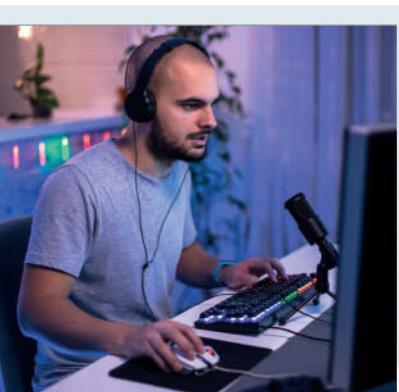THE PRINCETON REVIEW
TOP GAME DESIGN PROGRAMS
2025

THE BEST GAME DESIGN PROGRAMS
RANKED BY THE PRINCETON REVIEW 2025

No matter what aspect of game development you're interested in, the Princeton Review has worked to find the best school for you.

Charting a path for your education isn't as easy as videogames make it out to be. As much as we'd love to become masters of our crafts by placing points into a skill tree or reading the right book cover to cover, it actually calls for a skill even more impressive than acrobatics or speech: picking the right university for your needs. If you're interested in a career in game design, or curious about where you could fit in on a team of talented artists, here's your first stop. Every year, the Princeton Review ranks the 50 best undergraduate and 25 best graduate programs for video game design, rated through a set of criteria from graduate employment percentage to notable alumni and faculty quality. These are the best of the best schools in the country and beyond, and reviewing these options—regardless of which you ultimately choose—is an excellent first step toward your dream career. To get your creative juices flowing, we've also included some 'homework' projects based on real challenges game developers face today, and talk about how level design and animation help shape modern videogames.

Want to know more? Check out The Princeton Review's website for further info:
www.princetonreview.com/game-design

THE TOP 50 GAME DESIGN
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

THE PRINCETON REVIEW
TOP GAME DESIGN PROGRAMS
2025

Whether you're just getting into game design or honing existing skills, the perfect game design program for you is out there. Read up on the 50 best undergraduate and 25 best graduate programs in the country and beyond.

1 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2024 Grads Hired: 61%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $116,000
Faculty: TreaAndrea Russworm (Author, "Gaming Representation"), Mark Bolas (Founder, Fakespace Labs)
Graduates: Jenova Chen (Thatgamecompany), Brent Strong (Disney)

2 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

2024 Grads Hired: 24%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $76,400
Faculty: Eric Zimmerman (Gamelab), Dr. Mitu Khandaker (Spirit AI)
Graduates: Jenny Jiao-Hsia (IGF), Carol Mertz (Exploding Kittens)

3 CLARK UNIVERSITY

2024 Grads Hired: 65%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $69,000
Faculty: Ezra Cove (Lord of the Rings Online, Turbine), Scott Niemi
Graduates: Gary Goldberg (Fable Vision Studios), Stanley Pierre-Louis (ESA)

4 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

2024 Grads Hired: 52%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $72,304
Faculty: Michael Young PhD, Jose Zagal PhD (Game Studies)
Graduates: Doug Bowser (COO of Nintendo), Nolan Bushnell (Founder of Atari)

5. UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
2024 Grads Hired: 40%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $46,429
Faculty: Dr. Maria Harrington, Dr. Peter Smith
Graduates: Richard Ugarte (Epic), Alexia Mandeville (Niantic)

6. ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2024 Grads Hired: 91%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $83,600
Faculty: David I. Schwartz, Flip Philips
Graduates: Elan Lee (Exploding Kittens), Steven Van Slyke (co-inventor of OLED)

7. DREXEL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 88%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $80,000
Faculty: Dr. Paul Diefenbach (OpenWorlds Inc.), Dr. Frank Lee
Graduates: Girish Balakrishnan (Netflix), Greg Lebanov (Chicory, Wandersong)

8. ABERTAY UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 54%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $45,000
Faculty: Fraser Simpson (YoYo Games), Ruth Falconer (Women in Games)
Graduates: Zoe Sams (Riot), Richard Jolly (Splash Damage)

