

ITSL Graduate Jeremy Merrill In Demand

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ITLS graduate Jeremy Merrill welcomed in industry.

No sooner had Jeremy Merrill left USU with his new ITLS degree in August, than he returned to the Logan campus with good news in September.

In an economy where an estimated 53 percent of college graduates are unemployed or severely underemployed, [1] Merrill is already enjoying the job of his dreams. He told ITLS students at a lunch event sponsored by the Instructional Technology Student Association recently that the skills he developed in the ITLS Master of Arts program prepared him to step right into the job market.

Merrill is the new director of instructional design at the National Institute for Jail Operations (NIJO) where he runs an online program called Detention and Corrections Online Training Academy (DACOTA). He is the administrator of the academy's Learning Management System (LMS) and manages a team of five instructional designers who develop, design and present online courses and training classes for correctional professionals nationwide.

His job includes taking content from subject matter experts, designing the learning experience and developing the course to then be loaded onto the LMS for employees of jails and correctional facilities throughout the U.S. He usually works in shorts and a T-shirt from his home office

in Smithfield, Utah where he lives with his wife, Krystalee and children Draxtyn, 5, and Ambryelle, 2.

During an internship for NIJO in May 2019, Merrill recommended solution, including a more efficient LMS and he helped the company implement new design protocols for the future. The company sells a one-year subscription to their LMS online training to county jails, detention centers and correctional facilities all over the U.S. These correctional professionals can then log on, take courses and get certifications. Merrill and his team continuously add more courses with better training content.

"They didn't know how to make it better and grow it," Merrill said. "It's just really exploding. They're trying not to advertise it to agencies, but by word-of-mouth people are just knocking down the doors. Correctional professionals in the U.S. say it is the best they have seen."

Merrill said the programs he learned to use in the ITLS program, including Adobe Captivate and Storyline, made him marketable to potential employers. In fact, NIJO is specifically seeking students with ITLS degrees to help them build DACOTA, he said.

"The ITLS program, I think, is set up fantastic if you're going to go into academics, K-12 or college level, Merrill said. ITLS work in the industry lends itself to great creativity, he said. Instructional designers can do contract work and get paid per course they complete.

"That's kind of nice because you can work remotely, at your own pace and fit it within your schedule," Merrill said.

Merrill said the faculty, staff and classmates he met during his time as a student in the ITLS program were very influential.

"I love the faculty and staff here," he said. "You can always learn skills, but the skills I think that matter the most are people skills - caring about the individuals that you work with and you associate with."

1. <https://www.washington.edu/doit/>