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The Education Newsletter



Is Consumption a Behavioural Trait?

At MICA, Design Thinking
is a Way of Learning

In Conversation with Dr. Rashi Dixit

Alternative Schools Redefining
What Learning Looks Like
in India

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We would like to invite our readers to participate in our exciting Photo Contest by sharing powerful moments that reflect learning, mentoring, and student life. The winning entry will be featured on the cover of our newsletter. Please send your entries to write@uconnectworld.com. Submissions must be in portrait format

Meet the Photo Contest Winner



Kriti Gunashekar is a third-year MSci Biology student at The University of Manchester. Passionate about research, she has developed experience in genetics, microbiology, molecular biology and bioinformatics. Known for her analytical mindset, and also for her flare for short story writing and contributions to the Changemakers Collective podcast, Kriti's aiming to make her mark in biological sciences — and if her eye for standout discoveries is anything to go by, we're sure she'll do just that. After all, she already managed to spot this striking piece of graffiti worthy of our newsletter cover!

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COVER STORY

Alternative Schools Redefining What Learning Looks Like in India

By Paarth Suri,
Founder of Indian School Times



For decades, the Indian schooling system has largely been defined by board examinations, structured classrooms and a curriculum designed to prepare students for competitive entrance tests. While this system has produced generations of academically capable graduates, it has also left little room for alternative learning models that focus on curiosity, creativity and real-world skills.

When we talk about schooling in India, most people think of boards like CBSE, ICSE, IB or State Boards. Classrooms with rows of desks, a teacher in front, and examinations that largely define success. But beyond this familiar system, **several lesser-known schooling models quietly exist across India-Montessori schools, Waldorf-inspired learning environments, forest schools and homeschooling communities. These systems challenge the idea that learning must always happen through textbooks and exams.** Montessori schools focus on self-directed learning through hands-on materials, while Waldorf education emphasises creativity, arts and storytelling. Forest schools encourage outdoor learning in natural environments, and homeschooling allows families to design personalised learning paths outside traditional school systems.

Despite their presence, these schooling models remain relatively unknown in India. A large part of the reason lies in the country's deep-rooted exam culture, where board results and competitive entrance tests heavily influence schooling choices. Awareness among parents is also limited, and many alternative schools operate on a smaller scale with restricted capacity. In addition, regulatory structures around board affiliations and certification often make families hesitant to explore unconventional pathways. As a result, traditional schooling systems continue to dominate the education landscape. Schools such as Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh and Riverside School in Ahmedabad have long experimented with learning environments that prioritise curiosity, creativity and real-world engagement over rote memorisation.

The future of education by 2030 is the hybrid learning model, where traditional classroom teaching is combined with digital platforms, AI-supported learning and project-based experiences. In this approach, students may attend school for discussions, experiments and collaborative activities, while core academic content and practice are delivered through adaptive technology that allows them to learn at their own pace. Platforms like 21K School and institutions such as Minerva University are already exploring elements of this model. As artificial intelligence continues to personalise learning and remove geographical barriers, hybrid schooling could make quality education more flexible and accessible across regions.

Interestingly, India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has already begun encouraging **experiential learning, multidisciplinary education and skill development in schools.**

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However, a meaningful policy shift could involve the Ministry of Education introducing a dedicated innovation or alternative schooling fund to support models such as Montessori, experiential or project-based schools. By allocating a targeted budget to encourage such institutions, the government could expand the number of private schools experimenting with new learning approaches, giving parents a wider range of choices for their children. At the same time, stricter regulatory frameworks and transparent financial and academic audits would be essential to ensure quality, accountability and student welfare.

India has no shortage of talent, but it often goes unnoticed because our education system values uniformity over individuality. Many children grow up believing they are 'weak students' simply because they couldn't build up confidence through academics. **Alternative, forest, outdoor, home or skill based schooling reminds us that intelligence is not one dimensional.** When we identify a child's strength early and double down on that skill with the right guidance, we don't just create better students we create confidence, capable and fulfilled individuals.

Perhaps the real question parents should ask is not just "How many marks did my child score?" but "Is my child curious, confident and learning how to think?"



Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.

If you're an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you.
Please write to us at write@uconnectworld.com



Is Consumption a Behavioural Trait?

By Eeksha Masand,
Second year BSc in Psychology and Biology,
Krea University, CAAS 2024 student, UC Peer Mentor 2026

Why our brains are wired to overconsume and how emotional triggers and dopamine-driven habits are quietly shaping unsustainable choices?



