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INNOVATE at Northumbria

Fresh from speaking at the Davos World Economic Forum, international design and business leader Tim Brown's first priority was a visit to the UK to attend a conference on design for social innovation at Northumbria University's INNOVATE hub.

The CEO and President of global design company IDEO is an alumnus of Northumbria's School of Design. He retains strong links with the University and was keen to take part in a Northumbria "Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability" (DESIS) Lab conference to explore developing knowledge in these areas.

With IDEO's focus on innovation to help tackle global social challenges, it was also a useful opportunity to hear about some of the relevant research being undertaken by academics and students in the School of Design and at INNOVATE. Located in Gateshead's Northern Design Centre, INNOVATE is Northumbria's off-campus innovation space which provides a single point of contact for industry to collaborate with multi-disciplinary teams of academics and students to solve problems.

Tim's visit also coincided with the 40th anniversary celebration planning of the founding of the BA (Hons) Design for Industry (BADFI) programme, a course studied by him and other alumni such as Apple's Senior Vice President, Design, Sir Jonathan Ive and Gavin Proctor of Philips Design, Eindhoven, who also attended the conference.

Tim said: "The Davos World Economic Forum is an annual event with global significance, and as an alumnus, Visiting Professor and ambassador for Northumbria I wanted to discuss the notes of interest for the higher education sector with the University. Being able to combine this with attending the DESIS conference was therefore ideal. I was also highly impressed with the work the academics and students are undertaking at the School of Design and INNOVATE. Their research and collaboration with partners to implement solutions is highly relevant to the challenges we seek to address at IDEO.

"In my capacity as an ambassador for Northumbria, I'll continue to work closely with them in the future, both here in the UK and in supporting their growing international presence."

The DESIS conference and the work showcased represented the latest contribution of Northumbria's Design for Industry, MA Design and Multidisciplinary Design Innovation students, who engage in DESIS projects with organisations across all sectors in society and share the knowledge from these projects as Northumbria DESIS Lab through the DESIS International network of Labs, of which there are 40 in the world spread across all continents. Three main issues were addressed in a Q&A session at the close of the conference including what new methods and tools do DESIS designers need, what new professional roles in society does DESIS demand of designers and how do we generate new economic paradigms to make this sustainable and attractive as a career for talented designers.

Commenting on the INNOVATE hub, Lucy Winskell, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Business and Engagement at Northumbria, said: “INNOVATE offers businesses easy access to interdisciplinary teams of leading academics and our bright, energy-charged young students, all through one door and under one roof. It’s a unique proposition and a great way of tapping into a powerful cross-university knowledge base.

For more information on INNOVATE, DESISLab and the Northumbria Design please contact Bruce Watson bruce.watson@northumbria.ac.uk Tel: 0191 227 4300

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