UCF**TODAY**

COLLEGES & CAMPUS

UCF Graduate Video Game Design Named No. 1 — for Third Time

The university's undergraduate video game design program also ranked No. 14 in the world, according to The Princeton Review and *PC Gamer* magazine.

BY BENJAMIN NOEL
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At the Communication and Media building, students collaborate on innovative projects across 112,000 square feet of high-tech studio and classroom space, including Studio 500, one of the largest motion capture studios and soundstages on the east coast, as well as Oculus Rift dev kits and AR/VR labs to experiment the latest tech. (Photo by Nick Leyva '15)

U CF's graduate video game design program has been recognized as the top graduate game design program in the world. This marks the third time in the past six years that UCF has garnered the top spot, ahead of New York University, Southern Methodist University and the University of Southern California. UCF's undergraduate game design program also ranked highly at No. 14 again this year.

"Our game design programs have state-of-the art equipment and facilities, talented and experienced faculty and the advantage of being in physical proximity to some of the nation's top gaming companies," says President Alexander N. Cartwright. "Our goal is to not just prepare students to enter the industry when they graduate, but to position them to excel in it."

The interactive entertainment graduate program at Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy (FIEA) and the digital media undergraduate program are offered at the UCF Downtown campus in Orlando's Creative Village district, which will be home of the new Electronic Arts Tiburon studio later this year.

"We are again excited that the Princeton Review and *PC Gamer* have recognized the tremendous growth and success of the video game industry and education in Central Florida" says Ben Noel, FIEA's executive director. "The vision 15 years ago was for a creative higher-wage district with sustainable jobs and a pipeline of talent. Through the commitment of the state, city, UCF and industry, there will be 2,000 game developers and students within a few blocks of each other in 2021".

The graduate program, which started in 2005 with 12 students, now has over 800 graduates at over 300 companies in 45 different states and countries around the globe — with an average starting salary over $70,000 and Iron Galaxy, Electronic Arts and Epic Games being the top three employers. The limited-access program is home to state-of-the-art studios and world-renowned faculty. Each year, students from around the world apply, and remain in Florida where they continue to expand the region's digital media hub.

"UCF continues to see opportunities in the areas of communication and media. This recognition is evidence of the success we've had and reflects the atmosphere of exploration and collaboration being developed at UCF Downtown that will enable us to meet and exceed our challenges in the next-generation of media," says Robert Littlefield, director of the Nicholson School of Communication and Media.

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