STUDENT'S Corner

Have you ever bought something just because it was on sale? Or because it's the last one in stock? What if you need it later and it's not available, right? We don't overconsume because we're careless; we overconsume because our brain is wired to. While scrolling through reels late at night, we come across tempting offers that sound so enticing that we must make a purchase then and there. Often, this happens while we are neck-deep in assignments, and shopping gives us something to look forward to. The dopamine rush that we get from the anticipation of a parcel is the perfect way to keep us motivated to complete a task. **In many ways, our spending habits are predictable psychological patterns.**

Wired to Want More

Our minds are structured in such a way that consumption has become instinctual, whether it is to fit into new trends, a coping mechanism, or a distraction from our other problems. When an ad saying 70% off appears on our screens, we instantly experience a dopamine spike, exciting us enough to quickly browse through the products available. Once we spot something we like, it's almost impossible to stop ourselves from confirming the order, irrespective of whether we really need the product or not. Something similar happens when you have an exam coming up, but then you get a chance to order a new top or hoodie; the adrenaline/ dopamine rush takes away the stress from the upcoming exam by giving you something to look forward to. In academic environments, we are surrounded by uncertainty, which makes small rewards like ordering a new t-shirt or even a packet of ramen feel extremely comforting. This rush is similar to the rush we experience while gambling; **we are basically wired to want to buy more because the anticipation of new products excites us**, the same way anticipating winning money encourages people to bet.



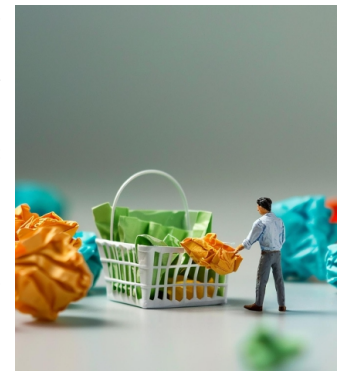
The Dopamine Loop

Consumer behaviour is also altered by **hedonic adaptation**, which is the human tendency to return to a baseline level of happiness after positive or negative events. We start with the dopamine spike when we anticipate something. If it's better than we expected, dopamine rises; if it's the same as we expected, either we are neutral, or there's a spike. If it's disappointing, there's a drop in the dopamine level. Once we get back to the baseline level of happiness, we tend to seek the same spike, which then creates a loop. For instance, when we buy a packet of chips during the 10 min break between classes, we expect it to taste a certain way,

although sometimes it tastes better, which then gives us an additional dopamine spike. But once you've eaten it, we get back to baseline level, making us want to buy something new. **Another factor that influences consumerism can be societal norms.** On a college campus, most students are motivated to buy new clothes for every event or at the start of each semester, which often leads to **overconsumption**. This want for new things is mostly driven by our want to belong to or display a certain identity, not by what we need. Sometimes I end up buying a new hoodie because it goes perfectly with an outfit, but I did not need a new one, although it definitely made me feel better and, in some ways, more myself.

Shopping as Emotional Regulation

Sometimes this loop is more emotionally driven than you expect. Sometimes we buy new things to cope with the stress or pressure that we feel; it's almost like a **reward system**. We tend to reward ourselves either with new clothes or even food. Shopping is often a form of self-soothing, a way to feel a sense of control when outcomes are uncertain. I may not know how I performed on a test, but afterward, I treat myself to a bowl of French fries, not because I did well, but because I gave my best. That way, regardless of the result, I've still given myself something to enjoy. This essentially helps regulate the anxiety that comes with thinking about exam and test scores. These emotional regulation patterns are often what advertisements tap into. So, after receiving a disappointing grade on a quiz you thought went well, seeing an ad for a dress you've been wanting can instantly lift your mood, because at least you can still have something to look forward to.



Rethinking Consumption

Now that we are aware of the fact that emotions can trigger our shopping habits, maybe we can **identify the trigger and work toward changing the way we react to it**. In some cases, waiting a few hours before you actually make a purchase can stop us from compulsive buying and overconsumption. I know the limited-time offers make this hard to do, but waiting even for a few minutes sometimes can alter the way we think, making us return to our baseline happiness level. But maybe then we can find happiness in minimalism, and maybe the fact that you resisted an unnecessary purchase can give you an adrenaline rush like no other! This way, we can bring a change in our social norms. Maybe we can find the same rush while thrift shopping and recycling instead of overconsumption; this way, we can create healthier loops or maybe even negate them. **In a society designed to make us want more, we need to take a minute to ask why, why do we want more, what are we really gaining for our purchases, and do we need more?**



Redefining the Role of School Counsellors – Supporting students’ transition from School to University

By Joanna James, School Counselor, Alphera Academy, Bahrain

Bridging the gap between academic success and real-world psychological preparedness.



