

## Connecting Students to Industry Leaders

**O**n the heels of an especially robust year for many facets of the sports industry, from footwear and apparel to equipment and cycling, Utah State University is well positioned to launch the first Bachelor of Science degree program in the U.S. focusing on Outdoor Product Design & Development (OPDD). The program was approved by the Utah Board of Regents on July 31, 2015, and officially begins during the Spring 2016 semester.

"This degree program connects students to industry leaders," cites Lindsey Shirley, Ph.D., FCS Teacher Educator and head of the program. "It has been developed with assistance from the world's leading technical designers, the world's largest fabric manufacturer, and the heads of outdoor product companies."

The program courses address product design and development across the supply chain, and include real world learning experiences that explore product design, materials, packaging, manufacturing and assembly, facilities, transportation, use and service, as well as focusing on the end-of-life for a product.

Core to the program are 13 courses that focus specifically on the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to outdoor product design and development for both soft and hard goods. The curriculum also incorporates key concepts from Art & Design, Clothing Production, Business & Marketing, Science, Engineering, Communications, Natural Resources, and Sustainability.

Classes will include and advance industry standards for environmental and social responsibility through collaborations with industry leaders, including the Outdoor Industry Association and its members.

Shirley explains, "Integrated into the courses and learning experiences will be concepts and



processes related to the sustainability indexes, responsible chemicals management, social responsibility, and fair labor practices."

### Advantages of the OPDD Program

The curriculum uses outdoor products as the context for providing students the technical skills associated with apparel design, production and manufacturing, while at the same time researching advances in the textile industry. Traditional design programs have focused on such areas as industrial design, engineering, textiles, and apparel design. In contrast, the OPDD program will integrate the core processes and skills associated with a variety of disciplines that pertain to both hard and soft goods.

"This program incorporates the core processes and skills associated with a variety of disciplines," notes Shirley. "In addition, the benefit to the outdoor textile/apparel industry is that the curriculum has been developed at their request, with their input, and we will continue to seek their input."

### Program Goals

Over the next few months, Utah State will finalize the structure for the OPDD Program Advisory Board that will assist in the process of advancing the program. Shirley will also be focusing on the short-term goal of developing an internship program to ensure that OPDD continues to move forward as a career pathway.

"With 150 students already enrolled in the program, internship has become very competitive, and there is a need for a large number of sites for student placement."

Looking long-term, Shirley is focusing on maintaining industry input for the curriculum, integrating industry-inspired challenges and assessments, and aligning the program with the economic development priorities in the state of Utah. Currently, Utah State's OPDD has many students who are pursuing a second bachelor's degree, having completed the required USU coursework, so the program is already considered a big success.

Shirley says, "With the high number of students currently enrolled, there is a possibility that we will have students receiving their OPDD Bachelor of Science degree in two-and-a-half to three years!"

*For more information on Utah State University's Bachelor of Science degree in Outdoor Design & Development, contact Lindsey Shirley at (435) 797-3410, lindsey.shirley@usu.edu*

*Kathlyn Swantko, president of the FabricLink Network, created TheTechnicalCenter.com for industry networking and marketing of specialty textiles, and FabricLink.com for consumer education involving everything fabric.*

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### Partnership Opportunities:

Kristi Rummel  
kristi@rummelmedia.com  
608.435.6220

### Editorial Opportunities:

Kathy Swantko  
kgswantko@fabriclink.com  
818.345.7501

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