

Backlot

Innovators, Events, Honors

Top 25 Film Schools



The Top 25 Film Schools in America A career behind the camera begins at these elite institutions (even as COVID-19 complicates curricula) By Mia Galuppo and Kirsten Chuba

With both entertainment and higher education deeply impacted by the COVID-19 shutdown, top film schools across the U.S. spent the summer break reassessing established curricula. Many programs are moving classes completely online to comply with local and state health restrictions (student films will mostly be shot on cellphones and star family members and roommates). Colleges, universities and conservatories alike are filling in the gaps in their promised programs with Zoom lectures from top talents like **Taika Waititi** and **Spike Lee**, and are hoping to hold makeup physical production classes over the spring and summer breaks in 2021, assuming the world returns to relative normality by then.

But no matter how they are handling the pandemic, all of *The Hollywood Reporter's* top film programs are committed to ensuring their graduates will be ready for a career in Hollywood — whatever it may look like. Whether it's adding new virtual and augmented reality labs (like the University of California Los Angeles), or offering more courses in Black film theory (USC, Chapman, CalArts and UT Austin are among the schools to do so), these programs aim to evolve with the industry and educate the storytellers and executives who will shape the future of entertainment — even if that future is currently on hold.

1

AMERICAN FILM INSTITUTE

LOS ANGELES

After much turnover in the dean's office, **Susan Ruskin** took over the reins of the famed conservatory just in time for The American Film Institute's 50th anniversary and a major year of awards and endowments. She replaces Richard Gladstein, who stepped in after Jan Schuette left in 2016. The school swept the narrative category at last year's Student Academy Awards, picking up the gold, silver and bronze honors, and had a similar showing at the DGA Student



Ruskin

From left: Dodge Hall, Columbia University; Warner Bros. Building at AFI; UCLA's Royce Hall.

Awards, winning three of its four eligible categories. Alums and industry professionals note that the grad-student-focused conservatory guarantees students the opportunity to make their own films, with plenty of support. Alum **Max Barbakow**, whose Sundance feature *Palm Springs* sold to Neon/Hulu for a record-setting sum in Park City, says the conservatory excels at “empowering young filmmakers to make stuff,” adding that “the opportunity to dive in and make three substantial short films in my first year was undoubtedly the boon of the AFI experience.”

Its strong alumni network includes veteran helmer **Mimi Leder** and *Midsommar* director **Ari Aster**, and, thanks to a \$3 million gift from trustee emeritus **Lawrence Herbert**, the school plans to boost alums with a new physical Alumni Center and a digital portal, called AFI Backlot, designed to expand the center’s global reach to alumni. Even by oft-inflated film school standards, AFI offers an expensive education but hopes to continue to offset some tuition and production costs with a new \$15,000 Bridges/Larson Production Award and the T.R. Paul Family Foundation Scholarship, and has seen an overall increase in gifts to its general scholarship fund, including installments from **Bob Daly**, **Alan Horn** and **David Geffen**.

TUITION \$63,575 TO \$65,800 **GRAD ALUMNI** David Lynch, Ari Aster, Julie Dash

2 USC
LOS ANGELES
While most film schools focus on the creative and technical side of filmmaking, few cater to students looking to become execs or producers. USC’s renowned School of Cinematic Arts, which encompasses roughly 1,000 undergraduates and 700 grads, focuses on both disciplines, with a track record to prove it. SCA boasts both Marvel movie director **Ryan Coogler** and head of Marvel Studios **Kevin Feige** as alums. In the last school year, SCA established the John H. Mitchell Endowment for the Business of Entertainment chair — William Morris agency

THE THR RANKINGS: HOW IT’S DONE

First the magazine consults with a variety of educators, industry professionals, grads, current students and other experts to hear what insiders are saying. Then a team of reporters reaches out to campuses across the country to discover what’s new since last year’s rankings. All that reporting is then triangulated with other factors — student awards, alumni achievement, killer (or not) facilities — to determine the final rankings. In the interest of fairness, *THR* did not weigh how the schools on this list are adapting curricula to the COVID-19 crisis because, at time of publication, the situation remains fluid.

alum **Bonnie Chi** is the inaugural holder — and the school’s Peter Stark producing program celebrated its 40th anniversary with past grads who include UTA co-president **David Kramer**. “Rely on the talent and insights of your peers, the people you trust and respect,” says **Nahnatchka Khan**, the creative force behind *Fresh Off the Boat* and *Always Be My*



Khan

Maybe, on the lessons she learned at SCA. “Keep in close contact with them, keep it real, and you will all lift each other up and hit new heights together.” As Hollywood tries to uproot entrenched systems of racism and sexism, the school has made a new class a requirement for all students: Visions of Diversity in the Cinematic Arts, which looks at cinema and television history through the lenses of equality and inclusion.

