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**MASSACHUSETTS DESIGN AND BUSINESS LEADERS LAUNCH
STATEWIDE DESIGN INDUSTRY GROUP**

*Statewide partnership will support innovation and long term prosperity in
the Commonwealth's design economy*

BOSTON – Wednesday, June 10, 2008 – Today, design, business and government leaders celebrated the official launch of the Design Industry Group of Massachusetts (DIGMA,) an economic cluster initiative aimed at growing the design economy. In announcing a \$150,000 grant from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative's John Adams Innovation Institute, Housing and Economic Development Secretary Gregory Bialecki noted that the funding is a confirmation of design's role as an engine for innovation and economic growth. DIGMA also introduced a high level Leadership Committee and announced the first Massachusetts Design Festival scheduled for this fall.

DIGMA is a multi disciplinary group that includes architecture, advertising, graphic design, industrial design, interior design, landscape architecture and other design specializations. Collectively, the design industry employs 44,500 people in Massachusetts. While much of the employment is concentrated in the Commonwealth's 3,100 design firms, companies like Fidelity and Reebok also employ large numbers of designers in in-house design departments. Freelance designers account for a rapidly growing segment of the design economy.

"Design is one of the creative industries that the Patrick Administration is looking to as a source of innovation and economic growth," said Housing and Economic Development Secretary Gregory Bialecki. Speaking from a policy perspective, guest speaker Elizabeth Tunstall, Director of the U.S. National Design Policy Initiative said, "The real leverage for design policy change takes place at the state and local levels. That's why I am really interested in what DIGMA is doing in Massachusetts and see it as a national model for other states to follow."

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"We are excited to be one of several collaborators helping MassArt launch DIGMA," said Pat Larkin, Director of MTC's John Adams Innovation Institute. "This launch elevates our collective appreciation that design, both as an industry and as a way of thinking, is a catalyst of innovation across multiple arenas of our economy, including the technology sectors."

"Massachusetts has a high concentration of design talent compared to the rest of the country and ranks within the top five state in virtually every design profession," said DIGMA's Founding Director Beate Becker. Particularly strong occupations include art directors, landscape architects, architects and interior designers. "However," Becker said, "industry employment figures alone understate the importance of design whose economic impact is better measured by value it brings to other industries." To make that point, DIGMA held its launch at Continuum, a design consultancy firm in West Newton that has developed well-known consumer products such as the Swiffer, the Reebok pump and Pampers diapers.

Architect Frano Violich, principal of KVA MATx and Design Advisory Committee co-chair said, "Our new Leadership Committee was formed with the idea of linking designers with technology, science and business leaders to form partnerships that lead to innovation, particularly in the green industries." KVA MATx's award-winning Portable Light Project developed energy-harvesting solar textiles that power home appliances and bring light and power to remote areas of the developing world.

The Leadership Committee includes CEO Howard Berke of Konarka Technologies, a solar cell company in Lowell; Nicholas Negroponete, founder of the One-Lap Top per Child Foundation; William Mitchell, head of the Smart Cities/Smart Cars program at the MIT Media Lab; and John Warner, founder of the Warner-Babcock Institute for Green Chemistry. Also included are design leaders such as fashion designer Joseph Abboud, architect William Rawn, landscape architect Martha Schwartz and creative director Brian Collins. (A complete list of Leadership Committee members is attached.)

MassArt President and DIGMA co-founder Kay Sloan attributes Massachusetts' high concentration of design talent to the state's strength in design education. "As with other industries, a strong partnership between the design sector and higher education is critical," said Kay Sloan, president of Massachusetts College of Art and Design. "MassArt has invested in DIGMA in order to ensure the Commonwealth's competitive advantage in the design industry is maximized to its full potential."

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Sloan pointed to Massachusetts' seven schools of architecture¹ as an example of the programs that attract students and often retain top talent in the region by employing professionals as faculty. David Hacin of Hacin + Associates, who co-chairs DIGMA's Design Advisory Committee said, "Massachusetts architectural firms, renowned for specialties in medical, educational and museum design, export their services globally and drive demand for other leading Massachusetts design disciplines such as interior and landscape design."

Referring to the 2000 national elections, Director of the U.S. National Design Policy Initiative, Elizabeth Tunstall said, "You only have to mention the word *ballot* for people to understand the consequences of poor design. Conversely, design excellence is an essential underpinning of democratic governance and civic life, be it in the design of transportation systems, government communications or school buildings."

As part of its effort to raise the visibility of design, DIGMA announced the first annual MA Design Festival to be held from September 22 through October 24, 2009. The month-long event will be a collaborative effort involving the broad Massachusetts design community and will focus on showcasing local design assets including educational and career opportunities. The Festival will be anchored by events such as Boston Design Center's *Design Boston 2009*, Boston Fashion Week and National Design Week that are taking place during that month.

DIGMA is sponsored by Massachusetts College of Art and led by a 35-member Design Advisory Committee. The initiative is funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, The Boston Foundation, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative's John Adams Innovation Institute and the Boston Redevelopment Authority. For more information about DIGMA visit <http://www.digma.us>.

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¹ Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston Architectural College, Wentworth Institute, Northeastern University, Harvard University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst and MIT.

LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

Katherine Sloan, Leadership Chair
President
Massachusetts College of Art and Design

Nicholas Negroponte
Founder & Chairman
One Laptop per Child

Joseph Abboud
President & CEO
Jaz

David Privitera
Partner/Boston Location Head
IDEO

Howard Berke
Executive Chairman and Co-Founder
Konarka Technologies

William Rawn
Founding Principal
William Rawn Associates

Brian Collins
Chairman and Chief Creative Officer
Collins

Michael Schaeffer
Global Creative Director
Reebok International

Marjorie Garber
Director, Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts
Harvard University

Martha Schwartz
Principal
Martha Schwartz Partners Ltd.

Frederick Leichter
Senior Vice President
Fidelity eBusiness

Niki Tsongas (invited)
Congresswoman
Fifth Congressional District

William Mitchell
Professor of Architecture and
Media Arts and Sciences
MIT

John Warner
President and Founder
Warner Babcock Institute

Mohsen Mostafavi
Dean, Graduate School of Design
Harvard University

Gianfranco Zaccai
Founder & CEO
Continuum