

SO YOU WANT TO BE A GAME DESIGNER?



THE BEST GAME DESIGN PROGRAMS, RANKED BY THE PRINCETON REVIEW

Making video games has never been more accessible, but it still comes with plenty of challenges. You'll need to learn how to implement your grand ideas, how to tell your story effectively, and for most of you, work well with others. Thankfully, no budding developer is forced to go alone in this big, scary world of programmers, artists, and designers.

That's where these amazing schools come in. The only thing better than having someone help you achieve your dreams is having that person be someone who's got all the expertise and wisdom you'll need to take your first steps. More and more schools are offering game design programs, and The Princeton

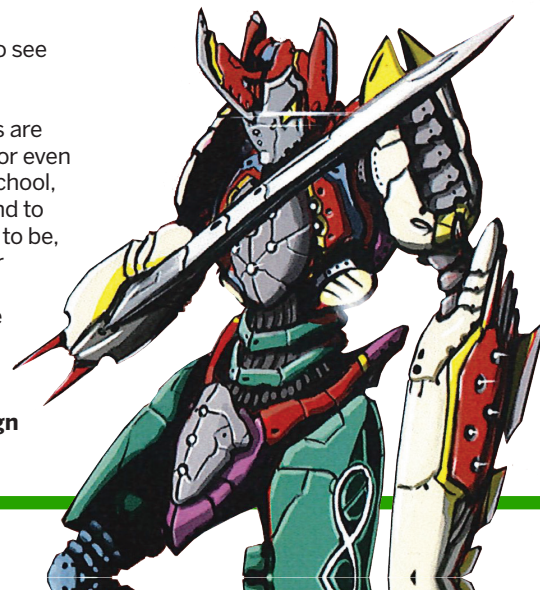
Review has done all the heavy lifting of stacking them up against each other to see which will fit you best.

Whether you're concerned about graduation rates, what kinds of classes are available, who your professors will be, or even just the demographic makeup of the school, we've got you covered. So take a second to consider who you are, where you want to be, and how you want to get there with our helpful guide.

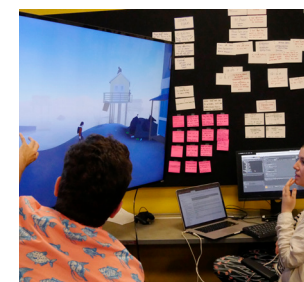
Want to know more? Check out The Princeton Review's website for further information on game design programs:

princetonreview.com/game-design

Take your big ideas and turn them into the skills and tools necessary to make great games. There's a school for almost anyone, and they're eager to help you fulfill your dreams of being a game developer.



THE TOP 50 BEST GAME DESIGN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS



1 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Total Courses: 227
2018 Grads Hired: 80%
2018 Grads Salary: \$65,000
Faculty: Mike Fischer (Square Enix America)
Fun Fact: USC Games Expo allows students and alumni to showcase their games and network with industry professionals.



2 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Total Courses: 518
2018 Grads Hired: 31%
2018 Grads Salary: \$48,000
Faculty: Bennett Foddy (QWOP, Getting Over It)
Fun Fact: The NYU Game Center Incubator program (first of its kind) has helped more than 50 graduates launch successful or award-winning games. Incubator program (the first of its kind).



3 BECKER COLLEGE

Total Courses: 125
2018 Grads Hired: 66%
2018 Grads Salary: \$52,242
Faculty: Jonathan Rudder (The Lord of the Rings Online)
Fun Fact: Has the largest game design program in the U.S., and launched an esports management program.



4 DIGIPEN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Total Courses: 391
2018 Grads Hired: 64%
2018 Grads Salary: \$72,143
Faculty: Claude Comair (Nintendo)
Fun Fact: Was the first college in North America to offer a bachelor's degree dedicated to video game development.

5. HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE
Grads Hired: 80%
Faculty: Noah Falstein (LucasArts)

6. DREXEL UNIVERSITY
Faculty: Tony Rowe (The Force Unleashed)
Alumni: Glen Winters (Red Dead Redemption 2)

7. MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
2018 Grads Hired: 90%
Fun Fact: The Inclusive Game Development Collaborative teaches about industry diversity challenges.

8. ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2018 Grads Hired: 90%
2018 Grads Salary: \$70,000

9. WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
Faculty: Brian Moriarty (LucasFilm)
2018 Grads Hired: 86%

10. UNIVERSITY OF UTAH
Alumni: Nolan Bushnell (Atari)
Female Grads: 45%, tied for highest on the list.

11. MIAMI UNIVERSITY
Alumni: Chris Carney (Riot Games)
Fun Fact: The only undergraduate program that has semester-long internships in San Francisco studios every semester

12. BRADLEY UNIVERSITY
2018 Grads Hired: 75%
Fun Fact: One of 10 schools selected this year to participate in the Xbox Live Creators Education Program.

13. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Alumni: Justin Schram (Skyrim)
Total Courses: 140

14. COGSWELL POLYTECHNICAL COLLEGE
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 96%
Faculty: Stone Librande (Diablo III)

15. LASALLE COLLEGE VANCOUVER
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%

Fun Fact: More LaSalle students work in Vancouver games industry than any other area school.

16. ABERTAY UNIVERSITY
Alumni: Timea Tabori (Rockstar North)
Fun Fact: Home to the oldest games program in Europe.

17. FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
2018 Grads Hired: 70%
Fun Fact: Developing a 40,000 square foot building for media arts and game design and a VR/mocap lab.

18. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 98%
Alumni: Ben Thompson (Hearthstone)

19. CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE
Faculty: Nate Walpole (Halo 2, 3, 4)
2018 Grads Hired: 87% (after one year)

20. SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 88%
Alumni: Sam Bushman (Wizards of the Coast)

21. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - STOUT
2018 Grads Salary: \$55,000
Fun Fact: Students go to places like Sweden and the Jim Henson Company to receive professional feedback.

22. HOWEST UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Alumni: Leslie Van den Broeck (Blizzard)
Faculty: Tristan Clarysse (Mass Effect)

23. NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
2018 Grads Salary: \$85,000
Fun Fact: Largest provider of college graduates to the North Carolina games industry, which includes Epic Games.

TOP 50 GAME DESIGN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS (CONT)

24. ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Emphasis On: Virtual reality and mobile
2018 Grads Hired: 71%

25. FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 80%
Alumni: Rex Crowle (LittleBigPlanet)

26. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

Alumni: Tim Schafer (Double Fine)
2018 Grads Salary: \$64,000

27. SHERIDAN COLLEGE

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 88%
2018 Grads Hired: 72%

28. KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

2018 Grads Salary: \$56,000
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 60%

29. NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Total Courses: 54
Fun Fact: Earn a four-year degree in three years via their accelerated program.

30. FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 75%
Alumni: Shiyang Ao (Respawn Entertainment)

31. QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY

2018 Grads Salary: \$53,000
Fun Fact: By end of senior year, each student has helped make 10-18 games.

32. MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART

Alumni: Brian Martel (Gearbox Software co-founder)
2018 Grads Salary: \$65,000

33. VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL

2018 Grads Hired: 39%
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%

34. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 42%
Fun Fact: The coming DePaul Game Studio will bring students from multiple disciplines together to work together in a large studio experience.

35. BLOOMFIELD COLLEGE

2018 Grads Salary: \$60,000
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%

36. RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

Female Grads: 42%
Alumni: Ben Esposito (Donut County)

37. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

Total Courses: 113
Female Grads: 42%

38. NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Total Courses: 63
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 75%

39. MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Alumni: Chris Weaver (Bethesda Softworks Founder)
Games Companies Visiting School: 200

40. SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Total Courses: 74
Faculty: Jack Mamais (Far Cry, Crysis)

41. TORONTO FILM SCHOOL

42. INDIANA UNIVERSITY

43. CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF ART

44. NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

45. EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

46. MARIST COLLEGE

47. RINGLING COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

48. OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

49. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN

50. CORNELL UNIVERSITY



HOMEWORK: Battle Chef Brigade

Combining completely different mechanics to make something unique

Rather than make a needlessly complicated and “innovative” puzzler, Trinket Studios wanted to combine separate gameplay mechanics (monster hunting, match 3 puzzles, RPG systems) into something fresh enough to feel like Iron Chef in a fantasy universe. Balancing so many ideas resulted in lots of revision, often wiping away years of work at a time.