TUITION \$59,260 **UNDERGRADUATE**; \$39,900 **GRAD**

ALUMNI Robert Zemeckis, Doug Liman, Shonda Rhimes

3 NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK
After an online spring semester of Zoom calls with auteurs like **Taika Waititi** and **Darren Aronofsky**, New York University students will partially return to campus this fall with a hybrid approach, and international and L.A. students will have the option to study at one of its global network of campuses. In addition to welcoming Oscar-winning producer **Donna Gigliotti** (*Shakespeare in Love*) and nominated sound mixer **Tod Maitland** (*Joker*) to its graduate school faculty, its undergrad program has added classes in storytelling with a modern twist (“Aristotle to Beyoncé and

15 TOP INTERNATIONAL FILM SCHOOLS

From a Quarantine Stories film competition to on-set pod teams, colleges around the globe have quickly adapted to the COVID-19 crisis

AUSTRALIAN FILM, TELEVISION AND RADIO SCHOOL
This Sydney-based school has turned out an array of Oscar winners — writer-director **Jane Campion** (*The Piano*), **David White** (sound editing for *Mad Max: Fury Road*) and **Margaret Sixel** (editing *Mad Max: Fury Road*). As of August, most student activity had returned to campus, but the university was assessing health and safety conditions on a weekly basis in tandem with the Australian government.

BEIJING FILM ACADEMY
The incoming 2020 students at the Beijing Film Academy, China’s most elite moviemaking institution, were required to submit to online admissions interviews

this spring — including virtual auditions for coveted spots in the acting department — because of the pandemic. But thanks to China’s highly effective domestic containment of the virus, classes will be held in person this fall.

CENTRO DE CAPACITACIÓN CINEMATOGRAFICA
All classes have shifted online at Mexico’s premiere film school, founded in 1975. As part of its virtual curriculum, the school is uploading films on the Mexican Film Institute’s streaming platform as well as its own social media channels, with many new titles accessible for free.

CENTRO SPERIMENTALE DI CINEMATOGRAFIA
Italy’s National School of Cinema — offering

courses across all film disciplines for anyone fluent in Italian — used the COVID-19 lockdown to start a program of distance learning for all its courses, which it claims has enhanced the level of teacher-pupil interaction.

ECAM
While 2020 might not have been the greatest year for the Madrid school to celebrate its 25th anniversary, it did launch three master’s degree programs (executive production, postproduction coordination and TV script writing). During the coronavirus crisis, ECAM shifted its theoretical classes online and, once the lockdown was lifted, adapted its facilities so students could complete their shoots and practical exercises in safety.



HOCHSCHULE FÜR FILM AND FERNSEHEN
Germany has not yet reopened its universities for regular classes, but the country’s No. 1 film school — whose alumni include the likes of **Wim Wenders**, **Roland Emmerich** and *Dark* director **Baran bo Odar** — has moved its courses online and is offering a combination of digital and in-person instruction.

LA FÉMIS
The French state film school was forced to close its Paris doors in early March during the COVID-19 lockdown. But its 11 departments adapted their training, with numerous online talks from various cinematographers, sound engineers and editors,

From top: A production studio at the Australian Film, Television and Radio School; a sound editing suite at Germany’s Hochschule für Film und Fernsehen.

alongside top directors such as **Michael Haneke** and **Damien Chazelle**.

LODZ FILM SCHOOL
Poland has weathered the COVID-19 crisis better than most and has begun reopening public institutions, including schools and universities, though the government has said it will shut things down again if infections spike.

LONDON FILM SCHOOL
The central London school this year saw its alumni land eight BAFTA TV Craft Award nominations (including for *The End of the F***ing World* showrunner **Jonathan Entwistle**). Adjusting to the lockdown, it moved its 66 staff off site and shifted to remote learning, brought its M.A. Filmmaking curriculum forward to avoid disruption and, ahead of students’ return to class, refitted its premises to support social distancing.