9. CHAMPLAIN COLLEGE
2024 Grads Hired: 64%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $50,226
Faculty: Jessie Leigh Gagnon (Riot Games, Phoenix Labs), Jason Della Rocca (Execution Labs)
Graduates: Heather Conover (Riot), Alex Martens (Rockstar)

10. MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 80%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $60,000
Faculty: Brian Winn (Will Winn Games), Ricardo Guimaraes (Blizzard, Ubisoft)
Graduates: Brian Murray (EA), Steven Messinger (Rockstar)

11. DIGIPEN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2024 Grads Hired: 44%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $91,870
Faculty: Claude Comair (Nintendo), Ellen Guon Beeman (EA, Microsoft)
Graduates: Kim Swift (Portal design), Alex Williams (Studio Wildcard)

12. WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
2024 Grads Hired: 50%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $82,000
Faculty: Ben Schneider (Standing Stone, Turbine), Walt Yarbrough (EA, Turbine)
Graduates: Michael Gesner (Riot), Jon Radoff (Beamable)

Setting the tone and telling stories with level design

Level designers are the unsung heroes of game development, building the spaces that test the player's reflexes, perception, and problem solving skills in ways that often go unnoticed. A grotesque corner of Hell in Doom Eternal, the isometric dungeons of Diablo 4, a test chamber in Portal 2—level designers are as responsible for establishing a game's look, flow, and fun as the artists who paint the world and the programmers who bring mechanics online.

At the core of a level designer's job is to create challenges for players that feel like a natural escalation of what's come before. The level team often has the difficult (but rewarding) task of teaching players about new mechanics or conveying information without a heavy-handed tutorial, be it a weapon, a way forward, or a puzzle solution hidden in plain sight. In The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom, Nintendo slowly introduced the ability to glue objects together with a series of environmental puzzles: In one, planks of wood and a fan are placed on the bank of a river, suggesting they could build a raft to cross it. In another, a metal rail connects to floating islands. Most players craft a makeshift ski lift with a nearby metal hook and ride the rail to the next island, but Nintendo's level designers also supplied

less obvious tools to get the job done. You could instead ignore the hook, cut down a bunch of trees, and make a long bridge to cross the gap.

Depending on the game, level design can pull from a number of different disciplines. If you're making a game set in our world, you're bound to learn about real principles of architecture and interior design. If you're part of a larger team creating a naturalistic sandbox, you'll research canyons, mountain formations, foliage patterns, and human infrastructure as you carve a critical path into a larger space.

As technology has advanced, level designers have gained new tools to play with level design in ways that weren't previously possible. The ability to load levels quickly is a big one: The latest Ratchet and Clank game, Rift Apart, featured levels designed to showcase the PlayStation 5's fast SSD by sending the player through portals that rapidly transitioned from one level to the next. Another recent example is Lords of the Fallen, where developer Hexworks created two different versions of the world that exist simultaneously: Axiom, the world of the living, and Umbral, the realm of the dead. By holding a magical lantern, the player can peer into Umbral in real time, revealing pathways in Umbral that don't exist in Axiom.

One of the most interesting aspects of level design is taking on the role of the player's "antagonist." You want to design aesthetically pleasing spaces that give environment artists a lot to work with, but for many games, your first priority is to think in terms of obstacles: Where does it make sense for enemies to emerge? How is the player expected to navigate the room? What hazards might send them back to the checkpoint?

Seasoned level designers will tell you it's rarely something you nail on the first try. It takes regular playtesting and feedback to discover the appropriate level of challenge—difficulty is a tough nut to crack when you're surrounded by a team who knows the game inside and out and lacks the perspective of a brand new player.

Levels tend to start with a theme. The Mario series is well known for designing singular levels around unique mechanics (like a power-up that turns Mario into a bee) that may only appear in the game once or twice. In Marvel Rivals, a multiplayer map's art style revolves around a specific hero's home world, but it's the level designers who get to translate that vision into arenas with bespoke layouts and destructible environments. In the Frozen Airfield map set within a secret Hydra base, walls and doors literally shift behind the scenes as the match goes on, cutting off paths and opening others. This is a perfect example of level design directly contributing to the thematic goals of a space while presenting players with a fresh challenge.

