

Continuing on from the Phase 1: Ad campaign, this new phase, focuses Problem Seeking, assignment immerses you in the collaborative, strategic, and research-driven practice of design thinking to solve real-world sticky/wicked problems for an authentic client.

**PURPOSE:**

The Phase 2 project is designed to immerse you in the full spectrum of design thinking by tackling real-world wicked problems with authentic constraints, clients, and outcomes. In this assignment, you'll engage in strategic problem seeking (developing research questions), research-driven investigation, and evidence-based iteration—equipping you with the skills demanded by creative industries and professional workplaces.

You will not only learn *HOW* to solve complex problems, but *WHY* deeper inquiry, rigorous teamwork, and iterative pivots make you valuable and adaptable in a rapidly changing field. This work will boost your confidence in college-level design while preparing you for the realities of industry and leadership roles. Through team collaboration, you'll build connections with your cohort, learn how to present with professional polish, and develop the analytical mindset, empathy, leadership, and communication skills that employers seek in subject matter experts.

By becoming a critical & creative thinker in complex, ambiguous, and evolving contexts, you'll acquire skills and resilience that transfer beyond the classroom—empowering you to create meaningful impact and thrive in your future design career.

**KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TASKS:**

**Problem Seeking & Definition:** Identify & refine a sticky problem (research questions) worth solving with a community partner (e.g., Rosamond Gifford Zoo).

**Research & Investigation:** Conduct in-depth research using scientific, observations, data collection, interviews, analytic, and empathetic methods. Use case studies, literature review, interviews, case studies, frameworks (e.g. 5 Whys, personas), secondary research, and contextual analysis.

**Strategy & Ideation:** Collaboratively brainstorm innovative, evidence-based solutions; map strategies and prioritize actionable opportunities for implementation of this knowledge for the client.

**Iteration & Prototyping:** Rapidly prototype ideas, test visuals & concepts, collect/integrate feedback, & iterate for improvement.

**Execution & Program Development:** Build out a detailed implementation plan, create supporting materials, and solve problems as the scope evolves.

**Professional Presentation:** Deliver persuasive, polished presentations of team findings, solutions, and strategies to both peers, community (academic and social) and the client.

**Team Collaboration & Leadership:** Take meaningful roles, practice accountability, and reflect on your contributions and team dynamics through discussions with peers, instructors and peer evaluations, course survey.

**Empathy & Reflection:** Approach the problem from multiple perspectives, consider stakeholder and user needs, and conduct personal + peer self-evaluations

**CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS:**

**Problem Mastery:** Demonstrate deep understanding of a wicked problem and its real-world context, showing diverse perspectives and robust research.

**Innovative Solutions:** Present creative, feasible strategies backed by evidence and empathy, with a clear hypothesis or rationale.

**Iterative Practice:** Show substantial growth through drafts, prototypes, and documented feedback loops—adapt and pivot as needed.

**Teamwork & Leadership:** Exhibit clear communication, accountability, and leadership roles within the team. Help develop a positive, productive group dynamic.

**Professional Presentation:** Communicate solutions with clarity, persuasion, and visual excellence. Tailor content for the audience/client. Respond thoughtfully to questions.

**Self & Peer Evaluation:** Complete honest personal self-evaluation and peer assessment forms reflecting on growth, contribution, teamwork, and performance.

**Reflection:** Articulate lessons learned, future recommendations, and implications for your future as a designer and problem solver.

**KEEP IN MIND:**

- +The best teams lean into feedback and see failure as forward progress, not as setbacks.
- +Iteration is tough—expect to revise, get feedback, and try again. The best work comes from embracing the process, not rushing to a single solution
- +Don't rush to a solution, live in the uncomfortable unknown

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE**

- +Research
- +AI can help you, organize, or check grammar, but all core ideas, writing, and design must be your own.
- +Always cite any AI use (show prompts).
- +Do NOT use AI to write drafts, generate visuals, or replace your original thinking.

**DESIGN THINKING PROBLEM SEEKING CAMPAIGN****RESEARCH: W 4 (9/17)****LAUNCH & PROBLEM FRAMING.**

Begin new phase, introduce design thinking, form teams, identify initial problem areas.

**RESEARCH: PROB DEF: W 5 : (9/24)****RESEARCH DEEP DIVE:**

Synthesize research, present findings, define strategic problems, reflect on research process.

**PROB DEF: W 6 : (10/1)**

**PROBLEM DEFINITION:** Group discussion, clarify responsibilities, submit refined problem definition

**PROB DEF: STRAT SOL: W7 : (10/8)**

**FINALIZE & THEME:** Present final problem definitions, form strategic solution teams, plan fieldwork.

**STRATEGIC SOLUTION: W 8 (10/15)**

**FIELDWORK & EMPATHY:** Fieldwork/design sprint at Zoo, observe, build empathy, brainstorm collaboratively. Design Charrette

**STRAT SOL: PROGRAM EX W 9 (10/22)**

**IDEATION & FEEDBACK:** Present initial solutions, refine top ideas with visuals, gather team feedback.  
Design Charrette

**PROGRAM EXECUTION: W 10 (10/29)**

**EXECUTION PLANNING:** Present execution plan and sketches, break into execution teams, select final projects 3-5 with preliminary visuals.

**PROG EX: PORT BEST PRACTICES:**

WEEK 11 (11/5)

**CRITIQUE & PROCESS:** Critique execution sketches, integrate feedback, submit progress report.

**PROG EX: PORT BEST PRACTICES:**

WEEK 12 (11/12)

**REVISE & PREPARE:** Revise solutions, focus on implementation, begin final presentation prep.

**PROG EX: PORT BEST PRACTICES:**

WEEK 13 (11/19)

**PRESENTATION REHEARSAL:** Rehearse and revise presentations, practice professional delivery.

**PROG EX: PORT BEST PRACTICES:**

WEEK 14 (11/26)

**THANKSGIVING BREAK:** Rest.

**PORTFOLIO BEST PRACTICES:**

WEEK 15 (11/26)

**FINAL PRESENTATIONS:** Deliver final team presentations, upload decks, complete evaluations..

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## PHASE 2

WEEK 7

(10/22)

**TIPS: Seduce the Eye:** Tighten up those headlines AND adjust final strategy. We are not married to any concept. Now you will be layering in image strategies with heads and benefits. Again, it is a negotiation game. This week you are visualizing image and headlines images that align, with the best benefit and head.

You will be producing (1!) final strategy, (3) final benefits, (2) heads per benefit with (4) image solutions per benefit. Find your system, both in headline and image. In other words, strategies can be found either verbal and through imagery — ideally both. Begin to fold in style guide mandatories.

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## PHASE 2

WEEK 8

(10/29)

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## PHASE 2

WEEK 9

(11/5)

**TIPS: Seduce the Eye:** Tighten up those headlines AND adjust final strategy. We are not married to any concept. Now you will be layering in image strategies with heads and benefits. Again, it is a negotiation game. This week you are visualizing image and headlines images that align, with the best benefit and head.

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## PHASE 2

WEEK 10

(11/12)

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## PHASE 2

WEEK 11

(11/19)

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## PHASE 2 (11/26 - THANKSGIVING BREAK)

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## PHASE 2

WEEK 12

(12/3)

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