

IIDA
NEW YORK
chapter

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.





“

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.

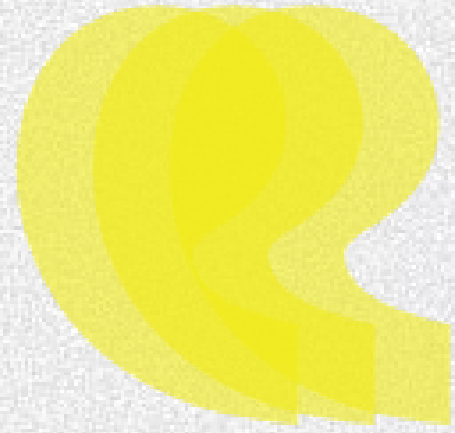
The day begins with our **matching ceremony**, the moment students meet their mentorship triad for the very first time. An emerging professional, an industry sponsor, and a student, brought together in a room full of people rooting for them. From there, a networking lunch gives everyone the space to 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





THE CONVERSATION HAS STARTED

SUP isn't just being felt in the room —it's being talked about beyond it.

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.

Project Manager (Hospitality Focus)
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Entry-Level Facade Architect/EIT
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Where Innovation Meets
Pilkington North America
solutions for your next project.

PILKINGTON

SUBJECTS • REGIONS • DIGITAL ISSUES • AN INTERIOR • CE STRONG • EVENTS

This event has passed.

IIDA NY Celebrates 2nd Annual Student Uplift Program

November 1, 2024 @ 11:30 am - 2:00 pm EDT

The International Interior Design Association's New York Chapter (IIDA NY) announces the return of the second consecutive year. This initiative, launched to support student development, brings together student and design professionals through membership, mentorship, and engaging events. The 2nd Annual SUP event, continues to align with IIDA NY's mission to empower the next generation of interior designers by fostering meaningful professional growth.

Held at the Ted Moudis Associates office (405 Lexington Avenue, 23rd Floor, New York), the event will offer participants a collaborative and dynamic experience. With a focus on education, networking, and creative engagement with industry leaders, exchange ideas, and gain valuable insights in a fun and supportive environment. Admission is free, and the event is designed to accommodate up to 60 attendees.

This year's event will kick off with an hour of networking, followed by the highly anticipated Matching Ceremony, where students will receive IIDA memberships, generously sponsored by industry leaders. The program will also feature a panel discussion on the topic, *Understanding Industry Relationships: From Manufacturers to Dealers, Reps, and Beyond*, offering valuable insights into the diverse connections that shape the design industry.

"The energy and enthusiasm we experienced last year were palpable, and we're thrilled to build on that momentum," said Student Development Co-Vice Presidents Robin Reigi & Elisabeth Mejia. "The 2nd Annual SUP event is all about creating opportunities for students to connect with professionals in an inclusive and engaging atmosphere. We look forward to seeing you continue to grow as a valuable platform for the design community."

The Student Development Committee, in collaboration with the IIDA NY College Ambassadors, will continue their support of emerging designers by presenting the annual Catalyst Laptop Award, providing laptops to promising future design professionals. The Student Development Committee aims to build on these relationships while expanding opportunities for diverse members, designers and educators to students and marketers.

About IIDA NY
The IIDA New York Chapter (IIDA NY) is an inclusive community of creative and diverse professionals, industry partners and advocates for design, encourages collaboration, shares knowledge and advocates for the interior design community. This professional and educational association provides invaluable resources to over 800 members in 10 specialty forums with the enhancing their expertise, knowledge and contacts. IIDA NY is proudly committed to design advocacy, sustainability, civic engagement, student mentorship and development, as well as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. For more information, visit <http://www.iidany.org/> (<http://www.iidany.org/>).

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All Events (<https://www.officeinsight.com/events/>)

- This event has passed.

Empowering Tomorrow's Interior Designers: IIDA NY Celebrates 2nd Annual Student Uplift Program

November 1, 2024 @ 11:30 am

IIDA NY IIDA NY

Chapter's Student Development Committee Continues to Unite Students & Design Professionals

The International Interior Design Association's New York Chapter (IIDA NY) announces the return of its Student Uplift Program (SUP) for the second consecutive year. This initiative, launched to support student development, brings together student and design professionals through membership, mentorship, and engaging events. The 2nd Annual SUP event, scheduled for November 1, 2024, continues to align with IIDA NY's mission to empower the next generation of interior designers by fostering meaningful connections and inspiring professional growth.

Held at the Ted Moudis Associates office (405 Lexington Avenue, 23rd Floor, New York, NY 10174), the event will run from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm, offering participants a collaborative and dynamic experience. With a focus on education, networking, and creative engagement with industry leaders, exchange ideas, and gain valuable insights in a fun and supportive environment. Admission is free, and the event is designed to accommodate up to 60 attendees.

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IIDA NY Supports the Next Generation of Designers

By today's standards, the interior design industry has a reputation for being a closed-off profession. For many years, it was a place where established designers and professionals would support their own, often overlooking the potential of emerging talent. However, the Student Uplift Program (SUP) has been created to help bridge this gap and provide a platform for students to connect with industry professionals.

With so many factors in the industry, it is often difficult for a student to know where to begin when it comes to finding a mentor. This is where the Student Uplift Program comes in. The program is designed to provide a platform for students to connect with industry professionals and gain valuable insights into the industry. The program is free and open to all students, and it is designed to accommodate up to 60 attendees.

For Elisabeth Mejia, who serves as vice president of student development at IIDA NY, it quickly became clear that they would have to rethink their role and what they could offer during a time of unprecedented change. "IIDA started as vice president of the committee in 2020, and I came on in July of the following year," she explained. "So when we were already thinking of ways to get students involved, we had the added layer of the pandemic, when everyone was working at home or in a hybrid setting."

Indeed, in an era of uncertainty and rapid change, the committee began to bridge the gap by ensuring that the events were a draw for all, not just educators and the young designers. "We are trying to bring in more and more, and making it what we call a 'win-win' for everyone involved. For the students, we are providing them with the opportunity to connect with industry professionals and gain valuable insights into the industry. For the industry, we are providing them with a platform to engage with the next generation of designers and gain valuable insights into their needs and desires."

As the founder of Redesign, Inc., which specializes in the sourcing and sales of architectural products, she adds that bringing people together comes naturally, and she hopes that having such a platform will help support new entrants to the industry. The new Student Uplift Program was created to connect students, sponsors, and professionals through membership, mentorship, and events.

Maria, an associate interior designer at HKS, notes that the membership costs are not prohibitive for younger members, as in addition to a reasonable fee to join IIDA, the committee laptop awards provide over 800 students. "We are being that our only focus is to make sure that everyone who wants to participate can do so."

Mentorship in the AI Era: How IIDA NY Is Building Stronger Pathways for Emerging Designers With Elisabeth Mejia and Paridhi Chawla

This episode explores how IIDA NY is building stronger pathways for emerging designers in the AI era, featuring insights from Elisabeth Mejia and Paridhi Chawla. The article discusses the importance of mentorship in a rapidly changing industry and how IIDA NY is providing a platform for students to connect with industry professionals and gain valuable insights into the industry.

Emerging designers are stepping into a profession that looks nothing like what many would expect. The industry has changed significantly, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the traditional path of education and experience is no longer enough. This is where the Student Uplift Program (SUP) comes in. The program is designed to provide a platform for students to connect with industry professionals and gain valuable insights into the industry. The program is free and open to all students, and it is designed to accommodate up to 60 attendees.

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Meet Our Guests
Elisabeth Mejia, Office Design Leader, HKS | Chawla



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