If you're the type of person who thinks about the shape of spaces or enjoys pushing the limits of what's possible in videogames, level design might be the perfect fit for you.

13. FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 35%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $27,500
Faculty: Tanya Krzwinska, William Huber
Graduates: Rex Crowle (Media Molecule), Sophie Shepher (Respawn)

14. SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
2024 Grads Hired: 6%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $55,000
Faculty: Nye Warburton, Cyril Guichard (Electrotank)
Graduates: Chad Dezem (Insomniac), Harrison Pink (Blizzard)

15. SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 50%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $73,500
Faculty: Bastien Lecouffe-Deharme, Greg Lyons
Graduates: Dan Clark (Epic), Derek Lewis (Insomniac)

16. VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL
2024 Grads Hired: 14%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $65,000
Faculty: Ramus Dahl Tindborg (Klei), Joe Bonar (Unity)
Graduates: Armando Troisi (MY. GAMES, Ubisoft), Jack Kelly (New World Interactive)

17. PURDUE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 84%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $65,093
Faculty: Robert Howard, Jeffery Kesselman
Graduates: Jeff Hanna (Volition), Keith Self-Ballard (PlayStation)

18. FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 7%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $62,109
Faculty: Graham Leeb, Jason Hinders
Graduates: Alejandro Garcia-Tunon (Ghostpunch Games), Shaun McCabe (Insomniac)

19. LA SALLE COLLEGE VANCOUVER
2024 Grads Hired: 52%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $55,000
Faculty: Saeed Mirjalili PhD, Ivaldo de Sosa
Graduates: Jarett Metcalfe (EA), Dani Merrithew (Blizzard)

20. RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
2024 Grads Hired: 27%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $74,917
Faculty: Maurice Suckling (Epic, 2K), Philip Vanderhyden
Graduates: Karthik Bala (Velen Studios), Jesse Schell (Schell Games)

21. QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 4%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $68,000
Faculty: Roger Clark (Rockstar), Peter Zoppi (Treyarch)
Graduates: Donovan Sepulveda (Riot), Zaria Brogdon (Rockstar)

22. HOWEST UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
2024 Grads Hired: 44%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Tristan Clarysse (Larian, Bioware), Kevin Hoefman (Larian)
Graduates: NR

23. BRADLEY UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 39%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $50,000
Faculty: David Abzug (Deep Silver), Ray Hazlip (Deep Silver)
Graduates: Diana Hughes, Joseph Lax (Sony Santa Monica)

24. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT
2024 Grads Hired: 22%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $64,065
Faculty: Dr. Andrew Williams, Kim Loken
Graduates: Jose Estrada (Riot), Margaret Rigotti (Dreamworks)

HOMEWORK

Competitive communication

At some point in the development of a team-based shooter, game developers have to contend with a common conundrum: Team shooters are at their most fun when players are communicating, but most people choose to play without a microphone or text chat. This problem is exacerbated on consoles, where the lack of keyboards make text chat uncommon. Some studios, like Call of Duty developers Infinity Ward, design around the problem by giving players strong individual incentives besides winning the match, such as unlocking weapons or attachments just for playing. But when core competition is integral to the experience and nobody's speaking up, how do you get players on the same page?

