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By: Brett Molina, USA Today

For the second straight year, the University of Southern California is home to the top video game design program in the country.

USC boasts the top graduate and undergraduate programs, according to The Princeton Review's list of "Top Schools for Video Game Design Study for 2011."



"We're just very excited about where the program is going," said Elizabeth Daley, the dean of USC's School of Cinematic Arts.

The schools were selected based on a survey of administrators at 150 schools offering video game design programs or degrees.

The survey focuses on four key categories: academic, faculty, infrastructure and career opportunities.

The University of Utah and the DigiPen Institute of Technology in Redmond, Wash., round out the top three undergraduate programs. The full top 10, including honorable mentions:

1. University of Southern California (Los Angeles)
2. University of Utah (Salt Lake City)
3. DigiPen Institute of Technology (Redmond, Wash.)
4. The Art Institute of Vancouver (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada)
5. Michigan State University (East Lansing, Mich.)
6. Worcester Polytechnic Institute (Worcester, Mass.)
7. Drexel University (Philadelphia)
8. Champlain College (Burlington, Vt.)
9. Rochester Institute of Technology (Rochester, N.Y.)
10. Becker College (Worcester, Mass.)

**Honorable mentions:** Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta), North Carolina State University (Raleigh), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy, N.Y.), Savannah College of Art and Design (Savannah, Ga.) and Shawnee State University (Portsmouth, Ohio).

This marks the first year The Princeton Review ranked the top graduate programs for video game design. The top 10, with honorable mentions:

1. University of Southern California (Los Angeles)
2. University of Central Florida (Orlando)
3. Southern Methodist University (Plano, Texas)
4. Rochester Institute of Technology (Rochester, N.Y.)
5. Drexel University (Philadelphia)
6. University of Utah (Salt Lake City)
7. University of California-Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz, Calif.)
8. Savannah College of Art and Design (Savannah)
9. Parsons The New School for Design (New York)
10. University of Texas-Dallas (Dallas)

**Honorable mentions:** Academy of Art University (San Francisco), DePaul University (Chicago), DigiPen Institute of Technology (Redmond, Wash.), Georgia Institute of Technology (Atlanta), and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, Mass.)

The video game design programs at USC are run by the School of Cinematic Arts' Interactive Media Division and the Computer Science division at the School of Engineering.

Daley credits the success of USC's programs to teaching philosophy. "What we really try to do is to look constantly at the user experience with games -- how do you design games so that, like films and like television, people want to engage with them," Daley says.

The Princeton Review -- in conjunction with *GamePromagazine* -- started ranking video game design programs last year after recognizing a surge in the number of options available at schools.

"As there is more notoriety around the list and the idea that game design is a viable option for going to school -- not as a major but as a career afterwards -- it's adding a lot of credibility to the field," says David Soto of The Princeton Review.

The list will be featured in the April issue of *GamePro*.