

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Academic and Student Affairs
Consent

AGENDA ITEM: 5 – D (4)
DATE: May 18-20, 2026

SUBJECT

New Program Request – USD – MDes in Human Computer UX & UI

CONTROLLING STATUTE, RULE, OR POLICY

[BOR Policy 2.3.2](#) – New Programs, Program Modifications, and Inactivation/Termination

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

The University of South Dakota (USD) requests authorization to offer a MDes in Human Computer User Experience (UX) & User Interface (UI). The proposed program will equip students to become leaders in creating user-centered digital experiences. By integrating principles from psychology, interaction design, and computer science, this program offers a comprehensive approach to understanding and designing for user behavior, cognitive processes, and accessibility needs. Students will acquire advanced expertise in UX research, usability testing, information architecture, and UI prototyping, leveraging industry-standard tools and innovative design methods. Through immersive, hands-on projects and collaborative work, students will build an impressive portfolio that showcases their skills and vision, positioning them for leadership roles as UX/UI designers, product designers, and strategic design thinkers in technology-driven fields. The MDes (Master of Design) will be a new degree for USD.

The intent to plan has been approved by the Executive Director and was presented to the Board as an informational item at the [July 2025](#) Board meeting.

IMPACT AND RECOMMENDATION

USD plans to offer the MDes in Human Computer UX & UI on campus. USD does not request new state resources. No new courses will be required. USD estimates 25 students enrolled and 20 graduates by the sixth year of the program.

Committee A has reviewed the proposed program with BOR academic staff and recommends BOR approval.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment I – New Program Request Summary: USD – MDes in Human Computer UX & UI

DRAFT MOTION 20260518_5-D(4):

I move to authorize USD to offer a MDes in Human Computer UX & UI, as presented.

**Full Proposal – MDes Human Computer UX & UI
University of South Dakota**

BOR Recommendation: The Board of Regents Academic Affairs and the Executive Director support the program request that will add the Master of Design in Human Computer UX & UI to USD's program offerings. This program will increase opportunities for students to obtain a Master's degree and expertise in a field that supports workforce demand.

Program Description:

Catalog Description: The MDes in Human Computer User Experience (UX) & User Interface (UI) Design is a cutting-edge graduate program that equips students to become leaders in creating user-centered digital experiences. By integrating principles from psychology, interaction design, and computer science, this program offers a comprehensive approach to understanding and designing for user behavior, cognitive processes, and accessibility needs.

Students will acquire advanced expertise in UX research, usability testing, information architecture, and UI prototyping, leveraging industry-standard tools and innovative design methods. Through immersive, hands-on projects and collaborative work, students will build an impressive portfolio that showcases their skills and vision, positioning them for leadership roles as UX/UI designers, product designers, and strategic design thinkers in technology-driven fields.

Strategic Impact:

USD Strategic Impact:

This program equips students to enter the workforce as innovative, ethically minded professionals capable of navigating the complexities of designing and researching for diverse users in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. By cultivating skills in empathy-driven design and ethical technology practices, the program directly supports USD's strategic goals of enhancing student learning, preparing graduates for impactful careers, and fostering community engagement through socially responsible practices.

Academically, the program aligns with USD's priorities of excellence in research, experiential learning, and public impact. The curriculum aims to provide students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills through interdisciplinary collaborative coursework - Graphic Design, Psychology, and Computer Science, hands-on projects, and collaboration with industry partners. This approach enhances students' technical and design skills while promoting a strong dedication to inclusivity and accessibility in design—essential for engaging today's diverse and global user base. Graduates are well-prepared to contribute significantly to their professions, which furthers USD's mission of cultivating graduates who contribute significantly to their professions.

The MDes program aligns with the institution's priorities of research excellence, experiential learning, and societal impact. Through rigorous coursework and industry-standard projects, it sharpens students' technical skills in user experience and interface development, design, and research capabilities. Graduates will be uniquely prepared to make significant contributions across various sectors, thereby advancing the institution's mission of developing visionary leaders and socially responsible practitioners.

BOR Strategic Impact:

The proposed MDes in Human Computer UX & UI Design supports the South Dakota Board of Regents Strategic Plan directly addressing multiple goals, objectives, steps, and actions outlined in the plan.