The journey of a student from secondary school to university cannot be classified solely as an academic transition; it’s a **core developmental shift** that shapes how an individual thinks, feels, makes decisions, relates to others, and navigates independence. Research studies in child and adolescent psychology

define emerging adulthood as a stage marked by **exploration of identity, a sense of possibilities, and optimism**. However, difficulty in making the right choices, a strong focus on the self, instability, and a lingering sense of being “in-between” are core concerns during this phase, as many emerging adults take on responsibility but do not yet fully feel like adults. Traditional school counseling focuses only on college entry and career readiness, thereby failing to prepare students for the psychological realities beyond school.

The Gaps in Traditional School Counselling

As a school counselor, I have understood the importance of providing psychological support services, aiding the developmental trajectories of children from high school to college. College students often struggle with the increased independence after graduating from high school. Without **developing strategies** for this life stage, emerging adults may struggle with coping, anxiety, and emotion regulation. Given their role in addressing adolescents’ social and emotional needs, we, as school counselors, need to be well-equipped to help students build skills they can carry beyond the secondary setting.

Nurturing the Whole Self

I believe that supporting identity exploration begins with **nurturing a strong belief in the development of the whole self, one that balances mental, social-emotional, and physical well-being**. In my practice, I intentionally design structured activities such as **identity mapping, reflective journaling, and discussions around personal meaning** to help students deepen their self-understanding.

I have also experimented with using alumni panels and mentorship programs to help students visualize real pathways from school into adult life, which can greatly impact the student. The counselors must help the children identify long-term and short-term academic, career, social, and emotional goals. Students should be guided to develop time management and organizational skills through perseverance, enabling them to achieve both short- and long-term goals while building effective coping skills, social maturity, and appropriate behaviors. This will aid in tackling the concern of instability during emerging

adolescence. **Students often feel uncertain about their identity and direction**. Counselling groups can create space to talk about these feelings, framing them as part of normal development rather than faults or failures. Teaching practical life skills like financial literacy, time management, and healthy routines also builds readiness for the independence of university life.

Transitions are inherently unpredictable. Teaching coping strategies, such as reframing negative thoughts, stress management techniques, and problem-solving skills, equips students with the tools to handle setbacks with resilience, whether adapting to a new city, navigating social dynamics, or balancing academic demands. Promoting ownership of personal goals and behaviour is essential. **Goal-setting frameworks like SMART goals help students clarify, plan, and track their aspirations**. Encouraging reflection on successes and challenges also nurtures self-efficacy.

The Counsellor’s Expanded Mission

The recent war circumstances have negatively affected the children in many ways, resulting in heightened symptoms of anxiety, sleep disturbances, emotional dysregulation, and post-traumatic stress disorder. During this time, I worked closely with caregivers and teachers, ensuring consistent support, reassurance, and gradual rebuilding of resilience despite the ongoing external stressors.

Thus, school counsellors must be facilitators of holistic development, not only academic advisors. **We must equip students with psychological tools, not just educational ones.**

By preparing students for the developmental realities of emerging adulthood, we should help them step into university and life with emotional awareness, resilience, and a deeper sense of self. In my counselling approach, I make it a priority to include identity work, emotional regulation, decision-making, and life skills alongside university planning. For me, the goal goes beyond helping students secure letters. I strive to prepare them to succeed in life. After all, real success is not just measured by grades or university offers; it is reflected in a young person’s ability to **grow, adapt, cope, and truly flourish** in the world that awaits them.



Disclaimer

The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.

At University Connection, we engage with visionary thinkers from around the globe who are redefining the landscape of education. By capturing the essence of their ideas and insights, we serve as a bridge connecting all stakeholders in the education ecosystem.



UCONNECT would be incomplete without the valuable contributions of such trailblazers.



In today's Educator Spotlight, we're honored to feature **Dr. Rashi Ahuja Dixit, Senior Career and College Counsellor, City Montessori School, Lucknow.**



In Conversation with Dr. Rashi Dixit

Please share a defining moment in your journey as an educator.

