

Animation and Game Development

Overview

For years, the Digital Media Department offered a Bachelor of Science Degree with various tracks. One of those tracks was an emphasis in Gaming and Animation. Beginning in the Fall of 2015, each former track became its own major.

The major in *Animation and Game Development* has been constructed to prepare students for the demands of industry. It has been planned and assembled with the assistance of multiple industry partners, and will provide a deeper and more rigorous learning experience for those accepted into the program than what was in place during the emphasis years.

There are three basic skills at the heart of this program: Aesthetics in DGM 1620 (drawing and communication through the principles of animation); Intro to 3D Modeling in DGM 1660 (an accomplished understanding of software like Autodesk's *Maya*); and Scripting in DGM 1610 (an accomplished understanding of computer-based languages, like C# using the Unity game engine). A significant mastery of aesthetics and technology will provide graduating students with the best opportunity to realize the goal of a career in the production of animation and/or interactive games. Individuals with tangible accomplishments in these areas are sought after and will have career options.

The term *Animation and Game Development* is long. For brevity sake the full discipline (both animating and game development) will be referred to simply as *Animation* throughout this introductory document.

Program Emphasis

With curriculum centered on the skills outlined above, the department goals are to prepare students for industry entry-level positions as technical artists. These positions have different titles in different studios – in some they use the job title “Technical Director.” Technical Directors (TDs) are needed in many departments, and fill a variety of roles in modeling, rigging, lightings, rendering, vfx, and compositing departments. Scripting is equally important for game developers and for animators.

Why Technical Artist/Technical Director

It is true that in studios today there are myriad job descriptions from Concept Artist to Programmer (and everything in between), however studios often search for interns and new employees to fill entry-level TA or TD positions. These also tend to be studio positions that have legs – meaning new hires that do well often have the chance to move elsewhere in the studio after they have proven their worth. Individuals are hired in these positions to solve problems; those who can do this well offer value in an industrial setting. We seek students that are willing and able to tackle challenges and learn the principles of animation, apply principles of art and design, model in 3D, and employ scripting languages.

What Is Not Emphasized

If you wish to write for the Animation or Game Development industries, you should consider a major in Creative Writing (yes, we create stories for short animated films and games, but writing is not a program emphasis). If you are interested in telling stories and making digital movies, you might consider DGM's Cinema program. If you only want to program, or only want to create concept art, you should consider Computer Science or Illustration as your university major.

Open Enrollment and Acceptance Into the Program

UVU continues to be an open enrollment institution with inclusivity as one of its core pillars. The university provides *Structured Enrollment* for students that enter the school in need of academic remediation. All admitted UVU students are eligible to take the first-year Animation and Game Development courses. Acceptance into the formal program, beyond the first year, is predicated on student performance in the first-year courses.

Animation and Game Development is a **Limited Enrollment Program**. Students are admitted based on evaluation of a portfolio of their work, completed in three first-year courses. All three must be completed before they can be considered for inclusion in the program.

The three classes potential Animation students must take are DGM 1610, *Scripting for Animation & Games I*; DGM 1620, *Survey of Animation*; and DGM 1660, *Intro to 3D Modeling*. These three courses may be taken simultaneously, or may be staggered, with enrollment in one in the Fall and two in the Spring – or two of them in the Fall with the third completed in the Spring. This can also be staggered across two years, while finishing up most general education credits. Once again, all three must be completed before being evaluated for enrollment into sophomore level courses and beyond will be considered. A minimum grade of a B in each is required before a student can be considered for acceptance into the program, it is expected that the application process will be very competitive. Those students who are most accomplished in all three classes will be placed into the program first.

Transfer students hoping to get into the animation program will be required to submit their portfolio from corresponding courses at another institution for review.

Transfer students must have completed both first year aesthetic and technology components before they will be considered for program entry (any discrepancy will need to be filled at UVU before a student can submit their portfolio for review).

Portfolio Application

After completing DGM 1610, DGM 1620, and DGM 1660, students will submit their work from those three classes through an online portfolio account (more information and instructions will be provided in classes). The formal review will take place twice each year. The first committee review is completed during the first week of May (as soon as the Spring Semester is completed). The entire cohort of 28 students, for the following academic year, will be filled and two or three alternates will be chosen. Committee decisions will be communicated, using the student's MyUVU email address. A list of accepted UV IDs will also be provided to department advisors.

The second review will take place in August, if needed, two weeks before the Fall Semester begins. This review is conducted to fill any available cohort slots that might have come open. It is common to have one or two openings as the Fall semester is about to begin due to students making the decision to discontinue or postpone their education due to changing life or academic circumstances.

Making Progress Through The Program

The department recommends that students accepted into the program complete the requirements for the two-year associates degree, as full-time students. Doing this will ensure students stay on track for graduation in four to five years. The two-year degree dovetails into the bachelor's program. It is difficult to try and make headway in the program as a part-time student.

The Sophomore year is focused on discipline fundamentals. In this second year, students will be introduced to a studio system (courses share assets – in other words, the model a student constructs in a Modeling class will be rigged in the Rigging class). During the second semester of the sophomore year, students will complete an online portfolio, which will be evaluated by DGM faculty. Students will be counseled on direction based on their online portfolio.