Goal 2: Access & Affordability

The surging demand for UX/UI professionals draws in working professionals and non-traditional students eager to elevate their careers, refine their skills, and seize opportunities in this dynamic, high-growth field. The program provides a career-driven education that opens doors to high-paying, prestigious opportunities and attracts a new wave of ambitious students eager to excel in a rapidly growing, innovation-driven industry. A competitive tuition structure in South Dakota attracts regional and out-of-state students to the program.

Goal 3: Academic Excellence, Student Success, and Educational Attainment

By seamlessly blending human centered design, psychology, and computer science, this program delivers a high-impact learning experience that empowers students to create innovative, user-focused solutions in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The hands-on projects and industry-aligned curriculum equip students with cutting-edge skills and real-world experience, ensuring they graduate career-ready and primed for success in a competitive, innovation-driven field. The portfolio-driven approach empowers students with real-world experience and industry-ready skills, creating a clear pathway to success while boosting retention and ensuring graduates are fully prepared for high-impact careers. The interdisciplinary nature of UX/UI design appeals to a diverse range of students, fostering an inclusive learning environment that enhances engagement, drives innovation, and boosts graduation success.

Goal 4: Workforce and Economic Development

According to the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation's 2022-2032 projections, careers in Web and Digital Interface Design are set to grow by 11.11%, while Web Development is expected to surge by 17.53%, which rapid expansion highlights the critical demand for skilled UX/UI professionals who can shape seamless digital experiences and cutting-edge innovations. UX & UI Design is a cutting-edge, technology-driven field that shapes the future of digital experiences, requiring designers to master emerging technologies, advanced software, and data-driven strategies. This program equips students with in-demand skills, positioning them as key players in workforce development, ready to drive innovation in tech, business, and digital transformation. The hands-on, project-based curriculum actively cultivates partnerships with leading tech firms, design agencies, and research institutions, creating exciting opportunities for collaborative faculty research and valuable internships and sponsorships for students. This dynamic approach bridges academia and industry, ensuring students gain real-world experience while driving innovation and cutting-edge research. UX/UI professionals are sought after nationwide, with businesses across industries competing for top talent to drive digital innovation. By fostering strategic job placement initiatives, we can create exciting career opportunities right here in South Dakota, ensuring our graduates stay and contribute to the state's growing technology and design ecosystem.

Goal 5: Financial Health and Competitiveness

This program offers a high-value graduate degree unlike any other in South Dakota, making it a premier destination for students seeking cutting-edge expertise in UX/UI design. With its unique curriculum and industry-driven approach, it attracts ambitious learners from South Dakota and beyond and prepares them for high-impact careers in the fast-growing digital landscape. With high-paying career opportunities in UX/UI design, graduates can step into roles that offer strong earning potential, making loan repayment manageable and ensuring long-term financial sustainability. This field not only fuels innovation and creativity but also provides a lucrative return on investment, setting you up for a successful and secure future.

Program Summary:

The classification of this program will be 11.0105 [Human-Centered Technology Design]. This program is proposed to be offered beginning Fall 2026 in an on-campus format at USD. USD will seek accreditation through the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) for the program.

New Degree Type:

The proposed Master of Design (MDes) in Human Interaction UX & UI Design represents a transformational leap forward for South Dakota—academically, economically, and technologically. What makes this program particularly novel and valuable is its interdisciplinary nature, drawing from design, psychology, computer science, and human factors to prepare students for the evolving demands of the digital age.

As AI, automation, and emerging technologies continue to reshape industries, the need for professionals who can design human-centered, intuitive, and accessible digital experiences is growing rapidly. Despite this increasing demand, no undergraduate or graduate programs currently exist in South Dakota that are specifically focused on UX/UI design. This new degree is the first in the state to directly address a critical educational and workforce gap.

The program equips students with versatile, cross-disciplinary skills increasingly sought in high-demand fields such as digital product design, human-computer interaction, and user research by integrating technical expertise, behavioral science, and creative problem-solving. This interdisciplinary approach gives the program its distinctive value and wide-reaching relevance.

Furthermore, the MDes degree complements and builds upon existing programs at USD—such as Graphic Design and the MA in Human Factors Psychology—offering students a clear pathway into specialized careers or further academic study at the doctoral level.

Beyond the classroom, this degree has the power to position South Dakota as a hub for UX/UI education and innovation, attracting students from across the region and preparing graduates for high-paying, impactful careers nationwide. It supports academic excellence and economic development, tech-sector growth, and talent retention in the state.