One defining moment in my journey was the successful implementation of a 6-week intensive Career Awareness Workshop for students of Classes 8 and 9. What made it transformative was not just its design but the measurable impact it demonstrated through pre- and post-program surveys. Watching students gain clarity about their academic goals, build confidence in decision-making, and develop motivation for structured preparation reaffirmed my belief that career counselling must be evidence-based, structured, and introduced early in a student's life.

Another milestone was moderating global dialogues at the International Conference of Chief Justices (2023 & 2024), where discussions centred on youth and future generations were held. **It strengthened my conviction that education policy and career guidance are deeply interconnected.**

How has your experience working with students evolved over the years? Are there any shifts in mindset, expectations, or values that you've observed?

Over the years, I have witnessed a significant shift in student mindsets.

Earlier, students sought clarity on "what to pursue." Today, they seek alignment with purpose, impact, flexibility, and global exposure. Gen Z is more aware, more vocal, but also more anxious. Social media comparisons, rapidly changing job markets, and evolving admissions trends have created both opportunity and pressure. **As counsellors, we now go beyond college lists; we address emotional literacy, cognitive biases, collaboration skills, and identity-building.** Students today value authenticity. They want to build impact, not just resumes.

In what ways have platforms like UniversityConnection.in aided in broadening views and impact in the education sector? What is your experience with UC?

Platforms like UniversityConnection.in (UC) have played a vital role in democratizing access to information. UC bridges the gap between schools and universities by creating structured engagement opportunities. It allows counsellors to stay updated with institutional trends, scholarship opportunities, admission shifts, and emerging programs. For institutions like ours, it broadens perspective by ensuring students in cities like Lucknow

receive the same exposure as those in metro hubs. My experience with UC has been collaborative and forward-looking, helping expand networks and inform decision-making.

What trends or gaps do you currently see in the school education system that deserve more attention from educators and policymakers?

One of the most pressing gaps in school education today is the delay in structured career awareness. Students often begin serious exploration only in Grades 11 or 12, when decisions feel urgent and high-stakes. By then, choices are reactive rather than reflective. Alongside this, there remains an overemphasis on marks as the primary indicator of success. Academic scores frequently dominate identity formation, leaving little room for exploration of strengths, interests, and interdisciplinary potential.

Another concern is the insufficient use of data in counselling frameworks. While schools collect academic data, few systematically analyze trends in aptitude, engagement, motivation, or longitudinal outcomes to inform guidance strategies. Evidence-based counselling must move from being aspirational to operational.

Equally critical are well-being gaps. Anxiety, fear of failure, and peer comparison, amplified by social media, are increasingly shaping student decision-making. Yet emotional literacy and psychological readiness are not always integrated into career conversations. Additionally, alignment between school education and employability remains inconsistent. In the context of SDG 4 and the education-to-employment pipeline, schools must consciously integrate skill awareness, adaptability, and future-of-work conversations into their curriculum. **Policymakers need to position structured counselling frameworks as foundational components of schooling rather than optional enhancements.**



Fuel your Passion



Commit to Growth



Inspire Change

Contd.

In Conversation with Dr. Rashi Dixit



How do you or your organization approach preparing students for global higher education opportunities?

At City Montessori School, our preparation model is proactive and layered. We begin early, introducing structured career exploration modules in Classes 8 and 9 to cultivate curiosity and awareness before subject specialization begins. This early foundation reduces confusion later and fosters intentional academic planning.

We follow a structured profile-building framework that moves students from Participation to Initiative to Impact. The emphasis is not on accumulating activities but on demonstrating growth, ownership, and measurable contribution. Data-driven academic planning supports this journey, ensuring that subject choices, standardized testing strategies, and co-curricular engagements are aligned with long-term goals.

Parent orientation programs form a crucial pillar of our approach, as informed families create stable ecosystems for decision-making. Additionally, global university engagement forums and exposure to evolving admissions trends, including holistic review practices and standardized testing transitions, ensure students are globally aware yet personally grounded. Ultimately, our goal is not just admissions success, but long-term alignment, where students thrive intellectually, emotionally, and ethically in their chosen environments.

What advice would you give to educators or counselors who are just starting their journey in this field?

