Jimmy Iovine and Dr. Dre Back USC Master’s ‘Mashup’ Degree

The graduate-level program integrates design, tech and biz.

A groundbreaking school endowed by Jimmy Iovine and Andre “Dr. Dre” Young at the University of Southern California, which welcomed its first undergraduate students in 2014, is taking a leap forward with the creation of a graduate program, powered by state-of-the-art online education technology.

The USC Jimmy Iovine and Andre Young Academy for Arts, Technology and the Business of Innovation has begun accepting rolling applications for its Design@USC masters program with its first classes set for August.

Design@USC will offer a masters of science in integrated design, business and technology, expanding upon the academy’s unique multi-disciplinary undergraduate program.

“The sky’s the limit on both of these programs because we’re not focused on a specific discipline but rather on what we call ‘new literacies’ and how those can be applied to problem solving in any area,” says Erica Muhl, dean of the Roski School of Art and Design and founding executive director of the Iovine and Young Academy.

Iovine, a longtime music executive now at Apple Music, and Young, the co-founder...
of Beats By Dre, gave $70 million to USC to create the academy in 2013. “I feel like this is the biggest, most exciting and probably the most important thing that I’ve done in my career,” said Young at the time. Iovine added: “The lines between technology and the arts are starting to become blurred—in a great way.” More recently, in an interview with Billboard in October, Iovine reaffirmed that the USC academy means “everything” to him.

Iovine and Young “continue to be supportive of every move upward we make,” says Muhl. “They’re thrilled with the relevance of the academy and how it has been reaching not just our students at USC but also education as a whole by providing, if you will, a unique experiment.”

Design@USC will continue that experiment by allowing graduate students to complete the 38-credit master program in 18 to 24 months through a combination of campus and online classes.

The Iovine and Young Academy has partnered with 2U Inc., an online education company which works with other schools including the University of California Berkeley, Georgetown University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, New York University and Northwestern University.

“They have the state-of-the-art platform in the field and they’ve worked extensively with us to enhance it,” says Muhl, noting that Design@USC, like the academy’s undergraduate curriculum, is highly collaborative. “We have already created unique elements that don’t exist in any other online programs and we’re continuing to fashion those as we move forward.”

At the same time, two on-campus residencies will be important part of Design@USC, a “boot camp” at the start of the program and a second on-the-ground session as research projects evolve.

“The academy’s model is highly collaborative and team based,” notes Muhl. “It works, to a certain extent, on a collision of ideas and what I like to call the over-the-shoulder look of one student to another.”

Design@USC is expected to draw applicants from among recent college graduates as well as professionals already working in design, tech and business. Iovine and Young, says Muhl, “are fully behind this, as excited as we are and ready for the future.”