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Fitchburg State to offer digital media bachelor's degree



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Fitchburg State University announced on Monday it is launching a new bachelor's degree program in digital media innovation.

By Timothy Doyle

Fitchburg State University announced on Monday it is launching a new bachelor's degree program in digital media innovation.

The STEM-designated program is intended to prepare students related to media and journalism, social media, and content development.

The program, part of the Communications Media Department, will teach students about social media, multimedia storytelling, information design, data studies, and coding, according to a Monday press release.

"Fitchburg State's new major in digital media innovation weaves innovative interdisciplinary coursework and research already being done on our campus into a curriculum designed to teach students the advanced digital skills they will need to succeed on the job market today and into the future," university President Richard Lapidus said in the press release.

FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

FSU launches Digital Media Innovation program

Program to teach cutting-edge skills through hands-on experience

By Sara Arnold
Correspondent

FITCHBURG » A brand new Bachelor's degree program in Digital Media Innovation is coming to Fitchburg State University, providing students with a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary education on the topics of the future.

According to the university's website, degree participants will "develop a wide range of new digital skills that span social media, multimedia storytelling, information design, data studies, coding, and more to meet the needs of a flexible and changing global economy."

Matthew Bruun, director of communications and public affairs at FSU, said that it "offers students an innovative and adaptive pathway model that provides cutting-edge digital skills through hands-on experiential learning. The pathways offer opportunities to study digital storytelling, culture, and societal applications of data and its ultimate goal is to have students activate their learned digital skills by way of experiential projects throughout their coursework and especially in their capstone course."

He added that "these hands-on projects demonstrate the way that digital technology and computing are changing social and cultural systems in commerce, the law, the arts, and the broader human experience."

Students choose a pathway and then select 33 credits worth of courses, which may include a semester overseas in Greece or Japan and internships. The three pathways are "Storytelling, Narrative, and Design", "Data Studies", and "Digital Culture, Heritage, History, and Preservation."

In those courses, students will integrate academic work with community engagement "to produce tangible, engaging, audience-aware products, produce engaging digital narratives using emerging tools (such as 3D printing, 360-degree video, augmented reality and creative multimedia coding), and evaluate and critique the impacts of data on society and how data can be used to address issues such as social justice and inequality," as per FSU's website.

Before obtaining their degree, students will also have to complete a capstone project, which will be community-oriented and geared around both scholarship and professional development, giving students the ability to develop portfolio pieces for their future employment.

Although the program will be housed in the Communications Media department, faculty members span multiple university departments, including Computer Science, Earth and Geographic Sciences, English Studies, and Humanities.

"Many members of (FSU's) community of faculty scholars reach across disciplinary silos to explore multifaceted topics," Bruun said.

To add a new academic program, it first goes through a lengthy internal review process with campus stakeholders including students, faculty,

FSU

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administrators, and trustees. For a degree-granting major, the state Board of Higher Education has to allow it. The board approved Digital Media Innovation this past summer.

The new major "weaves innovative interdisciplinary coursework and research already being done on our campus into a curriculum, designed to teach students the advanced digital skills they will need to succeed on the job market today and into the future," University President Richard Lapidus said.

The degree is federally STEM-designated, which means that the coursework includes topics that are in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and math as defined by the U.S. Department of Education's classification of instructional programs.

It is also unique among the state's public universities to be offering this degree, providing a diverse group of students with opportunities rivaling those of more expensive private institutions.

Graduates of the new program could find themselves in a variety of careers including journalism, social media management, web development, digital media startups, data analytics, multimedia production, and still emerging roles like digital data detectives and augmented reality journey building.

Whatever students decide to do going forward, it will allow them to "communicate with fluency and translate between the languages of ethics, business, and technical knowledge," said a recent press release.

"It's a fresh approach to getting students involved in building a more humane digital society in a hands-on way in their own communities," said Professor Elise Takehana of the English Studies department, who helped create the

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new program.

Professor J.J. Sylvia IV of the Communications Media Department, another program creator, added "Our graduates will be equipped with the tools to tackle these challenges, and I can't wait to see the impact that they make."

Digital Media Innovation is given as a Bachelor of Science degree unless the student has advanced intermediate proficiency in a world language, in which case a Bachelor of Arts will be awarded.

It can be taken as a double major, where students can count requirements that fulfill both majors for up to three courses.

An 18-credit minor in Digital Media Innovation is also being offered, giving students in other majors the ability to add it as part of their existing degree programs "to learn the fundamentals of emerging digital media tools and apply them across a wide variety of disciplines and careers to achieve technical media competency," according to the university catalog.

Additional information on the Digital Media Innovation program can be found on FSU's website at fitchburgstate.edu.

