

Utah First in the Country to Embrace Voluntary Certification for Commercial Interior Designers

The Utah State Legislature enacted the Commercial Interior Design Certification Act, removing significant barriers for Utah's interior designers

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing is now accepting applications from interior designers who qualify for the newly enacted Commercial Interior Design Certification.

Since the early 1990's, Utah's interior designers have been prohibited from independently practicing to the full extent of their education and experience. This meant that an interior designer was barred from performing design work on their own in any code-impacted commercial space above 3,000 square feet.



During the 2016 legislative session, the Interior Design, Education, and Legislative coalition of Utah (IDEAL for Utah) advocated for interior design to be recognized as an independent profession and removed barriers to practice in specific commercial spaces. The Commercial Interior Design Certification is the result of collaborative efforts including representation from the design community, trade organizations, educators and students, Utah Legislature, the Women in the Economy Commission, the Disability Law Center and more.

Senator Luz Escamilla, the sponsor and champion of the legislation said, "I am proud to work hand in hand with the interior design community and their leaders in the passing of SB 117, Commercial Interior Design Certification, that removes barriers for qualified interior designers so they can expand their ability to compete or bid in new spaces independently as the primary lead on a design project. More importantly, it allowed for an industry of mostly professional women to practice their profession to the full extent of their education and experience, expanding services and stimulating economic development."

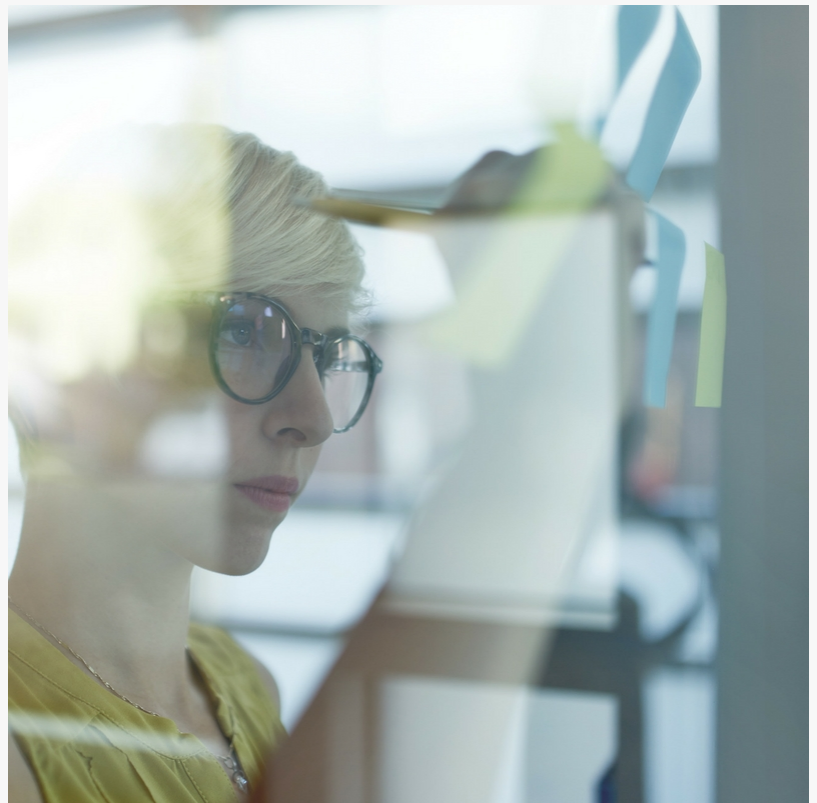
Commercial Interior Designers typically have a four-year degree, experience through a supervised internship, and have passed the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) examination; an independent, non-profit testing body nationally recognized as the industry standard

examination for interior design. Utah has several accredited interior design programs, including Weber State University and Utah State University.

Utah is the first state in the country to pass legislation for Commercial Interior Designers and has adopted certification as a less burdensome regulatory designation recommended by many in the legislature. Certification not only helps define the profession as separate from decorating, it also provides a pathway for interior designers to compete for design projects in commercial spaces that are subject to the International Building Code. Opportunities to bid on state and federal contracts will increase competition, anchor design firm expansion as contracts are won, and diversity within the professional designer workforce in commercial spaces will provide additional options for consumers. Certification clearly defines Commercial Interior Design from interior decorating, yet because it is voluntary, will not limit designers from working.

Amy Coombs, IDEAL-UT lobbyist said, "Misconceptions abound concerning what professional interior designers do, and clearly if investigated you would quickly find out they do so much more than paint and pillows. For example, many public buildings have interiors exclusively designed by interior designers who are trained and educated in our state universities regarding health-safety issues. These health-safety issues include applied knowledge of fire-ratings, flammable materials, Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements, egress and much more."

To become a Certified Commercial Interior Designer individuals must submit an application found on DOPL's website, pay a fee, provide satisfactory evidence of good moral character, and qualify and pass the NCIDQ examination. The cost to apply for the Commercial Interior Design Certification is an initial \$70.00 and thereafter the renewal fee is \$40.00 every two years. Certified Commercial Interior Designers are also required to complete 20 hours of continuing education for their renewal, with at least 10 continuing education credit hours dedicated exclusively to



health-safety issues.

Interior Design is known to be a female dominated industry yet women entrepreneurs still face challenges getting fair access to capital. Only 4 percent of the total dollar value of all small business loans goes to women entrepreneurs, according to a US Senate hearing on July 23, 2014, which focused on Empowering Women Entrepreneurs. Additionally, women entrepreneurs still face formidable challenges gaining equal access to federal contracts. When interior designers choose to start their own business as an alternative to employment in architectural design-build firms, these small businesses are often owned by women. With the enactment of the Commercial Interior Design Certification, these small women-owned businesses will now have the ability to bid on state and federal contracts within a newly defined scope of practice.

IDEAL for Utah President and Principal Interior Designer at Interiors West, Melanie Bahl said, "It was an exhilarating day to see Certified Commercial Interior Designer on the DOPL website. I encourage all professionals to register with the state. What took years to put into law takes only a few minutes to register. I wish to encourage working interior designers and students to take the NCIDQ exam, which is the best measurement of professional practice our industry has. Congratulations to all who took part in opening opportunities for Commercial Interior Designers."

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