EXAMPLE:

Battle Chef Brigade’s scope was revised many times, and for three whole years of development included a pantry room for grabbing ingredients, plus extra stirring mechanics. To keep things orderly, Trinket had to refocus on the game as a whole versus constantly overworking individual sections. This meant cutting the fat and spreading out stronger mechanics over more of the game.

READING MATERIAL:

<https://bit.ly/2tbuxz0>

HOMEWORK:

Play Battle Chef Brigade and note how it blends mechanics that typically aren’t in the same game, and how it toes the line of “feature creep.” How would you mix seemingly incompatible mechanics to evoke something exciting while still focusing on the whole experience?

Co-op College: How schools are preparing students to make games as a team



If you want to make it as a game developer, odds are you’ll probably have to learn to work well with your peers. It can be daunting walking into a team project having only worked on solo projects, or just not knowing your place. We talked to some of the top game design colleges to see what they’re doing to make sure students are ready for challenges of their own.

Long-Term Lessons

“Thinking about the design and production becomes particularly important,” says NYU Professor Eric Zimmerman. “Defining clear roles for everyone on the team, establishing a common vision and set of design principles, and agreeing on a shared set of values and work practices should be part of every team-based project.”

Zimmerman added that the act of designing is essentially figuring out how to solve a problem, such as which features make sense in your game, or how to most effectively tell your story. At the NYU Game Center, students work together to design games both digital and physical, sometimes for up to a full year, learning milestone-based development strategies that major studios often rely on.

Me, Myself, and Myers-Briggs

Turns out those personality type tests are good for something. Southern Methodist University uses Myers-Briggs and Bartle Tests to give each students a “gamer type” descriptor. Then they use those to help students help themselves figure out



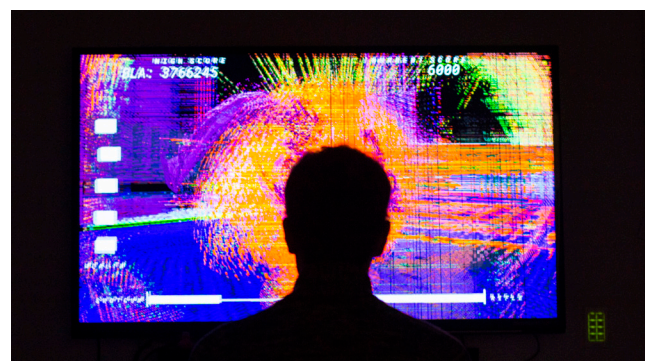
who they’d best mesh with, or who they might need to fill a gap in their development plan. Students learn values like dependability, structure, psychological safety, accountability, and more.

Cross-Campus Co-op

The USC student body is, to put it lightly, quite big. That means game design students are liable to run into tons of

similarly artistic and talented filmmakers, audio designers, and even legal professionals. USC capitalized on this wealth by creating tracks that could both push students to collaborate with others outside their school building and give them a leg up. These include a Minor in Immersive Media, Minor in Game Entrepreneurship, or even a Minor in Themed Entertainment designed and run by a former vice president of Disney.

THE TOP 25 BEST GAME DESIGN GRADUATE PROGRAMS



1 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%
All-Time Grads: 414
2018 Grads Shipped Game: 88%
2018 Grads Hired: 66%
2018 Grads Salary: \$65,000
Fun Fact: Faculty are required to maintain an ongoing professional practice, releasing games, books, or organizing conferences.



3 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 63%
All-Time Grads: 383
2018 Grads Shipped Game: 100%
2018 Grads Hired: 78%
2018 Grads Salary: \$65,000
Fun Fact: Partnering with Zynga and Jam City for a dedicated suite of mobile game design classes, plus mentoring from Zynga employees.