For educators and counselors beginning their journey, empathy must precede expertise. Technical knowledge of admissions processes is essential, but understanding a student's fears, aspirations, and identity is foundational. **Counselling is relational before it is procedural.** It is equally important to build systems rather than rely solely on individual sessions. Structured workshops, data-tracking mechanisms, parent engagement models, and collaborative networks create sustainable impact. Staying globally informed about evolving trends while remaining sensitive to local cultural contexts ensures relevance and balance.

Finally, intuition should be strengthened with evidence. **Data-informed practices elevate counselling from guidance to strategy.** Above all, remember that you are shaping identity, not merely applications. Career counselling is not about telling students what to become; it is about helping them discover who they already are and empowering them to walk that path with clarity and confidence.

Your role model educator:

My mother, Mrs. Kadambari Ahuja

What does the world need most today:

Empathy

An overlooked superpower among students:

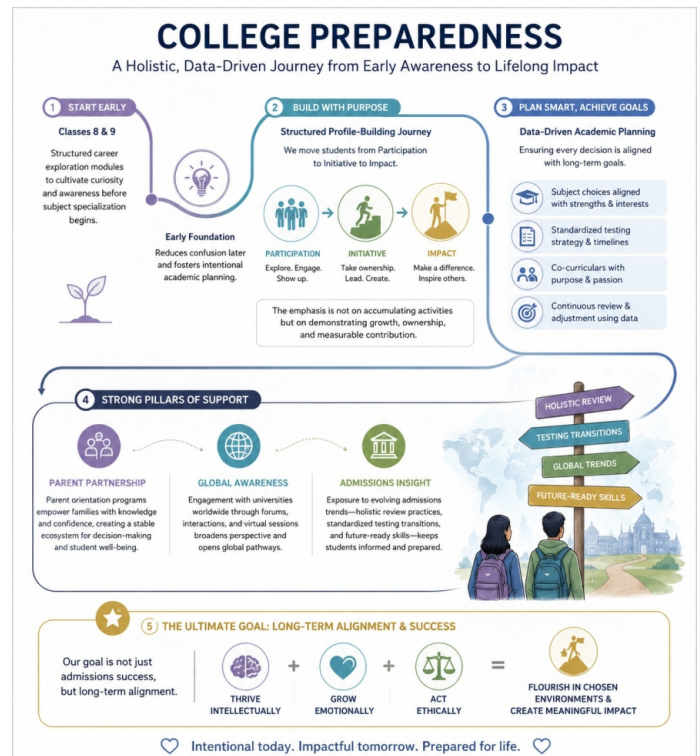
Collaboration

A teacher you remember fondly:

Ms. Nirula, My Economics teacher

Your hometown:

Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India



AI generated



Your Journey.
Your Impact.
The world is better
with you in it.

UNIVERSITY
Spotlight

MICA
MARYLAND INSTITUTE
COLLEGE OF ART



Kristian Bjørnard



Karl Williamson

At MICA, Design Thinking is a Way of Learning

By Kristian Bjørnard, Chair of Graphic Design, and Karl Williamson, Product Design Faculty, MICA, USA

An educational approach that positions design thinking as both a discipline and a way of knowing

"Design Thinking" has become a widely used and misused phrase in business and industry. Intended to describe a set of creative practices distinct from the reasoning prevalent in business and engineering, design thinking has lost much of the meaning that makes it a powerful tool.

Businesses use design thinking to describe in-person workshops and charrettes that never leave the office. Universities offer courses built around brainstorming with colorful sticky notes. Or consultants sell a toolkit for solving problems without questioning why those problems exist in the first place. **Design thinking is a distinctly different way of thinking that goes well beyond sticky notes and problems.** It is about direct engagement, framing and reframing the problem, and iterating with materials, prototypes, and stakeholders to co-create the fit between the problem and the solution.

The 1958 Eames India Report made a similar argument: "The purpose of training students is to prepare them to meet problems in design, problems which have occurred many times, and problems which have never occurred before and to meet them all openly and inquiringly."

What Design Thinking Actually Means

At the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore, students learn that design thinking asks them to:

- Frame problems carefully before jumping to solutions
- Prototype early and often
- Test ideas with collaborators and communities
- Iterate based on feedback and real-world conditions

This approach returns design thinking to a process rather than a formula or worse, a veneer of creativity. Here, design thinking evolves through risky experimentation, difficult critique, and strategic collaboration. For artists and designers, this mindset is powerful. It allows them to move fluidly and create synergies between disciplines, combining creativity with analytical thinking to address complex challenges.

