



IIDA NY Student Development
presents



SUP

STUDENT UPLIFT PROGRAM

CHAPTER AWARD SUBMISSION 2026

Connections Change Careers. Not Everyone Starts With Them.

Every year, talented students graduate from New York's top design programs with strong portfolios and a passion for the profession. But many of them are without the professional connections that open doors.

Meanwhile, IIDA NY's sponsors had no structured way to connect with the next generation, and emerging professionals had hard-won insight to share but no platform to do it.

Three groups. A shared need. No bridge between them. SUP was built to change that.





WHERE THE NEXT GENERATION FINDS THEIR PEOPLE

WHAT'SUP

Remember the person who first made you feel like you **belonged** in this industry? The mentor who opened a door, made an introduction, or simply took the time to say —*you have something here*. SUP exists to be that moment for the next generation of New York designers.

Now in its third year, the Student Uplift Program brings students, emerging professionals, and sponsors into the same room and watches something spark. Every Gold and above IIDA benefactor sponsors one deserving student with an annual IIDA membership, turning a financial commitment into a **human one**. Then we bring everyone together at our signature matching event, where mentorship flows, ideas ignite, and the kind of **connections** that shape entire careers are made over great **conversation** and even better company.

Because every designer deserves that person who **believed in them** first. SUP makes sure they find them.



