

The Best Game Design Programs Ranked By The Princeton Review 2026

No matter what aspect of game development you're interested in, The Princeton Review has worked to find the best school for you.

Whether you're curious about a career in game development or honing your skills, there is a perfect game design program for you. Read up on the 50 best undergraduate and 25 best graduate programs for gaming.

Higher education is one of the bigger choices you'll ever make in life, and finding your path is not as simple as choosing an RPG class. When it comes to a career in game design, every journey starts at the same place: picking the right university. Let this be your first stop. Each year, the Princeton Review ranks the 50 best

undergraduate and 25 best graduate programs in the United States and beyond, using a thorough set of criteria that includes graduate employment rates, early-career earnings, faculty industry experience, curriculum relevance, and demonstrated student success in the games industry. The list spans the best of the best programs in the country, so no matter where you land, you'll be one stop closer to your dream career. To get you into the mindset of a game designer, we've also included homework projects that explore common challenges faced by developers today, as well as a discussion on the role of AI programmers and map designers in game development.

Want to know more? Check out The Princeton Review's website for further info: www.princetonreview.com/game-design

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Best Game Design Undergraduate Programs

1

New York University

2025 Grads Hired: 53%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$84,800
 Faculty: Eric Zimmerman (Gamelab), Dr. Mitu Khandaker (Spirit AI)
 Graduates: Jenny Jiao-Hsia (IGF), Carol Mertz (Exploding Kittens)



2

University of Southern California

2025 Grads Hired: 63%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$107,400
 Faculty: TreaAndrea Russworm (Author, "Gaming Representation"), Mark Bolas (Founder, Fakespace Labs)
 Graduates: Jenova Chen (Thatgamecompany), Brent Strong (Disney)



3

University of Central Florida

2025 Grads Hired: 36%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$48,500
 Faculty: Dr. Peter Smith, Dr. John Murray
 Graduates: Richard Ugarte (Epic), Alexia Mandeville (Niantic)



4. Rochester Institute of Technology

2025 Grads Hired: 88%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$77,000
 Faculty: David I. Schwartz, Flip Phillips
 Graduates: Elan Lee (Exploding Kittens), Steven Van Slyke (co-inventor of OLED)

5. Abertay University

2025 Grads Hired: 44%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$41,000
 Faculty: Fraser Simpson (YoYo Games), Ruth Falconer (Women in Games)
 Graduates: Zoe Sams (Riot), David Hynd (Rockstar)

6. DigiPen Institute of Technology

2025 Grads Hired: 62%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$96,096
 Faculty: Claude Comair (Nintendo), Ellen Guon Beeman (EA, Microsoft)
 Graduates: Kim Swift (Portal), Alex Williams (Studio Wildcard)

7. Clark University

2025 Grads Hired: 68%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$69,000
 Faculty: Ezra Cove (Lord of the Rings Online, Turbine), Amanda Theinert
 Graduates: Gary Goldberg (Fable Vision Studios), Stanley Pierre-Louis (ESA)

8. University of Utah

2025 Grads Hired: 36%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$71,113
 Faculty: Michael Young PhD, Jose Zagal PhD (Game Studies)
 Graduates: Doug Bowser (former COO of Nintendo), Nolan Bushnell (founder of Atari)

9. Savannah College of Art and Design

2025 Grads Hired: 34%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,500
 Faculty: Nye Warburton, Cyril Guichard (Electrotank)
 Graduates: Chad Dezem (Insomniac), Harrison Pink (Blizzard)

10. Michigan State University

2025 Grads Hired: 53%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,000
 Faculty: Brian Winn (Will Winn Games), Ricardo Guimaraes (Blizzard, Ubisoft)
 Graduates: Brian Murray (EA), Steven Messenger (Rockstar)

11. Champlain College

2025 Grads Hired: 78%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$50,226
 Faculty: Jessie Leigh Gagnon (Riot Games, Phoenix Labs), Jason Della Rocca (Execution Labs)
 Graduates: Heather Conover (Riot), Alex Martens (Rockstar)

12. Drexel University

2025 Grads Hired: 43%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$42,857
 Faculty: Dr. Paul Diefenbach (OpenWorlds Inc.), Dr. Frank Lee
 Graduates: Girish Balakrishnan (Netflix), Greg Lebanov (Chicory, Wandersong)

