EXCITING CAREER POSSIBILITIES TAKE SHAPE
VIDEO GAME ANIMATION & COMPUTER ANIMATION PROGRAMS

From video games to websites, from online advertising to movie and television production companies, animators are very much in demand in today’s workforce. Limited only by your imagination, you can enjoy a lifetime of creativity in the world of animation. The animation field, however, is a fiercely competitive one, so if you want to succeed, you’ll need the best education and training possible. College of the Canyons is a great place to start with classes that cover theory and include hands-on experience.

A part of the newly revamped Media Entertainment Arts (MEA) department at COC, the video game and computer animation programs offers a two-year program leading to an Associate in Arts Degree in Animation Production or Computer Animation, as well as certificates in Animation Production or Computer Animation. These programs give students a foundation in traditional animation skills as well as training in current digital technology, in order to compete in today’s evolving environment. They also provide preparation for transfer to four-year universities with a major in animation.

According to Professor Jeffrey Baker, Coordinator of Animation, “Students learn from instructors working in the entertainment industry and have the opportunity to meet and talk with industry professionals.”

In addition, the MEA department has the latest professional equipment and modern technologies for students to reserve, use and tell stories with. More than $1 million worth of funding and Career Technical Education (CTE) grant-funded initiatives have enabled New Media, Animation and Journalism at COC to create a vastly overhauled, innovative approach to workforce training.

At the conclusion of their studies, students will be prepared for entry-level positions in a number of fields (i.e., video game design, television and motion picture production), requiring them to create animation by either computer or hand drawn methods, or a combination of the two. Classes are offered in traditional drawn animation, character design, layout, storyboarding and 2-D computer animation. COC’s 3-D computer animation classes offer students training in 3-D character animation, special effects and video game production.

Jobs in traditional animation are available in the areas of television, feature films and commercials, to name just a few. Jobs include: animator, background artist, character designer, art director, storyboard artist and color stylist.

Computer animation careers are available in the areas of special effects, commercials, to Internet and video game companies, as well as the television and feature film markets. Job examples include: animator, special effects animator, character animator, character rigging, lighting designer, modeler, technical director and texture artist.

Just think, with a career in this field, you may be on the production team of tomorrow’s hit film, video game or “Avatar” wizard!

Jessie Sealy is a recent graduate whose experience at COC led her to a career opportunity. She said internships through COC’s Cooperative Work Experience Education (CWEE) gave her an opportunity to take a closer look at animation production, interning on the production of an animated feature film as well as for local video game company WayForward Technologies, where she now works as an Animation Manager.

“The biggest strength of the internship program at COC is how it offers actual work experience as part of your studies,” she said. “It’s a great opportunity to get a good idea of what your job will be like once you graduate. You can come away from an internship focused and more excited than ever about your career choice.”

In today’s technologically advanced world, Baker said, “Content is needed for an increasingly digitally entertained world, and the skills needed to create this content will be of increasing value. Additionally, as the tools to create the next film, TV show or video game become cheaper and simpler to use, it becomes easier and less expensive to create your vision.”

This field is highly competitive and therefore, Baker said if students want to succeed, practice is crucial.

“The only way I became good at what I do, is because I did it every day, all day for many years,” he said. “The only way for students to succeed in this competitive of a business, is to practice every day. Just like any other acquired talent, students must develop their talents in animation and design.”

For more information about this program please contact Jeffrey Baker, program coordinator, at Jeffrey.Baker@Canyons.edu or (661) 362-5868.
A fter graduating from Pennsylvania State University in 1985 with a degree in Film Production and a minor in Studio Art: Drawing, Jeffrey Baker moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he started on his path to success by working in the lowest of entry-level jobs in the animation industry as a cell painter. He eventually moved from Albuquerque to Chicago, Houston and finally Los Angeles. Working in a variety of positions that included assistant cameraperson, news videographer for a CBS affiliate, videogame designer and owner of his own graphics company, Baker eventually settled into the field of education.