How MICA's New Major Fuels Design Thinking

MICA's new **Design and Innovation** major continues a long tradition of reframing design education as a way of thinking, not merely an aesthetic. It also makes design education more approachable for students who may not yet know exactly what kind of designer they want to become. Rather than pushing students toward narrow specialization from the start, **the program encourages interdisciplinarity** by teaching shared tools, such as drawing and ethnographic research, tools that students will use to



collaborate in advanced courses. Students pair the major with a co-major such as graphic design, product design, architectural design, or emerging fields like biodesign. Shared coursework brings students together to explore ideas collaboratively while building expertise in their chosen fields. In practice, this means students regularly work across disciplines and sometimes across species.

A few examples:

Microorganisms: Students in biodesign courses work with microorganisms as collaborators whose behaviors must be understood and shaped through environmental conditions.

Elephants: In one project, students collaborated with behavioral scientists at the Smithsonian's National Zoo to design enrichment toys for elephants. The project required students to rethink fundamental design assumptions: What does "user experience" look like when the user is a 10,000-pound animal?

Other students: In a graphic design class, students collaborate to make, design, and use an instructional guide for specialized equipment. This exercise is deceptively simple, but it forces students to confront a fundamental truth: teaching others even the simplest design task shapes how people connect and experience their environment.

What Distinguishes a MICA Graduate as a Design Thinker

Take those workshops we mentioned earlier. MICA students can make thoughtful contributions in those sticky note sessions, but they can also take the ideas on those sticky notes and turn them into something real. And because MICA emphasizes exploration over predetermined career paths, graduates often move into remarkably diverse fields.

Recent alumni have pursued careers in areas such as:

- Implantable medical device design
- Emerging technology firms in Europe
- Contract furniture manufacturing
- Soft goods and product development

Others have shaped the tools designers themselves use. Alumni now work on the interfaces behind creative software platforms like Adobe and Figma, designing the digital environments where millions of designers create their work.

This range of outcomes reflects the central premise of MICA's approach: design thinking breathes life into the studio, the shop, the lab, the field, and the workplace. **MICA graduates carry a distinct way of knowing that does not end when they change industries. Instead, we are cultivating a way of interacting with the world.**

UNIVERSITY
Spotlight



D Sew Clubs
EST. 2011
The International Sewing School



**From Fabric to Future:
Changing Lives
Through Fashion Education**

By Ms Kalpana Singh,
Director at The International Sewing School, Malaysia

**Beyond the runway: where talent meets training
to build global fashion leaders.**

Fashion education is rapidly transforming lives and the industry itself, turning ambitious students into confident design leaders ready to take on the world. Imagine the allure of glittering runways and iconic designer collections: that's the visible magic of fashion. Yet beneath it lies a **fast-moving, highly competitive field** that demands constant innovation and new voices. This is where schools worldwide step up, from renowned institutions to flexible online programs, providing the skills and vision needed to thrive globally. Let's explore how this education is reshaping tomorrow's trends.

Those simpler times, when raw passion and a keen design eye were enough to break through, have faded. Today's landscape brims with rivals and trends that shift in an instant, thereby requiring **more than talent** alone. Fashion education fills that gap by teaching essential technical abilities, like pattern drafting and material science, alongside insights into worldwide markets. This allows graduates to emerge equipped to navigate and succeed in an industry worth billions.

Beyond Design: A Multidisciplinary Powerhouse

Fashion schools have evolved into specialized powerhouses, offering far more than standard degrees. Programs span design, merchandising, marketing, and leadership, complete with professional-grade studios and direct links to industry mentors. Online accessibility has democratized it all, drawing talent from every corner of the globe and building a truly connected fashion community. **Hands-on experience** is at the heart of it. Through internships, brand collaborations, and student showcases, learners craft impressive portfolios while facing genuine industry hurdles. Guest speakers and workshops from top professionals deliver insider wisdom and valuable contacts that no textbook can match. As fashion itself advances, so does its education. Lengthy



traditional degrees are blending with shorter, tailored courses, while digital tools and virtual platforms expand reach. This shift welcomes diverse backgrounds, allowing more people to pursue and influence fashion on an international scale.