In the Junior year, students will work with a small team on skill-building projects. Junior year will include studio classes covering concentrated work in the three core areas: aesthetics, software, and code, for various industries like tech, forensics, automotive, military, medical, engineering, architecture, etc. It will widen the net for skill set and career options.

In the Senior year, students will have an opportunity to strengthen their skill set as they complete team-based capstone projects and develop a working knowledge of industry standard processes and procedures, specializing in animated films or games.

For students wishing to seek a minor, in addition to the Animation and Game Development major, the department recommends the pursuit of a Computer Science minor. For those that may have a strong desire to pursue further art courses, the UVU Art Department does not currently offer a minor, however there are a handful of courses that will enhance aesthetic skills, and can be used to fill elective hours.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I don't get in the program after completing the three introductory courses. What options are there for me?

There are two options; students who are not selected for the program may repeat the first-year class or classes covering the deficiencies in their own portfolio, or they may choose to fill the deficiency on their own through independent study. In either case, repeating a course, or working independently, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure their portfolio is submitted for committee evaluation at the end of the Spring Semester.

It is also a good idea to come up with a "Plan B" with your advisor. Discuss with them other disciplines of interest outside of Animation.

Is there a limit on the number of times I can apply?

Yes, students are limited to two submissions for committee evaluation.

How many people apply for the program each year?

The number varies from year to year, but typically 150 students enroll and have their portfolios reviewed each May.

If I transfer to UVU and already have my Associate Degree, can I get into the program and finish in two years?

This is actually two questions: "Can I get into the program?" – Yes, transfer students have been accepted and successfully completed the four-year program. However, a transfer student must meet the same criteria as a student that has done all of his academic work at UVU. The three first-year courses must be completed and the student portfolio must be reviewed.

It is highly unlikely that a transfer student could come to UVU with an Associate Degree, be accepted into the animation program, and complete the degree in two years. It is more typical to have a transfer student get accepted at the sophomore level, and have three years of academics remaining to complete a Bachelor's Degree.

A transfer student that has taken no animation classes before coming to UVU will have four years of work in front of them before they would complete their degree.

If I get a B in each of the three first-year courses, does that mean I am automatically accepted into the program?

No, grades in the classes do not ensure acceptance. Getting A grades in all three courses is a good indication that you are doing very well, but a committee looks at all student portfolios at the end of the academic year and chooses the very best. Twenty-eight students are chosen for the cohort each year.

Which of the three disciplines is most important: aesthetics, modeling, or scripting?

Honestly, industry people want both aesthetics and technical skills at the same time – in the same employees. This is a challenging set of skills – it means that animation majors must be dual-brained, working well in both areas. It has never been easy to break into this industry, expectations are extremely high and there are many people that want to be a part of it, which simply means that competition is high. However, for those that can function masterfully in both the aesthetic world and the technical, there will be many opportunities.

Which of the three is most important? The answer is all of them.

I don't feel comfortable with my artistic skills (this could also read: I don't feel comfortable with my technical skills). I'm not sure I will ever learn to draw/model/code (choose one). Is there something I can do to prepare before I take classes?

Of course students can prepare prior to enrolling. The best students have most often been preparing since their junior high school years taking art, multimedia, and computer science classes from the seventh grade on. These same students may have considered a career in animation for years. Yes, this is an advantage, just as the student wishing to become an M.D. for years and completing anatomy, chemistry, physics, and physiology courses in high school will be better prepared to take pre-med courses in college.

Students who may not have completed preparatory work prior to enrolling at UVU can obviously labor on their own to fill gaps. There are many *Learn to Code* tutorials, available online at no cost. C# is the language most used in our program. Improving drawing skills is best accomplished by purchasing a sketchbook and drawing everyday. There are also many *Learn to Draw* sites free online. We would suggest students that work on their own try to concentrate on classic drawing skills – learning to capture the human form is most important. Avoid sites that only teach one style, like anime. This style is popular, but it's limited and won't help you really learn to draw.

I work a regular forty-hour a week job, is there a night program available?

Unfortunately, there is no program in place that can be completed only at night. Classes are scheduled with every attempt to consider student's busy

schedules, and are held Monday through Friday, mornings, and afternoons, with occasional evening classes scheduled when they won't fit anywhere else.

I want to purchase a laptop for school, which one should I get? And what software should I purchase?

We would advise you get the best machine you can afford. Computing power, the graphics card, RAM are all important. Most of the software used in the animation program can be acquired at no cost to students. Specific software tools will be discussed in various classes. Either Mac or PC machines will work and accomplish what you need – the majority of the faculty use Macs, but not all. It's purely a personal choice.

We do encourage students to get a Digital Tutors account, for some classes access to this site is required. The cost is \$119.00 each year.

Is there a place I can see examples of student work?

<https://www.uvu.edu/dgm/game-animation-dev/students/>

<https://vimeo.com/uvuanimation>

<https://vimeo.com/digitalmediauvu>