

University of Iowa News Release

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Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh to speak in conjunction with new UI 'Life Design' course



Finding purpose and meaning can be one of the greatest challenges for college students, and a new University of Iowa "Life Design" course aims to help. Guest speakers will describe how their paths to success unfolded, and one of those inspirational figures is Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh, the best-selling author of "Delivering Happiness."

While in town for the class, Hsieh will share his story with the public at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 1, at the Englert Theatre, 221 E. Washington St., Iowa City. Doors to the unticketed event will open at 7 p.m.

At age 24, Hsieh (pronounced Shay) sold LinkExchange, the company he co-founded, to Microsoft for \$265 million. He went on to lead the online shoe and clothing store Zappos, growing it from almost no sales to more than \$1 billion in gross merchandise sales annually. The company became known for exceptional customer service and made Fortune magazine's list of "Best Companies to Work For."



Zappos was acquired by Amazon last year in a deal valued at \$1.2 billion. Hsieh's first book, "Delivering Happiness," debuted at No. 1 on the New York Times Bestseller list and has remained on the list since June 2010.

The event is presented by the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, UI Dance Marathon and Iowa Touchdowns for Kids. Sponsors include the Moen Group, the Corridor Business Alliance and several individuals and businesses.

Hsieh is on a national bus tour promoting the book, and he agreed to visit Iowa City to speak to students in the first-time UI course, "Life Design: Building Your Future," taught by David Gould, academic coordinator of the Interdepartmental Studies Program.

The one-semester-hour course is offered through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to help undergraduates who may not have clear goals in mind develop their plans. The eight-week class focuses on identifying talents and passions, finding community, discovering campus resources and cultivating relationships with mentors. About 100 students are enrolled.

Gould will interview Hsieh about his experiences and philosophies during the class, from 1:05 to 2:20 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 2 in Room 101 of the Becker Communication Studies Building.



"I've worked with students who are settled into a major and are doing well in school, but still have trouble answering the question, 'Why am I here?'" said Gould, who also teaches courses as a lecturer in health and human physiology. "The thought behind this course is that if you can recognize your passion -- your signature strength -- you'll have a much higher chance of being successful and satisfied. Finding something you love and can be good at seems to be a better approach than just going through the motions to get a job."

The course will draw upon the work of well-known authors, thinkers, motivational speakers and psychologists like Richard Florida, Daniel Goleman, Ken Robinson, Daniel Pink, Malcolm Gladwell and Stuart Brown. Gould interviewed several of them over the summer, requesting advice for his students. The conversations will be available on the course website, <http://www.uiowa.edu/~lifeclas/>.

Assignments will include creating a "life commandment," setting goals and considering how they align with dreams, navigating a scavenger hunt to learn about UI resources, making a mentor map, and writing journal entries to reflect on topics like "do-overs," parents' dreams for their children, good deeds and gratitude.

In structuring the course, Gould sought input from current students, past student leaders, respected faculty and community members. One community organizer, West Bank Senior Vice President Tom Cilek, is assembling a panel of local entrepreneurs to share their stories with the class. Other presenters will include Nate Staniforth, a UI alumnus who followed his childhood dream to become a magician, Mitch Kelly, who arrived at the UI as a walk-on wrestler without a plan and went on to become a faculty member in the College of Education, and Bosnian refugee Amir Hadzic, the head soccer coach at Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids.

One theme of the class is that the path to fulfillment isn't always a straight line; sometimes it evolves along the way. For that, Gould can speak from experience. Out of high school, he was focused on playing in a band and didn't plan to attend college. His father urged him to try it out, so he enrolled just three weeks before the semester began. Once Gould found a sense of community, he enjoyed college -- now, of course, he teaches it.

NOTE TO MEDIA: Coverage is welcome at the Englert or classroom events.

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