

# CU student gets his 'dream' job

## Engineering graduate will start at DreamWorks next month

By Alicia Wallace  
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Like some high school graduates, Jacob Melvin loved playing video games.

But it was during his time at the University of Colorado when Melvin set himself apart from the crowd — he "tailor-made" his computer science major and sought out classes related to game design and computer animation.

The efforts paid off for Melvin, who is graduating today — he'd landed a job right out of school at DreamWorks Animation SKG, the movie studio known for such computer-animated hits as "Antz," "Madagascar" and the "Shrek" series.

"I really consider this already to be my dream job," said Melvin, who said he loves the animation and design of movies such as "Shrek" and "Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children."

If Melvin's new job is any indication, this year could be a solid one for new college hires.

Last month, employers raised their hiring projections to 19.2 percent from 17.4 percent, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' Job Outlook 2007. An earlier study from the association said employers expressed the most interest in graduates in the business, engineering and computer-related fields.

Five-and-a-half years ago, Melvin left Connecticut to attend CU's engineering school. It was when he arrived that he realized how much he enjoyed the creative process that goes into animation and programs. There's no specific computer animation major or track, so Melvin chose classes that would help him bolster his passion.

When Melvin attended the National Society of Black Engineers conference and job fair this spring in Columbus, Ohio, he wandered up to a booth and started flipping through a brochure on "Shrek" and animation. The DreamWorks recruiter struck up a conversation and soon thereafter interviewed Melvin.

"I got an actual on-site interview, which is something they told me they don't do," Melvin said. "He actually gave me a job on the spot, which is another thing they don't do."

When Melvin starts at DreamWorks next month, he'll be an assistant for a technical director. From there, he should have some opportunities to work on different elements of design and animation.

Melvin credits his success to the Multicultural Engineering Program at CU, which offers assistance such as help sessions on classes for first-year students, tutors and a familial environment, he said.

"I probably wouldn't have been able to finish," Melvin said.

Anthea Johnson Rooen, co-director for recruitment and outreach for the program, has worked with Melvin during the past four years. The two got to know each other during trips to the National Society for Black Engineers conferences.

Melvin's calm, easy-going nature and his comfort with sharing his knowledge should be a great fit with the culture of the business, Rooen said. She added that she hopes his story will inspire others to look at the many creative possibilities a degree in engineering can provide.

It is also hoped Melvin's actions and accomplishments will inspire others to eke out their own paths during college, she said.

"CU doesn't offer an emphasis in animation; he went out and found those opportunities and sort of tailor-made his computer science experience," Rooen said. "Your degree is totally what you make of it. ... Sometimes the most exciting part of college is being able to create that experience and piecing it together."

*Contact Camera Business Writer Alicia Wallace at 303-473-1332 or [wallacea@dailycamera.com](mailto:wallacea@dailycamera.com).*



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