13. Worcester Polytechnic Institute

2025 Grads Hired: 50%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$82,000
 Faculty: Ben Schneider (Standing Stone, Turbine), Ralph Sutter
 Graduates: Michael Gesner (Riot), Jon Radoff (Beamable)

14. Northeastern University

2025 Grads Hired: 20%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,000
 Faculty: Christopher Barney, Celia Pearce (IndieCade)
 Graduates: Devin Yang (Owlchemy Labs), Ryan Maloney (Blizzard)

15. Purdue University

2025 Grads Hired: 68%
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$67,066
 Faculty: Robert Howard, Jeffery Kesselman
 Graduates: Jeff Hanna (Volition), Keith Self-Ballard (PlayStation)

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The Best Game
Design Programs



Programming believable AI characters

Artists can produce amazing concept art and designers can think up compelling gameplay loops, but videogames never make it out of the conceptual phase without talented programmers constructing the underlying logic. Their work is often invisible—a line of code that makes a character’s jump or car’s drift feel perfect—but one place a programmer’s work gets to shine is in the non-player characters that populate a world. Programming believable behaviors into friendly NPCs or hostile creatures is crucial to the player believing the virtual world they’re inhabiting.

A recent example of great AI programming is Arc Raiders, the hit 2025 extraction shooter that attracted millions of players through its unique PvPvE format. Players can optionally fight each other on its large maps, but they’re encouraged to band together because of the presence of Arc—a fleet of mysterious robots that roam the planet’s surface.

The Arc, and specifically the behaviors that developer Embark Studios programmed into them, are the glue that binds the whole experience together. Arc drones will dynamically patrol the map, changing up their routes and thoroughly investigating noises. They’re smart, but crucially, Embark programmers ensured they aren’t so smart that players can’t outmaneuver

them. Careful stealth and awareness of their vision cones can mitigate their threat.

The Arc’s dynamic perception is impressive, but the real magic trick is how the robots react to damage inflicted by players. When players shoot off one of a flying drone’s propellers, it will dynamically attempt to compensate for the loss in power, drifting and

dipping through the air before it either finds balance or crashes into the ground.

The same goes for ground-based Arc robots. When a four-legged Leaper loses a leg, it compensates by changing its walking pattern. That adherence to physics-based rules, as enabled by talented programmers, makes the Arc feel alive. They’re curious, inquisitive, and worthy foes with a survival instinct, not rigid constructs with a few pre-determined actions.

Programmers are also at the heart of our favorite RPGs. Baldur’s Gate 3 is known for its excellent writing, but talented programmers working behind the scenes constructed the complex web of quest outcomes that made its characters so reactive to the player’s choices.

Sometimes, the best way to program believable AI characters is to double down on social interactions. In Playground Games’ upcoming Fable reboot, every single citizen of the open-world Albion is a real, simulated person with a name, home, and daily routine. That much has been done before, but where Fable goes the extra mile is simulating every individual citizen’s personalities and their perspectives on the world. The people of Albion will form an opinion of the player, and that opinion can change based on one-on-one interactions or choices made throughout the story.

Fable’s programmers call this system the “living population.” Passing citizens will remark upon developments in the main story. A shop clerk might have a high opinion of the player if that player owns the shop they’re working in. If the player develops a reputation in town as a tycoon, some citizens will find them off-putting by default.

If you find yourself fascinated by the little details and behaviors that make great videogame AI and want to be a part of it, then programming may be your starting point.

**“Double down
on social
interactions for
believable AI
characters”**

16. Falmouth University

2025 Grads Hired: 56%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$28,311
Faculty: Tanya Krzwinska, William Huber
Graduates: Rex Crowle (Media Molecule), Sophie Shepherd (Respawn)

17. Shawnee State University

2025 Grads Hired: 25%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$73,500
Faculty: Bastien Lecouffe-Deharme, Greg Lyons
Graduates: Dan Clark (Epic), Derek Lewis (Insomniac)

18. University of Florida

2025 Grads Hired: 33%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$99,000
Faculty: Dr. James Oliverio, Dr. Hyo Jeong Kang
Graduates: Jesse Rapczak (Studio Wildcard), Joshua Jayaheri (Raven Software)

19. Full Sail University

2025 Grads Hired: 10%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,109
Faculty: Patrick Kelly, Miguel De La Cruz
Graduates: Alejandro Garcia-Tunon, Elbert Perez (Unity)