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL
The U.K.’s most famous film and TV college — whose alumni range from Oscar-winning industry veterans such as **Roger Deakins** to emerging stars like 1917 scribe **Krysty Wilson-Cairns** — expanded its offerings in 2020 with the addition of both casting and postproduction supervision courses. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the school offered almost daily Zoom master classes with the likes of **Judd Apatow**, **Elisabeth Moss**, **Steve McQueen** and **David Fincher**.

NATIONAL FILM SCHOOL OF DENMARK
One of the first countries to emerge from lockdown, Denmark has returned to near normality, and classes at its acclaimed national film school — whose alumni include **Susanne Bier**, **Lars von Trier** and **Thomas Vinterberg**

— are going ahead under new regulations for hygienic conditions. The university is notoriously selective. Besides fluency in Danish, all applicants must pass an entrance test including practical exercises and interviews before being admitted.

RTA SCHOOL OF MEDIA AT RYERSON UNIVERSITY
Amid the pandemic, Toronto’s Ryerson has embraced a hybrid online and in-person format, with social distancing and pod teams during location shoots.

SAE INSTITUTE
Swiss universities have returned to semi-normality with reduced class sizes, social distancing and new hygiene regulations in place. Zurich’s SAE — part of a network of institutes that spans 26 countries — will again offer instruction in the tech side of filmmaking, with

18-month and two-year bachelor’s programs.

SAM SPIEGEL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL
The Jerusalem school briefly went online-only during the first wave of COVID-19 in March and April, but new director **Dana Blankstein-Cohen** was able to restart classes and finish the semester as normal. The school even turned lockdown to its advantage with a Quarantine Stories competition that saw winners receive grants to turn their shut-in tales into short films.

VANCOUVER FILM SCHOOL
Since the pandemic, VFS industry programs have gone online. Students working remotely will return to in-person courses as soon as government safety guidelines permit it. During the lockdown, VFS has delivered equipment to student homes to allow remote production.

Beyond”) and bulked up on its state-of-the-art equipment with new Alexa Mini cameras. Spike Lee, who is a professor at the school, also established a production fund that gives annual grants to student filmmakers, and the newly launched Black Family Film Prize awards \$150,000 to grad students whose film projects exemplify innovation in story, style and tone. Says *Watchmen* producer **Tiffany Chung**: “My years at NYU have accompanied me beyond graduation as I continue to grow and be inspired by my peers, both personally and professionally, in the collaborative world of storytelling.”

TUITION \$60,282 **UNDERGRAD**; \$65,926 **GRAD**
ALUMNI Martin Scorsese, Damon Lindelof, Nia DaCosta
DIRECTOR, *CANDYMAN*

4 COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
NEW YORK
The Ivy League MFA program, which will start this fall with a mix of online and in-person classes, will also return

with a new commitment to diversity, inclusion and safe-space initiatives, focusing on the ways in which racism, privilege and inequity impact its community through facilitated discussion workshops. With programs for screenwriting-directing, creative producing and a growing emphasis on the production side, Columbia has been the starting ground for star alumni like Walt Disney Animation chief creative officer and *Frozen* writer-director **Jennifer Lee**, who says she chose the school “because it takes a holistic approach — you write, direct, edit, act and produce before specializing. I gained skills to complete every script I could imagine and learned the power of rewriting. In directing, emotion and character drove every shot and frame; in producing, I found the power of collaboration — it truly was everything I dreamt of and more.”

TUITION \$62,912 **GRAD**
ALUMNI Kathryn Bigelow, Simon Kinberg, James Mangold

5 UCLA
LOS ANGELES
Amid the box office shutdown, UCLA alum **Gina Prince-Bythewood** entertained the self-isolating masses with her Netflix feature *The Old Guard*, which was viewed by 72 million subscribers in its first four weeks, according to the streamer. At 19, the filmmaker was at first rejected from the school but wrote a letter to its then-head, **Teri Schwartz**. “Two days later, she called me and told me she read my letter and I was in,” says Prince-Bythewood. “She literally changed the trajectory of my life.” The school will educate the next generation of Prince-Bythewoods with the new Forever Sunny Directing Scholarship, which provides the female recipient with support for four years to cover tuition and fees, as well as up to \$50,000 to cover production costs on the recipient’s thesis film. The Department of Film, Television and Digital Media also boasts diversity among its ranks, with the majority of both the student

