

Nicole McLaughlin Hosts Workshop and Lecture for OPDD 10 Year

04/02/2026



Nicole McLaughlin with an OPDD student during the upcycling workshop

Nicole McLaughlin Visits OPDD to Celebrate 10-Year Anniversary

As part of the ongoing 10 Year Anniversary celebration of the Outdoor Product Design & Development (OPDD) program, Nicole McLaughlin visited Utah State University to engage with students, faculty, and the broader program community. Her visit included a lecture, hands-on workshop, and a tour of the Outdoor Recreation Archive, reinforcing the program's continued connection between design practice, history, and innovation.

Nicole's approach to design, which involves transforming existing materials into new, functional objects, aligns closely with the philosophy at the heart of OPDD and the archive. Her work reflects a shared belief that meaningful innovation often begins by revisiting and reinterpreting what already exists, making her visit especially relevant to the program and archive.

The Archive

Nicole began her visit in the [Outdoor Recreation Archive](#), where she explored the growing collection of catalogs, magazines, books, photographs, and design sketches that document the evolution of the outdoor industry. The archive continues to serve as both a research resource and a creative catalyst for students and designers.

For those working in design, the archive offers a unique opportunity to study the lineage of ideas, materials, and

products that have shaped the outdoor space. Nicole's time in the archive highlighted how historical reference can inform contemporary design thinking, providing insight into how past solutions can inspire new directions.

YouTube video playerhttps://www.youtube.com/embed/AqbW1tWniYA?si=Z9eRUByk8_Yk__ID5603150
The Workshop + Lecture

Following her time in the archive, Nicole led an upcycling workshop with OPDD students centered on rethinking snack storage systems using used jackets from Outdoor Research. Students deconstructed the garments and reassembled them into functional prototypes, experimenting with structure, accessibility, and durability.

The workshop emphasized rapid prototyping, resourcefulness, and creativity. By working directly with pre-existing materials, students were challenged to think critically about material use, construction methods, and design constraints, while also embracing a playful and exploratory approach to making.

Nicole concluded her visit with a lecture for students and faculty, where she shared her personal journey, design process, and reflections on both successes and challenges. Her insights offered valuable perspective for students preparing to enter the industry, underscoring the importance of persistence, experimentation, and developing a unique creative voice.

Looking Ahead

Nicole's visit was a meaningful part of the OPDD 10 Year Anniversary celebration, reinforcing the program's commitment to connecting students with industry practitioners and real-world design perspectives. Experiences like these continue to shape the next generation of designers emerging from OPDD, leaving a lasting impact on both students and the broader program community.

We extend our sincere thanks to Nicole for her time, energy, and willingness to engage with students. Her visit not only celebrated the program's history, but also contributed to its ongoing evolution and future direction.

About Nicole McLaughlin

Nicole McLaughlin is a designer known for her innovative and often playful approach to upcycling, transforming discarded and unconventional materials into functional outdoor gear and apparel. Her work challenges traditional notions of design by blending sustainability, humor, and craftsmanship, and has earned recognition across the outdoor and fashion industries.