

# New Leadership for Utah State's Outdoor Product Design and Development

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Utah State University's unique, multi-disciplinary Outdoor Products Design and Development bachelor's degree program has experienced remarkable success in its first year. A newly appointed interim director, Sean E. Michael, will now oversee the growing program that has already attracted over 140 students.

Michael joined USU's faculty in 2008 as professor and head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning. He teaches History of Outdoor Product Industry and Outdoor Product Design and Development (OPDD) Professional Seminar, and has served as an invited panelist and instructor for Overland Expo West.

"I am extremely honored to serve OPDD students, faculty and industry partners in this role," Michael said. "OPDD is a degree that fills a massive void. It's also a degree that industry professionals constantly say they wish had been available when they were in school."

The degree combines courses from a number of disciplines to provide graduates training in design, textiles, chemistry, marketing, drafting, materials processing, biodiversity and sustainability, color theory, business law and fundamentals, intercultural communication and digital design technologies.

"Utah is the epicenter of the outdoor products industry, and Utah State University is proud to offer the only design degree focused on careers in this amazing market," Michael said. "Our students have an unbelievable passion,

which our program pairs with a curriculum that was purpose-built for their needs."

In his new role, Michael will continue teaching, coordinate faculty across the university whose courses are part of the degree, build more partnerships with the industry and develop additional facilities and resources for students in the program.

Michael's roots in the outdoors began in the 1970s, and he continues to modify and make his own gear. His outdoor products experience includes retail sales and trip leadership, along with independent product testing and reviews for the past 12 years. His graphic illustrations have been published in *Climbing Magazine*, along with Eric Horst's *How to Climb 5.12*. Michael's outdoor pursuits include cycling, rafting, snowboarding, mountaineering and vehicle-based exploration.

Michael received his PhD in wildland recreation from Virginia Tech following a master of landscape architecture degree from Texas A&M University, and bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from West Virginia University. His parks and recreation work has included the Colorado Springs Parks Department, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and various state parks. He has published and spoken to local, state and international audiences on trail design/planning and security. His partnerships have included projects with the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for trail development in Washington's Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties, Missoula, Mont., Moscow and Avery, Idaho, and Spokane, Wash., as well as parks planning in Washington, Connecticut and Colorado.

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