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>
> —Pete Bandstra
> Program Director, Computer Animation & Game Art
> Full Sail University

# Full plate at Full Sail.

## Florida-based university uses Autodesk® Maya® software to teach challenging computer animation and game art courses.



**Image courtesy of Full Sail University**

### Project Summary

More than 30 years ago, the Full Sail Center for the Recording Arts was founded in Dayton, Ohio. A little over a year later, the specialist school was moved to Florida and later became Full Sail Real World Education. Today, Full Sail has stayed put in Winter Park, Florida, but just about everything else has changed. For one thing, the one time "Center" is now a full-fledged university, offering bachelor's and master's degrees, both on campus and online. For another, course offerings have extended far beyond the world of audio to include entertainment business, Internet marketing, computer animation, and game art.

Pete Bandstra has been director of the computer animation and game art programs since 2003.

"We offer prospective 3D artists a complete program of study through a combination of fine art and high technology," says Bandstra. "When students emerge from Full Sail University, they will be 3D content developers capable of creating content for the film, television, games, architecture, medical, and all manner of other industries."

Would-be applicants take note: Bandstra isn't kidding when he describes the program as "intense." On-campus Full Sail University students can expect no less than 40 contact hours per week; that's a daily slate of four hours in the classroom and four hours in the lab.

"It's not for the faint of heart," says Bandstra. "But when they graduate, they are ready to face the industry."

### The Challenge

It is no small challenge to both quickly and completely prepare students for a career in an ever-more demanding and competitive field such as 3D animation. By developing expert skills in both fine art, game design, and computer programming, however, Full Sail University is definitely giving its students an edge, with help from Autodesk® Maya® software.

"Our game art program is a hybrid," says Bandstra. "Students begin their time here in the more traditional computer animation side of things before splitting off into courses specifically geared to creating game art. They learn more about using polygon modeling, creating compelling characters, building texture maps, and so on. They then connect with the Game Development degree students who have learned to program, build game engines, create artificial intelligence command scripts, and so on. Together, teams of students actually come up with a fully functioning game from scratch. As a result, our game art students come out of our program not only with an excellent reel to show employers, but also a complete game to show off as well."

**Autodesk**®

## The Solution

Autodesk Maya software is at the core of Full Sail University's computer animation and game art program. Bandstra is both emphatic and matter-of-fact about the university's choice of software.

"When we're preparing our students for careers in 3D animation, we want them to develop specific skills that they can take with them wherever they go," he says. "From that perspective, they can't do better than Autodesk Maya software."

While touting the strengths of Maya, however, Bandstra is quick to point out that Full Sail University students also use Autodesk® Education Suite for Entertainment Creation, which includes Autodesk® 3ds Max®, Autodesk® MotionBuilder®, Autodesk® Softimage®, Autodesk® Mudbox™, and Autodesk® SketchBook® software.

"Adding Autodesk 3ds Max, MotionBuilder, and Softimage to our toolset has been a big help to our students," he says. "With more complex tools come greater opportunities. Using different platforms opens up more doors in the animation and game art industries, because our graduates can show they understand more than one interface and are able to bring their ideas to life on a variety of platforms."

Scott Dansby, head of Industry Relations for Information and Media Technology at Full Sail University, also touts the benefits of the Education Suite. "The Education Suite is much easier to manage and support than our previous systems," says Dansby. "We have a single contract to renew for all the applications, and just one serial number on our license server includes all the computer labs on campus. We'll save money on Subscription renewal over having individual contracts for each application. Individual use rights for faculty

members has also been very popular. Our online students already receive a copy of the Education Suite. Now, our faculty will as well."

## The Result

Full Sail's ascension to full university status in 2008 was the result of years of hard work and hard-earned recognition. Full Sail alumni have gone on to distinguished careers, and the new designation rightfully reflects the success of the school's offerings. And, yes, university status has its privileges.

"It was very exciting to receive the official designation," says Bandstra. "It also gave us the opportunity to take on new and ambitious projects."

Full Sail University also offers the Global Professionalism System (GPS), a reward system based on the university's research into the needs of current employers in the entertainment industry.

Students are awarded points for innovation, volunteerism, community service, and more. Recently, a team of Full Sail film students created a spot for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

"When students graduate from Full Sail, they do so with both a GPA and a GPS," says Bandstra. "Employers, in turn, can get a more complete picture of their future animators. The program has been very successful for our graduates, and we couldn't have done it without the help of Autodesk software."

## Learn More

For more information about Autodesk software, visit **www.autodesk.com/me.**

For more information about Full Sail University and to see the gallery of student work, visit **www.fullsail.edu.**



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