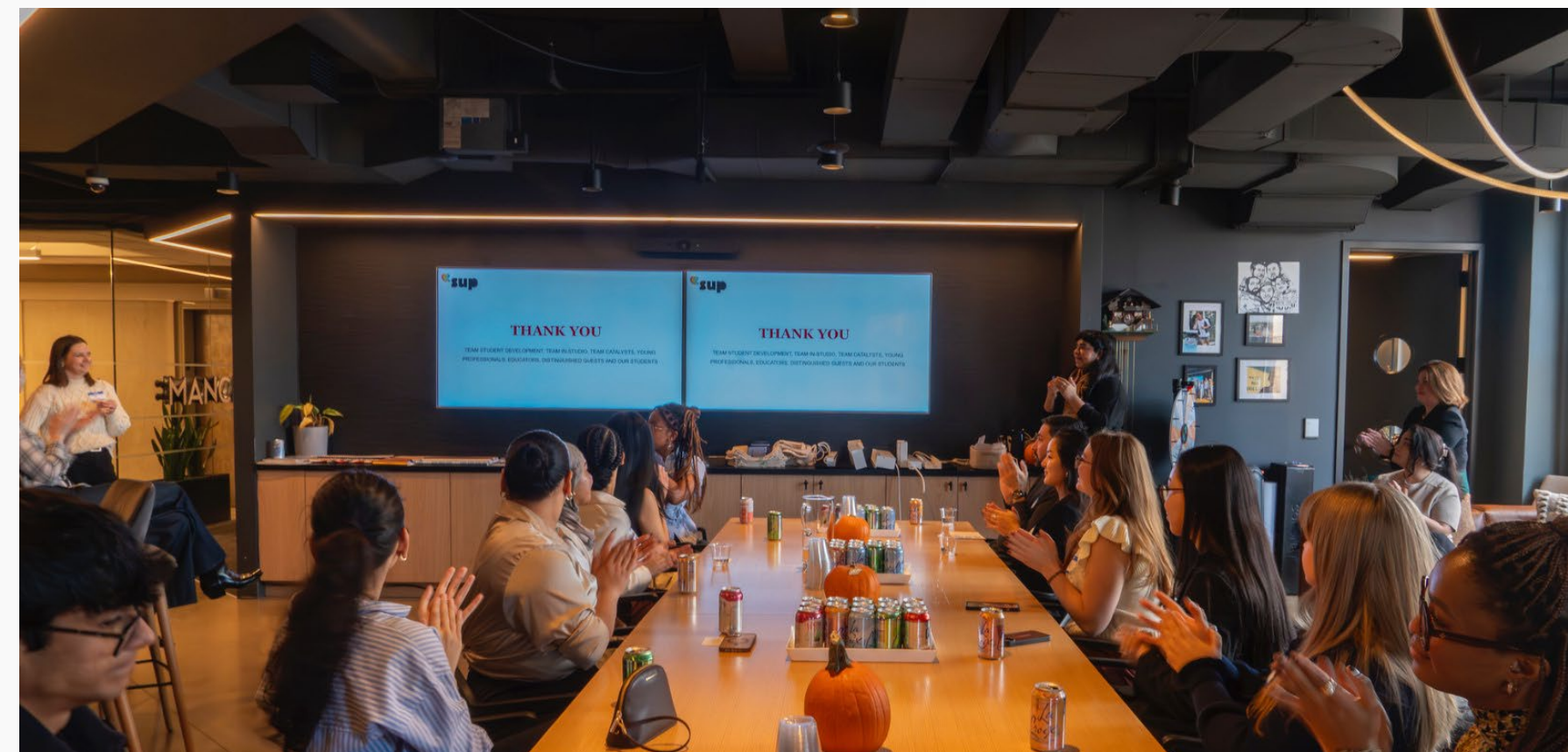
ENGAGING MEMBER GENERATIONS

ONE SPONSOR. ONE EMERGING DESIGNER.
ONE STUDENT. INFINITE POTENTIAL.

SUP is built on a simple but powerful idea: the most meaningful growth happens when generations learn from each other.

That's why we don't just pair a sponsor with a student. We create a mentorship triad by bringing together an experienced industry sponsor, an emerging professional, and a student in a relationship designed to give and take in equal measure. The sponsor offers access and wisdom. The emerging professional offers a perspective that's close enough to remember what starting out really feels like. And the student? They bring the energy, curiosity, and fresh eyes that remind all of us why we fell in love with this profession in the first place.

Each year, **12 Gold and above sponsors** make it possible to welcome **12 students** from across New York State into the IIDA community with a fully sponsored **annual membership**. Alongside them, **12 emerging designers** from our Design Firm Advocates join the program, creating a cohort of **36 professionals** at different stages of their careers, all in it together. But the membership is just the beginning. What we're really giving them is **access** and a warm introduction into an industry that can feel intimidating from the outside.





“ WHAT OUR SPONSORS VALUE

Attending SUP as an Interior Designer and Specifier, and returning as a sponsoring manufacturer ambassador, felt like a journey back in time, and a confirmation of my career path.

- Giuseppe Amato, Estel America
(Gold Sponsor)

IIDA Team with Giuseppe Amato and SUP'2025 Mentee Kiana Abram (Pratt)



Royce Epstein with the 2023 SUP Cohort

It was a pleasure to support the Student Uplift Program and spend the day with students in an engaging, hands-on, and interactive way—discussing sustainable materials and the evolving role designers play in shaping healthier, more responsible spaces. Programs like SUP create an important bridge between education and practice, offering meaningful opportunities for mentorship and direct engagement with manufacturers and designers early in students' careers. Experiences like these deepen their understanding of materials and help them see how thoughtful design decisions can shape both the built environment and the future of our industry.

- Royce Epstein. Senior Director | Design Insights Mohawk Group (Gold Sponsor)



FOR THE ONES WHO BELIEVED FIRST

Behind every thriving program is a person who showed up before it was easy, who championed students not because it was required, but because they genuinely cared.

Each year at SUP, Student Development honors one of those people. The **SUP Dedication Award** recognizes an individual within the IIDA community who has shown exceptional commitment to uplifting the next generation of designers, someone whose belief in students has quietly shaped more careers than they'll ever know.

Robin Gunther, Perkins & Will



SUP 2023

Rachel Robinson, Ted Moudis Associates



SUP 2024

Jessica Amato, Mancini Duffy



SUP 2025



EVENT DAY - SUP'2025

Every year, one of our Design Firm Advocates opens their doors and welcomes the SUP community in.

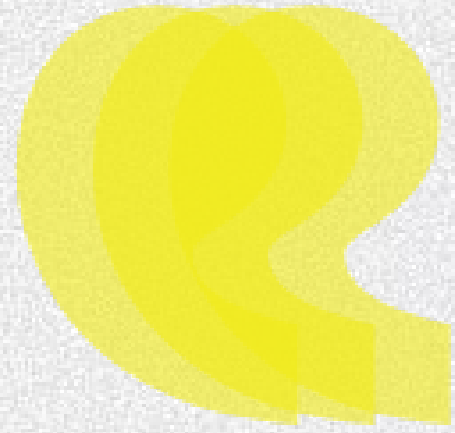
The day begins with our **matching ceremony**, the moment students meet their mentorship triad for the very first time. An emerging professional, an industry sponsor, and a student, brought together in a room full of people rooting for them. From there, a networking lunch gives everyone the space to connect across generations, swap stories, and begin building the relationships that carry well beyond the event itself.

Industry sponsors also have the opportunity to **showcase** their products and collections, giving students a hands-on introduction to the materials and brands shaping the profession today.

And every year, the day closes with something that feeds the mind as much as the spirit. Professionals earn a **CEU credit** while students participate in a dedicated learning session on the same theme, ensuring everyone leaves with something new.

