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New LSU Digital Media Arts Program Addresses Statewide Workforce Development Need

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BATON ROUGE – Digital media and technology are the fastest growing sectors in Louisiana. State leaders have been implementing strategic initiatives to position Louisiana at the forefront of these industries over the past decade. Within the next three years, there will be more than 5,000 new technology jobs in the state as 12 technology companies establish offices here. However, having a trained, skilled workforce in these ever-evolving creative sectors has been a challenge. To meet this statewide need, LSU has launched the state's first professional master's program in Digital Media Arts and Engineering.

"This new program in Digital Media Arts & Engineering represents a smart step by LSU to capitalize on an important, promising trend in Louisiana's economic development," said Louisiana Economic Development Secretary Stephen Moret. "The fastest-growing industry sector in our state is now software and digital media. Targeted higher education programs like this one will be critical components in growing and sustaining this technology sector in Louisiana for years to come."

When considering Louisiana as a location for their companies, many executives have directly asked for workforce development channels to meet their staffing needs.

"Digital media companies are very demanding and they hire the best of the best. This program is designed to prepare our workforce to meet the needs of the existing and future film, technology and digital arts companies throughout the region," said Marc Aubanel, director of the Digital Media Arts and Engineering, or DMAE, program.

Aubanel worked previously in the digital media and entertainment industry for 19 years. His extensive industry experience has guided the development of the new DMAE program. Students in the program will work together in teams in a studio environment on digital media arts projects, where they will take their ideas from concept to commercialization.

"The DMAE program is not meant to be abstract or theoretical. The goal of the program is to foster the necessary creativity and skills that will enable future professionals to take on design challenges and to solve them," he said.

Louisiana is the only state that has a uniquely designed incentive package for motion pictures, digital interactive and software development projects, sound recording and live performance productions. In January, LSU will also offer a unique training program for these industries.

"The new master's program in digital media arts at LSU will be a major asset to growing jobs in the technology sector," said Adam Knapp, president and CEO of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber, or BRAC. "BRAC and its partners have proven success in attracting software and video gaming companies to the Capital Region, and expanding the workforce development for these high-demand jobs is crucial."

DMAE is housed in the LSU Digital Media Center, a new state-of-the-art building that is shared with one of the world's largest video game developers and publishers, Electronic Arts.

"Our society is going through a bit of a revolution now where we're moving away from being consumers and moving towards being innovators and builders. I think this program is on the leading edge of that cultural shift and will help nurture the next generation of creators, inventors and entrepreneurs," Aubanel said.

"This is an example of LSU, the Office of Research and Economic Development and the Center for Computation and Technology playing a key role in helping the state develop a highly skilled, diverse workforce with a view to advancing Louisiana's information- and computation-based economy," said J. "Ram" Ramanujam, director of the LSU Center for Computation and Technology and professor in the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. "It enables us to explore new strategic partnerships to support the growth and expansion of knowledge-based ventures in the state."

About DMAE

The two-year Digital Media Arts and Engineering master's program is geared for both recent college graduates and working professionals in the digital media industry. Students will develop their skills in the latest 3D design, visual effects, animation and video game software including Nuke, Maya, Houdini, Unity and Unreal. A semester-long industry internship and valuable networking opportunities will help place DMAE graduates in top companies in the industry.

"It's a very small industry that is relying less and less on traditional job listings to place people and much more on referrals," Aubanel said.

About 47 similar master's programs exist in the U.S. including University of Southern California, Carnegie Mellon and New York University. Compared to these programs, LSU offers the same degree and level of training but at a lower financial cost. The program leverages the strengths and builds off the success of the programs in two existing LSU colleges.

"This collaboration between the College of Art & Design and the College of Engineering provides students with a uniquely interdisciplinary flavor to the LSU DMAE degree program," said Richard Koubek, dean of the LSU College of Engineering.

For more information about the LSU Digital Media Arts and Engineering program, visit: dmae.lsu.edu.

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