



Are you interested in challenging design standards?

Want to build a unique piece of furniture using innovative techniques and diverse materials?

Does working with a diverse team of academics, researchers, and builders interest you?

Then, consider joining ***Fat Chair: Thickening Design Standards through Fat Studies!***

Seeking Design and Architecture Research Assistants

- Duration: 20 months, starting immediately
- Rate: \$25.00 an hour + 4% vacation pay
- Hours: 5 hrs/week in Fall/Winter, and 35 hrs/week in Summer of 2026

Fat Chair will challenge modernist design principles that prioritize a narrow anthropometric standard that too often leaves fat individuals (those who wear size 4X and higher) with few seating options and excludes them from public life. Societal narratives often blame individuals for their inability to conform to these design limitations, perpetuating fatphobic ideologies instead of addressing systemic failures in design. For the large global population of fat individuals, this exclusion carries profound social and health consequences, including feelings of isolation, reduced participation in public life, and negative impacts on mental health. Design standards that appear neutral may be deeply biased and require closer examination.

Fat Chair aims to challenge these exclusionary design paradigms by exploring how “thickened design” can transform access to public life for fat individuals. Alongside archival research, interviews with fat people, and the development of a design toolkit for future use by designers, this project will design, develop, and build a chair that envisions a fat user from the outset following a fat aesthetics.

This SSHRC-funded project is hiring two research assistants:

- one upper-year Architecture student
- one upper-year Industrial Design student

Interested applicants should possess the following skills and experiences:

- A deep commitment to social justice in architecture and design and within the students’ community
- Experience with 3D modelling software and digital design tools.

- Hands-on experience with one or more of the following: woodworking, metal fabrication, plastics, and soft goods materials.
- Familiarity with prototyping, modelling, and building physical objects.
- Ability to safely and effectively use tools and equipment in industrial design and architecture workshops, including:
 - School of Industrial Design's woodworking, metal fabrication, and soft goods/sewing and plastics labs
 - Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism woodworking and welding shop
- Experience with 3D printing
- Understanding of materials and how they affect comfort, durability, and accessibility in furniture design.
- Strong teamwork and collaboration skills.
- Ability to communicate design concepts clearly through sketches, presentations, and reports.
- Willingness to experiment, iterate, and refine designs based on participant input.
- Adaptability to explore unconventional design approaches and materials.
- Ability to provide regular updates to the research team.
- Flexibility to perform other duties as required.

Must be available to work:

- In person from September 2025 to April 2027
- Worksites include Carleton University and the Ottawa City Woodshop in Centretown, Ottawa, as well as other potential testing sites in and around the National Capital Region.

Other requirements:

- Please note that his work cannot be replicated for student's course work or any degree requirements, including the 4th-year capstone.
- Students will need to apply to the Tri-Council USRA-NSERC program and the Carleton University I-CUREUS fund.

Rate of pay:

Fall and Winter 2025/2026 and 2026/2027

- \$25.00/hr x 5/hrs a week x 30 weeks = 3,750 plus 4% vacation pay **(\$3,900)**

Summer, 2026

- \$25.00/hr x 35/hrs a week x 14 weeks = 12,250 plus 4% vacation pay **(\$12,740)**

How to apply: Please submit the following materials either in a PDF file or link to an online portfolio by October 3, 2025, to Dr. Shanouda (fadyshanouda@cunet.carleton.ca):

- **Cover Letter** - explain your interest in this project, how you interpret the idea of "thickening normative design standards" and "fat aesthetics," and how your previous experience or work aligns. (1-2 pages)
- **CV** - including education, relevant skills (e.g. woodworking, welding, sketching, 3D printing or modelling, fabrication, etc.). (2 pages max)
- **Portfolio/Work Samples** – 3-5 of your strongest projects. You may include drawings, sketches, pictures, etc.
- *Short-listed candidates will be invited for an interview the week of October 6.*

Applicants will work under the supervision of Dr. Fady Shanouda, Assistant Professor in the Feminist Institute of School Transformation. Research team members include Dr. Chantal Trudel (ID), Dr. Menna Agha (ARCH), Harrison Lane (Intern Architect), and Margarita Zulueta (Independent Designer).