EXAMPLE: In 2019, Respawn Entertainment emerged with its battle royale FPS Apex Legends and tackled the genre's communication problems head-on. Next to its novel respawn mechanic, one of the most distinctive features of Apex Legends was its dynamic ping, a button that creates an on-screen marker wherever you're pointing. The genius of Apex Legends' ping, and what set it apart from shooters that'd used simpler marking systems in the past, is that it's contextual: If you point at an enemy and ping, a red mark with a unique "enemy" symbol appears. If you point at a gun, it marks the weapon and a voice line asks if anyone on the squad wants it. Hold the ping button and you can choose from preset callouts like "Let's go here" or "Someone's been here." By anticipating common battle royale scenarios and doing the hard work of recording voice lines to support them, Respawn made communication so easy that players could comfortably and
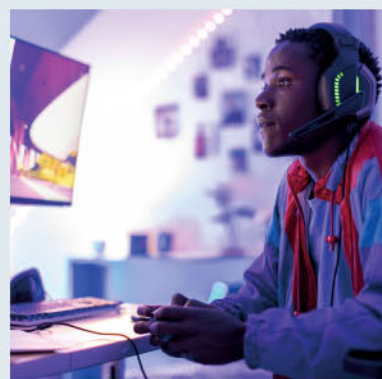
efficiently fight like a team without the need of voice or text chat. In the years since, nearly every multiplayer shooter in the business has adopted a ping system based on Apex Legends.

HOMEWORK: Imagine you're making a multiplayer game: How would you tackle communication? Do you design around the problem by making the game simple or intuitive enough that mic chat is never needed, or do you go big on a ping system that covers every possible use case?

25. NEW ENGLAND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2024 Grads Hired: 35%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $50,000
Faculty: William Culbertson (Hasbro), Jordan Dubreuil
Graduates: Mr. Daniel Laba (Blizzard), Daniel Cuccia (Sony)

26. ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 57%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $48,800
Faculty: Dr. Brian Burton, Rich Tanner
Graduates: Morgan Davis (Gearbox), Bryce Gattis (Brazen Animation)

27. UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
2024 Grads Hired: 33%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $90,000
Faculty: Dr. James Oliverio, Dr. Hyo Jeong Kang
Graduates: Jesse Rapczak (Studio Wildcard), Virgilio Lasaga (Psyonix)

28. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 89%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Ed Keenan (Midway), Allen Turner (Disney)
Graduates:

29. MIAMI UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 24%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $63,750
Faculty: Geoffrey Long PhD (Microsoft, Disney), Ben Nicholson
Graduates: Ellie Helbling (Naughty Dog), Lauren Midna (ZeniMax)

30. UNIVERSITY OF SILICON VALLEY
2024 Grads Hired: 30%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $59,000
Faculty: Evan Skolnick, Philip Campbell
Graduates: NR

31. ACADEMY OF ART UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: David Goodwine, Brian Hess
Graduates: Toby Winograd (Odyssey Interactive), Gary Mcgee (NetEase)

32. MARIST COLLEGE
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Dr. Karen Schrier (Nickelodeon), Dr. Ron Coleman (IBM)
Graduates: Darren Sugg (Epic), Rex Dickson (Blizzard)

33. KENT STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 30%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $65,000
Faculty: Christopher Totten, Justin McCrea
Graduates: Joey Gage (EA), Nina Marotta

34. NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY
2024 Grads Hired: 29%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: John Zuur Platten, Craig Caton-Largent
Graduates: Leandro Ribeiro (Afterverse), Guillermo Quesada (Amazon)

35. UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $68,000
Faculty: Clay Ewing (Social Impact Games), Lindsay Grace
Graduates: James Waugh (LucasFilm), Casey O'Brien (Respawn)

36. NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $71,600
Faculty: Richard Thomspon, Hye Yeon Nam
Graduates: Jason Chin (Nvidia), James Tichenor (Meta)

37. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Bryon Caldwell (Riot, ILM), Nelson Lim (ILM, Lucasfilm, Riot)
Graduates: Matthew Ward (Gearbox), Matt Charles (Gearbox)

38. DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 67%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Peter Britton, Erik Pederson
Graduates: Matt Engesser (Rockstar, Epic), Jimmy Chattin (Microsoft)

39. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN-DEARBORN
2024 Grads Hired: 30%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $80,000
Faculty: Brice Maxim, Foyzol Hassan
Graduates: Austin Krauss, Shane Costello

40. UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD
2024 Grads Hired: 18%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Adam Watkins (Serious Games), Jingtian Li
Graduates: Matt Tovar (Retro Studios), Patrick Martinez (Insomniac)

41. HIGH POINT UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 25%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $50,000
Faculty: Dr. Stefan Hall, Dr. Kristina Bell
Graduates: Kira Foglesong (Epic), Emily Krol (Logitech)

42. CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF ART
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Steven Gutierrez (Serious Games), Harrison Walsh (Niche Worlds Cult)
Graduates: Zack James, Robert Lauer

43. ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN
2024 Grads Hired: 33%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Zachary Adams, Tim FitzRandolph
Graduates: Syd Mead, Michael Bay (Director)

44. FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 10%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $65,000
Faculty: Martin Han Lier, George Stankevich
Graduates: Lydia Zanotti, Robert Evans

45. PRATT INSTITUTE
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Jason Corace, Everest Pipkin
Graduates: NR

46. CORNELL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 25%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Donald P. Greenberg, Jon Kleinberg
Graduates: Daniel Sturman (Roblox), Rick Arons (Pokemon)

47. INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $55,000
Faculty: William Emigh (Studio Cypher), Michael Uslan
Graduates: Max Lancaster (Psyonix), Jess Tompkins (Skeleton Key)

48. BLOOMFIELD COLLEGE OF MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Samuel Leigh (Viacom), Oliver Hong (IGDA)
Graduates: Josiah Hunt (Cloud Chamber), Michael Murphy (Blizzard)

49. UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA—IRVINE
2024 Grads Hired: 5%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $90,000
Faculty: Kurt Squire (Serious Games), Constance Steinkhueler
Graduates: NR

50. ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Yoshihiro Kobayashi, Ross Maciejewski
Graduates: Adam Fairfield (Microsoft)

GETTY IMAGES

Bringing videogames to life with beautiful animation

Animation is one aspect of game design that overlaps directly with other forms of media. Many professional animators at major studios transitioned to games after spending time in the film and television industries, or vice versa. But what sets videogame animation apart from other mediums is its flexibility.

Not only do game animations call for precise, hand-animated sequences strewn together in a minutes-long cutscene, but the same department is also responsible for crafting gameplay animations that change depending on where the player chooses to go—running, walking, jumping, grabbing a ledge, the transition between a dead sprint or sudden stop.

It takes constant iteration and smart deployment of technology to make these animations look right in various contexts, and in the case of 3D games, from every possible angle. We see some of the most detailed animation work in The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom, where Link's mannerisms will change when he's too hot or cold, or in Red Dead Redemption 2, where Arthur Morgan has bespoke animations for minor interactions like opening doors, climbing the short steps in front of a saloon, and feeding his horse.

The scope of a game's animation varies wildly based on team size and budget, but increasingly, more animators are utilizing motion capture to record naturalistic human motion. Many studios maintain their own motion capture studios operated by dedicated motion capture engineers. Nowadays, we see the technology in everything from the realistic axe swings of Assassin's Creed Valhalla to the cinematic first-person cutscenes of Stalker 2: Heart of Chornobyl. Similarly, performance capture takes the animation process a step further, capturing both the body and face at the same time to fully integrate the actor into their role.

But motion and performance capture are only as useful as the animators behind the scenes stitching the work together into something beautiful. Captured performances typically require tuning from keyframe animators, and much of the animation work in a videogame simply can't be done in a studio. 2D games, for instance, often call for traditional illustration and old school animation principles like "squash and stretch." Even 3D games benefit: The heroes of Blizzard's FPS Overwatch squash and stretch to accentuate motion and reinforce their fighting styles, and yet the effect is almost entirely invisible unless examining freeze frames. This is the magic of animation: a powerful tool for expression used alongside scriptwriting and dialogue to tell you who someone is, what they're feeling, or what they're going to do next. Call of Duty: Modern Warfare (2019) is celebrated for its visceral, realistic gun reloads. The reload animations look so cool and believable that players assumed Infinity Ward had motion captured experts actually reloading the weapons, but in reality, they were animated entirely with traditional keyframes.