body (60 percent) and faculty (65 percent) being nonwhite. While the new school year begins under the leadership of interim dean **Brian Kite**, UCLA is looking to fill its top administrative spot, after Schwartz stepped down as dean a year ago.
TUITION \$27,712 **UNDERGRAD**, **IN-STATE**; \$57,466 **UNDERGRAD**, **OUT-OF-STATE**; \$17,486 **GRAD**, **IN-STATE**; \$32,588 **GRAD**, **OUT-OF-STATE**
ALUMNI Frank Marshall, Ava DuVernay, Marielle Heller

6 CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY
ORANGE, CALIFORNIA
Actively recruiting students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, Chapman’s Dodge College of Film and Media Arts is launching a scholarship fund that will provide up to 10 full scholarships per year for underrepresented young men and women from the local community. Additionally, a mentorship program is set to launch in 2021 that will see the film school partner with L.A. and Orange County high schools



Netflix’s Ted Sarandos delivered the keynote address at Chapman University in 2015.

and the nonprofit College Access Partnership. Faculty additions include dean **Stephen Galloway** (former *THR* executive editor), as well as nine Black female professors who will teach across the school’s curriculum, which includes such new offerings as Black Cinema and Fake News. **Justin Simien** (*Dear White People*) says an influential course he took as a student was Acting for Non-Actors. “[Instructor] **Joel [Moffett]** spent the first few classes teaching us why *Star Wars* was actually about self-doubt

and how to similarly drill down to the theme of any story,” says Simien, who adds: “We eventually did scene work, but only after understanding that what we were actually learning was how to make creative choices driven by what we felt the story was ultimately about.”

TUITION \$56,830 **UNDERGRAD**; \$44,240 TO \$56,830 **GRAD**
ALUMNI Matt and Ross Duffer
STRANGER THINGS, **Carlos López Estrada** *BLINDSPOTTING*

7 LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY
LOS ANGELES
As construction continues on its Howard B. Fitzpatrick Pavilion, which will house teaching spaces, an AR/VR area and a state-of-the-art theater, LMU also has formally created five specializations in its MFA in film and television program: creative producing, directing fiction, directing nonfiction, cinematography and editing (plans to launch a new International Documentary minor based in Germany were

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put on hold, however). Classes are scheduled to return entirely online this fall, including a cross-disciplinary elective pairing animation students with screenwriting students and English majors to encourage side-by-side development of story ideas. Plus, with nine new full-time faculty hires (including four people of color), the expansion under new dean **Peggy Rajski** continues. Says **Brian Helgeland**, Oscar-winning writer of *L.A. Confidential*: “I learned how to write at LMU — first of all, by having it expected of me, and secondly, by having instructors with real industry writing experience. It was a film school that took the mystery out of film and replaced it with the practical, the craft. That’s how I learned.”

TUITION \$52,553 UNDERGRAD; \$20,775 TO \$33,240 GRAD
ALUMNI **Francis Lawrence** *THE HUNGER GAMES*, **Jim Toth** HEAD OF CONTENT ACQUISITIONS AT QUIBI, **Patricia Whitcher** CAPTAIN MARVEL PRODUCER

8 CALARTS VALENCIA, CALIFORNIA
As expected with a school that was founded by Walt Disney, CalArts leads in animation education. Since the creation of the best animated feature Oscar category in 2001, 12 of the 19 winning films were directed by CalArts alums. Grad **Bruce Wayne Smith** co-directed the recent Oscar-winning short *Hair Love*; the school is now investing in new classes about animation and identity like Afro-Centric Character Design in its Character Animation Program. Looking outside the scope of traditional animation, CalArts has also brought on Pulitzer winner

and alum **Ann Telnaes** to teach Commentary Through Cartoons. **TUITION** \$52,850 UNDERGRAD; \$52,850 GRAD
ALUMNI **Tim Burton**, **Brad Bird**, **Kirby Dick** *THE HUNTING GROUND*

