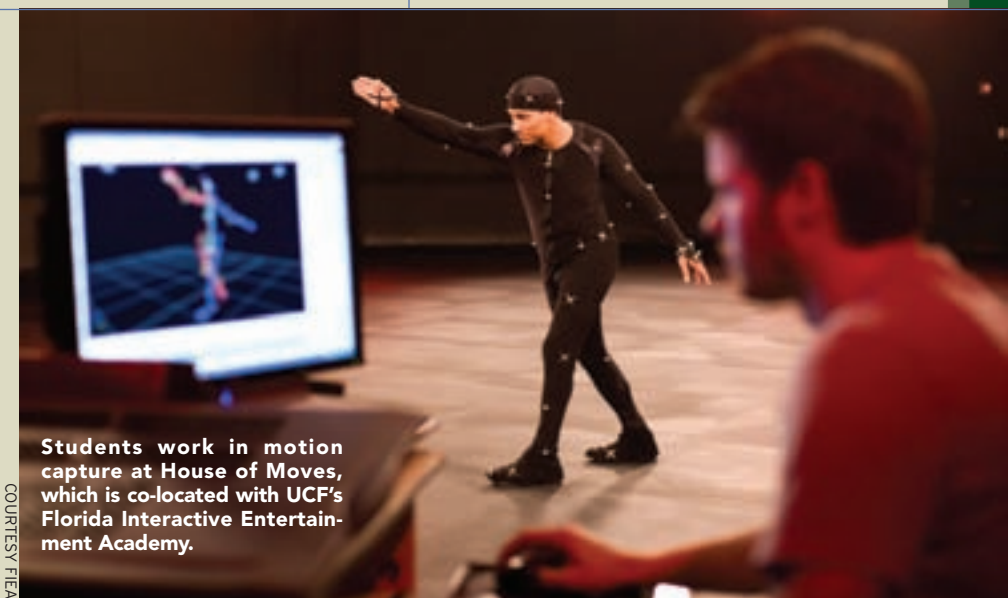


# IMAGINING the Possibilities

SPOTLIGHT ON CENTRAL FLORIDA'S  
DIGITAL ARTS AND MEDIA SCHOOLS

By  
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» Behind the multi-media innovations in entertainment today are innovators who are equipping students to accomplish the next great feats in web and cinema. These distinguished Central Florida schools are positioning the region as a hub for the digital media industry.



Students work in motion capture at House of Moves, which is co-located with UCF's Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy.

COURTESY: FIEA

## THE DAVE SCHOOL

When April Warren left her job as a wench at Medieval Times to enroll in the year-long visual animation and effects program at The DAVE School, she had no idea that just a few years later she'd be working alongside James Cameron on the international sensation, *AVATAR*. But this is exactly the sort of opportunity that awaits graduates of an educational experience that leaves 100 students each year uniquely skilled to pursue some of the most exciting opportunities in the entertainment industry today. Housed on the Universal Studios back-lot and founded by Jeff and Anne Scheetz, The DAVE School (which stands for Digital Animation and Visual Effects) provides an intensive computer animation curriculum for very specific jobs in the television, film, and video gaming industries. A cutting-

edge facility complete with the latest in 3D technology, The DAVE School churns out a steady stream of highly employable professionals.

## FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY

Full Sail's Digital Arts & Design Degree Program is internationally renowned for cutting-edge innovation. Named one of the Top Ten New Media Schools in the U.S. by *Shift Magazine*, its graduates have gone on to become award-winning superstars in the digital media and entertainment industries. For example, eight Full Sail graduates worked alongside James Cameron on his blockbuster *AVATAR*. In 2008, graduate Mike Colby was recognized twice at the 2008 ADDY Awards for creating the winning logo for the Orlando-based morning show "The Daily Buzz." Student James Rydesky recently won the grand prize in

Adobe's 2008 Webby-In-Motion contest. Last year, Garry Jones, president of Full Sail University, was named "Leader of the Year" by ITFlorida.

"Full Sail University is inspired and fueled by innovation and we strive to merge the balance of technology and art," says Kristin Weissman, the school's director of public relations.

A perfect blend of technical savvy and design capability, this 21-month course takes students through the worlds of graphic design, interactive media, computer graphics, 3D, and digital video production to prepare them to work in an industry that knows no boundaries.

