Regional Virtual Production Academy
Fall 2024 Industry Advisory Meeting
12/5/2024 | 4:00PM - 5:00PM
Meeting Report

Links:

- [Meeting Agenda](#)
- [Meeting Slide Deck](#)

The Regional Virtual Production Academy (RVPA) Advisory is a regional program advisory composed of industry professionals, employers, and technology providers volunteering their time to inform the Academy's decisions regarding curriculum and work-based learning required to develop the skills, knowledge and abilities needed for jobs in virtual production.

On December 5, 2024, representatives of the RVPA and its member colleges (Berkeley City College, Diablo Valley College, Laney College, Mission College, Ohlone College, and Santa Rosa Junior College) convened the Fall 2024 advisory meeting to inform planning for the remainder Year 3 of the regional joint venture. The RVPA is a collaborative program to prepare students across the region for jobs in the growing fields of virtual production and creative technology. The meeting objectives were:

- Provide an update on accomplishments and activities since the Fall 2023 meeting
- Identify trends we should be aware of in the development of the talent needed by the industry.
- Collect industry input for the design of the VP Professional certificate aimed at skill-building for individuals already in the industry.
- Seek industry/employer support for student work experience

The meeting was attended by 12 industry professionals, 8 representatives from the RVPA project team. (See attendee list.) Below are notes from the meeting.

Program Update

Olivia Herriford began the update with the announcement of the Fall 2024 launch of the Academy. After a "soft" launch in Spring 2024 targeting students taking related courses, we saw a 10% increase in the Fall enrollment, one of our metrics.

Joanne discussed the launch and progress of the RVPA Creative Technology Internship Program. The program, which is funded by the California Film Commission and the Foundation for Community Colleges, currently has 9 interns and is managed by Kevin Leeper, RVPA's Technology Lead. The interns work on projects for industry partners, including Goal Line Studios, Movers, and TIFCA, and are paid $20 an hour and are required to pursue the VP fundamental certificate.The program is designed to provide industry experience and help students prepare for creative technology roles. Joanne also mentioned that they are exploring the possibility of an apprenticeship program, for which they are applying for a grant. The team is looking to expand the program and is open to partnering with other organizations, which was a topic of discussion at the end of the meeting.

Professional Certificates

The RVPA is developing professional certificates for skill builders. Monica Cappiello, from Ohlone College, shared updates on the virtual production advanced certificate and the noncredit offering, which are parallel to the credit versions but cannot be transferred. The team debated whether to specialize in 3D modeling or animation for the advanced certificate. Monica also mentioned that their goal is to offer every class online. The team also discussed the possibility of creating smaller, semester-long certificates.

The overview of the professional certificates segued to a discussion about the integration of camera movement in the courses. Zach Alexander and James Blevins suggested that the current curriculum might not adequately cover the technical aspects of camera operation and broadcasting for sports. Edward Dawson-Taylor agreed, noting that virtual production is a blend of various fields and that understanding film production and storytelling is crucial. Monica asked if it was important to have specific classes dedicated to these topics, and it was agreed that it would be beneficial. Attendees also discussed the challenges of transitioning from traditional film production to virtual production, with Zach highlighting the need for broadcast engineers to understand VFX more.

Discussion: Trends

The discussion then focused on the emerging trends in the film and video production industry, particularly in virtual production and the use of tracking data. James highlighted the potential for a "ray traced world" and the growth of AR kit tracking data in filmmakers' hands. John Shike emphasized the importance of technical training in the industry, while Isao Kogure discussed the scarcity of technical artists and VFX artists in the game development sector. Monica sought clarification on the term "VFX". The conversation ended with a discussion on the potential for more options in the industry due to advances in technology.

Game Industry Evolution and Technical Artists

The discussion moved to the evolution of the game industry and its impact on the entertainment industry. James highlighted the shift from using duct tape and paint to create sets to a more robust approach, with a focus on beautiful designs and exceptional lighting. Zach agreed, noting

the importance of pre-production planning to ensure a high-quality final product. Isao shared his experience of hiring visual effects artists who learned on the job, suggesting a need for more hands-on learning. Jeremiah Grant expanded on the role of technical artists, emphasizing their responsibility for creating effects and ensuring visual performance. The discussion also touched on the importance of technical knowledge in the industry, with Paul Churchill suggesting that schools could play a role in promoting this understanding.