20. Vancouver Film School

2025 Grads Hired: 11%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$65,000
Faculty: Mike Wuetherick (Unity, Cloudhead Games), Joe Bonar (Unity)
Graduates: Armando Troisi (MY.GAMES, Ubisoft), Jack Kelly (New World Interactive)

21. Quinnipiac University

2025 Grads Hired: 60%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Roger Clark (Rockstar), Elena Bertozzi
Graduates: Donovan Sepulveda (Riot), Zaria Brogdon (Rockstar)

22. New England Institute of Technology

2025 Grads Hired: 24%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$50,000
Faculty: William Culbertson (Hasbro), Jordan Dubreuil
Graduates: Daniel Laba (Blizzard), Daniel Cuccia (Sony)

23. Bradley University

2025 Grads Hired: 15%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$45,000
Faculty: David Abzug (Deep Silver), Ray Hazlip (Deep Silver)
Graduates: Diana Hughes, Joseph Lax (Sony Santa Monica)

24. Miami University

2025 Grads Hired: 56%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$56,690
Faculty: Geoffrey Long PhD (Microsoft, Disney), Ben Nicholson
Graduates: Ellie Helbling (Naughty Dog), Brian Beebe (Riot)

25. DePaul University

2025 Grads Hired: 77%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Ed Keenan (Midway), Allen Turner (Disney)
Graduates: Kevin Geisler (Young Horses), Mark Nauta (Firaxis)

26. Howest University of Applied Sciences

2025 Grads Hired: 54%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
Faculty: Tristan Clarysse (Larian, Bioware), Kevin Hoefman (Larian)
Graduates: NR

27. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

2025 Grads Hired: 8%
2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$74,917
Faculty: Rush Swope (Guerilla Games), Maurice Suckling (Epic, 2K)
Graduates: Curtis Priem (Nvidia co-founder), Zach Barth (Zachtronics)

Homework: Creative accessibility

Designing for every type of player

In recent years, the industry has reinforced the importance of designing videogames with accessibility in mind. After all, the more people who can comfortably play your game, the better chance you have of reaching an audience. The most common forms of accessible game design are options that allow players to tweak colorblind settings, alter models that trigger certain phobias, or tone down flickering lights. But sometimes, a game calls for accessibility considerations specific to the project.

Example

Clair Obscur: Expedition 33, the breakout hit RPG of 2025, looked beyond the usual settings when designing for accessibility. Developer Sandfall Interactive took note during playtests that its jerky combat camera was causing motion sickness for some players. To get ahead of that problem, the team included a camera stabilization option at launch that mitigated motion sickness without making any major artistic sacrifices.



Homework

Imagine you're developing a first-person shooter, a strategy sim, or a puzzle game that relies on color. How would you anticipate accessibility needs and design for them?

28. University of California, Santa Barbara

2025 Grads Hired: **33%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$155,000**
 Faculty: Pradeep Sen PhD, Tobias Hollerer
 Graduates: Cody Corona (Electronic Arts), Eric Roth (Screenwriter)

29. Abilene Christian University

2025 Grads Hired: **63%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$52,200**
 Faculty: Dr. Brian Burton, Rich Tanner
 Graduates: Morgan Davis (Gearbox), Chase Yamaguchi (Sony)

30. Kent State University

2025 Grads Hired: **34%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$65,000**
 Faculty: Christopher Totten, Justin McCrea
 Graduates: Joey Gage (EA), Nina Marotta

31. Marist College

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Dr. Karen Schrier (Nickelodeon), Amy Finkel
 Graduates: Darren Sugg (Epic), Rex Dickson (Blizzard)

32. University of California, Irvine

2025 Grads Hired: **25%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$83,000**
 Faculty: Katie Salen, Constance Steinkhueler
 Graduates: Rob Pardo (Blizzard), Ben Brode (Blizzard)

33. LaSalle College Vancouver

2025 Grads Hired: **44%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$70,000**
 Faculty: Dr. Amir Jahanlou, Lisa Smedman
 Graduates: Jarett Metcalfe (EA), Dani Merrithew (Blizzard)

34. Academy of Art University

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: David Goodwine, Brian Hess
 Graduates: Ciaron Ireland (Striking Distance), Tala Furniss (Playtika)

35. University of Miami

2025 Grads Hired: **32%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$54,000**
 Faculty: Dr. Lindsay Grace, Dr. Anna Queiroz
 Graduates: Pingtin Ji (Ubisoft), Casey O'Brien (Respawn)

36. Northern Arizona University

2025 Grads Hired: **50%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Jared Duval (Serious Games), James Palmer
 Graduates: NR

