

**Program Title:** HatchEd – Innovation Conference and Idea Incubator  
**Institution:** Ferris State University  
**Innovation Category:** Student Academic Improvement  
Academic Partnerships

FERRIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY

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FERRIS FORWARD

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**Project Description:**

HatchEd is Ferris State University's Innovation Conference and Idea Incubator for faculty and staff with a secondary audience of students. HatchEd is focused on nurturing innovation and empowering innovators in the higher education space. Too often innovative projects happen in silos in higher education and this not only limits other faculty from being inspired by colleagues, but also doesn't afford students the opportunity to benefit from the initiatives. HatchEd was designed to connect faculty across the university despite physical location, and ultimately frame their projects to provide the type of expansion, replication, and creativity that could ultimately benefit students. The first annual conference was a two-day event created by Ferris administrators who were privy to information about many great projects happening at the university and wanted to spread that information to other motivated faculty. Although the first annual conference was geared toward faculty, future iterations will include students as both participants and attendees. Funding for the conference was provided by the Division of Academic Affairs and planning support was provided by Extended and International Operations, Conference and Professional Services, and the eLearning Department. The event was also sponsored by the Ferris Academic Senate and the Kendall College of Art and Design (KCAD) College Senate.

**Project Objectives:**

- Help faculty make connections between innovative projects and initiatives across the university to inspire future interdisciplinary collaborations.
- Increase student awareness about innovative projects and initiatives across disciplines.
- Clearly connect administrative support (including resources) with existing and future innovative projects.
- Improve internal marketing of innovative projects and initiatives to both faculty and students.

**Target Population:** Although the first iteration of the conference was geared toward faculty, the goal has always been to expand it to include existing Ferris students and future Ferris students by providing faculty with an outlet to showcase their student-driven work.

**Quantifiable/Qualifiable Outcomes:**

- Number of participants in HatchEd during the first conference.
- Number of participants in HatchEd during the following annual conferences.
- Survey to solicit feedback from participants.
- Survey to solicit feedback from attendees.

**Challenges/Problems Encountered:** The biggest challenge encountered with the conference was scheduling it during a time that maximized participation and attendance. The first conference was held September 25-26, 2019 with subsequent conferences in 2020, 2021, and 2022 being held virtually due to the COVID 19 Pandemic. In 2023 and 2024 the event was

temporarily combined with the annual Celebration of Creative and Scholarly works as a new format and focus were being discussed. In 2024 the decision was made to expand the HatchED conference into an institution-wide event and feature it as a daylong kickoff to the fall faculty week. The previously scheduled HatchED event in the Spring of 2024 was retooled as an introduction / teaser / relaunch of the conference, with the new format HatchED scheduled for August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

**Evaluation Approach:** Informal feedback was solicited from participants. Future events will incorporate formal feedback (i.e., surveys for both participants and attendees).

**Value Proposition, Financing Strategy and Return-On-Investment Indicators:**

The cost of planning, organizing, and implementing the HatchEd Innovation Conference and Idea Incubator was relatively low compared to the number of professional connections made by participants and the ideas generated for the next conference. Typical conference materials were needed (e.g., directional signage, name badges, giveaways, programs, poster boards, food, etc.). At Ferris, faculty and staff volunteered to assist with the planning, organization, and implementation of the event.

**Potential for Replication:** Highly replicable and costs could be adapted based on the scope of the conference and the availability of resources. In other words, this type of innovation conference can be scaled based on a variety of factors. There would need to be a designated planning team with buy-in from multiple areas of the college or university.

**Vendor Involvement:** None

**Requisite Program Manager Competencies:** Organization, project-management, communication, creativity, flexibility, and marketing.

**Date Updated:** October 17, 2024