



// 3D Animation & Visual Effects

Advisory board meeting was held October 12, 2011 at 9 am. In attendance were Stephanie Moore, KSBI; Wes Davis, Weston Media; Ben Stone, Stone Graphics Media; Brooks McGinnis, Skyline, Inc.; Alexa Mashlan, Oklahoma City Community College; and Brandon Tucker, Mid-Del Technology Center. Francis Tuttle employees in attendance were: Jennifer Haile-Egbert, Linda Lindsey, Dana Myers, and Terry Wallace. Members contributing suggestions via email were Piyush Patel, P L Studios; and Don Pope, Ethno-Graphics Media.

Flash/Toon Boom/Unity 3D

- Flash is finding its role more in development and graphic design and less as a tool for artists who work in 3D and Visual Effects.
- If Flash is emphasized less for 3D and Special Effects artists, additional training time should be spent developing concept art or compositing, and on editorial for renders.
- Flash will continue to be utilized more for application development, billboards, banners, videos, and game development. As a platform, it is getting bigger, definitely not going anywhere. The market is too saturated to disappear.
- Flash Player 11 will allow you to publish video games directly to Flash Player. Next to the already existing build targets of a Unity project, one will be able to target Flash with Stage3D, announced for Flash Player 11.
- May consider adding Unity coding for flash programmers, since it also supports 2D animation.
- Toon Boom has its place, but there are no employment opportunities in Oklahoma for a Toon Boom artist.

Final Cut

- Industry is currently using Version 7. For production purposes, let others test bugs and stick with what works. However, it was noted that nothing is ever always compatible, regardless of version.
- What were formerly individual product updates are now tied to bundles. With subscription services becoming more popular, software industries are now doing ½ updates.
- From a student/learning perspective – training in latest software may be ideal. At the rate software is updated, once a student is ready to enter the workforce, they're likely to be a version behind. In this case, the practice for updates in a production environment is different than the educational environment.

Programming

- More companies are expecting people who are graphics-oriented to also be familiar with coding to help with customization, rendering.
- All visual designers should be exposed to a little object-based coding. Students don't need to write code from scratch, but should be able to tweak and look up solutions.
- Students should also be familiar with the differences between AS2 and AS3.

Web

- All products and assets developed will end up on the web at some point, and students should produce assets to support a variety of formats and various mediums. A client may initially want a product, and then will have you adapt it for billboards, flyers, etc..
- 3D on the Web will be big. For After Effects, InDesign, target XML formats.

Where are the Jobs?

- Many openings are related to motion design, special effects.
- Students need to be well-versed in the foundation skills, with an understanding of multiple areas; adaptable. If a student doesn't know exactly what s/he wants, go for a well-rounded training option. An independent person may prefer to specialize.
- The current trend seems to be away from specialists to generalists. People (clients) are expecting more and more. For example, an editor may also do audio, color, and animation – especially since the various programs are becoming more affordable.
- Online web-based learning is projected as the largest area for growth and jobs, not just for schools, but businesses will use to train employees. Online learning is a huge market that will utilize motion graphics and skills attained in program.
- “Interactive applications” looks better than “gaming” on a resume.
- How much time do students practice? They will have to work at home to be excellent. Even people w/degrees can't always compete with a high school student that has an awesome portfolio and passion.
- Regarding portfolios, Re-do or complete a project rather than demonstrate learning at a surface level. Polish portfolio pieces! People in this industry have trouble COMPLETING a project. First 80% of work is easiest, goes fastest; last 20% takes most time. Must be polished, pay attention to details, and be user-friendly.
- A final project representing each skill is preferred.

Career Major Suggestions

- Combine the 2D Animator and Motion Graphics Artist career majors.
- Simplify choices for students.
- For the most employment opportunities, emphasize Special FX Artist or Motion Graphics Artist career majors.
- Special FX Artist – good foundation. This career major will help students figure out strengths. This major is versatile and provides more unique types of work and experiences, rather than specifics.

Collaboration

- Learn through a project that utilizes a collaborative community. Give a deadline, (for practice).
- Collaborative projects help the students better understand the pipeline.
- Troubleshooting is a huge benefit on the side.
- “Throw them to the wolves”. This type of experience builds the best people as well as confidence. At some point, they will hit a wall where the level of knowledge is not sufficient.
- Collaboration will help build professional skills along with the ability to be cordial while maintaining sanity.
- Collaborative projects provide a different experience each time—no two are the same.

Trends, Suggestions, Comments

- Node-based architectures stepping up – consider training in Autodesk Smoke.
- College is important for corporate America in order to get promoted. It gives more polish, represents commitment, and makes a difference in salary. Suggest combining specialty skills learned in this program with a communications degree or other degree that provides versatility.
- In the “real world”, college is helpful; portfolio is critical. Students MUST have a portfolio to get a job in Visual Arts. Networking is also valuable.
- Encourage students to negotiate to “test out” of courses at other colleges.
- Gen Y people may emphasize degrees less in the future; however, for now, it’s hard to compete against someone with equivalent skills that has a degree.
- It was noted that the OCCC degree articulation with UCO is the best transfer option for students.
- Teach INTEGRATION. Keep relevant, and put everything together.

Academic Skills

- Math skills are important.
- Algebra and trigonometry are used everyday.
- Academic skills are utilized for dynamics, models, animations, calculating pixel ratios, scaling, etc.

Drawing

- Drawing is more important for print, graphics, and modeling.
- Drawing is also helpful for concept art, printed art, pre-vis process.

Facility

- Advisory members toured the classroom and commented the classroom layout, tools, and versatility of the room provided students with a great production lab, representative of industry.

Internet Marketing through Social Media

- Facebook is a huge TREND, but that's all it is—a trend, just as MySpace was earlier. Education must address Internet marketing through social media. SEO, SE Marketing, Organic search results.
- If you follow all trends, you'll quickly fall behind trying to address every trend. Focus on marketing tools with the largest impact.
- KSBI customers are on FB more than email, and it's important to recognize that tool. Rather than hiring a person to do FB customization, they will likely contract someone.

Future tools/projections regarding special effects and digital compositing-

- Code-based effects; smaller file size, faster rendering
- Code-based dynamic compositing

Emerging trends in our professions and/or other suggestions-

- Node-based architectures
- Well integrated workflows
- Open platforms/architectures
- Cloud Sourcing
- Crowd Sourcing
- Game Engines
- Exponential Advancement in Technology
- Web Integration of 3D

What are the future tools/projections regarding animation for designers?

- Game Engines
- Inexpensive Motion Capture

What's an out of the box tip for inspiring excellence, creativity, a motivational technique, learning a concept, an awesome resource, etc.

- Gnomon Workshop
- Monthly 2D and 3D contests
- Tutorials/training (DVD & Web)
- Watching someone else work
- Tutorials
- Interview clients about what they see for their future
- Yoga
- 3D World Magazine & Disk
- Video Premier Night
- Skills USA Contest
- Get out of your environment—take a stroll
- Find an online resource or image blog that has art to inspire you

What makes an awesome conference? Identify your best personal experience.

- Progressive lunch
- Multiple tables; speakers rotate 10 minutes at each table
- Interactivity/new ideas
- Autodesk University

- Interaction; hands-on
- Have stations/kiosks
- Q & A sessions/booths
- Great teachers w/great presentations
- New & innovative technologies being or that have been utilized in successful and notable brands

The 3DFest Student conference will be held March 29, following the 3D User Group Event sponsored by Digital Tutors on March 28. The event on March will feature guest speakers from