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Title: Agents of Change.

In the past, the roles of product design educators involve scaffolding students to navigate technological innovations, consumers, consumption and manufacturing. Through transfer of technical and professional knowledge, educators empower students to translate latest technological advancements into user friendly offerings and systems for a modern society. The approach was focused on creating commercial value while addressing practical and physical problems.

However, in the 'post industrial revolution' of the new century, product designers need to contribute more than just tech-savvy solutions that meet emerging needs. With globalization and ubiquitous technology making impact on every facet of life, society's attitudes have changed, placing emphasis not only on a product's functional aspects but added concern on the social, cultural, economic and environmental impact of such product offerings. Issues resulting from societal phenomenon like poverty, aging population, globalization, inequality, cultural loss

and environmental degradation have become the realm of product designers in the modern age.

Modern design education and the notion of 'open' design seeks to create designers who are agents of change working in co-design and participatory contexts directly with members of society from a wide range of backgrounds. They are more responsive to a host of societal issues and problems in both familiar and new uncharted contexts. These designers analyze trends in society to identify and address emerging issues pertinent to improving quality of everyday life. These designers not only develop a broader forward-focused awareness, but also require a sensitivity to cultural and historical lineage that are so easily lost in a fast-paced society. Designers preserve culture, history and heritage; and decipher the cutting-edge of technological developments for the masses.

In contemporary design education, designers are agents of change empowered by possibility and opportunity in the globalized society. Through creative problem solving, designers impact the lives of individuals from different segments of society.

As evidence to this, students have generated projects that yield breakthrough

product designs. They address a wide range of contemporary societal concerns. As examples, inclusive designs for the disadvantaged which innovatively allow the visually-impaired to successfully apply make-up, a sustainable kitchen appliance which focusses on multi-function, space saving and durable engineering; and a product which helps the 'social media' generation to engage with Chinese calligraphy and Chinese cultural heritage.

In the end, design education hopes to empower young minds to expand their future roles as not only developers of services and experiences, but also agents of positive change who facilitate improvement of society and creation of value in a sustainable ways.