9 EMERSON COLLEGE BOSTON
Nestled in picturesque Boston’s Back Bay, the liberal arts college has a globe-spanning footprint with the one-year-old Paris College of Art film program as well as the well-established 107,000-square-foot L.A. outpost on Sunset Boulevard. The Beantown campus, which serves most of the 1,700 undergrad and grad visual and media arts students, features an Emerging Media Lab that includes AR and VR suites as well as 3D modeling and animation. On the diversity front, the program has a nearly 50-50 male-female student ratio, with 24.2 percent of the Visual & Media Arts student body being persons of color (3.5 percent are Black), according to fall 2019 data. In 2018, Emerson announced the Norman Lear Scholarship Fund, which provides a

four-year scholarship to students from underrepresented and underserved backgrounds. The first recipient, **Worlanyo Mensah** (2023), met Lear at his home in Los Angeles in September. Faculty comprises 11 percent persons of color, with 4 percent being Black (numbers are expected to increase for the 2020 academic year but are not complete by press time). Perhaps the biggest draw for prospective students is the active Emerson-Hollywood network. “I’ve hired Emerson interns at every job I’ve ever been at,” says MGM film group president **Pam Abdy**. “I’m just a real advocate for the school.” **TUITION** \$50,240 UNDERGRAD; \$1,296 GRAD, PER CREDIT



Abdy

ALUMNI **Jay Leno**, **Richard LaGravenese**, **Adele Lim** SCREENWRITER, *CRAZY RICH ASIANS*

10 UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS WINSTON-SALEM
The alma mater of **Danny McBride**, **David Gordon Green** and **Jody Hill** — who have collaborated on hits like *Vice Principals* and *Eastbound & Down* — UNCSA is a small creative and performing arts conservatory that alum **Vera Herbert**, a co-executive producer on *This Is Us*, says “emulates a Hollywood studio system in producing student films, and from my first year I learned how to pitch, develop, take notes, and work with both my peers and the faculty to bring a project to fruition — and experience all the ups and downs that come with that.” With training in drama, film, dance, music, design and production, and new offerings of motion-hand-face-capture, immersive VFX entertainment and effects technologies, the school, which plans to return with hybrid classes, is on the cutting edge of technology, launching an immersive storytelling residency in its technology lab last fall. Last year also marked UNCSA’s first freshman filmmaking school class that was predominantly female, with a focus on creating a pipeline of women into the entertainment industry. **TUITION** \$6,497 UNDERGRAD, IN-STATE; \$23,040 UNDERGRAD, OUT-OF-STATE; \$9,169 GRAD, IN-STATE; \$23,203 GRAD, OUT-OF-STATE
ALUMNI DIRECTORS **Brett Haley** *HEARTS BEAT LOUD*, **Jeff Nichols** *LOVING*

11 UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AUSTIN
Between its facilities (including a motion-capture studio and one of the largest greenscreens outside Hollywood), its TV writers room workshop class (which culminates in a student-written series shopped to major networks) and an advanced producing class taught by alum **Matthew McConaughey**, UT has taken innovative approaches to film education. “RTF (Radio-Television-Film) helped me find my voice,” says WME partner and Advisory Council member



Kevin Shivers, who also cites the recent hires of **Ileana Sosa**, **Alex Rivera**, **Sarah Seulki Oh** and **Adrien Sebro** as new additions “to a talented and diverse faculty to create an empowering and creative experience.” **TUITION** \$10,946 UNDERGRAD, IN-STATE; \$38,748 UNDERGRAD, OUT-OF-STATE; \$9,996 TO \$10,882 GRAD, IN-STATE; \$18,816 TO \$20,310 GRAD, OUT-OF-STATE
ALUMNI **Wes Anderson**, **Renée Zellweger**, **Mark** and **Jay Duplass**

12 WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT
In addition to its new 16,000-square-foot expansion of its Center for Film Studies, the past year saw the launch of the Wesleyan Documentary Project, an initiative to teach, support and produce nonfiction film and video to students graduating into an industry that is experiencing a nonfiction boom. Doc producer **Sadia Shepard** (*The September Issue*) will be joining the faculty this fall, while recent classes included Oscilloscope co-founder **David Laub** teaching “The Art and Business of Contemporary Film” and *New York Times* critic **A.O. Scott** tackling Italian Cinema.