2023 Sustainability at Perkins & Will, **2024** Building Industry Relationships at Ted Moudis Associates, **2025** Design and Technology at Mancini Duffy





LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

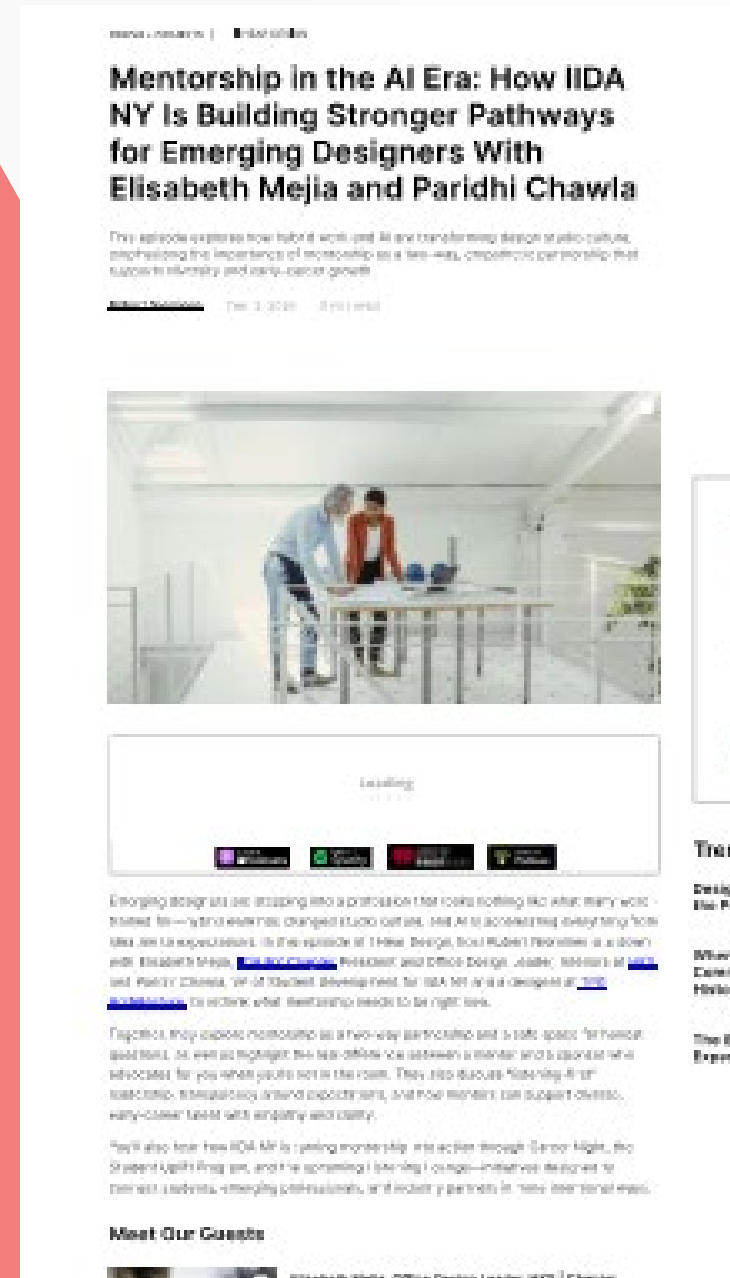
"When I was an emerging designer, I was paired with a student through this program and saw firsthand how impactful that connection could be. Those early conversations can shape how someone sees their place in the profession. Now, as VP of Student Development, it's incredibly rewarding to help grow the SUP program and expand the opportunities it creates for the next generation of designers."

-Paridhi Chawla, VP of Student Development





From podcast features to press coverage, the Student Uplift Program has captured the attention of the broader design community as a model for meaningful mentorship and student engagement.





65

Attendees every year

12

Students
from across NY State

12

Emerging Designers
from Design Firm Advocates

12

Annual Sponsors
Gold level and above

29

Past Presidents, Chapter Leaders, and Design Professionals

One afternoon. Multiple generations of the design community. Together.



BY THE METRICS

How the Model Works

Where the Money Goes

Catering	\$2,000
Venue	\$0 (Design Firm Advocate)
Raffle Items	\$0 (Donated by sponsors)

Where the Money Comes From

Event Sponsorship	Primary
Product Display	New (Year 3 addition)
Student Membership	Included in Sponsorship Package

Three Years of Results

\$0

Year 1
Broke Event

\$0

Year 2
Broke Event

\$1,000

Year 3
First Profit