



**CU COMMUNITY  
FAB LAB**

**STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2022-2027**

# OUR STORY SO FAR

The C-U Community Fab Lab began in 2010 by volunteers from the Urbana-Champaign community and members of the University of Illinois, joining the network of Fab Labs (Fabrication Laboratories) started by Neil Gershenfeld of MIT. The concept was to democratize making—allow anyone to make (almost) anything—through local action and global connections. Over the past 10 years, the Fab Lab has grown to host thousands of unique visitors each year, collaborating with makers, educators, researchers across the campus and local communities.

In integration with the iSchool in 2019, the lab is in the critical moment of aligning our mission with the iSchool and the university, at the same time remaining as an asset for the local community and expanding national and global networks for broader impacts. As part of the Informatics program, the lab is highly interdisciplinary and benefits the campus communities across disciplines. We bring together learners and experts from the various parts of the campus as well as the surrounding community, which we believe allows for truly groundbreaking discoveries that are relevant to the lives of people in the real world. As a critical component of the public land-grant university, the lab seeks to play a boundary spanning role that intersects with both on- and off-campus communities, breaking the convention of the binary, artificial distinction of the university versus community. To further this mission, the lab has set the following overarching goals for AY 2022-2027.

# OUR MISSION

## ACCESS FOR ALL: INSPIRING CREATIVITY AND DISCOVERY THROUGH DYNAMIC LEARNING

The Champaign-Urbana (CU) Community Fab Lab supports campus and community members through research, university courses, community engagement and programming, professional development, youth summer camps, and design and fabrication support for all students, staff, faculty, and community members. We seek to play a boundary spanning role across those areas and intersect with on- and off-campus communities. We are committed to creating an open, community-oriented, and capacity-building makerspace, fostering a dynamic experiential learning environment, and sparking interdisciplinary groundbreaking discoveries.

## OUR VISION

## TO BUILD A COMMUNITY OF COURAGEOUS CREATORS AND PROBLEM SOLVERS

## CORE VALUES

**CREATIVITY**

**SELF-DETERMINATION**

**INCLUSIVITY**

**BOUNDARY SPANNING**

# OUR GOALS

## 1 INCREASE RESEARCH CAPACITIES, ACTIVITIES, & PRODUCTIVITY

The C-U Community Fab Lab inspires and supports interdisciplinary research on making and design, embracing all types of scholarly inquiry. We aim to be the best place to conduct research on educational, library, and community makerspaces. Current focus areas include: inclusive and accessible makerspaces; library makerspaces; makerspace evaluation and impact; humanities makerspaces; technology, digital, and information literacies; arts- and game-based learning; information organization, and more.

## 2 OFFER ROBUST & ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION FOR FUTURE AND CURRENT MAKERSPACE PROFESSIONALS

Makerspaces have become an essential program and service for contemporary libraries, schools, museums, community centers, and other organizations. There is a significant need for higher education (such as pre-service education for librarians and teachers) to offer quality and accessible education for future makerspace professionals. The CU Community Fab Lab—ideally situated in the iSchool, home for the top Masters' Program in Library and Information Sciences in the nation, including its #1 Youth Services program and a strong history of community informatics—strives to be the destination for makerspace professional preparations.

## 3 PROVIDE UNIQUE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE DISCIPLINARY BACKGROUNDS

The lab offers introductory university courses to design and fabrication across a variety of context and medium for students from all disciplines. The cross-disciplinary courses taught by our instructors include INFO 415 Makerspace Introduction, INFO 416 Game Studies, INFO 418 Escape Rooms, and GSD103 The Basics of Game Design. Our courses provide unique and engaging learning experiences for students, as they are hands-on, experiential, playful, and foster cross-disciplinary collaboration.

# OUR GOALS

## 4 COMMIT TO SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BUILDING & ENGAGEMENT, VALUED BY BOTH ON-AND OFF-CAMPUS COMMUNITIES

Community connections are a pillar of the C-U Community Fab Lab. The lab will maintain and strengthen its current reputation on community engagement with a focus on youth and families. As our local communities in the Champaign county re-invigorate in Post-Covid, solidifying local impacts is a priority. This will lead us to create regional and statewide networks and support for communities throughout Illinois. We strive to lower education barriers and make university programs more accessible to the public by leveraging the lab's existing professional development, workshops, and summer camp curriculums.

## 5 PROVIDE ACCESS TO DESIGN & FABRICATION TOOLS, PROGRAMS, & SUPPORT FOR ALL IN A SAFE AND WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

The Fab Lab provides space, tools, services, educational programs, expertise, mentorship, and social opportunities to campus and community makers. The range of fabrication and design tools utilized in the professional market is continuously evolving. This reality pushes our lab to strategically identify which tools will most ardently support the strengths of both the university and local community. While the lab's community engagement effort meet community members where they are (e.g., our community partner sites, such as libraries and afterschool programs), the physical space of the lab offers a safe and welcoming place for community members (with or without university affiliation) to come, do their own project, and explore new opportunities. The Fab Lab has the potential to broaden makerspace access into a variety of communities in the state of Illinois. As part of the Fab Foundation, we seek to reconnect to the global network of Fab Lab makerspaces to forward our mission of access for all.

# VISIT OUR SPACE



1301 S. GOODWIN AVE  
URBANA, IL

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OR

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# & WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IN OUR PROGRAMS



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