Tracy Brandenburg

Tracy is a lecturer at the S.C. Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University, and a Design Thinking coach at the Hasso-Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University (the “d.school.”) Tracy is an anthropologist who specializes in Design Thinking. She is happiest when she is designing for social innovation. One of her courses works with Syracuse’s enormous refugee population and tries to tackle their enormous challenges, from how Congolese women can form startups to how to best receive and resettle seekers of asylum. This class seeks to help people thrive, not just survive.

Tracy also loves journeying back to the Stanford d.school, where she learned the IDEO method of problem-solving that she now shares with her Cornell students today. Tracy loves nothing more than a wicked problem – the messier the better – and so she has taken on challenges with her Cornell students, such as redesigning Google Glass, reimagining daily spending for Capital One, redesigning check-in for jetBlue, and creating trust and security for users of Airbnb. Cornell design thinkers are developing a reputation as top innovators as Airbnb brought our Cornell students out to San Francisco to share our new concepts for them. Thrilled with our work, Airbnb is committed to partnering with us to continue to take on the many challenges this fast growing company faces.

Tracy has learned a few important lessons from her Design Thinking journey. First, make your own power. Don’t ask for it. All the Design Thinkers she admires at some point had to believe in their work when no one else did and just move forward. Second, creativity isn’t something only a few of us possess, but belongs to all of us (thank you, David Kelley for this message). And finally, there really is nothing we cannot solve when we all work together.

Tracy’s life goals are reasonable(?): to change the world and make it a better place for others, one student at a time.