

# USU Faculty Member Dave Gibson Earns International Red Dot Award for Outdoor Product Design

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[Dave Gibson](#), a faculty member in Utah State University's Outdoor Product Design and Development (OPDD) program, [has earned international recognition after a product he designed](#) — the Rigel Dual Zone eCooler — received the prestigious 2026 [Red Dot Award](#) for Product Design. The honor, announced on April 29, 2026, places Gibson and his collaborators among an elite group of designers recognized annually by one of the world's most respected design competitions.

Gibson designed the Rigel as part of his work with TRAVOCA, a brand focused on creating high-quality gear for overlanders and outdoor enthusiasts. The 12V portable fridge/freezer draws its visual identity from nature and the golden age of adventure travel — think classic Woody station wagons and vintage panel vans — rendered in a woodsy green cold-rolled steel exterior with optional customizable bamboo panels. The design bridges nostalgia and modern functionality in a way that is rare in the outdoor gear market.

*“My path in design has taken many turns. After studying Industrial Design with the original goal of becoming a furniture designer, I unexpectedly found myself in the outdoor industry. Looking back, it feels like exactly where I was meant to end up. After spending more than a decade working as a product designer, teaching design also seemed to fortuitously stumble into my path. Working with students has been profoundly rewarding, and both careers have brought me a great deal of joy. I feel incredibly fortunate to have spent my time doing work that I truly love.*

*When news of the Red Dot Award came, I felt that same sense of fortunate opportunity. I'm grateful to have had the chance to work with a great new brand, Travoca, alongside people I genuinely enjoy and respect. What stands out to me most is that the product represents more than just good design—it reflects a company committed to creating truly meaningful products, not simply more stuff. The award feels like icing on the cake.*

*I feel fortunate to have the support of the USU OPDD program, which has allowed me to continue sharing these experiences and opportunities with the next generation of designers through my ongoing professional work and journey.”*

**— Dave Gibson, Professor of Outdoor Product and Industrial Design, USU OPDD**

Gibson noted that the overlanding category is relatively new and hungry for great design, and that the Rigel was conceived to set a new benchmark for products in the space. That vision resonated with the Red Dot jury, which evaluates thousands of submissions from around the globe each year across 52 product categories.

## About the Red Dot Award

Founded in 1955, the [Red Dot Design Award](#) is one of the oldest and most recognized distinctions in the global design community. Each year, an independent international jury evaluates entries across three disciplines — Product Design, Brands & Communication Design, and Design Concept — assessing each submission on criteria including functional quality, aesthetic appeal, usability, and responsible design. Earning a Red Dot is broadly understood as a mark of excellence that signals a product has met the highest global standards.

Winners will be celebrated at the Red Dot Gala in Essen, Germany, on July 7, 2026, and award-winning products

will be showcased at the Red Dot Design Museum Essen, international exhibitions, and through the annual Red Dot Design Yearbook.

## **Design Education Meets Industry Impact**

Gibson's recognition illustrates the real-world impact that USU's OPDD program cultivates. The program prepares students to design products at the intersection of human performance, outdoor environments, and responsible manufacturing — and faculty like Gibson bring active professional practice into the classroom. His work with TRAVOCA and the resulting Red Dot honor exemplifies the kind of industry-engaged scholarship that defines the program's approach.

### **About USU's Outdoor Product Design and Development Program**

Utah State University's Outdoor Product Design and Development (OPDD) program is one of the nation's premier programs dedicated to designing gear, apparel, and equipment for the outdoor industry. Located in Logan, Utah — a hub for outdoor recreation — the program combines industrial design, human factors, materials science, and business principles to prepare graduates for careers across the outdoor industry. For more information, visit [opdd.usu.edu](http://opdd.usu.edu).