

Announcing the new ITLS Bachelors Degree | ITLS

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Announcing the New ITLS Bachelor's Degree In Human Experience Design and Interaction (HEDI)



Utah State University's newest degree, the [Bachelor of Science in Human Experience Design and Interaction](#), will prepare graduates for careers limited only by the imagination.

Recently approved by the [State Board of Regents](#), this Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences (ITLS) undergraduate degree already has a waiting list of applicants who want to be among the first to join the workforce with skills necessary for fields ranging from game studies to new venture management, multimedia, product development, user experience design and data analysis.

Shane Park is on track to be one of the first graduates of the new bachelor's program. With associate's degrees in psychology and business, this 26-year-old West Jordan resident is adding Instructional Technology skills to his resume by taking online pilot classes in the HEDI bachelor's program. With a three-year-old at home and another child due in June, Park said the online degree makes it possible for him to work full time and go to school.

"I really enjoy the convenience of being able to work wherever and whenever I can. I like that I don't have to be in a classroom at a certain time and day," he said.

Park said the HEDI bachelor's degree will prepare him for a number of jobs 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, not one-sided," said Park, whose program of study emphasizes ITLS multimedia. "There are so many different ways you can go with it (HEDI BaS degree)."

[Dr. Andy Walker](#), ITLS department head and professor, said the HEDI BaS degree was built with workforce needs in mind and has the support of many industry partners in Utah and beyond. Businesses already want to hire graduates of this program and some businesses ([Discover](#)) are so anxious they are willing to pay for employees to go through the degree program, Walker said.

The HEDI program is housed in the [ITLS department](#) in the [College of Education and Human Services](#), but it will be a cross-disciplinary undergraduate degree program. The vast majority of emphasis areas involve classes from one or more academic units at [USU](#) while focusing on instructional design, video game design, product design or multimedia design - all with an emphasis on making the design human-centered and culturally responsive with design thinking principles.

"We are surrounded by design that has been done by people but often not designed with people in mind," Walker said. "Whether it is an app that doesn't make sense, a car dashboard or even a physical space or product, we deserve to interact with software, tools and spaces that make sense for us."

ITLS professor [Dr. Kristy Bloxham](#) led the collaborative process of developing the HEDI BaS degree at USU with input from all of the ITLS faculty members. The degree will offer students expert instruction in courses including User Experience and User Interface Design, Product Management, Learning Design, Game Design and Data Analysis, just to name a few. The HEDI BaS degree was built to give students the skills needed to lead tech initiatives and become leaders in this fast-growing tech-industry, Bloxham said.

"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 the degree from 19 industry partners

across the state, including Utah's own Silicon Slopes, an organization supporting start-ups and the tech community.

Mason Lefler, ITLS PhD student and the Associate Vice President of Educational Innovation at [Bridgerland Technical College \(BTECH\)](#), said the state is desperate for employees with these high-tech skills. Utah is projected to have some of the highest growth rates out of all 50 states and the District of Columbia in software development jobs (United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

"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. "A 4,139 deficit of skilled IT workers is currently strangulating economic progress."

Lefler and Bloxham collaborated to secure funds from a Strategic Workforce Investment Grant, which will connect existing state tech initiatives (e.g., [Code to Success](#), [STEM IT](#), [ROI](#)) to higher educational opportunities. The [Utah Governor's Office of Economic Development \(GOED\)](#) recently approved \$346,700 in on-going funds for statewide support of a partnership, which includes USU, BTECH in Logan, [Davis Technical College](#), [Mountainland Technical College](#) and [Ogden-Weber Technical College](#). These public institutions will work together to facilitate a statewide "stackable" credential pathway for IT students, Lefler said.

The new degree will be fully online, so students can stay where they are and keep their current jobs as they progress. USU is piloting classes now and the first official cohort will start in the Fall 2020 semester.

For more information about the degree, contact the program advisor Michelle Wilson at michelle.wilson@usu.edu or look online: <https://itls.usu.edu/programs/bachelor-of-science/>.