2 SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%
All-Time Grads: 771
2018 Grads Shipped Game: 100%
2018 Grads Hired: 78%
2018 Grads Salary: \$64,671
Fun Fact: The only masters game design program to include all four of the major specializations: Art creation, level design, production, and software development.



4 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 84%
All-Time Grads: 369
2018 Grads Shipped Game: 100%
2018 Grads Hired: 91%
2018 Grads Salary: \$88,870
Fun Fact: Provides funding for students to attend the Game Developers Conference.

TOP 25 BEST GAME DESIGN GRADUATE PROGRAMS (CONT)



5. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

All-Time Grads: 675
2018 Grads Hired: 85%
Fun Fact: All FIEA students receive an Alienware computer so they can always keep class with them.

6. DIGIPEN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

2018 Grads Hired: 65%
Total Courses: 391

7. ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

2018 Grads Hired: 80%
2018 Grads Salary: \$70,000

8. MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

2018 Female Grads: 50%
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 80%

9. ABERTAY UNIVERSITY

2018 Grads Hired: 80%
Fun Fact: Home to Europe's oldest degree program in game development.

10. DREXEL UNIVERSITY

2018 Grads Salary: \$68,301
Fun Fact: Requires students to work 6-18 months of full-time experience in the industry.

11. BECKER COLLEGE

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%
Fun Fact: First graduating class is in 2020.

12. WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

2018 Grads Salary: \$71,644
Fun Fact: Provides \$5,000 scholarships for international project center work trips in Japan and Australia.

13. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

2018 Female Grads: 43%
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 98%



14. FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY

Total Courses: 126
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 83%

15. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA CRUZ

Faculty: Robin Hunicke (Journey, Wattam)
2018 Grads Salary: 85,000
Alumni: Tim Schafer (Double Fine)

16. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT

2018 Grads Salary: \$55,000
Fun Fact: Has semester to year-long exchange programs with game development programs in Sweden and Germany.

17. UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

2018 Grads Hired: 66%
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 100%

18. NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Faculty Has Studio Experience: 91%
All-Time Grads: 20

19. MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Alumni: Eren Egozy (Harmonix)
2018 Grads Salary: 87,812

20. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

Alumni: Mark Nauta (XCOM)
Faculty Has Studio Experience: 42%

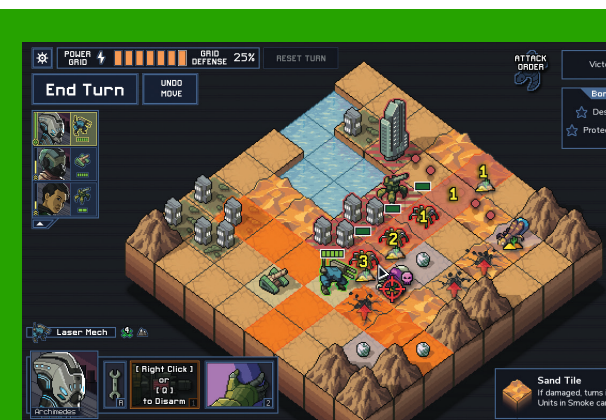
21. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

22. SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY

23. SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

24. AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

25. UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI



HOMEWORK: Into the Breach

Evoking giant tactical combat by being reserved with music

Sure, a tactics games starring mecha and kaiju being PC Gamer's 2018 Game of the Year. Who could have seen that coming? Beyond the minute to learn, lifetime to master gameplay, Into the Breach's composer Ben Prunty wanted to evoke those Pacific Rim vibes while avoiding cliches or having the music be all awkward by coming in at the wrong moment.

EXAMPLE: Early on in development, Into the Breach had music playing almost constantly. The intense guitar strings of Prunty's soundtrack originally played over the section where players place their mechs on the battlefield, which felt wrong. Prunty changed it so the game would stay silent until your last mech dropped, the tension released, and the music signaled the drama of a new fight.

READING MATERIAL:
<https://bit.ly/2RNxcrN>

HOMEWORK: When composing your game (or working with a composer), consider following Prunty's example. How can you do more with less, and in the process give your game a much more resounding thematic vibe.