
2-6-2020

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 6, 2020

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International Center for Creative Growing with Columbus

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- When Cedarville University industrial and innovative design (IID) junior Nick Mahek began working with his team on a new line of toys, he kept hitting a roadblock. But it wasn't his creativity. It was his classmates.

"We started this toy car project, and we were crammed into the woodshop making foam models," Mahek explained. "Everyone was running into each other because there was no room. We needed a bigger space."

Nick Mahek, ask and you shall receive.

The International Center for Creativity (ICC) recently moved from its original facility, a former design "farm" owned by Columbus, Ohio, industrial design legends Deane Richardson and Dave Smith, to a new, more spacious and better-equipped facility at the Innovation Campus at Lakehurst in Dublin, Ohio. Classes began at the new site on January 27.

ICC is an educational space where students come to learn consumer product design, transportation design, exterior space design and interior space design. IID students at Cedarville University spend their junior and senior years at the ICC in Columbus. Cedarville's industrial and innovative design program, ranked #5 in the nation by College Values Online, is an exclusive partnership between the ICC and Cedarville University. There are approximately 60 accredited programs in the country, and Cedarville is believed to be the only program of its kind at a Christian university in the United States.

ICC's move parallels an overall growth trend in Columbus, which has become the Midwest hub for innovation and design over the last 10 years. Columbus is home to three different higher education programs in industrial design and is now an internally recognized and rapidly growing innovation community.

"We were at the front end of the development of this experiential and innovation methods curriculum redevelopment," Jim Stevenson, ICC's president and IID supporting instructor, commented. "Now it's mainstream. And there's a high creativity quotient in Columbus."

"We couldn't be any more humbled and inspired to partner with Cedarville," noted Stevenson. "Combined with the 10-year campus master plan that is currently underway on Cedarville's main campus, this agreement gave us the green light to dream at a higher level that we hadn't been able to before."

And dreaming they have done. While the original property in Powell, Ohio, has a welcoming woodland setting and building style that invites exploration, the program's success necessitated a vision beyond this idyllic landscape. What started with three students in 2012 has grown rapidly to more than 100,

with IID consistently among the top 10 majors for enrollment at Cedarville. As a result, the learning and creative spaces got tighter with a lot more elbow bangs and shoulder bumps.

Mahek loved the design farm, but he sees the need to grow and expand.

“The juniors and seniors were separated by buildings,” he said. “The workshop was in a different section; the computer labs were in a different building, and we were crammed when we did peer review sessions. The new facilities are all in one larger building, making it easier to collaborate and work on group projects. In the other facility, we had to ask ourselves as students, ‘Do we have space for this?’”

With a major as hands-on and creative as IID, space to be creative is a significant concern. IID majors create multiple two-dimensional drawings, which they typically hang on every available wall space. They create three-dimensional models from cardboard to start, then shift to foam, clay and sometimes wood, PVC or composites.

Imagine a group of kids building a pirate ship in your dining room from old appliance boxes, construction paper, crayons, markers, foam board and worn-out bed sheets. But instead of a pirate ship, college kids are creating a prototype for a new electric car. Not enough space in the dining room for that job. That’s a job for an open floor plan, like the basement. With this move, ICC just gained lots more square footage of “basement.”

In addition to creative space, the new building will also provide more parking, better internet connectivity, a grab-and-go food station and a fitness room. One-, two-, and three-bedroom apartment living is a short walk from the new site, plus there’s going to be a food truck alley. Traditional restaurant lunch options are also just a short drive away.

The Innovation Campus at Lakehurst is also on existing Central Ohio Transportation Authority (COTA) bus lines, and is 15-20 minutes closer to Cedarville, meaning the trip from the main campus to ICC just went from more than an hour to about 45 minutes.

“The students are thrilled with the upgrades,” Stevenson said. “We’ve been paying attention to their feedback and needs, and we’re making improvements to the program.”

Developers will complete the final custom finishes on the new spaces throughout the spring, and will be ready for outside visitors at the ICC’s annual spring open house, scheduled for May 1.

“We have loved our time at the original location,” Stevenson said. “But this is a dream come true to move into facilities of this quality and to do so in this area. Columbus has become the home for startups, creatives and innovators, and the Dublin area is intentionally attracting educational institutions and companies committed to innovation.”

The new location inspires sophomore IID student Trey Roudebush, currently taking classes at Cedarville’s main campus. He will begin at ICC in fall 2020.

“What excites me most about going to the ICC is how much I am going to be immersed in design and working among so many other talented designers,” Roudebush said. “The move to the new studio shows that the ICC wants to deliver the best quality education in the best surroundings so we can be as prepared as possible for our careers.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,380 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including its Bachelor of Arts in Innovative and Industrial Design program,

strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.