37. Dakota State University

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$41,964**
 Faculty: Peter Britton, Erik Pederson
 Graduates: Matt Engesser (Rockstar, Epic), Jimmy Chatten (Microsoft)

38. University of Michigan-Dearborn

2025 Grads Hired: **20%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$80,000**
 Faculty: Brice Maxim, Foyzol Hassan
 Graduates: Austin Krauss, Shane Costello

39. New Jersey Institute of Technology

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$78,265**
 Faculty: Richard Thompspon, Hye Yeon Nam
 Graduates: Jason Chin (Nvidia), James Tichenor (Meta)

40. University of Wisconsin-Stout

2025 Grads Hired: **10%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$40,000**
 Faculty: Dr. Andrew Williams, Kim Loken
 Graduates: Jose Estrada (Riot), Eleanore Falck (Epic)

41. Stetson University

2025 Grads Hired: **100%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$68,000**
 Faculty: Dengke Chen, Matt Roberts
 Graduates: Daryl Holt (EA Sports), Ben Burbank (Valve)

42. Oklahoma Christian University

2025 Grads Hired: **25%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$35,000**
 Faculty: Jacob Touchstone, Dr. Robert Nix
 Graduates: Alex Hallenbeck (Bungie), Laurel Zwirtz (Ember Labs)

43. Bloomfield College of Montclair State University

2025 Grads Hired: **7%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Samuel Leigh (Viacom), Oliver Hong (IGDA)
 Graduates: Josiah Hunt (Cloud Chamber), Michael Murphy (Blizzard)

44. Indiana University Bloomington

2025 Grads Hired: **20%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$70,000**
 Faculty: William Emigh (Studio Cypher), Michael Uslan
 Graduates: Max Lancaster (Psyonix), Kees Leyundjik (Nintendo)

45. University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Firas Khatib, Clinton Rogers
 Graduates: Matt Mrazik (WB Games)

46. ArtCenter College of Design

2025 Grads Hired: **25%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Zachary Adams, Tim FitzRandolph
 Graduates: Syd Mead, Michael Bay (Director)

47. Louisiana State University

2025 Grads Hired: **4%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Marc Aubanel (Electronic Arts), George Robins
 Graduates: Janiece Campbell (Epic), Ashley Aucoin (Meta)

48. Oklahoma City University

2025 Grads Hired: **10%**
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: **\$50,000**
 Faculty: Justin Shaw, Shirley Zhang
 Graduates: Andrew Remeniski, Jessica Jennings

49. Cleveland Institute of Art

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Steven Gutierrez (Serious Games), Harrison Walsh (Niche Worlds Cult)
 Graduates: Zack James, Tim Elek (Epic)

50. New York Film Academy

2025 Grads Hired: NR
 2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR
 Faculty: Glenn Storm, Andrew Allen
 Graduates: Leandro Ribeiro (Afterverse), Guillermo Quesada (Amazon)



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The Best Game
Design Programs

The art of map design

One of the most specialized disciplines in game development is multiplayer map design. Multiplayer arenas can be sculpted from anything—a California golf course in *Battlefield 6*, a neon-soaked city in *Fortnite*, a long-forgotten spaceport in *Arc Raiders*—but unlike traditional level designers, map makers have the unique challenge of creating spaces that delight players upon first impression while also standing up after hundreds or thousands of hours of playtime.

Good maps have to be as distinct or visually interesting as any singleplayer space, but crucially, they also have to be fair. Mapping challenges every facet of spatial design: great mappers have an understanding of architecture, nature, composition, lighting, and can visualize how players are likely to move through spaces from any direction. The balance is considering all of these principles while also taking competition into account: Are the sightlines clear? Is the space too busy or confusing? Will it be fun to navigate the hundredth time players see it?

One way designers achieve fairness in maps is through symmetry: even if two sides of a map have different theming, they'll often share a similar or even identical shape to ensure one side isn't advantageous over the other. This is why maps in competitive shooters tend to take the general shape of a rectangle or bowl—no matter which side your team is on, it takes roughly the same time to reach the center.

We see this sort of “camouflaged symmetry” used on the largest map in *Battlefield 6*. Mirak Valley is a wide, flat expanse set in Tajikistan. On one end of the map is a small village with lots of indoor cover. On the opposite end is a bombed-out village with fewer standing buildings, but an elaborate network of trenches. The two sides achieve the same thing—locations with cover that

act as capture points—with the same general land mass, but the map team at DICE utilized cover in two different ways. The side with fewer buildings favors vehicles, while the village gives infantry players a better fighting chance. It's not 100% symmetrical, but it's close, and it's more interesting to opt for variety.

