"What does an Instructional Designer Do?"

Note: Below is a general description of what Instructional Designers (IDs) do in the UC Online context. In other contexts (for example, on UC campuses) IDs might serve more as consultants on learning technologies and pedagogy rather than as full service course designers and project managers. In addition, the terms Instructional Designer and Instructional Technologist are often used interchangeably. Finally, on some campuses there are additional staff members and Ed Tech groups that can provide assistance in the course design and development process. For example, media services groups, video producers, media specialists, animators, graphic designers, and software developers.

Instructional Designer Role (UCOP)

An Instructional designer (ID) is a highly skilled professional that designs effective and engaging learning experiences both online and on the ground. IDs in higher education often have professional degrees in Education or Design, or advanced degrees in an academic discipline. Many also have significant college-level teaching experience. In addition, they are well versed in online pedagogy and adult learning theory and have strong technical skills. IDs keep abreast of the latest educational tools and technologies through ongoing research, training, and conferences.

For fully online courses, it is ideal to have an Instructional Designer manage the design and development process from start to finish. This includes:

- Initial analysis and planning. This is a collaborative process that takes place with the faculty member and may include a plan for converting an on-ground course to an online course or developing an entirely new online course. This plan often includes a production schedule and budget, course learning objectives, and a pedagogical rationale for the use of various tools and technologies.
- With faculty, design online course structure and flow, learning activities, and assessments, aligning them with course learning objectives
- Research and implement various course tools and technologies, aligning them with course learning objectives (for example discussion forums, lecture videos, blogs, collaborative writing, synchronous web conferences, etc.).
- Work alone or with media production team to design various elearning media assets such as lecture videos, interactive lessons, graphics, and animations.
- Advise faculty on best practices for creating video lectures including developing lecture scripts and outlines, on camera presence, effective presentations, DIY production, studio production, working with a media production crews, etc.
- Coordinate media production personnel and teams, manage production schedule, and manage media assets and storage.
- Build out course in a learning management system such as Canvas, Blackboard or Moodle.
- QA final course.
- Train faculty and TAs on various online teaching and learning tools, as well as tools for media asset production (for example screen recording tools, web conferencing tools, learning management systems, etc.)/
- Maintain course throughout the term and address various technical and pedagogical issues that arise.

Online course design and development is a labor intensive process that requires extensive time and attention from the faculty member as well as assistance from various professionals. As one ILTI faculty commented at a training session, "It takes a village to build an online course, don't do it alone…"

Links about Instructional Designers/Technologists:
http://christytucker.wordpress.com/2007/05/26/what-does-an-instructional-designer-do/
http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdla/fall153/shaw153.html
http://www.instructionaldesigncentral.com/htm/IDC_instructionaldesigndefinitions.htm