Designing with Purpose: Sustainability at the Core

Sustainability and ethics now define forward-thinking design, and schools are leading the charge. Courses embed lessons on eco-materials and responsible production, ensuring students create with purpose, for the planet and its people. It's preparation for a more conscious era. Technology and social media have rewritten the rules, letting designers connect instantly with global fans via platforms like Instagram. Progressive schools integrate digital creation and online marketing training, arming students to not just adapt, but dominate.

The Future of Fashion Education

The horizon looks bright: education will prioritize green innovation, tech mastery, cultural awareness, and multifaceted expertise. Tomorrow's designers will blend artistry with strategy to keep pushing boundaries.

At **The International Sewing School in Malaysia**, we're channeling this global momentum into local action. Like the world's top programs, we blend hands-on projects, sustainability focus, digital skills, industry partnerships, and ethical training to ignite student potential. Join us to activate your fashion journey and emerge as the next design trailblazer. Enroll today and shape the future. Visit: www.dsewclub.com



DID YOU KNOW?

The Devil Wears Prada - the film is cited as a key study in how the fashion industry is a significant driver of economic activity and social influence.

According to the NPR, the 2006 film highlights a much faster, "39-look" fashion cycle where social media, fast fashion, and ultra-fast fashion retailers (like Shein or Temu) have changed the "trickle-down" model into a "trickle-up" one.



Your Education Digest: Snapshots of events that matter

Are you hosting an event for your institution?
Send us details, and we will be happy to feature relevant events
within this section of UCONNECT

Charushilla Narula, Founder and Director of University Connection, recently visited the University of Chicago. The visit offered valuable insights into undergraduate admissions at highly selective universities. Conversations with current students and the admissions team highlighted UChicago's holistic approach, where every part of an application matters—from essays and recommendations to activities and optional videos. With nearly 50,000 applications for just 1,800 places, the focus remains on finding students who align with the university's intellectual culture and collaborative community.

The experience emphasized that at UChicago, the application is viewed as a narrative rather than a checklist. Key takeaways included UChicago's student-friendly "No Harm" test-optional policy, the importance of authentic storytelling in essays, and the value of meaningful relationships reflected through recommendations and extracurricular involvement.



Ishpreet Kaur, a representative from University Connection recently shared that her time at FLAME University felt less like a formal institutional visit and more like an immersive experience that slowly grew on her. She highlighted how the two-day visit was thoughtfully orchestrated. Rather than a traditional lecture, the discussion offered relatable, real-world insights, particularly the standout takeaway that lateral influence is more important than vertical influence. Beyond the classroom, the campus was noted for its striking balance of aesthetic beauty and functional design. Surrounded by lush greenery, the environment felt peaceful yet vibrant, with classrooms and a sports complex that were described as a "dream" for any student or fitness enthusiast. These facilities underscored a clear commitment to a holistic lifestyle, mirroring the university's overarching focus on practical, action-oriented learning.

The second day further solidified this understanding through Ms. Anju Deoskar's session on Liberal Education, which emphasized the importance of exploration and self-discovery over the mere pursuit of a degree. A particular highlight was the Discover India Program, where the dedication to field research and collaborative problem-solving showcased how the university translates theory into meaningful real-world impact. Ultimately, the visit concluded not just as a campus tour, but as a deep dive into an educational philosophy that empowers individuals to explore, iterate, and define their own paths.



Kala Anand, Director of Sports Advisory at KPMG India, recently shared her reflections on the Young India Sports Summit 2026, emphasizing that while ideas can originate in any forum, their success depends on a shared intent across all stakeholders. She highlighted the summit as a powerful signal of the evolving landscape of Indian sports, particularly regarding the intersection of professional careers and institutional education. During the event's opening panel, Anand engaged in a meaningful dialogue with Srishty Jain, Vishal K, and Naveen, focusing on the critical role educational institutions play in bridging the talent gap within the sports industry. The discussion brought to light both the persistent challenges and the emerging opportunities for students looking to build careers in this specialised field. She specifically commended Karthik Yanamandra for orchestrating the summit effectively despite a demanding lead time. A significant portion of her insights centred on the strategic growth of Telangana as a burgeoning sports hub. Under the leadership of Jayesh Ranjan, the state is leveraging a watertight policy framework and clear objectives to establish a presence on both the national and global stages. Supported by a strong roster of local athletes, this initiative serves as a prime example of how Indian states are dreaming big. Ultimately, Anand's experience underscored a shift toward action-oriented growth in sports, driven by robust policy and a commitment to nurturing the next generation of professionals.