During the 2005-2006 school year, while teaching computer animation part-time at a community college in Albuquerque he was offered a full-time position teaching all of the computer animation courses at New Mexico State University, which lasted for a year before the position was cancelled. It was then that he took the position as a full-time, tenure-track professor of animation at College of the Canyons.

Baker has since stayed in the field of education, because he found he enjoyed helping students develop their potential.

“Creating games is best suited for the young,” Baker said. “I found that helping to develop artists was more fulfilling to me than just creating another game, or helping a lawyer win a case. And, because of my time off during the summer months, I still work in the industry. So I get to continue my passion for creating, as well as my passion for teaching others.”

When asked what the most challenging and rewarding parts of his job are, Baker said they are one-in-the-same: “Helping students overcome their challenges.” More specifically, he explained, “Students in animation face the dual challenge of mastering a technical skill while needing to maintain an artistic vision; especially students in computer animation. Students are challenged to apply the principles of animation that they learn in addition to learning to create solid, artistic drawings on either paper or the computer.”
Courses Offered in Video Game Animation and Computer Animation

Mass Media Communication (MEA 100);
History of Animation (MEA 102);
Introduction to Animation (MEA 106);
Story Development and Storyboarding (MEA 109);
Digital Audio for Multimedia (MEA 114);
Digital Video Editing I (MEA 116);
Interactive 2D Animation (MEA 118);
3D Modeling and Surfacing (MEA 131);
Computer Animation and Special Effects (MEA 135);
Real-Time Video Game Animation (MEA 218);
Digital Sculpture (MEA 231);
Character and Prop Design for Animation (MEA 232);
Character Animation (MEA 234);
Visual Effects (MEA 235);
Animation Production (MEA 265);
Professional Practices/Portfolio (MEA 295);
Introduction to Photoshop (GMD 047);
Motion Design (GMD 173);
and Cooperative Work Experience Education: Animation Work Environment (CWEE 188).

An internship is required (Cooperative Work Experience Education: CWEE) and therefore, students may find internships on their own or they may search the COC internship website to find a program at: Canyons.edu/Interns.

Industry Wages

The market will continue to be competitive for professionals in the animation production and computer animation fields. According to O*Net, the nation's primary source of occupational information, between 2013 and 2018, there is an expected 3 percent change in annual job openings, with approximately 521 openings per year in California, compared to 2,077 nationwide. In terms of salary, California will continue to lead the nation, with the wage range for multimedia artists and animators between $41,538 and $73,070 annually, compared with a U.S. average of between $33,259 and $55,286 annually. The labor market information reflects job titles including creative director, art/animation director, modeler, visual development, effects artist, character animator, layout artist and technical director.

Check Out Careers on the Go

Presented in a panel format, Careers on the Go workshops are designed to help attendees with career exploration with industry professionals serving as guest speakers. Attendees hear firsthand how our guests got to where they are and the type of training and education they look for in new hires. Events are geared toward individuals who are not quite sure what they want to do, and for those who have chosen that career path and want to learn more about the field. Workshops are free and open to students and the public. Check www.canyons.edu/cog to register.

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<th>COC CAREERS ON THE GO</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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Accounting | Administration of Justice | Administrative Assistant | American Sign Language Interpreting
Animation Production | Architectural Drafting | Automotive Technology | Commercial Photography
Computer Applications | Computer Networking | Culinary Arts | Customer Service | Early Childhood Education
Electronic Systems Technology | Emergency Medical Technician | Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management
Filmmaking | Fire Technology | Graphic & Multimedia Design | Hotel & Restaurant Management
Human Resources Management | Interior Design | Land Surveying | Manufacturing Technology | Marketing
Medical Laboratory Technician | Medical Office Administrative Assistant | Nursing | Paralegal Studies | Real Estate
Retail Management | Solar Energy Technician | Sound Arts | Sports Medicine | Video Game Animation
Water Systems Technology | Welding Technology | Wine Studies