Our programs and classes challenge students to tackle problems that are happening right now. We work with nonprofit, corporate and public entities to develop projects that address real-world problems.
Your gift enables the d.school to advance its big picture vision: a fundamental shift in how people teach, practice and think about creativity and innovation.

**Giving Opportunities**

**Directorship**

$5 million

Demonstrating confidence in the impact that outstanding leadership will have on the d.school, your endowed gift provides the director with regular income and flexibility to support d.school teaching, research and programming as opportunities arise.

**Fellows**

$2 million per fellow

Each $2M gift names a fellow. Fellows are talented professionals at points in their career when they seek new ways to influence their fields. They learn design thinking inside the d.school as they advance an ambitious project from the real world. Then they relaunch themselves and create change, with the added benefit of a new set of skills they can teach others.

**K-12 Design Thinking**

Existing K-12 classroom and pedagogical models are in need of change. The d.school will apply its techniques to envision and create powerful models for teaching and learning. Gifts of any size may be directed to the d.school’s K-12 work through this expendable fund. The goal is to put design thinking in the hands of K-12 teachers and bring innovation practices to secondary school leaders.

**Innovation Fund**

The d.school is a place to ask bold questions. And there are many bold questions yet to be asked about advancing the teaching and practice of creativity and sparking interdisciplinary collaboration. Gifts of any size may be directed to the d.school’s mission through this expendable fund for real-time critical operational support.

Support some of the world’s top innovators as they push the boundaries of human-centered design to address complex systems and tackle pressing real-world challenges.

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One bright day in August 2016, three teammates who had just completed an intense two-quarter course at the d.school, “Design for Extreme Affordability,” boarded a flight back to Capetown, South Africa.

They were en route to reunite with their project partner, a social enterprise called Shonaquip, which makes high quality products for children with severely restricted mobility. Long known in the region for their excellent wheelchairs, Shonaquip had partnered with the class in the hopes of making headway on a product that could support their small clients’ big physical needs at night, or while lying down during...
the day at care homes or school facilities. This is a major concern: Without the right recumbent support, the positive health effects of sitting up in a supportive wheelchair are undermined.

It had proved an elusive task. Existing products were bulky, expensive, and worst of all, hard for caregivers to use. They had to be set up by a trained therapist, and every time a caregiver positioned a child to sleep or be turned over during the night, ample room for error meant the child wasn’t really receiving the quality of care that she or he needed and deserved.

The students were traveling with what they thought was a working prototype. But when they landed and started testing the model, they quickly discovered that their design wasn’t that effective. Given their own space in Shonaquip’s local manufacturing facility, the team began iterating rapidly. They built, tested, re-built. Again and again.

Finally — a breakthrough. Abandoning hook-and-loop fasteners as a method for fixing the padded blocks on the product in place, the team started experimenting with telescoping rods, straps, and a novel slot-and-clamping rig that seemed to be nearly error proof.

Their agility and persistence paid off. Their partner agreed; unbeknownst to the team they entered the students’ work in a South African design competition. In October 2016 they won first place and will use the funding to help launch the product.

This team included students from the Schools of Engineering and Medicine: Mindy Phung, Shivani Torres, Jessica Hawkins, and Oliver Boeckel.
While a junior at Stanford, Katie Kirsch, ’16, co-founded a project called Girls Driving for a Difference.

Inspired by experiences she had while taking education design classes at the d.school, she and her team created a workshop aimed at teaching design thinking to middle school girls. Encouraged by their early prototypes, they raised over $35,000 on Kickstarter, and took off in an RV to bring their workshop to girls and communities across the US. In 14 weeks they crossed 30 states, coached 55 workshops, and reached over 1200 middle school girls nationwide. Every workshop they offered was free.

“Middle school is a critical time for girls. A lot of insecurities rise about their bodies . . . about who they are. It’s the age where girls stop raising their hands and stop pitching in ideas. As a team of women who have been through these ups and downs, we asked ourselves what are the ways we’ve been growing as leaders? How can we give some of those experiences to middle school girls who might be questioning their ability to give something to the world and become a leader at all? We weren’t sure exactly how to start those conversations until we just started a workshop and saw what stuck.

“I can feel it when I walk in. There is so much energy here. People are crazy about the ideas they are coming up with and they want to make them into a reality. There’s something so special about the d.school and the type of people that it brings together and the type of work that people are able to accomplish together in this space. What’s most important to me is being able to take this energy and the things I’ve learned from this context and take them to a totally new environment.”
Ben Knelman began his start-up in a d.school class, though he didn’t know it at the time. For one project he engaged low-income people who had little access to traditional banking services and experimented with text messages as a way to help people establish savings behaviors.

“The d.school made me believe how democratic the nature of innovation can be.”
A year after the class was over he reconnected with one of his test users, a janitor with a salary of $21,000. She continued to use Ben’s original prototype and was proud to report that she had saved $2000 over the previous 12 months.

Ben knew he couldn’t let the project drop. Through more classes he deepened his skills and passion to launch a business and serve those on the financial fringes.

That business became Juntos, which has won several awards for financial inclusion, and which Ben still leads as CEO today. Juntos is reaching over 1M people in seven countries in Central America, South East Asia, and East Africa.

“Six months after I started Juntos, I realized, ‘Oh my gosh — I am doing microeconomics!’ But I’m doing it in a totally different form than I ever thought I would be. And this way is so much more interesting and fun to me than any of that analytical research ever would have been.

“We are starting now to have access to sample sizes of people to do some of the most interesting behavioral research on finances for the poor, particularly savings; more than any of the leading researchers in the world. All of the famous professors have sample sizes of only a couple hundred people . . . or they are doing it in a lab setting. We are able to see what people are doing in the real world. Most behavioral economists don’t get to do the experiments that we are getting to do.”

Ben holds degrees in Economics, Russian Literature, and Engineering from Stanford University. He took three d.school classes while a graduate student.

“No one would have predicted I would become an entrepreneur,” Ben says. “I thought I would be an economist. I thought that looked like working in industry or at the World Bank: very analytical and research based. I did not think of myself as a creative person. It was not until well into my Stanford years that I began to realize that creativity was at the basis of all the things that gave me energy. Even the things I loved about literature and econ, for me they were acts of creation.

“The d.school made me believe how democratic the nature of innovation can be. To let go of perfectionism and let go of being worried that I was supposed to have some great solution inside my head . . . that was ultimately really empowering and liberating.”