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Life design, with the aid of a book  
  
BY **HANNAH KRAMER** | SEPTEMBER 01, 2010

David Gould wants to know how a four-year graduate spends her or his 2 million minutes at the University of Iowa. So he created a class that studies just that.

"[It is about] how this experience can be more of a laboratory for students," the interdepartmental studies coordinator said.

As part of the course, Gould's students will learn from example. They will read about, hear from, and speak with some of the people who have made their way to the top in the business world.

Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos.com Inc., is one of those examples. Hsieh will give a public talk at the Englert Theatre, 221 E. Washington, at 7:30 p.m. today. Admission is free.

This past summer, Gould wrote to Hsieh about how Hsieh's new book, Delivering Happiness, influenced him. Though the CEO and author receives around 1,000 e-mails a day, Gould's stuck out to Hsieh as worth reading.

Delivering Happiness tells his story of how he became successful at a young age and chronicles the skills he learned through his experiences in the business world.

Longtime friend, business partner, and "backup brain" Jenn Lim said Gould's message initiated an idea for the future of Delivering Happiness.

"It was one of the first e-mails [we received] about education and how the book could be integrated into curriculum," she said.

Gould's e-mail contained praise for the book as well as information about the new class he was teaching at the UI called Life Design: Building Your Future. He was excited about the new course, especially because Helena Dettmer, an associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, was willing to take a chance on his idea.

"It means a lot to me that the college is willing to try this experiment with me and see if it works," he said.

The message from Gould persuaded Hsieh and Lim that the book would be beneficial in more outlets than they expected. When a team was planning the book tour for Delivering Happiness, they knew they needed to make a stop in Iowa City.

An opportunity such as this would be great to expand beyond his class at the UI, Gould said. With the help of Senior Vice President Tom Celik of West Bank and Andre Perry, the Englert Theatre executive director, Hsieh's visit became a public event.

"Reaching out to him was no big deal," Gould said. "It is a big deal that he cares enough about this message that he would be willing to do this."

Though Gould's class has only met three times so far this semester, he expects Hsieh's presentation to be a great lesson in the curriculum.

"When you are making decisions and looking at what's really important in your life, happiness is one of those ingredients," Gould said.

Since the book was published, people such as Gould have inspired Hsieh and Lim to take the idea of promoting happiness to the next level.

On the book's website, www.deliveringhappinessbook.com, a team put together a section called "Join the Movement," in which people can share their success stories, read the stories of others, and learn about the effect of Delivering Happiness.

"We didn't know what the movement was when we started, but we have all these stories coming from all different places," Lim said. "We are collecting that as a community and knowledgebase and then connecting people."