



VICKI CRONIS/THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

Jonathan Fobbs, 20, is a transfer student from Tidewater Community College's graphic design program and now is enrolled in Regent University's animation program. He and other students work in the digital imaging lab, also known as the "bat cave."

AN ANIMATED SUBJECT

Regent University's new bachelor's program draws students with passion for cartoons, art

BY PHILIP WALZER
THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

VIRGINIA BEACH — Now they're crafting 10-second computer-generated cartoons using just three shapes: sphere, cube and cone.

In a few years, they dream of creating full-length classics for Pixar and Disney.

Sixteen students this fall entered Regent University's new bachelor's program in animation. In the next four years, they will hone their drawing skills, learn to master Maya — the top-of-the-line computer program for animators — and brush up on the history of U.S. and world animation.

Students in the program dropped jobs, switched colleges and moved across the state, many to pursue their lifelong passion.

Amy Lee, 34, of Hampton, grew up on comic books such as "Spider-Man" and "The Prince and the Pauper." Joshua Lyman, 19, of Hampton, made his own: He remembers sketching

"Mach Man," a stick figure who shot down Martians, in the margins of his home-schooling textbook.

"I want to work for Pixar," Lyman said last week. "When I saw 'Toy Story,' I automatically made up my mind: That's what I want to do."

Peggy Southerland, a three-time Emmy award winner who is the director of digital imaging and animation at Regent, said "a very few of them" will end up in Hollywood, but there are plenty of opportunities elsewhere.

"Almost every commercial has an animated element in it," Southerland said. "If it's nothing more than the logo moving, it's animation."

Ad agencies, medical schools and even the U.S. Department of Defense are looking for animators, she said.

Peter Ratner, a professor of 3-D animation at James

THE PROGRAM

Regent University's animation program is a concentration within its bachelor's degree in communication.

Students must take 120 credit hours to graduate. Half of the hours will come from animation classes such as Digital Puppetry in Maya and History of World Animation.

The school hopes to arrange internships for students, too.

THE INDUSTRY

Besides working to create Nickelodeon cartoons such as

"The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron, Boy Genius" or Pixar movies such as "Toy Story," animators are needed by ad

agencies, medical schools, the Department of Defense and others.



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