Another way to create variety in maps is when the terrain can be changed by players. The destructible maps in the likes of *Rainbow Six Siege X* and *The Finals* force mappers to really get their creative juices flowing: How do you maintain competitive integrity when the map changes every session? The developers at Ubisoft tackled this problem in *Siege* by designing a visual language for “soft” walls that can be destroyed by players, and “hard” walls that cannot. In this way, designers can tightly control what sightlines can be altered by players and maintain a building's intended shape.

The Finals, meanwhile, sets no such limitations. Literally everything but the ground itself can crumble—a freedom that creates unparalleled dynamism, but also forces the map team to find other ways to distinguish arenas. The team at Embark Studios goes all-in on setting for this reason: its globe-trotting maps recreate real world locations across various time periods, including a futuristic Las Vegas, Monaco, Mexico, Korea, and even 16th century Japan.

The rise of battle royale games over the last decade has created a whole new category of map design: the 100-player mega map. Creating one large map instead of a dozen smaller ones is a major undertaking that requires close collaboration between individual mappers. The average *Fortnite* map, for instance, has over a dozen distinct points of interest in addition to kilometers of hills, roads, rivers, and mountains between them. It's a lot to consider, but all the extra space gives designers a blank canvas to sculpt beautiful views, incorporate multiple biomes, or hide secrets.

If these are the sort of challenges that get your mind racing, you may have the heart of a multiplayer map designer.

**“Good maps
have to be as
distinct as any
singleplayer
space”**

Best Game Design Graduate Programs

1

New York University

2025 Grads Hired: 59%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$84,800

Faculty: Eric Zimmerman (Gamelab), Dr. Mitu Khandaker (Spirit AI)

Graduates: Jenny Jiao-Hsia (IGF), Carol Mertz (Exploding Kittens)



2

University of Central Florida

2025 Grads Hired: 80%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$94,646

Faculty: Benjamin Noel (EA), Nicholas Zuccarello (Sony)

Graduates: Carlos Barbosa (WB Games), Brian DeSanti (Blizzard)



3

University of Southern California

2025 Grads Hired: 81%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$97,857

Faculty: TreaAndrea Russworm (Author, "Gaming

Representation"), Mark Bolas (Fakespace Labs)

Graduates: Jenova Chen (Thatgamecompany), Brent Strong (Disney)



4. Rochester Institute of Technology

2025 Grads Hired: 79%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$83,000

Faculty: David Schwartz, Flip Philips

Graduates: Elan Lee (Exploding Kittens), Steven Van Slyke (co-inventor of OLED)

5. University of Utah

2025 Grads Hired: 80%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$87,325

Faculty: Michael Young PhD, Jose Zagal PhD

Graduates: Doug Bowser (COO of Nintendo America), Nolan Bushnell (Founder of Atari)

6. Southern Methodist University

2025 Grads Hired: 45%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$104,744

Faculty: Dr. Elizabeth Storz Stringer (Atari), Joowon Kim MacDonald

Graduates: Grace Liu (Netflix Games), Daniel Rivin (Disney)

7. Abertay University

2025 Grads Hired: 49%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$49,000

Faculty: Dr. Kenneth Fee, Joseph DeLappe

Graduates: Zoe Sams (Riot), David Hynd (Rockstar)

8. Clark University

2025 Grads Hired: 72%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$70,000

Faculty: Terasa Ulm, Scott Niemi

Graduates: Stanley Pierre-Louis (ESA), Gary Goldberg (Fablevision)

9. Savannah College of Art and Design

2025 Grads Hired: 73%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,500

Faculty: Nye Warburton, Cyril Guichard (Electrotank)

Graduates: Lucas Slominski (ZeniMax), Chris Schmidt (BioWare)

10. Drexel University

2025 Grads Hired: 50%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,000

Faculty: Dr. Paul Diefenbach

(OpenWorlds Inc.), Dr. Frank Lee
Graduates: Anna Nguyen (NetherRealm Studios), Greg Lebanov (Wondersong, Chicory)

11. Michigan State University

2025 Grads Hired: 60%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,000

Faculty: Amanda Cote, Susan Bonner

Graduates: Brian Murray (EA), Geoff Johns (DC Entertainment)