In summary, this isn't just a new degree—it's a strategic and forward-thinking investment in South Dakota's future, reflecting the value of interdisciplinary education and its power to drive innovation in the digital economy.

Duplication and Competition:

Currently, no undergraduate or graduate programs in UX & UI Design exist in South Dakota. Given the rapid digital transformation across industries, students interested in this field must seek education

out-of-state or pursue related but non-specialized programs. The absence of a dedicated UX/UI degree presents a clear gap in educational offerings, suggesting strong potential demand from students eager to enter this high-growth career path.

Competitor University Peers¹:

University	Total Degrees in Related Fields Conferred	Total Number of Degrees Conferred at Each Institution
Iowa State University	49	49
Illinois Institute of Technology	41	41
University of California-Irvine	32	32

Workforce Outlook/State Need:

The demand for UX & UI professionals is expected to grow as companies recognize that intuitive design improves user satisfaction, engagement, and retention. The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation's 2022-2032 Statewide Employment Projections indicate that the related industry fields for this degree are expected to grow by 11.11% for Web and Digital Interface Designers (SOC Code-15-1255) and 17.53% for Web Developers (SOC Code-15-1254), respectively (South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation, n.d.).

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that employment for web developers and digital designers will grow by 8% from 2023 to 2033, exceeding the average growth rate for all occupations. Approximately 16,500 job openings for these positions are expected each year over the next decade. The ongoing expansion of e-commerce fuels this growth. As businesses increasingly enhance their online offerings and close physical stores, the demand for these roles is anticipated to rise. Moreover, the increasing use of mobile devices to browse the web has increased demand for developing digital interfaces that accommodate various screen sizes, including websites, mobile apps, smartwatches, and TVs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024).

The demand for UX and UI design professionals is robust both nationally and within South Dakota, as evidenced by numerous current job openings:

National Landscape:

A recent search on Indeed.com revealed approximately 3,292 full-time UX designer positions available across the United States. UX Design Institute. LinkedIn currently lists over 5,000 UX designer job openings nationwide, underscoring the extensive need for professionals in this field (LinkedIn).

South Dakota Landscape:

In South Dakota, there are currently 144 UI/UX design job openings, indicating a significant demand for these professionals within the state (ZipRecruiter). Sioux Falls, the state's largest city, has at least seven UI/UX positions available, reflecting local opportunities in this sector. These figures highlight a substantial and ongoing need for UX and UI designers both nationally and within South Dakota. The presence of numerous job openings suggests that the supply of qualified professionals may not be keeping pace with industry demand, leading to unfilled positions in this rapidly evolving field.

¹ IPEDS, 2022-2023

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the MDes Human Interaction UX & UI Design program, students will demonstrate the following competencies:

1. Apply Human-Centered Design Principles

Demonstrate the ability to integrate human-centered and interaction design methodologies to create intuitive, user-focused digital solutions.

2. Conduct Effective User Research

Design and implement user research strategies—including observation, interviews, usability testing, and data analysis—to identify and respond to user needs.

3. Design, Prototype, and Test Interactive Systems

Develop prototypes using industry-standard tools and conduct iterative usability evaluations to refine digital products and interfaces.

4. Integrate Technical and Visual Design Skills

Combine technical fluency (e.g., interaction coding, responsive frameworks) with advanced visual communication principles to design high-quality user interfaces.

5. Demonstrate Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Effectively collaborate with professionals across disciplines—including computer science, psychology, business, and healthcare—to develop integrated, real-world solutions.

6. Implement Inclusive and Ethical Design Practices

Design products that reflect ethical awareness and are accessible to users of all backgrounds, abilities, and demographics.

7. Communicate Design Intent and Process

Clearly articulate design rationale, research findings, and project outcomes in both written and verbal formats to diverse audiences, including clients, stakeholders, and team members.

8. Engage in Lifelong Learning and Professional Practice

Demonstrate preparedness for ongoing learning and adaptation in a rapidly evolving field through reflective practice, portfolio development, and engagement with industry standards and emerging technologies.