POLICE

Fitchburg celebrates graduation of 21 new officers

By Matthew Bruun

Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » The fifth Recruit Officer Course of Fitchburg State University's groundbreaking police program graduated from the police academy Friday, Sept. 9, ready to report for duty in municipal police departments across Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

The 21 members of the fifth ROC completed bachelor's degrees in criminal justice and spent the past 17 weeks in the police academy. The majority of the graduates have already been hired by police departments in Massachusetts.

Academy Director Lisa Lane McCarty recounted meeting Officer Sean McCue when he visited campus as a high school student. His dream then was to one day serve his hometown of Fitchburg as a police officer. On Friday, he graduated from the program and has already been hired by the Fitchburg Police Department.

Lane said that was just one example of a "truly remarkable" group of officers, who possess practical police skills as well as compassion and empathy. "If I have done my job, they all possess the knowledge, skills and tactics to be good police officers," she said. "What will make them exceptional, is they know they have the ability to make people a little better than they found them."

Class leader Michael Masterson of Pepperell addressed the families, elected officials and police leaders gathered in Weston Auditorium and recounted the camaraderie that was forged among the 5th ROC members. In fall 2018, 90 recruit officers began the five-year program, and just 21 remained by the academy's conclusion on Friday.

"I can proudly say that I wouldn't trade this group for the world," said Masterson, who thanked the academy staff for being role models and modeling the highest standards. "The lessons taught by all of you will forever be ingrained in how we perform our duties."

Masterson said the new officers should hold their new profession to the highest possible standards. "True perfection is unattainable," he said. "Strive for excellence, not perfection, because the world we live in is not perfect."

Fitchburg State's police program, developed in collaboration with the state's Municipal Police Training Committee, allows graduates to complete — in five years — their bachelor's and master's degrees as well as municipal certification to serve departments in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. It is believed to be the first program of its kind in the nation.

Fitchburg State President Richard Lapidus saluted the fifth ROC

Police

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members for successfully completing a rigorous program amid the singular disruptions of the pandemic.

"Your commitment and your passion for your chosen career is impressive and commendable," said Lapidus, who encouraged the students to continue with their master's degrees. Police reform in Massachusetts will make their advanced degrees highly desired, he said. "The hard work and sacrifice will ultimately pay off."

MPTC Executive Director Robert Ferullo Jr., retired chief of the Woburn Police Department, said graduates of this program are not only well-prepared to serve their communities, they are positioned to be future leaders in the field.

"Welcome to the greatest profession on earth," he said.

Ferullo described the rapid evolution of the profession just in the past few years, and said the graduates are ready to face the challenges ahead if they follow a simple rule: "Do the right thing," he said. "Do what you learned at this phenomenal institution."

Natick Police Chief James Hicks, chairman of the MPTC, has already hired two of the fifth ROC graduates, twins John and Stephen Delehanty. Hicks said the Fitchburg State police program, embedding academic and skills training over four years, is a model that will serve the profes-



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

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sion well.

"Continue to take what you learned over these last four-plus years, because that's going to be the essence of your success," he said.

The fifth ROC graduates include:

Benjamin Ashton of Leominster (hired by the Portsmouth, N.H. Police Department)

Scott Cormier of Ash-

burnham (hired by the Ashburnham Police Department)

John Delehanty of Natick (hired by the Natick Police Department)

Stephen Delehanty of Natick (hired by the Natick Police Department)

David Fors of Lunenburg
Shane Gilman of (hired by the Clinton Police Department)

Emily Grant of Mansfield

Brett Halloran of West Yarmouth

Steven Ingman of Winchendon

Joseph Mancuso of Dracut

Michael Masterson of Pepperell

Toros Matellian of (hired by the Mendon Police Department)

Sean McCue of (hired by the Fitchburg Police Department)

Jake Minear of (hired by the Ayer Police Department)

Travis Morcaldi of (hired by the Fitchburg Police Department)

Michael Sellards of (hired by the Concord Police Department)

Kyle Smith of Lincoln, R.I.

Matthew Smith of (hired by the Sherborn Police Department)

Tristan Straker of Law-

rence (hired by the Georgetown Police Department)

Alexia Surprenant of Dracut (hired by the Ayer Police Department)

George Tibbets III of Lunenburg

Those interested can learn more about the program and Fitchburg State's other undergraduate and graduate level criminal justice programs at fitchburg-state.edu/criminaljustice.



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FITCHBURG STATE

Salvatore to discuss ‘The Future of Storytelling’

By Matthew Bruun

Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » Best-selling author R.A. Salvatore, a two-time graduate of Fitchburg State University, will return to campus this month to discuss “The Future of Storytelling.”

The talk, to be held at



Salvatore

the public.