TUITION \$69,704 TO \$71,764 UNDERGRAD
ALUMNI **Joss Whedon**, **Matthew Weiner**, **Lin-Manuel Miranda**

13 STANFORD UNIVERSITY PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA
While the Palo Alto university offers an expanding film and media studies major — with lessons on film language, genre, video production and visual and narrative structures — it is known

Construction continues on LMU’s Howard B. Fitzpatrick Pavilion, which will house teaching spaces, an AR/VR area and a state-of-the-art theater.

for its exclusive MFA in documentary film and video production program, which is capped at eight students annually. In their second year of the program, students produce a 15- to 20-minute thesis film on a pressing social issue, some of which have gone on to screen at Sundance, SXSW and Tribeca. The school is on track to return for some in-person classes this year and, after voicing support for the Black Lives Matter movement, says actionable plans for justice and equality issues are forthcoming. **TUITION** \$55,473 UNDERGRAD; \$54,315 GRAD
ALUMNI **Lisa Joy** *WESTWORLD* CO-CREATOR, **Sarah Naftalis** WRITER, *FX’S WHAT WE DO IN THE SHADOWS*, **Ramona Diaz** *IMELDA*

14 COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO
Columbia College will see changes to its faculty with filmmaker **Thelma Vickroy** starting as a new chair and cinematographer **Robert Edgecomb** joining as an assistant professor of photography. The school will also launch its new BA in Film and Television program — which encourages cross-pollination between the two mediums — while offering online, face-to-face and hybrid classes, with assignments redesigned to incorporate social distancing, smaller crews and remote production. Says alum **Carl Seaton** (*Batwoman*, *Chicago PD*): “I constantly run into people in different places who go, ‘I went to Columbia,’ and it’s a constant thread. We are here to work,

we’re striving for excellence.” **TUITION** \$27,142 TUITION ONLY
ALUMNI **Lena Waithe**, **George Tillman Jr.**, **Christian Sprengle** CINEMATOGRAPHER, ATLANTA

15 BOSTON UNIVERSITY BOSTON
This East Coast institution has trained Hollywood’s old guard, like **Jim Gianopulos**, as well as creatives shaking up the industry, like *Uncut Gems* helmers **Josh** and **Benny Safdie**. While the school is situated far from entertainment hubs, it re-creates the business of content creation on campus with courses like Hothouse Productions, a student-run production banner that shoots PSAs and short documentaries for local nonprofits and TV stations. The school also boasts a revamped MFA in screenwriting, which will see students take a fourth semester in Los Angeles. **TUITION** \$56,854 UNDERGRAD; \$57,686 GRAD
ALUMNI **Jennifer Getzinger** DIRECTOR, *WESTWORLD*, **Bonnie Hammer**, **Bonnie Arnold**

16 SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
After launching a new BFA film curriculum last year offering hands-on experience starting freshman year, Syracuse’s College of Visual and Performing Arts has added essay film, script analysis and sci-fi courses, along with a new film history survey class that will take an anti-sexist, anti-racist and international approach to cinema history from the 1960s to today. With classes planned for in-person and hybrid instruction, its film program, the Newhouse School (Syracuse divides up performing arts and film disciplines), will continue to expand its offerings in TV, radio, podcasting, VFX, production design and entrepreneurship with an emphasis on diversity, inclusion and equity. Pixar president **Jim Morris** credits the animation courses he took at Syracuse for setting him on his path: “The technology then was stone age compared to what we do at Pixar now, but the soul of creating the illusion of life has never changed.”

Syracuse University’s S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications

TUITION \$54,270 UNDERGRAD; \$30,294 GRAD
ALUMNI **Dan Silver** DISNEY+, **Danny Zuker**, **Mike Lasker** SONY VFX SUPERVISOR

17 ITHACA COLLEGE NEW YORK
At the Roy H. Park School of Communications, student-run production company Park Productions has been delivering client-driven materials like local TV ads and PSAs for a half-decade, allowing students to put their production and story skills to work. Newer additions at the school include an MBA program in Entertainment and Media Management and a collaboration with Ithaca’s business school, as well as West African filmmaker **Idrissou Mora-Kpai** joining the faculty. Says *One Day at a Time* writer and executive producer **Mike Royce**: “Ithaca taught me that, while it was fine to idolize **Spielberg**, it was even better to graduate knowing how to be me.” **TUITION** \$46,610 UNDERGRAD; STARTING AT \$10,500 GRAD
ALUMNI **David Boreanaz**, **Liz Tigelaar** SHOWRUNNER, *LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE*