Projected Enrollment:

The introduction of the Master of Design in Human Interaction UX & UI Design at the University of South Dakota is anticipated to attract both new students and those from related disciplines within the university. The unique nature of this program in South Dakota positions USD to draw prospective students from across the state and beyond who are seeking specialized education in UX/UI design. In addition to students from traditional design or arts backgrounds, the program is also likely to attract students with computer science (CS) who are interested in expanding their expertise into design-focused disciplines such as computer graphics, immersive design, and game design.

These fields require a strong understanding of both technical systems and user-centered design, making the MDes in Human Computer UX & UI Design an ideal bridge for technically trained students who want to develop creative, applied skills in visual storytelling, interface design, and interactive media. The cross-disciplinary appeal of the program supports a more diverse graduate student body and represents a net increase in USD's graduate enrollment, tapping into new populations of learners not currently served by existing offerings.

Current USD students enrolled in programs such as Graphic Design, Computer Science, and Psychology-Human Factor may find that the proposed MDes program aligns closely with their evolving career interests. In particular, Computer Science students interested in computer graphics, immersive environments, or game design may view the MDes as an opportunity to build a robust foundation in user-centered design, interaction aesthetics, and real-time visual storytelling—areas that are essential in game development and immersive media.

While some students may choose to transition fully into the MDes program, the interdisciplinary structure also supports dual-interest pathways. Many students might pursue the MDes as a complementary degree or specialization, allowing them to enhance their technical or psychological training with design thinking and interface innovation skills. This flexibility encourages internal collaboration across departments and broadens the academic and creative horizons for USD's student population without requiring them to leave their primary field of study.

While specific enrollment numbers and growth percentages are yet to be determined, the rising demand for UX/UI professionals and the absence of similar programs in the region suggest a positive enrollment outlook. The program is expected to contribute to USD's overall graduate enrollment growth, complementing the university's recent successes in attracting more students. In summary, the MDes in Human Interaction UX & UI Design is poised to enhance USD's academic offerings, attract new students, and provide current students with additional pathways to align their education with evolving industry demands.

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	6th Year
ESTIMATES	2026- 27	2027-28	2028- 29	2029- 30	2030- 31	2031- 32
Students new to the university	5	9	13	18	22	25
Students from other university programs		1	1	2	2	3
Students off-campus or distance						
Continuing students						
Total students in the program (fall)	5	10	14	20	24	28
	60	60	60	60	60	60
Program credit hours (major Courses)**	300	600	840	1200	1440	1680
Graduates			5	10	15	20

*Does not include current fiscal year.**This is the total number of credit hours generated by students in the program in the required or elective program courses. Use the same numbers in Appendix B – Budget.

Projected Revenue/Expenses:

Fiscal Year	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31	FY32
TUITION & FEE REVENUES	35,427	63,769	88,061	123,488	151,830	170,050
PROGRAM EXPENSES	1,000	1,000	17,721	30,242	33,444	33,444
NET (T&F REVENUES LESS PROGRAM EXPENSES)	34,427	62,769	70,340	93,246	118,386	136,606
OTHER SUPPORTING REVENUES	-	-	-	-	-	-
NET AFTER OTHER SUPPORTING REVENUES	34,427	62,769	70,340	93,246	118,386	136,606

No new faculty lines are requested during the initial implementation phase of the MDes in Human-Computer Interaction (UX/UI Design). The program will be delivered through strategic collaboration and resource-sharing among existing faculty in the Departments of Art, Computer Science, and Psychology.

Personnel & Faculty Time

Initial Phase (Years 1–5): The program will be launched using existing faculty and courses from the Departments of Art, Computer Science, and Psychology. Post-Year 5 (Growth Phase): As enrollment grows, new faculty lines may be requested to support program delivery if revenue trends from the program support the additional position(s), particularly in specialized areas such as immersive media, interactive prototyping, or UX research methods.

Professional Development

One-time and ongoing support will be allocated for faculty to attend industry conferences (e.g., Adobe MAX, UXPA, Interaction Design Association, CHI), engage in certification workshops (e.g., Figma, Unity, UX Research Tools), and collaborate on interdisciplinary research or curriculum development across design, computer science, and psychology.

Instructional Technology & Software

As one-time costs, UX/UI-specific tools such as Figma, Adobe Creative Cloud, Miro, Axure, or Unity/Unreal Engine (for immersive media projects) will be required along with set up for usability testing labs, including video capture equipment and eye-tracking software. Ongoing Costs will include software licensing renewals and updates.