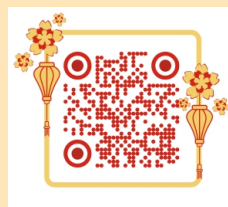
UPCOMING EVENTS

This summer, build more than just your resume with Xavier University, Cincinnati.

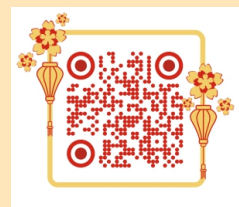
Coming soon for Grade 11 & 12 students: a hands-on Business Internship (June–July) focused on leadership, strategy, innovation, and real-world learning; followed by a National-Level Cybersecurity Competition in July. Open to students across India.

For enquiries: sandeep.bhalla@xavier.edu

Atlas Summer School
ISDI, ISME, uGDX



Confused about summer opportunities?
Join SAAS (Summer Application-Admission Schedule)





Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

Design Career Scavenger Hunt: Ready to Look Closer?

Pause for a second.

Right now, you're surrounded by design – the phone in your hand, the apps you use, the ads you notice. But here's the twist: behind every one of them is a career you probably don't think about. And some of those careers? They're hidden right here.

In this word-search style challenge, each clue leads to a design career.

Your job is to figure it out... and then find it hiding in the grid. Sounds simple? Look again

Some answers will jump out. Others will make you think twice. By the end, you won't just finish a game.... you'll start seeing the world a little differently. Ready to spot what most people miss?

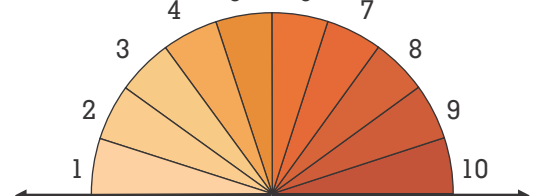
Let the hunt begin

1. This person selects and arranges clothing and accessories for photo shoots, films, or celebrities.
2. They design everyday objects: from chairs and toys to appliances, making them useful and beautiful.
3. They bring characters and stories to life frame by frame – think Pixar or Disney films.
4. This professional designs buildings, homes, and public spaces where we live and work.
5. They plan and create the look of websites, from colours, fonts, layouts, and all.
6. In film and advertising, this person leads the entire creative vision of a project
7. They shape and refine content – in publishing, film, or digital media – cutting what does not work.
8. They create hand-drawn or digital artwork for books, magazines, packaging, and campaigns.
9. In 3D design and product development, they build digital or physical prototypes.
10. They create patterns, textures, and fabrics used in fashion, home décor, and interiors.

Z	E	N	Y	J	Q	V	A	B	M	S	X	T	E	X	T	B	D
E	P	H	O	T	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	R	N	K	P	I	I
B	S	S	H	O	T	D	B	L	O	G	T	E	C	X	E	J	R
A	M	L	I	E	D	I	T	O	R	E	C	J	K	I	D	O	E
N	I	G	H	Y	F	B	V	D	P	L	H	G	E	Q	S	B	C
I	L	L	U	V	G	Y	M	O	P	D	S	T	R	C	X	L	T
M	P	L	K	T	R	E	W	E	B	A	D	S	R	C	B	L	O
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T	A	I	L	G	N	C	J	P	R	O	D	U	C	T	Y	R	J
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K	L	N	G	S	E	B	I	N	X	Z	T	J	I	R	S	E	O
I	L	L	U	S	T	R	A	T	O	R	K	J	B	C	M	G	D
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A	S	T	Y	L	I	S	T	B	G	T	E	W	Q	T	M	L	L
C	K	G	T	S	V	J	O	B	T	I	O	L	C	E	B	H	E
Q	T	Y	P	O	G	R	A	P	H	E	R	M	O	C	L	F	R
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S	T	U	D	I	T	E	X	T	I	L	E	L	I	T	E	M	J

The Orange Meter

- Answers
1. Stylist
 2. Product Designer
 3. Animator
 4. Architect
 5. Web Designer
 6. Director
 7. Editor
 8. Illustrator
 9. Modeler
 10. Textile Designer





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We are proud to be connected with a diverse network of individuals and organizations that resonate with our mission of empowering career choices one student at a time. We welcome and value insights from students, parents, partners, and educators on a wide range of topics and issues, and look forward to sharing their perspectives.

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