

Generous Devils provides graphic design supplies for ASU students in need

By Mary Beth Faller, ASU News
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Amy Robinson understands how hard it can be for some students to pay for the cost of supplies required for their art projects.

“One semester, my printing costs hit about \$700,” said Robinson, who majored in design and visual communication at Arizona State University while married with a child.

“I had very gracious teachers and it always worked out in the end, but it was very much a struggle,” she said.

When she became associate program head of graphic design in The Design School, Robinson saw other students who were financially strained.

“One student specifically said, ‘I would love to pass your class. But if I do, I can't feed myself or my siblings.’ And faculty were coming up to me with the same thing,” she said.

So in 2024, Robinson started informally collecting art and graphic design supplies and distributing them to students in need.

Giving to Generous Devils

Sun Devil Giving Day is ASU's biggest day of fund-raising and involves the entire ASU community.

[Donate to Generous Devils](#) today or any time by emailing Amy Robinson at arobin13@asu.edu.

This year, her initiative became an official nonprofit organization, called Generous Devils, and is seeking donations during [Sun Devil Giving Day](#) on March 19.

Generous Devils collects supplies from students, alumni, studios, faculty and community partners. The wide range of items includes sketchbooks, glue, markers, filament, vellum, binders, tablecloths, and modeling and office supplies. The Generous Devils warehouse lends glue guns, light pads, a camera and hand tools including drills, pliers, hammers, hand saws and wrenches. Students can come in and use books, a 3D printer and a large-format printer.

Many of the materials that end up at Generous Devils are abandoned in lockers over the summer or passed along by students who no longer need them.

“By the time students get to third year, they don't need a lot of the materials from first or second year anymore. They're like, ‘My apartment's only so big and I don't want it here.’ Or, ‘It's not going on the plane with me,’” Robinson said.

“So they give it back and it goes into that circular economy where somebody else can absolutely put it to good use and it stays out of the landfill.”

Some of the materials required for graphic design can range from \$200 to \$500, depending on the discipline.

For example, first-year students must buy a box of Color-Aid colored papers, which are used to teach value matching and saturation. Each box of hand-painted papers costs \$200 and each paper can only be used once. Generous Devils has several boxes of Color-Aid available plus individual papers.

Robinson has created Generous Devils to be as accessible as possible. To get supplies, students [email her](#) to set up an appointment.

ASU Online students also can acquire materials from Generous Devils, which collaborates with ASU Mail Services on deliveries.

The team also is working on an inventory website so students can reserve what they need before having to visit the space in Tempe.

Sometimes, students are embarrassed to ask for help, Robinson said.

“I don't want anyone to feel like they have to flunk because they're too afraid to ask.

“You don't have to ask me in front of other people. I try to make it as easy as possible for students to reach out because we have a culture of helping you,” she said.

Her wish list includes cash gifts so she can directly buy what's needed and pay for printing costs and item donations such as sketchbooks, binders, light pads, hand tools, 3-D printers, laptops.

Drop item donations off at The Design School office, room 162 in Design North. For an appointment, call (480) 965-3536 or email Robinson.

Interested in helping other programs, too? Check out [more opportunities to give](#).

Sharing a creative community

ASU staffer Lindsay Kinkade donated books and an expensive camera to Generous Devils. She recalled that she was able to use an old film camera as a student.

“It slowed me down. It forced me to experiment, to make mistakes, to study light and shadow in a deeper way. That camera gave me control, but it also gave me confidence. It helped me find my voice,” said Kinkade, who was previously a studio instructor in the graphic design program and is active in the Phoenix creative community.

“Looking back, I can see that my growth was shaped by people who shared what they had — a camera, a book, a poster, an idea. None of us build our creative lives alone. We inherit tools, knowledge and encouragement from others.”

She said her donations keep that exchange moving.

“I hope these items help students experiment, take risks and discover what only they can make. Amy has created a space where ideas and energy can circulate freely. I am grateful to play a small part in that ongoing exchange.”

A welcoming space

Another key aspect of Generous Devils is the welcoming space that Robinson has created in the Design South building on ASU’s Tempe campus. Everything is neatly organized in colorful cabinets.

She and her husband, along with Yi Ning, a PhD student who is a teaching assistant, transformed the basement rooms with a sofa, workbench, tables and other furniture Robinson donated or bought from ASU Surplus. They also refurbished the lockers to make them more accessible.

Robinson has created experiential learning opportunities such as workshops, creative challenges (like a T-shirt design contest) and collaborative events in which students work directly with materials and explore design beyond the digital.

Second-year student Isabella Clark likes hanging out in the Generous Devils space with Robinson, whom the students call “A-Rob.”

“I don’t always understand what’s in the syllabus and how to find it, so it’s helpful just coming in here to get clarification on what I need as well as checking out things,” said Clark, who’s gotten a binder and sketchbooks from the space.

Lexi Westover recently lost her chipboard binder and Robinson saved the day.

“I looked everywhere and I was frantically texting her before my midterm, ‘Do you have one I can borrow?’ So I came down and borrowed it. I’ve borrowed tape and drawing pads. I have a light pad from her right now.

"This program has helped me quite a bit. Just being from out of state, I already pay a lot of expenses."

Tracking success

Robinson would like to scale Generous Devils to include materials needed for other programs in the Herberger Institute, as well as universitywide.

The team is already tracking some measures of success. Ning said that when donations come in, they calculate the price and the weight to gauge the economic impact and how much is being diverted from the landfill.

As Generous Devils becomes more formalized, Ning hopes to drive a behavioral change in students.

"There's not only the stigma but also the mental cost and the anxiety of thinking, 'I didn't realize it would be this expensive.' We're here to relieve that because we don't want people having to focus on how they'll get through the semester," she said.

"If there's an official system, everybody thinks, 'Oh, it's normal to go there and everybody does it. So why not me?'"

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



From left: Design, environment and the arts graduate student Yi Ning, director of Generous Devils Amy Robinson, second-year graphic design student Lexi Westover and second-year graphic design student Isabella Clark look at art pieces in the Generous Devils space at Design South on ASU's Tempe campus on March 6. Photo by Emma Fitzgerald/ASU

Text image(s)



Graduate student Yi Ning looks through inventory in the Generous Devils space at Design South on ASU's Tempe campus. Photo by Emma Fitzgerald/ASU



Amy Robinson throws up the pitchfork at the Generous Devils space in Design South on ASU's Tempe campus. Photo by Emma Fitzgerald/ASU