

# Jackson Gordon '08 Creates Functional Batsuit

For Benchmark graduates, transformations from who they were when they first arrived at Benchmark to who they are years after they leave can be quite dramatic. For Jackson Gordon '08 (who prefers to be called Gordon), this certainly rings true. "My time at Benchmark really helped with reading, which is a huge life skill," he said. "The school also really encouraged individuality and influenced who I am today."

But evidenced by the functional Batsuit that Gordon created and recently revealed at the Katsucon anime convention, he also has the ability to make a transformation into Batman, making him something of a celebrity. In fact, Gordon, who is a Philadelphia University industrial design student, has been featured on a number of news sites and publications, including CNN, USA Today, Time, the UK's *DailyMail*, BuzzFeed, Comicbook.com, Fox29, 6ABC, and CBS3, and The Discovery Channel's TV shows, *Daily Planet* and *Outrageous Acts of Science*. "It was completely overwhelming at first," Gordon said. "It all kind of spiraled in one day [after being featured in an article for USA Today's College section] and continued for the next three weeks or so."

But how does one even come up with such an ambitious and unusual project? For the 21-year-old student who has always been a "tinkerer," it began with a need to fill some free time

and perfect some of the skills he was learning in his design classes. "It was simply an exercise intended to further my education in design by providing access to materials, processes, and technologies I cannot otherwise afford [on my own]," Gordon said. A few years ago when he was first experimenting with cosplay—a performance art in which participants wear costumes and accessories to represent specific characters or ideas—he had made a version of the Batsuit costume from Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight Trilogy* that looked cool aesthetically but had limited functionality. This new project, however, was Gordon's attempt at designing a Batsuit that not only resembled the one worn by Batman, but was an "actual fully-functioning replication of what a person would want in a modern-type combat suit."

In September 2014, he came up with a possible design that "wouldn't inhibit my mobility and would actually provide protection and function more like Batman's actual suit." The only problem was that the materials required to build the suit were out of his college student budget. To try and raise funds for the suit design, he went to Kickstarter, the online funding platform for creative projects, and, to his surprise, was able to raise \$1,255 in just six days.

After five months of prototyping and two months of construction, Gordon,



Jackson Gordon '08 in his functional Batsuit.

who is a black belt in Shaolin Kung-Fu, was excited to reveal the final suit, which "won't take a bullet, but can withstand punches, machetes and baseball bats." Made of materials such as Kevlar, silicone molds, armor plating, and polyurethane, the final suit comes in at 25 pounds, while the helmet is about three pounds.

While the daily press inquiries have slowed down, this is just the beginning for the go-getter. Gordon has plans for setting up a business creating props for sale and getting into the world of research and development or prop-making, perhaps in Hollywood. With his talent, confidence, and positive attitude, it seems as though the possibilities are endless for Gordon. "I'm a believer in the saying, 'do what you love and the money will follow'," he said. 

*In addition to Jackson Gordon, other innovative thinkers/designers who have graduated from Benchmark include:*

- **Chris Linder '90**, co-founder and lead engineer of *Demiurge Studios*, a video game developer, in Cambridge, Massachusetts
- **Haley Woodward '92**, a blacksmith and sculptor in Austin, Texas, who uses traditional and modern approaches to create custom ironwork and sculptures
- **Eric Welch '00**, a prototype developer for *The Franklin Institute* who was a principal designer on the "Your Brain" exhibit
- **Michael Grosso '10**, an industrial design student at Philadelphia University