

# ITLS Offers Support In Covid-19 Crisis (Part 1)

03/27/2020



*Dr. Mitchell Colver, founding manager of the Center for Student Analytics at USU, connects with ITLS students in a recently-converted online classroom.*

In true Aggie style, the faculty, staff, and students at Utah State University have worked together to address the online learning challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to growing safety concerns for staff and students as a result of the spread of COVID-19 in the U.S., President Noelle Cockett announced on March 12 that all face-to-face classes at USU's main and statewide campuses would be temporarily canceled. Students and faculty were instructed to transition to online formats to continue their coursework for the semester.

Neal Legler, director of USU's Center for Innovative Design and Instruction (CIDI), said that their team began discussing the possible cancellation of all classroom instruction as early as March 2. CIDI helps university instructors create and maintain high quality learning environments, especially through the use of learning technology. When face-to-face instruction was officially canceled on March 12, Legler and his team were already in the middle of an emergency training meeting, preparing to help transfer every course at USU to an online format.

Many of the trainees in that meeting were students and alumni from USU's Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences (ITLS) department who had responded to ITLS faculty member Dr. Kristy Bloxham's request for help in the content conversion process. "We had such an amazing response to my request to help CIDI," said Dr. Bloxham,

who was instrumental in organizing the ITLS COVID-19 Support Team.

In all, 105 staff, students, and faculty members were assembled to help "flip" all face-to-face classes to run entirely on Canvas, the learning platform used by USU students and educators. Many ITLS students worked through the weekend to contact instructors, discover their specific needs, and brainstorm with them about options.

Regarding the increase in online classes, Legler said, "Since March 16, we've gone from 1,881 active courses on Canvas to 2,425. There are a lot of hands at work here, involving a lot of individual little challenges. People have managed it remarkably well."

CIDI faculty and instructors were incredibly busy throughout the first week of online classes, supporting students and faculty through live chats, phone calls, and with web-based training materials. Legler said he wasn't surprised at how well USU's faculty worked together to make the transition, but the students who helped were an unexpected support.

"There's a whole lot of experience and expertise among our faculty around eLearning and distance education," said Legler. "What we didn't expect, what surprised us, were the ITLS volunteers. That was really cool. They came on board and were really helpful."

Robert Wagner, vice president for Academic and Instructional Services at USU, said that he has been impressed with the response of the ITLS faculty, staff, alumni, and students, calling them an "integral part of USU's move to remote instruction." Wagner, who briefed USU's president and provost regarding the ITLS efforts, added that he doesn't know of any other institution that has accomplished what USU has with such a large support team.

"We have seen the world turn to, and depend on, those who know how to develop and deliver online learning," said Bloxham. "They have become the heroes of the day!"

ITLS is housed within the [Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services](#). For more information about the online learning resources available through CIDI, [visit their website](#).