

THE  
PRESIDENT'S

# viewpoint

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## Arts and Technology ... Applied Humanities

The University of Texas at Dallas' commitment to lead in emerging fields of science and technology is consistent with both our unique history as the brainchild of innovators and our special mission to advance research in the name of economic benefit to Texas.

To do this, we have to be willing to experiment with new ways of thinking about traditional work, including art and literature. Some of our most recent boundary-breaking work involves students and faculty uniting computer science and engineering with the creative arts—a combo some have dubbed “applied humanities.”

Its real name is the Arts and Technology major, a collaborative effort of the School of Arts and Humanities and the Erik Jonsson School of Engineering and Computer Science. Arts and Technology has been an immediate and spectacular success, with more than 500 undergraduate majors and 150 graduate students seeking degrees. We are currently requesting authority to add Texas' first Ph.D. in this field.

Arts and Technology students can construct cohesive study programs that anticipate developments in both fields. Some pursue digital arts and design; others focus on interactive narrative and game creation; many build combinations that anticipate issues and uses that will be associated with digital technology of the future. They all take part in a comprehensive program of education and research in animation, simulated worlds, interactive games and emerging forms of electronic communication.

The Institute for Interactive Arts and Engineering is a research center allied with the program. The institute provides innovative solutions to issues in education, medicine, and national security. Our students and faculty learn and work in technologically sophisticated laboratories—including a state-of-the-art Motion Capture Laboratory that facilitates research in animation applied to everything from entertainment to medicine in a union of science and imagination.



Evidence of the bright present and almost boundless potential of Arts and Technology at UT Dallas is easy to find. Our graduate student David Hanson has gained international recognition for his work in creating robots with realistic human faces, and has formed a company that was recently the recipient of a \$1.5 million Texas Emerging Technology Fund grant. His modest goal, as reported recently by MSNBC: “...to create a compassionate, sociable robot...”

The Dallas organization Women in Film recently honored another graduate student, Mary Benedicto, for her digital animations. Her work and that of other art students is on display in the Visual Arts Building through early November, and vividly displays the interplay of art with digital technology.



Further examples of the vitality and range of this program are exemplified in two other student works: the first, a wonderful interactive learning game that you can find (and play) on the Web site of the Dallas Museum of Art [[www.dallasmuseumofart.org/dig/](http://www.dallasmuseumofart.org/dig/)] and the second, a United States Army project to develop a new approach to strategic planning.

UT Dallas recognizes the importance of creativity to success by combining its unquestioned commitment to science and technology with an examination of their uses in enlivening and expanding what we learn from the arts and humanities. We're succeeding through collaboration, thoughtful risk-taking and—when necessary—coloring outside the lines in the name of innovation.

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FROM THE  
DESK OF  
DAVID E. DANIEL

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