It's often the nature of videogames that animators work closely with designers, writers, and artists. That's especially true when what you're animating has no real-world counterpart to work from, such as the towering monsters of Capcom's Monster Hunter series. The studio designs these beasts from the ground up: Their behaviors, attacks, mannerisms, personalities, right down to their place in ecology. Are they predators or prey? How do they hunt? Do they pounce on targets or let threats come to them? Monsters are the centerpiece of this historic series, and at the center of what makes each monster unique are its animations.

The next time you're playing a game, take note of how many animations it takes to bring it to life, and imagine how you could do better. What would make a jump, wallrun, or simple walk more interesting to watch? When is less actually more? What works for you and what doesn't? Videogame animation is a field that branches out into nearly every aspect of a game's core design: dialogue, combat, movement, cutscenes, even menus. If you like to help make beautiful things move, animation might be your path into the industry.

THE TOP 25
BEST GAME DESIGN
GRADUATE PROGRAMS

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

1 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

2024 Grads Hired: 87%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $76,400
Faculty: Eric Zimmerman (Gamelab), Dr. Mitu Khandaker (Spirit AI)
Graduates: Jenny Jiao-Hsia (IGF), Carol Mertz (Exploding Kittens)

2 UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

2024 Grads Hired: 80%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $81,303
Faculty: Benjamin Noel (EA), Nicholas Zuccarello (Sony)
Graduates: Carlos Barbosa (WB Games), Brian DeSanti (Blizzard)

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

3 UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

2024 Grads Hired: 82%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $96,750
Faculty: TreaAndrea Russworm (Author, "Gaming Representation"), Mark Bolas (Fakespace Labs)
Graduates: Jenova Chen (Thatgamecompany), Brent Strong (Disney)

4 UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

2024 Grads Hired: 74%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $91,096
Faculty: Michael Young PhD, Jose Zagal PhD
Graduates: Doug Bowser (COO of Nintendo America), Nolan Bushnell (Founder of Atari)

5. CLARK UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 72%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $70,000
Faculty: Terasa Ulm, Scott Niemi
Graduates: Stanley Pierre-Louis (ESA), Gary Goldberg (Fablevision)

6. SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 59%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $96,667
Faculty: Dr. Elizabeth Storz Stringer (Atari), Dr. Karl Steiner (Amazon, Microsoft)
Graduates: Jane Chung Hoffacker (Incredible Dream), Tanya Short (Kitfox Games)

7. ABERTAY UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 54%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $59,000
Faculty: Dr. Kenneth Fee, Joseph deLappe
Graduates: Zoe Sams (Riot), Richard Jolly (CEO of Splash Damage)

8. DREXEL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 50%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $80,000
Faculty: Dr. Paul Diefenbach (OpenWorlds Inc.), Dr. Frank Lee
Graduates: Anna Nguyen (NetherRealm Studios), Greg Lebanov (Wondersong, Chicory)

9. MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 80%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $60,000
Faculty: Amanda Cote, Susan Bonner
Graduates: Brian Murray (EA), Steven Messinger (Rockstar)

10. ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2024 Grads Hired: 100%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $98,300
Faculty: David Schwartz, Flip Philips
Graduates: Elan Lee (Exploding Kittens), Steven Van Slyke (co-inventor of OLED)

11. FALMOUTH UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 72%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $31,000
Faculty: Tanya Krzwinska, William Huber
Graduates: Rex Crowle (Media Molecule), Sophie Shepher (Respawn)

12. DIGIPEN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
2024 Grads Hired: 50%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $111,050
Faculty: Claude Comair (Nintendo), Brian Schmidt
Graduates: Luis Villegas (Bungie), Taralyn von der Linden (Pixar)

13. WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
2024 Grads Hired: 70%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $82,000
Faculty: Ben Schneider (Turbine, Standing Stone), Walt Yarbrough (Turbine)
Graduates: Michael Gesner (Riot), Jon Radoff (Beamable)

14. NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 38%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $80,000
Faculty: Christopher Barney, Celia Pearce (IndieCade)
Graduates: Riddhi Padte (Epic), Wendi Zhang (Activision Blizzard)

15. SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
2024 Grads Hired: 7%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $55,000
Faculty: Nye Warburton, Cyril Guichard (Electrotank)
Graduates: Lucas Slominski (ZeniMax), Chris Schmidt (Bioware)

16. FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 14%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $62,109
Faculty: Dr. Shawn Stafford, Gerard Merrritt
Graduates: Erin Eberhardt (Dreamhaven), Aaron Hamilton Cook

17. PURDUE UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 5%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $65,093
Faculty: Robert Howard, Jeffery Kesselman
Graduates: Jeff Hanna (Volition), Keith Self-Ballard (Bungie)

18. BRADLEY UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 43%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $50,000
Faculty: David Abzug (Deep Silver), Ray Hazlip (Deep Silver)
Graduates: Diana Hughes (Age of Learning Inc.), Joseph Lax (Sony Santa Monica)

19. RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
2024 Grads Hired: 17%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $74,917
Faculty: Maurice Suckling (Epic, 2K), Philip Vanderhyden
Graduates: Karthik Bala (Velan Studios), Jesse Schell (Schell Games)

20. UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
2024 Grads Hired: 60%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $96,000
Faculty: Dr. James Oliverio, Dr. Hyo Jeong Kang
Graduates: Joseph Murphy (EA), Pooja Agshikar (Microsoft)

21. UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-STOUT
2024 Grads Hired: 20%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $42,100
Faculty: Dave Beck, Andrew Williams
Graduates: Hue Vang (Dreamworks), Andrew Murphy (Apple)

22. AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 80%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $80,000
Faculty: Andrew Phelps, Krzysztof Pietroszek
Graduates: Ryan Seymour (Smithsonian), Kelli Dunlop (TakeThis.org)

23. DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
2024 Grads Hired: 92%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Ed Keenan (Midway), Allen Turner (Disney)
Graduates: Philip Tibitoski (Young Horses Inc.), Kevin Geisler (Young Horses co-founder)

24. LAGUNA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
2024 Grads Hired: 50%
2024 Grads Mean Salary: $85,000
Faculty: NR
Graduates: Ben Thompson (Moonshot Games), Curtis Fetters (Escape X Games)

25. THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS
2024 Grads Hired: NR
2024 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Bryon Caldwell, Nelson Lim
Graduates: Matthew Ward (Gearbox), Matt Charles (Gearbox)

HOMEWORK

GETTY IMAGES

Meaningful exploration

Immersive fast travel in RPGs

One of the most popular genres in videogames is the open world adventure, and for decades, developers have experimented with how players should travel through the sandbox they've created. The most common method is fast travel, a shortcut that usually allows players to teleport to locations they've already been to. This way, players can quickly cross the map and efficiently complete quests without too much repetitive backtracking. But fast travel often has a tradeoff: How do you encourage players to explore the world you've spent years creating when it's possible to skip the journey?

EXAMPLE: Dragon's Dogma 2, one of PC Gamer's best-reviewed games of 2024, takes a novel approach to fast travel that prioritizes exploration. Each of the world's major cities become fast travel points after visiting them for the first time, but warping to that city requires a Ferrystone, a rare and expensive consumable item that players will only find a few of throughout the main story. For a more limited but easier form of fast travel, players can take ox carts between most settlements for a small fee. Convenient, except that ox carts don't operate at night, so it's often the smarter choice to walk. Capcom's solution was elegant—by limiting the supply of Ferrystones early in the game, players were encouraged to travel by foot, braving the world's hazards and discovering its secrets along the way. Later in the game, once the player is well-versed with the map and has more resources, fast travel becomes easier and routine.

Homework: Imagine that you're making a sandbox game full of cool things to discover off the beaten path, but you still want to let players quickly get around. How would you design a fast travel solution that weaves discovery into the journey?