

ITLS Announces New Degree in Human Experience Design and Interaction | CEHS

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Utah State University's Instructional Technology and Learning Science (ITLS) department recently announced a new bachelor's degree program in Human Experience Design and Interaction (HEDI). The new degree, for which there is already a waiting list of applicants, will teach human-centered design skills necessary for a wide range of career fields such as game studies, new venture management, multimedia, product development, user experience and interface design, and data analysis.

The HEDI program is housed in the ITLS department in the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, but it will be a cross-disciplinary undergraduate degree. Expert instruction in topics such as user experience design, product management, and learning design will be taught through the ITLS department, and certain emphases will also involve classes from other academic units at USU. Students can select an emphasis in instructional design, video game design, product design, or multimedia design.

The new degree will also be fully online, so students have the option to stay in their current jobs or locations as they earn their degree.

The core focus of the degree is to make design human-centered and culturally responsive. "We are surrounded by design that has been created by people, but often not with people in mind," said Andy Walker, ITLS department head. "Whether it's an app, a car dashboard, or even a product, we deserve to interact with software, tools, and spaces that make sense for us."

Walker also said that the HEDI degree was built with workforce needs in mind and has the support of many industry partners in Utah and beyond, with select businesses willing to sponsor their employees to obtain the degree.

Mason Lefler, ITLS PhD student and Associate Vice President of Educational Innovation at Bridgerland Technical College (BTECH), said the state is desperate for employees with these high-tech skills. "There are currently 5,863 IT sector openings in Utah, but the educational system has produced only 1,724 grads to fill those jobs," Lefler said. This deficit of skilled IT workers creates a huge opportunity for growth.

ITLS professor Dr. Kristy Bloxham led the collaborative process of developing the HEDI program. According to Bloxham, the degree was built to give students the skills to lead tech initiatives and become leaders in this fast-growing industry.

"The market requires people who understand how to work with both the consumer and the developer to facilitate the creation of products and services," said Bloxham, who garnered support for this degree from 19 industry partners across the state.

Lefler and Bloxham collaborated to secure funds for the HEDI degree from a Strategic Workforce Investment Grant, and the Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development recently approved \$346,700 in ongoing funds to support a statewide partnership of science and technology programs.

Shane Park of West Jordan is on track to be one of the first graduates of the new bachelor's program. With associate degrees in psychology and business, Park is adding Instructional Technology skills to his resume by taking HEDI pilot classes online. His program of study emphasizes multimedia development, and he said that the HEDI degree will prepare him for work in a number of fields he is interested in: instructional design, technology, leadership training and development, and video and audio graphics.

"I like the fact that the degree is very well-rounded," said Park. "I really enjoy the convenience of being able to work whenever and wherever I can."

The HEDI program is piloting classes now, and the first official cohort at USU will begin this fall. For more information about the degree, [visit the HEDI website](#) or contact the program advisor Michelle Wilson at michelle.wilson@usu.edu.