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## Gov. Edwards Announces Entertainment Workforce Grant Awarded to LSU for Innovative Program in New Media Production

[From the Office of the Governor](#)

**BATON ROUGE** — A proposed higher education program to improve the competitiveness and productivity of Louisiana residents in the entertainment industry is the latest recipient of a grant from Louisiana's new Entertainment Development Fund. Louisiana State University will receive \$1.25 million over five years to develop its Virtual Production & Emerging Media Filmmaking program, to be housed at LSU's main campus in Baton Rouge.

The program will aim to provide a specialized curriculum, focusing on content creation and talent development, to promote and support the hiring of Louisiana residents in the state's entertainment industry. The performance-based grant, administered by Louisiana Economic Development, will be awarded to LSU in five annual installments of \$250,000, to cover instructional equipment as well as faculty and administrative costs.

"Our Entertainment Development Fund aims to prepare Louisiana residents for the broad range of quality jobs that the entertainment industry is creating in our state," Gov. John Bel Edwards said. "I am excited to see our flagship university join in this effort, with plans for an innovative new course of study in production and filmmaking for new media. The fund was created with workforce development and education in mind, and LSU will support both with this exciting program."

The new LSU program will connect and build upon existing programs in seven colleges, centers and schools: Digital Art (LSU School of Art); Film & TV and Experimental Music & Digital Media (LSU College of Music & Dramatic Arts); Screen Arts (LSU College of Humanities & Social Sciences); Digital Media Arts & Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Computer Science (LSU College of Engineering); and the LSU Center for Computation & Technology.

The effort will help secure the state's position in a rapidly changing film and television industry where motion pictures increasingly rely on photorealistic gaming technologies for backgrounds and special effects. Over 300 students at a time will be able to cross-train and collaborate in novel ways on projects on the frontier of virtual and augmented reality using emerging cinematic techniques, whether they enter the program based on interests in gaming technology, visual effects, filmmaking, animation, art, music, performance, screenwriting, engineering or computer science.

In coming months, LSU will build a state-of-the-art virtual production stage, or XR studio, in its Digital Media Center, also home to the university's Center for Computation & Technology and EA Baton Rouge. The XR studio will have a full-scale LED wall, photogrammetry, motion capture and motion control to create virtual sets, performances and cinematography for virtual production education and curriculum development.

"The new studio will place LSU at the forefront of real-time filmmaking and empower our students' work for years to come," said Marc Aubanel, director of the LSU Digital Media Arts & Engineering program. "The program will open up more positions in digital art for the state of Louisiana, including modelers, level designers, animators, lighters and CG supervisors."

"By building an XR studio that plays on the convergence of virtual, mixed and augmented reality, we can design tailored experiences that immerse its builders, participants and viewers," said Derick Ostrenko, digital art area head in the LSU School of Art with a joint appointment in the LSU Center for Computation & Technology. "Using real-time technology for compositing, visualization and post-production allows for faster iteration and on-set improvisation."

In addition, LSU is entering the Unreal Academic Partner Program by Epic Games, developer of the Unreal Engine 3D creation platform. Through this new partnership, LSU students will gain access to additional training resources and advanced information on internships and hiring events.

"We're thrilled to welcome Louisiana State University as an academic partner, where it will continue to build the bridge between classroom and industry," said Julie Lottering, director of Unreal Engine Education at Epic Games. "There is ample opportunity ahead for creators in emerging fields like virtual production, and this is an excellent example of how to prepare students for the future."

The Entertainment Development Fund is a key feature of the motion picture incentive program enhancements signed into law by Gov. Edwards in 2017. This is the fourth EDF grant announced since the fund was launched earlier this year.

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