michigan. She began her journey in product design, but soon became drawn to the intersection of technology and design, which ultimately led her to explore how interdisciplinary design can create experiences that are not only useful, but essentially meaningful.

She is particularly excited by the potential of design strategy driven by research, imagination, and systems

thinking, with the goal of making intentional, effective decisions. For Tanisha, design is not just about aesthetics—it's about understanding the broader context in which

people interact with **products, services, and systems**. At its core, she believes design is about designing intentionally.

Tanisha was drawn to the Design Science program at Michigan because of its **inclusive and systems-thinking approach**. The program has enabled her to bridge design with engineering, psychology, and business, broadening her perspective and helping her grow as a more integrated, grounded designer. This semester, she is taking courses in **Artificial Intelligence** and **Information Architecture**, and is especially fascinated by how data, ethics, and interface design shape **human interaction with technology**.

She is currently working on two exciting projects. One involves using **extended reality (XR)** to bring new life to the iconic Hill Auditorium, aiming to deepen spatial storytelling and connection with the historic venue. The other is a research initiative at Munger Graduate Residences, which explores how **space design** and **behavioral science** can foster more inclusive and mentally healthy student communities.

Looking ahead, Tanisha hopes to design tools and experiences grounded in empathy, energized by understanding, and always in support of human connection. To her, design means hearing deeply and creating thoughtfully.

## Campus Career & Professional Development Resources

### **Find Job & Internship Listings** | University Career Center

Explore Career Opportunities with Handshake

Looking for internships, job opportunities, or networking events? Handshake is the University of Michigan's go-to platform for connecting students with employers, career fairs, and professional development resources.

[More details](#)

### **ECRC** - Career Development Workshops in Canvas

Visit [here](#) and click "Enroll in Course."

## Campus General Upcoming Dates & and Deadlines

**April 7-11** | Graduate & Professional Student Appreciation Week, theme "Innovate & Celebrate: Graduate Student Engineering Excellence" ([Link](#))

**April 15** | Tax Day

**April 22** | Classes end

**April 22** | Last day to submit graduation application for Winter 2025 Graduation

**May 2** | Rackham Graduate Exercises Ceremony ([Link](#))

**May 3** | Spring Commencement Ceremony ([Link](#))

**August 12** | Last day to submit graduation application for Summer 2025 Graduation

**August 25** | Classes begin

## Other Campus General Events

Here's some information about what's happening at the University of Michigan that might interest you. Check [Happening @ Michigan](#) for more events and details.

**April 16, 12:00pm-1:00pm** | Michigan Engineering Student Focus Groups ([Link](#))

**April 16, 1pm-2pm** | Interview & Hiring Process Accommodations ([Link](#))

**April 17, 12:00pm-12:45pm** | Boost Work Productivity with GenAI ([Link](#))

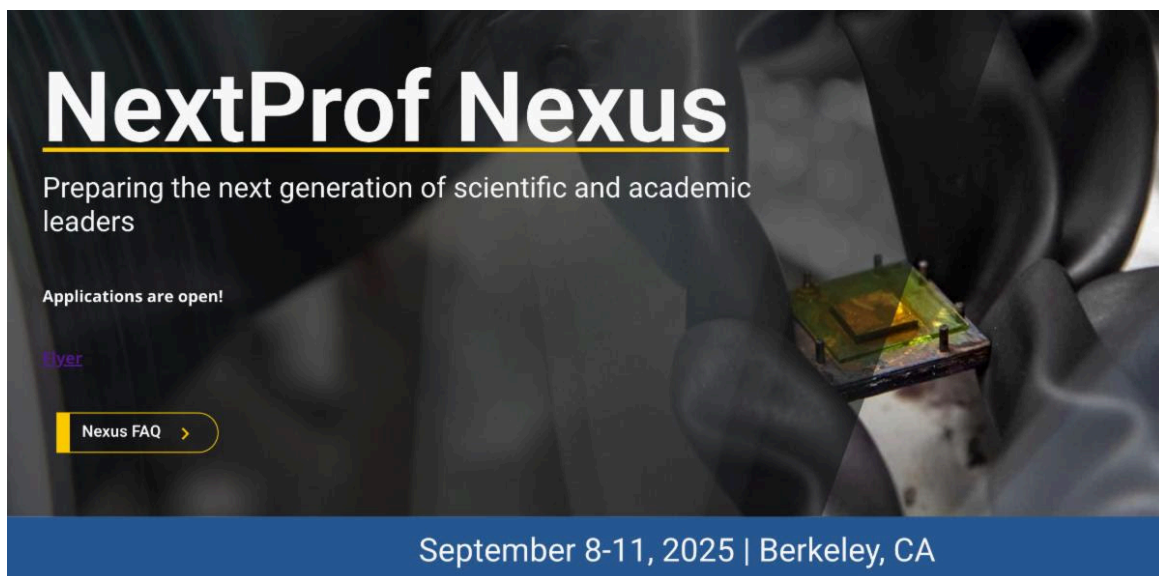
**April 22, 12:00pm-12:45pm** | Boost Teaching and Learning Productivity with GenAI ([Link](#))

**April 23, 11:30am-1:00pm** | Engineering Education Innovation Days 2025 ([Link](#))

**April 30, 3:30pm-4:30pm** | 2025 Research and Analytics Showcase, Center for Academic Innovation ([Link](#))

## External Conferences & Opportunities

### 2025 NextProf Nexus held at UC Berkeley



**NextProf Nexus**

Preparing the next generation of scientific and academic leaders

Applications are open!

Over

Nexus FAQ >

September 8-11, 2025 | Berkeley, CA

### Applications due April 21, 2025 by 5pm, EDT

This preeminent event is designed to give participants the opportunity to explore and prepare for a faculty position in academia. To be eligible for Nexus, you must be a senior-level PhD candidate, postdoctoral researcher, or an early-career scientist or researcher in the field of Engineering.

[Apply here](#)  
[More details](#)

**April 25** | Participation in NSF-funded study on engineering research lab group dynamics

An Opportunity to Participate in an NSF-Funded Research Study on Graduate Lab Dynamics

Dr. Catherine Berdanier, Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Pennsylvania State University, in collaboration with Dr. Jessica Deters from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, is conducting an NSF-funded research study focused on interpersonal dynamics within graduate engineering research laboratory environments. This study has been approved by the Penn State Institutional Review Board (IRB).

[Survey link](#)

[More details](#)

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**Fully Funded PhD Opportunities at Imagination Lancaster****April 30, 2025**

They are looking for proposals for design-led research into topics including:

- Sustainable and Regenerative Systems
- Robotics and AI
- Biomaterials
- Digital Worlds and Worldbuilding

[More Information](#)

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**Engineering Design Show Chicago****September 10-11, 2025**

A new exhibition entirely dedicated to mechanical, embedded and electronic design.  
Venue: Donald E. Stephens Conference Center, Rosemont, Chicago

[Registration link](#)

[More details](#)

## Call For Content

Do you have news, events, achievements, or opportunities you'd like to share with the Design Science community? We'd love to hear from you!

Send your content or ideas to [desci-gradcoord@umich.edu](mailto:desci-gradcoord@umich.edu), and it could be featured in an upcoming edition of the Design Brief!

[Visit Our Website](#) | [Contact Us](#)