

Student Design 2025 Challenge

The Challenge

Fiber-based packaging is sustainable and recyclable. To increase its use, this year's Design Challenge asks students to design a new paperboard packaging line for an original pet care company, PPA Pets

Background

The goal of this year's challenge is to create a non-food pet care product line consisting of **two (2)** packages that aren't typically packaged in fiber-based packaging and design a new paper-based solution.

Viable products could include accessories, toys, training devices, health aids, or grooming products.

One of your products must be a pet DNA testing system (or similar lab dependent item). It must be available through e-commerce or retail channels and convert after use to a forwarding mailer so that the pet specimen can be analyzed.

This challenge calls for a real-world innovative packaging solution that encourages customers to pick sustainable, fiber-based packaging instead of single-use plastics. The new package should also be widely accepted in residential recycling programs.

Optional Resources

[AF&PA's Design Guidance for Recyclability](#)

Designs from standard style in [PPC's Ideas & Innovation Book](#), sections 1 - 4

PPC's [Annual Paperboard Packaging Competition Book](#)

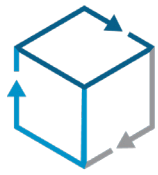
Package Requirements:

- 100% paper-based, and made of at least 70% paperboard (cannot be more than 30% fluted or corrugated)
- **Products should be individual and not bundled into a kit formation.**
- The structures should reflect the Brand and be identifiable as belonging to a family of products that they offer.
- Must be widely accepted in residential recycling systems
- Include any other material that would enhance the experience of sustainability of paper and paperboard packaging
- Visually appealing and enhances brand awareness
- Include an innovative functional feature that distinguishes itself from other packaging
- Feature the renewability, recyclability, versatility and innovative qualities of paperboard
- Non-fiber components should be Identified as easier to recycle, according to the AF&PA Design Guidance for Recyclability
- Also considers paperboard replacement for plastic fastening solutions



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Submission Requirements

The judges will evaluate each entry based upon the following submission requirements:

1. Prototype (40 points)

- Complete mock-up of packages (**note: physical prototypes are required for consideration**)
- Product protection
- Distinctive functionality
- Structurally sound
- Full graphics
- (Upon request, sponsor companies will provide paperboard for the design execution phase)

2. Structural Development and Exploration (30 points)

- Plain, unglued carton blanks
- Detailed production die drawings
- Design concept and execution (Sketches, various iteration and representative prototypes leading to final execution)
- Standard 10-point drop testing should be conducted and portrayed in your video as part of the process (no equipment needed).
- May also include graphic development

3. Student Design Brief (20 points)

A design brief is a document that defines the core details of your upcoming design project, including its goals, scope, and strategy. It needs to define what you, as a designer, need to do, and within what constraints. In many ways, it works like a roadmap or a blueprint, informing design decisions and guiding the overall workflow of your project, from conception to completion.

Successful briefs include:

- **Relevant Client Detail:** Capture the key points about what the company does, what is their mission, how do their brands go to market. Include competitor details if relevant.
- **Project Goals & Objectives:** Outline the overarching purpose of your project, as well as the methods you plan to use to achieve that purpose.
- **Target Audience:** Describe the customer/buyer, including their demographics such as age, gender, economic status, and media consumption. Also include any known pain points they may have.
- **Budget:** This can be high level, but you should demonstrate the understanding of how this impacts the whole of the project.
- **Does not exceed 5 pages (PPT Format Preferred)**

4. Final Video of Designs (10 points)

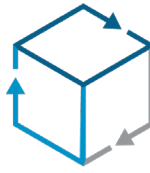
The video will be considered your “voice in the room” and should relay pertinent information to the judging panel. The video content should be specific to the design and its functionality – it is not intended to be a commercial for the products themselves.

Only one video is expected to highlight both prototypes and should be 2-3 minutes in length.

5. Required Forms

Acknowledgment of Intent

- Student and School Contact Information
- Certification of Originality
- Graduate Student Advisors Form (if applicable)



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Submission Deadline: June 6th, 2025

All entries with supporting forms and materials must be received no later than June 6. **Mail all physical materials to our new address:**

**Paperboard Packaging Alliance
ATTN: Gabriell Maupin
601 Thirteenth Street NW, Suite 1000 N
Washington, D.C. 20005**

Prizes and Judging

Winning student teams and their academic programs will receive monetary awards. If applicable, advisor(s) will receive 10 percent (equally split between advisors) of the cash award:

- 1st place: \$10,500 to the team/\$10,000 to the school
- 2nd place: \$8,300 to the team/\$8,000 to the school
- 3rd place: \$6,650 to the team/\$6,500 to the school

The top three finalist teams are invited and expected to present their designs at the Paperboard Packaging Council's (PPC) Fall Meeting.

PPC's annual Fall Meeting is an association conference that brings together over 200 paperboard packaging and processing professionals, providing students with access to future potential employers, networking opportunities, and much more.

Previous student designers received internships and jobs at consumer brand companies as a direct result of their participation in the meeting.