Salvatore, who com-

pleted degrees in communications and English at Fitchburg State in 1981 and 1991, is a top author of fantasy novels with an ever-expanding and loyal following. Hammond Hall, is free and open to

Thirty-five years ago, Salvatore created the character of Drizzt Do’Urden, the dark elf who has with-

stood the test of time to stand today as an icon in the fantasy genre. With his work in the Forgotten Realms, Crimson Shadow, DemonWars, and other series, Salvatore has sold more than 34 million books worldwide and has appeared on the New York Times bestseller list more

than two dozen times.

The Amelia V. Gallucci-Cirio Library at Fitchburg State is home to Salvatore’s collected papers, including original manuscripts and translations of some of his most celebrated works. Salvatore gave the address at the university’s 115th commencement exercises in 2011

and was awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition of his achievements.

The presentation, which will be livestreamed, is sponsored by the Fitchburg State University Alumni Association. To watch the livestream, visit [youtube.com/watch?v=W8BKk6Oeeyw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8BKk6Oeeyw).

FITCHBURG STATE



COURTESY FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY

Author R.A. Salvatore, right, a two-time alumnus of Fitchburg State University, returned to campus on Sept. 21 to discuss ‘the future of storytelling’ with faculty members Frank Mabee, far left, and J.J. Sylvia IV.

Salvatore talks ‘The Future of Storytelling’

By Matthew Bruun
Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » Best-selling author and two-time Fitchburg State University alumnus R.A. Salvatore returned to campus in September for a day-long residency that included addresses to student groups and a public audience on the topic of “The Future of Storytelling.”

Salvatore, who completed degrees from Fitchburg State in 1981 and 1991, and who delivered the commencement address at the university’s graduation ceremony in 2011, talked about the expanding media footprint of storytelling. With 20 million books sold since he was first published in the 1980s, Salvatore now plies his trade across media platforms, including graphic novels and games.

His newest book, *The Dao of Drizzt*, is a collection of journal entries written in the character of Salvatore’s most popular creation, the dark elf Drizzt Do’Urden.

During Salvatore’s visit to his alma mater on Sept. 21, he spoke about the evolution of storytelling as media has evolved, including his own work in new platforms like video games. He compared

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Salvatore

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his role to that of a dungeon master leading a game of *Dungeons & Dragons*.

“A good dungeon master lets the players tell them where they’re going next; a bad dungeon master hooks his fingers up their nose

and drags them where he needs them to go,” Salvatore said. “When I’m writing books, I am giving you characters through whom you can live vicariously. You will see the world through (their) eyes. When you’re writing for video games, the most important character to the player is the player’s character. Your job is to try to give that player a world

to explore that makes sense, that will allow them to go on grand adventures, and improve their character.”

Salvatore also took questions from the audience. One student asked for guidance on how to present backstory and “lore” into their creation. Salvatore replied that creating characters to whom readers could relate was the key

to successful storytelling, a lesson he learned from the late Robert Cormier, another celebrated writer who hailed from Salvatore’s hometown of Leominster.

“He said, ‘Character is more important than plot,’” Salvatore said, quoting Cormier. “You can have the greatest story ever, but if people don’t care about your characters, you’ll

never put any tension in that story. But if you have a character that people have come to love, give them a hangnail and the reader will say, ‘Ouch.’ And I’ve lived by that in my writing. That’s how I show people my world.”

Salvatore’s visit to campus included meeting with students in several classes, including courses in the

university’s newly-launched major in digital media innovation. The courses in this major allow students to develop a range of new digital skills that span social media, multimedia storytelling, information design, data studies, coding, and more.

To watch, or re-watch the conversation, visit tinyurl.com/4944mrv8.

DISABILITY AWARENESS MONTH

Fitchburg State to host Hugo Treviño

By Matthew Bruun

Fitchburg State University

FITCHBURG » Fitchburg State University's observance of Disability Awareness Month in October will include a keynote presentation by advocate and activist Hugo Treviño.

The online address will be given at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 4. To watch the discussion, go to meet.google.com/ice-fhxd-ie1 or dial in to +1 414-909-6738 and enter PIN: 453 656 159#.

Treviño is a first-generation Mexican-American, born and raised in Chicago, where he works as a disability specialist at the University of Illinois. He has a physical disability called spinal muscular atrophy which requires him to use a power wheelchair.

As a student activist, he advocated for the rights of Latinxs, LGBTQIA, students with disabilities and other marginalized communities. He earned his B.A. at the University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana in 2014 and, later, obtained his Master of Education in International Higher Education from Loyola University Chicago in 2018.

While Treviño's presentation will be virtual, those interested in a shared viewing experience are invited to watch from the Falcon Hub in Hammond Hall.

The presentation is offered in conjunction with the university's observance of LGBTQ+ History Month, which is celebrated throughout October.



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