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LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Booming BR tech industry providing jobs for young talent

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BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB) -

(Click here to watch interview.)

The holiday season also means we're in graduation season. Southeastern holds fall commencement exercises this weekend, while graduates at LSU and Southern walk across the stage next Saturday. But where will all these graduates go for jobs? Louisiana is making progress fighting the "brain drain" and keeping our best and brightest right here at home.

Evan Smith designs video games for a living - a fun job that's serious business.

"Growing up in the 80s and 90s in New Orleans this didn't exist. It was never presented as a career option," Smith said.

But in 2012 high-tech jobs are the new normal, and South Louisiana is quickly becoming the place to find one. When Smith launched Pixel Dash Studios last year, he didn't have to look far for young talent.

Kevin Dupuy graduates from LSU in a week and Claire Fontenot graduates in August. Both are now using their skills at Pixel Dash, and both are planning on being here for a while.

"I would like to stay in Louisiana," Fontenot said. "Once I started working here and started getting into it, I realize how big the industry will be in the next ten years. It's gonna be huge."

"Mom's from New Orleans, Dad's from Brusly, so if there's work for me to stay here, I'd definitely like to do that," Dupuy said.

LSU Computer Science professor Dr. Brygg Ulmer was lured here himself - all the way from Berlin. He says the state's focus on economic development is helping to fuel the rapid growth. Major tech-based companies like Ameritas and ProSonos both made multi-million dollar commitments to Baton Rouge this year, bringing more tech jobs and more clout for Louisiana's budding tech sector.

"We're seeing a lot of companies moving to Baton Rouge, a lot of companies being started in Baton Rouge, a lot of interactions across the state," Ulmer said. "We are seeing, in the last three years or so in particular, people joining local companies, sometimes Cyrious Software, sometimes other local companies, sometimes starting their own companies."

Companies like Pixel Dash. Their opportunity came from the Louisiana Technology Park, a small business incubator with a laundry list of success stories; success that's already trickling down to the ones hungry for it.

"I think you're seeing finally an opportunity for these students to jump right into an entry-level position in Louisiana," Smith said. "The state wants it, the city wants this kind of thing to happen, so we have an opportunity to have an inside track to success."

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