Exploring AI's Role

Isao discussed the potential of AI in the field, noting that some artists embrace it while others are hesitant or fearful. He suggested that leaders should help artists understand AI as a tool and partner, and that it's crucial to keep up with its rapid evolution. Isao also shared an example of an animator using Chat GPT to write a batch exporter, demonstrating the potential of AI in problem-solving.

The discussion moved to the rapid changes in the AI industry and its impact on the VFX industry. Roch, who was in Tokyo for Siggraph, Asia, reported on the speed of AI developments and the increasing role of startups in the industry. He expressed concern about the demand in the VFX industry due to layoffs and the lack of job postings. James agreed that it was a disruptive time and suggested that the certification process could be a way for people to catch their breath and explore. Edward, however, expressed uncertainty about the future, stating that the current moment was a triple disruption of COVID, strikes in the film industry, and AI, and that they had no idea where things were going.

Fundamentals and AI in Education

Edward emphasized the importance of teaching fundamental skills, such as storytelling and image making, which are timeless and will remain relevant despite the rapid evolution of technology. He also stressed the need for people to understand the fundamentals of their craft, whether they lean more towards aesthetics or technical aspects. Jeremiah discussed the responsible use of AI, emphasizing that it should be a supporting mechanism for creativity rather than a replacement. He also highlighted the importance of understanding the algorithm behind the tool to know when to use it and when not to. Paul agreed, stating that understanding the algorithm is crucial for effective use of AI. Roch suggested adapting the educational approach to teach students in a way that aligns with the current generation's thinking and adapting to new trends in content creation. Zach proposed fostering more technically-minded students who can guide the creative process and help develop hardware tools.

Professionals Certificate Program and Internship Discussion

Olivia asked the industry participants if they thought the RVPA was going in the right direction in its development of the professional certificate and it was agreed that it was.

In the discussion that followed about potential to grow the internship program, James suggested that the internship could be integrated with production which might create opportunities for partnerships. Joann and James agreed to follow up.

The team also discussed the potential for rebranding the Academy to the Regional Creative Technology Academy, which would encompass the trends discussed above, such as integrating AI.

Next Steps

- Joanne to schedule a meeting with James to discuss internship program details and potential partnerships.
- Monica to explore incorporating AI education and responsible use into curriculum development.
- Olivia will add rebranding the Academy to Regional Creative Technology Academy into the project plan
- Joanne to continue developing the plan for the apprenticeship program and explore potential expansion beyond California.
- Joanne to recruit additional industry partners for the internship program in spring.

Attendees:

Name	Organization	Title
Chris Lewis	Berkeley City College	Dean of Mathematics, Science and Career Education
Edward Dawson-Taylor		*Co-founder of CG Pro, an independent training center and consultancy*
Isao Kogure	*Former Director of Art*	*WB Games San Francisco*
James Blevins	*MESH, Production Consulting*	*Co-Founder*
Jeremiah Grant	*Technical Art Director*	*Escape Velocity Entertainment*
Joann Denning	Diablo Valley College	Department Chair Art Digital Media and Film Television
John Shike	*SMPTE and Advanced Systems Group LLC*	*Membership Director for Educators and Students SMPTE-Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers*
Johnathon Amayo	*Key Code Education*	*Strategist and Designer*
Kevin Leeper	Diablo Valley College	RVPA Technology Lead
Kim Paris	*ILM*	*Emerging Talent Manager*
Mark Garrett	Mission College	Chair Graphic Design Multimedia
Mary Clarke-Miller	Berkeley City College	Department Chair Multimedia

		Arts
Monica Cappiello	Ohlone College	Lead Faculty
Olivia Herriford	BACCC	RVPA Project Lead
Paul Churchill	*ILM*	Training Supervisor
Roch Nakajima	*RKG*	
Veronica Parker	Ohlone College	Director, Career Education Programs and Services
Wendy Madden	*Goal Line Studios*	
Zach Alexander	*Liminal Strategies*	*Former founder and EVP of Operations and Fin ance @ Lux Machina Consulting*

Industry participants in italics