## ORLANDO TECH

The Digital Media Arts Department at Orlando Tech might not be Central Florida's largest digital media program,

but it's happy with its boutique size and ability to consistently place graduates in the specific careers for which they train. "Orlando Tech is a creative nucleus for high-skill, high-wage positions," says Digital Media Arts Department Chair Alan Lynch. "Each program has specific job titles that students train for, such as production assistant or animator."

Having begun several years ago as a television production program, these days the Digital Media Arts program encompasses 3D animation, digital video, digital audio and most recently, game/simulation/animation programming. "By investing heavily in cutting-edge technologies, we're able to give students a rich, real-world experience," touts Lynch. "Just last year Orlando Tech completely retrofitted our studio for HD." In an experiential, lab environment lead by industry-renowned faculty, students get the opportunity to not only fully entrench themselves in their art, but as Lynch puts it, "to get all their mistakes out" before heading out for the real deal.

## PLANET DIGITAL

Walking by the quaint and unassuming historic home on the corner of Summerlin and Washington in downtown Orlando's Thornton Park, you'd never guess at the genius that's happening inside. But as David J. Beatriz, president of Planet Digital, puts it, this "funky little house is a far better creative environment than any office park or sterile educational facility."

Planet Digital offers a unique 'contextual learning' teaching model with a steady line-up of half-, full-, and three-day curriculums aimed at equipping participants with a specific set of skills. Inside this 3,000-square-foot, flexible space housing a video production studio, media design studio, classrooms and seminar facilities, there are no semesters or academic calendars; rather, this 'use as you go' form of digital media training is a quick, 'in and out' solution for busy professionals.

Most of Planet Digital's students are industry professionals looking to get better at what they already do, large corporations looking to stay ahead

of the latest trends, and small business people with a desire to manage their own media messages. Students are trained in short bursts in a la carte courses or as part of a series of certification courses for professions such as 3D artist, web developer or digital video editor.

## SEMINOLE STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA

Seminole State College of Florida's Art, Digital Cinema and Digital Media program is designed to blend critical and creative thinking with practical skill development. The college offers nine related degree and certificate options, including digital and interactive media design, a program developed in partnership with the Florida High-Tech Corridor Council; graphic design; web design; and digital cinema.

"By providing tools and resources to Florida's students, we're directly impacting the development of Florida's digital media industry," says program manager Michael Kappers. Courses focus on the latest trends, such as 3D modeling and animation; motion graphic; digital photography; and the graphic arts.

## UCF'S CENTER FOR EMERGING MEDIA

Walk into UCF's Center for Emerging Media (CEM) on any given school day and you're certain to witness something ground-breaking. Internationally known as a platform from which the entertainment industry's elite initially leap, CEM's educational scope




Sun, an illustration by FIEA graduate Shaun McNeely.

COURTESY FIEA

includes everything from filmmaking to military simulation.

One of CEM's most sought-after components is the Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy (FIEA), a graduate-level video game design school that entrenches a select group of exceptional students into a four semester program that boasts the best faculty and facility in the state, perhaps even in the nation.

"We had 34 companies come last year to recruit from what's considered to be one of the best emerging talent pools in the country," says executive director Ben Noel.

More than 90 percent of graduates are employed in the industry after graduation. FIEA's 114,000-square-foot facility is located downtown at the heart of Orlando's emerging Creative Village. 

## CREATIVE WORKPLACE

Like a lot of creative types, John Todero was fed up with lugging his laptop to Starbucks for WIFI and a change of scenery. Aware of the 'Co-working' trend that emerged from San Francisco and swept the nation, he saw a tremendous need for a place where independent professionals could work and collaborate. Thus, CoLab Orlando ([www.colabusa.com](http://www.colabusa.com)) was born. Located in downtown Orlando in a 1923 historic

building that once housed the Angebilt Hotel and hosted notable thinkers like Thomas Edison, CoLab is a mixed use space comprised of open areas, private suites, a lounge, and a conference room that caters to Orlando's creative workforce of writers, web designers, and graphic designers. Monthly memberships include WIFI, good coffee, and free weekly tutorials. Day passes are also available.