

I TEACHING & LEARNING

D-School Exploratory Learning Recognized as Top 100 Education Innovation

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Since 2021, the College of Innovation and Design at National Taiwan University (NTU D-School) has pioneered the Exploratory Learning Program, offering students a “gap year-style” learning experience between their academic studies. With over 200 participants to date, the program has empowered NTU students to step outside the classroom and into the world—pursuing international education, artistic creation, entrepreneurial ventures, and personal growth.

The program is designed to ignite the students’ passion and potential by breaking through the boundaries of traditional learning, leveraging external resources, and encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration. Its impact on higher education and social innovation has now been nationally recognized: the Exploratory Learning Program was named one of the 2025 “Top 100 Education Innovations” by *Parenting Magazine* (親子天下).

NTU Exploratory Learning — A Gap Year Without Pausing School: Helping Students Reclaim Agency Over Their Lives.



The announcement was made at the Top 100 Education Innovations Co-Creation Forum on June 28, which was themed “Education for a Diverse and Sustainable AI Era.” The event emphasized boundary-breaking ideas and welcomed innovations of all types. During the awards ceremony, Chih-Min Tang, Commissioner of the Taipei City Department of Education, presented the award to Shenglin Elijah Chang, NTU D-School’s Associate Dean.

Ji-Ren Lee, Chairman of the Chengzhi Education Foundation and a member of the judging panel, remarked, “This year’s awardees adopted an impressive spectrum of approaches. It proves that innovation in education doesn’t have to come in the form of experimental education—innovation can be ubiquitous and now is a must.”

The Exploratory Learning Program is supported by 22 faculty mentors, known as ‘Exploratory Guides’, from 11 NTU colleges, who accompany and advise students—called “Explorers”—along their journeys. NTU Executive Vice President Shih-Torng Ding praised the initiative, saying, “NTU’s mission is not only to preserve knowledge, but to lead innovation. I’m proud of D-School’s efforts and moved by the growth and creativity of our students.”

Serving as the program’s Chief Guide, Prof. Ruby Yun-Ju Huang of NTU’s College of Medicine emphasized: “Exploratory Learning is an extension of NTU’s liberal spirit. We’ve witnessed students find their own paths through autonomous learning while growing stronger through facing challenges. We’re grateful to every explorer who dared to take that first step.”

True to its name, the program celebrates exploration as a mindset—one that values the journey over the destination, and questions over answers. Or as the program’s ethos reminds students: Don’t overthink.



Taipei City Commissioner Chih-Min Tang presenting the award to NTU D-School Associate Dean Shenglin Elijah Chang.



NTU D-School’s Exploratory Learning Program named as Parenting Magazine’s Top 100 Education Innovations.



Exploratory Learning sharing session: Listening to what this generation of students truly needs.



Exploratory Learning students performing with a Canadian ballet company.



Department of Business Administration student Chien-Yu Wu sharing how Exploratory Learning helped her find her own path.