18 ARTCENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN PASADENA
This Pasadena-based program, which has a three-track focus on directing, editing and cinematography, is known for educating blockbuster helmers like **Zach Snyder** and **Michael Bay**, but the film school offers more than just technical wizardry by taking advantage of ArtCenter’s robust advertising and design programs. A cross-curriculum class, Media Maker’s Lab, sees students create a semester-long advertising agency, taking a note from alum Bay, who got his start directing commercials before graduating to giant robots. “It was those courses that enabled me to develop my own personal style and point of

view,” says Snyder, who is also a board of trustees member, of his BFA production classes. “The most important lesson I learned was to value your own unique perspective.” **TUITION** \$45,776 UNDERGRAD; \$48,380 GRAD
ALUMNI **Don Burgess** CINEMATOGRAPHER, *AQUAMAN*, **Ericson Core** DIRECTOR, *TOGO*, **Tarsem Singh** DIRECTOR, *THE FALL*

19 SAN FRANCISCO STATE SAN FRANCISCO
SF State was founded in the ’60s with an emphasis on political activism and experimental filmmaking, an ethos that can be seen in its contemporary coursework, with classes like Experimental Documentary. The program, which has been under the direction of noted film scholar **Celine Parreñas Shimizu** for a year, outlines an 18-point statement of values surrounding “diversity, equity and inclusion” (point 18 reads: “Down with censorship!”). The school recently named endowed chairs in both African American Cinema and Social Justice Fiction filmmaking — **Artel Great** and **Mayuran Tiruchelvam**, respectively. **TUITION** \$7,440 UNDERGRAD; \$8,704 GRAD
ALUMNI **Annette Bening**, **Lisa Cholodenko**, **Steven Zaillian**

20 FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA
Amid the renewed call for diversity and Black representation, Florida State established a Diverse Voices in Cinema grant this year for underrepresented film school alumni who seek to overcome injustice through cinematic storytelling. It will include a \$10,000 production grant, a full production equipment package, access to postproduction facilities, distribution consultation and a social media campaign. The university has also set up an



DEPAUL: COURTESY OF SUBJECT LMU; CORAL: KORNZUM/ALTCOURTESY OF SUBJECT SYRACUSE; JOHN GREIMAL/GETTY IMAGES; FILM STUDENTS: CLAREND; ADRIEN SEBRO: ABBY RANDY SHROPSHIRE/GETTY IMAGES

FSU FILM

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS

film.fsu.edu

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Equality Scholarship to support first-year students of color, as well as faculty and staff workshop initiatives and annual diversity events. Though classes are set to resume fully in person this fall, FSU will introduce a Real Solutions for Real-Time Filmmaking curriculum that teaches students how to navigate virtual filmmaking with a focus on the innovative technology for previsualization of animated and live-action films. “At the end of the day, it’s the stories that matter, and FSU is empowering filmmakers to tell the stories they want to tell,” says *Race to Witch Mountain* writer **Matt Lopez** of his experience at the college, which counts *Moonlight* helmer **Barry Jenkins** as its star pupil.

21 **RINGLING COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN**
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

Accounting for Hollywood’s ever-evolving definition of content, Ringling has introduced a new emphasis under its BFA film program: Branded Entertainment. The curriculum will focus on creating more advertorial content as a way to provide a faster track to the director’s chair than the traditional film or television career path. Last year, the Florida school finished construction on its 36,000-square-foot Studio Labs complex, which includes five soundstages, multiple edit suites, dubbing and Foley stages, and a color-correct theater, along with traditional classrooms. And with the complex comes the likes of **Beau Bridges**, **Kevin Smith** and

Smith

Dylan McDermott as visiting filmmakers, which have long been part of the program. “Two big experiences were getting to be in the edit room with **Werner Herzog** and taking a lighting workshop with [*Inception* cinematographer] **Wally Pfister**,” says alum **Jason Letkiewicz**, who is the senior writer and producer on this year’s Emmys broadcast. “Herzog changed the way I think about storytelling, and Wally opened my eyes to so many new possibilities on set.”

