

M.S. in Creative Collaboration and Multidisciplinary Design (Executive Summary)

October 2022

Program Overview

In today's highly networked organizational structures, leaders require a flexible toolkit to respond to shifting landscapes with agility, foster creativity across teams, and the skills to become well-rounded strategists and communicators. To address this need, the College of Arts, Media and Design (CAMD) is proposing a 32-credit experiential M.S. in Creative Collaboration and Multidisciplinary Design rooted in the creative process and design as the main drivers for adaptive thinking, collaborative team-building, and data-driven communication. Students will complete a 20-credit core curriculum complemented by 12-credits of course electives to provide additional breadth and depth of knowledge. Students will work closely with an assigned academic advisor to choose electives that are best aligned with their career aspirations and professional goals. Graduates will leave this program with the following broadly applicable career skills:

- Design Methodologies and Strategies
- Adaptive and Improvisational Thinking
- Data Storytelling/Visualization Techniques
- Dynamic Multi-Channel Communication
- Team-based Creative Engagement
- Immersive Technology for the Future of Work

Market Demand

The M.S. in Creative Collaboration and Multidisciplinary Design includes a combination of core skills that current and future leaders will need to shepherd their organizations through a rapidly changing landscape. As noted in the 2018 *The Future of Jobs Report* by the World Economic Forum, "By 2022, no less than 54% of all employees will require significant re- and upskilling. Skills continuing to grow in prominence by 2022 include analytical thinking and innovation as well as active learning and learning strategies. Human skills such as creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, persuasion, and negotiation will likewise retain or increase their value, as will attention to detail, resilience, flexibility and complex problem-solving."¹ The Economist's January 2017 Special Report notes that "Creative thinking and problem solving will be the #1 most valued skills for future workplaces."² This is further supported by Adobe's analysis of 2 million job postings, gap analysis across 18 different career fields, and multiple in-depth interviews with employers. Across the 18 career fields they analyzed, communication skills (71%) were the most highly sought in job postings, followed closely by creativity (50%) and collaboration (41%).³ Rutgers University also conducted an in-depth study of U.S. job postings between Aug. 2015 – July 2018 where they quantified positions which included "design thinking" as a required skill for new hires. Rutgers identified over 16,000 advertised positions that included the term "design thinking" in fiscal year 2018. The University compared this to the previous two fiscal years and discovered that "between 2016 and 2018 there was a 200% increase in jobs seeking design thinking compared with a 6% increase in all positions."⁴

In spring 2022, the College of Arts, Media and Design (CAMD) hosted an Industry Roundtable in collaboration with leaders from the Seattle campus to gauge employer interest in the content and structural innovation of the degree. Attendees included representatives from Amazon, King County Medic One, Kirkland Office of Emergency Management, Nordstrom, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), Providence Digital Innovation Group, Starbucks, and the Seattle Office of Emergency Management. While participants expressed great interest in the program content and encouraged rapid development of professional development workshops, they focused particular attention on the flexible structure as a novel differentiator for this degree, which will be discussed below.

As evident from the diverse industry sectors represented during this roundtable in Seattle, this experiential degree intends to attract professionals from multiple industry sectors and the occupational outlook statistics for each of the targeted sectors appears promising. Employment in computer and information technology occupations is projected to grow 13% from 2020 to 2030, faster than the average for all occupations. Employment in healthcare occupations is projected to grow 16% from 2020 to 2030, much faster than the average for all occupations, and adding approximately 2.6 million new jobs. While many entry-level communications positions only require a bachelor's degree, a master's degree provides opportunities for career agility and advancement. Finally, management occupations are projected to grow 9% from 2020 to 2030, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations, and will result in approximately 907,000 new jobs. Employment growth is expected to be driven by the formation of new organizations, and expansion of existing ones, which should require more workers to manage these operations.

