

Norman Design Fund - Design for America Training Report

On August 8-11 five members from Design for America UCSD traveled to Northwestern University to attend the 2019 Design for America Summit. This annual summit brings together all college campuses across the country with Design for America studios, industry leaders, and mentors to participate in workshops, listen to lightning talks, and plan out the next school year. We were able to attend this event largely due to the gracious award we received from the Norman Design Fund.

We found this event to be very valuable as it helped our skills as designers and leaders, helped us make new professional connections, and helped us plan out the year for our studio. Every one of us got the opportunity to attend workshops of our choosing, ranging from workshops on research to workshops on effective community partner outreach. Some of these workshops were led by industry professionals. One such workshop was a personal branding workshop led by Google representatives. In between workshops, we had the opportunity to chat with other Design for America leaders from other colleges. This was valuable as it allowed us to hear about what other studios are doing in terms of programming and projects. Some of these ideas (ex. having meetings solely for design feedback) we plan to adapt to our own studio this year. Furthermore, two of our members, Eric Richards and Andres Baez, led their own workshop during the conference that was attended by over 40 people across two sessions. They spoke about capacity building in human-centered design and how projects can evaluate the existing skills of a community to create sustainable and equitable design projects. They received positive feedback on their workshop which we were all happy about.

At the end of the Summit, our team was able to get together and synthesize all the ideas we learned over the course of the conference. We used this to make a more robust plan for studio recruitment and create a new rotational structure for our general body meetings. Specifically, we now plan to hold different types of weekly meetings, such as workshops, project feedback sessions, and talks from professionals. We also recorded the contact information of other Design for America leaders and have been in contact with them since the conference has ended.

Overall, being able to attend the Design for America Summit was extremely valuable to our studio and will help us create a more stable studio and more successful projects this year.

Sincerely,

Eric Richards and Danielle Zusman
Design for America Co-Presidents