12. DigiPen Institute of Technology

2025 Grads Hired: 37%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$179,000

Faculty: Claude Comair (Nintendo), Brian Schmidt

Graduates: Luis Villegas (Bungie), Taralyn von der Linden (Pixar)

13. Northeastern University

2025 Grads Hired: 40%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$80,000

Faculty: Celia Pearce (IndieCade), Bob De Schutter

Graduates: Angi Liu (Blizzard), Wendi Zhang (Activision Blizzard)

14. Worcester Polytechnic Institute

2025 Grads Hired: 70%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$82,000

Faculty: Ben Schneider (Turbine, Standing Stone), Ralph Sutter

Graduates: Michael Gesner (Riot), Jon Radoff (Beamable)

15. Falmouth University

2025 Grads Hired: 71%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$43,386

Faculty: Tanya Krzwinska, William Huber
Graduates: Rex Crowle (Media Molecule), Sophie Shepherd (Respawn)

16. University of Florida

2025 Grads Hired: 85%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$99,000

Faculty: Dr. James Oliverio, Dr. Hyo Jeong Kang

Graduates: Joseph Murphy (EA), Pooja Agshikar (Microsoft)

17. Full Sail University

2025 Grads Hired: 33%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$62,109

Faculty: Dr. Shawn Stafford, Chris Keeling

Graduates: Erin Eberhardt (Dreamhaven), Aaron Hamilton Cook (Blizzard)

18. DePaul University

2025 Grads Hired: 91%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR

Faculty: Ed Keenan (Midway), Allen Turner (Disney)

Graduates: Sara Asmussen (Blizzard), Kevin Geisler (Young Horses co-founder)

19. Bradley University

2025 Grads Hired: 40%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$45,000

Faculty: David Abzug (Deep Silver), Ray Hazlip (Deep Silver)

Graduates: Alex Cline (Shapeshifter Games), Annabelle Pries (Blind Squirrel)

20. Purdue University

2025 Grads Hired: 7%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$67,066

Faculty: Robert Howard, Jeffery Kesselman

Graduates: Jeff Hanna (Volition), Keith Self-Ballard (Bungie)

21. Carnegie Mellon University

2025 Grads Hired: 64%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$74,000

Faculty: Jesse Schell (Schell Games, Disney Imagineer), Derek Ham

Graduates: Neil Druckmann (Naughty Dog co-president), Bei Yang (Meta, Disney)

22. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

2025 Grads Hired: 33%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$74,917

Faculty: Maurice Suckling (Epic, 2K), Rush Swope (Guerrilla Games)

Graduates: Dr. Bryan Kim, Dr. Matthew Gantt

23. University of Wisconsin-Stout

2025 Grads Hired: 100%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$44,000

Faculty: Dave Beck, Andrew Williams

Graduates: Hue Vang (Dreamworks), Andrew Murphy (Apple)

24. American University

2025 Grads Hired: 50%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: \$70,000

Faculty: Andrew Phelps, Krzysztof Pietroszek

Graduates: Ryan Seymour (Smithsonian), Kelli Dunlop (TakeThis.org)

25. New York Film Academy

2025 Grads Hired: 2%

2025 Grads Mean Salary: NR

Faculty: John Zuur Platten, Craig Caton-Largent (Digital Domain)

Graduates: Leandro Ribeiro (Afterverse), Guillermo Quesada (Amazon Studios)



Homework: Finding fun

When the game transforms mid-development

Often in game design, creativity goes hand in hand with flexibility. It's rare that a game comes together exactly as it was pitched. Instead, developers tend to find their game's unique hook along the journey. That can mean taking your original idea and refining it, but sometimes the project's entire premise can change when an even better idea comes along.

Example

The 2025 Steam hit REPO, developed by Semiwork, was not originally conceived as a co-op horror game. At first, the team was making a singleplayer horror cleaning game in which players picked up trash around a mansion while avoiding a monster. By showing creative flexibility, the team realized it should pivot to multiplayer (because everything is more fun with friends). That change eventually led to moving away from the cleaning concept altogether, as the team found cleaning together wasn't as fun as it originally sounded. What was fun, they discovered, was cooperatively carrying fragile objects through precarious mansions. Thus, REPO was born.

Homework

You're developing a playable prototype for a 3D platformer. Your playtesters love how the jump feels, but aren't responding well to the game's setting or characters. How do you pivot?