¹ [The World Economic Forum, "The Future of Jobs Report," 2018, pg. 37](#)

² [The Economist, "What employers can do to encourage their workers to retrain," January 2017.](#)

³ [Adobe Inc., "Get Hired: The Importance of Creativity and Soft Skills," November 2019, slide 15.](#)

⁴ [Rutgers University, "Is Design Thinking a Skill?," September 2018.](#)

Structural Innovation

Accelerated Completion: This experiential master's degree provides the flexibility of full-time or part-time schedule and the entire 32-credit degree can be completed in as few as 12-to-18 months (respectively).

Program Delivery: Each course will be structured in a hybrid format such that course lectures and theory-based content will be delivered online with complementary on-campus components for hands-on experiential learning.

Professional Development Training: The 2-credit format of most courses allows for easy deconstruction into non-credit professional development workshops, bootcamps, and customized engagements for our industry partners.

Industry-Driven Projects: Employers will be invited to contribute real-world business challenges as embedded class projects to bridge theory with real-world application for students. Employers will also be invited as advisory board members to ensure continuous improvement, program currency, and alignment with market needs.

Seamless Degree Pathways and Trackable Credentials: Students may decide to earn a badge through a non-credit workshop or bootcamp as a stand-alone offering or before pursuing the formal degree as described below.

Stackable Credentials for Employers

This experiential master's will intentionally be delivered through dual business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) pathways. CAMD has designed this program in a modularized and stackable format that we believe will be particularly appealing to working professionals, alumni, and employers. Illustrative on-ramps include:

Professional Development Workshops – Prospective students will first have the option to select from a series of non-credit workshops that will be delivered in-person across our network of campuses (starting with Seattle, San Francisco, Vancouver, and London) to serve as both stand-alone professional development offerings and as an on-ramp for those who wish to further their education. We are focusing workshop selection based upon feedback from industry roundtables we are hosting in each region. We intend to send these bootcamps through the Northeastern University badging system so that participants can earn a Level 1 or 2 badge to demonstrate competency.

Professional Development Bootcamps – Prospective students will next have the option to select from more intensive, skills-based modules directly aligned with curriculum within the M.S. degree. These 24-hour, non-credit modules will be delivered in hybrid format (synchronous online complemented by on-campus experiential learning components) to provide a deeper dive into content areas for additional professional development and/or as a springboard into the formal degree. The broadly applicable content will include experiential learning projects sourced from external partners to optimize career applicability across industry sectors. We will leverage Northeastern's badging system so participants can earn a Level 3 badge that can be applied to credit-bearing coursework through prior learning assessment (PLA).

Graduate Degree Program – Students can enter this degree program directly (or through pathways above) on a part-time or full-time basis for completion in as few as 12-to-18 months. Most courses have been developed in 2-credit modules and will be scheduled in 7.5-week blocks to limit the total number of classes a participant is taking simultaneously. Hybrid course modalities will allow lectures and theory-based content to be delivered online with complementary on-campus experiential learning components and group work. Coursework will include real-world business challenges sourced from external partners to bridge theory with “real-world” application through embedded projects.

Contribution to College and University Mission

The College of Arts, Media and Design has set a bold vision to empower the next generation of students, researchers, and practitioners to create the future by engaging their innovation and creativity, curiosity, and entrepreneurial spirit to emerge as leaders, thinkers, creators, and drivers of human potential. Powered by experience-driven teaching, learning, and research, CAMD believes that the fields of design, communication, media, and the arts are crucial for shaping human experience in our age of technology. Design methodologies leverage the collective wisdom, experience, and diverse perspectives within any organization to yield results that are far more powerful, engaging, and interesting. This has been one of the cornerstones of CAMD's teaching philosophy and is increasingly being applied across all departments within the college. This experiential master's degree is being developed for current and future leaders to address user needs, draw inspiration from within and outside their organization, and create information flow that is accessible and can be turned into action items that add value. The flexible formats also address a critical goal within Northeastern University's Strategic Plan to “create environments where students can learn anytime, anywhere, with anyone.” Experiential master's degrees are structured to meet the needs of today's busy working professional and lifelong learner. As a program that can quickly be modularized and deconstructed to onboard new students, CAMD can strengthen employer and alumni connections and engage the regional networks through our campuses worldwide. This breaks down the “artificial barriers of place and circumstance” to put the power of education in the hands of the student.