22 **RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN**
PROVIDENCE

As one of the premier fine art schools in the country, this Providence mainstay boasts an avant-garde student body spanning all mediums (think **David Byrne**, who attended in the early ’70s). The 2019-20 student body reflects the college’s commitment to diversity, with 33 percent domestic students of color, including 5 percent Black (the 37 percent international students are not broken out by race). Likewise, 19 percent of the domestic faculty is of color, while 5 percent is Black (7 percent hail from abroad). Although many colleges are forgoing face-to-face instruction due to COVID-19, RISD plans to keep its upcoming core studio and shop-based courses in person with expanded spaces to ensure safe social distancing (courses that don’t require hands-on technique will be offered remotely or in a hybrid version). That’s a huge plus for the program, whose graduates have excelled in the field of animation in recent years.

23 **SAVANNAH COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN**
SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

While SCAD’s signature event, the annual Savannah Film Festival — with its big-name attendees and awards circuit influence — is on hiatus because of the pandemic, the school will continue (largely online) with a new curriculum, led by its Collaborative Experiences in the School of Entertainment Arts class, where students from different film specializations work together start-to-finish on a piece of content. “The time I spent in Savannah fully immersed in a creative community and constantly making stuff was probably the most valuable experience in my life,” says producer **Jett Steiger** (*Super Dark Times*). “Filmmaking is a team sport, and the only way you can really learn how to do it is to find a group of people you trust and go make something — SCAD gave me that opportunity over and over again.” Those opportunities will be expanded more than ever this year after SCAD recently created 15 endowed scholarships for incoming and current Black students.

24 **DEPAUL UNIVERSITY**
CHICAGO

While it’s not in L.A. or NYC, DePaul’s Chicago campus offers entry into another of the nation’s entertainment hubs: If screenwriting and production students want to get serious about comedy, the school offers a degree

Facilities at Cal State Northridge include film and television soundstages, postproduction and mixing suites, a new media lab, and a digital visual effects and animation suite.

25 **CAL STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHBRIDGE**
LOS ANGELES

This state school offers a cost-effective education that has the added value of being Los Angeles-adjacent. And thanks to a grant from the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the department of cinema and television is finishing a three-year cycle of updating production facilities, which includes new camera, sound and lighting equipment. Curriculum additions include a dedicated documentary production program, while extracurricular adds include a gallery devoted to the art of film posters, an upgraded script library and a public screening series that centers on 21st century LGBTQ films and rock ’n’ roll fare.

26 **NEW YORK FILM ACADEMY**
NEW YORK, N.Y.

With plans to return for hybrid classes at its New York, L.A. and South Beach Miami campuses, NYFA continues its hands-on approach in which first-year students write, direct, shoot and edit eight short films each and work with a crew of 28 more.

27 **THE NEW SCHOOL**
NEW YORK, N.Y.

The school, which has moved all its fall courses online, offers a film production minor that gives hands-on lessons in how to create a short film through planning, production and editing, and teaches use of cameras, film equipment, recording techniques and post-production software.

28 **PACE UNIVERSITY**
NEW YORK, N.Y.

Pace’s undergraduate film program focuses on cinema in the digital era, with courses — which will be a mix of online, in-person and hybrid this fall — on cinematography, multiplatform editing and lighting for HD.

29 **PRATT INSTITUTE**
NEW YORK, N.Y.

The past year has seen Pratt continue to expand, with growing VR coursework, serialized storytelling offerings and a new class centered on the work of *Killer of Sheep* director **Charles Burnett** (culminating in a Q&A with the filmmaker).

30 **LOS ANGELES FILM SCHOOL**
LOS ANGELES

A growing alumni network includes **Kyle Newacheck**, who was behind one of the Netflix’s most popular films of 2019, **Adam Sandler’s** *Murder Mystery*, and **Hannah Lux Davis**, the go-to music video director for **Ariana Grande**.

31 **PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY**
MALIBU, CALIF.

The film studies program in Malibu offers majors and minors, as well as an MFA in Writing for Screen and Television. An extensive film theory catalog includes several classes on the intersection of religion and media (the school is affiliated with the Church of Christ).

32 **HUSSIAN COLLEGE LOS ANGELES**
LOS ANGELES

Formerly known as Studio School, Hussian offers BFA programs in film and digital content, as well as commercial dance, acting and contemporary musical theater and film.

33 **LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE**
LOS ANGELES

Both certificate and associate’s degree programs are offered at the public community college, which can provide an inexpensive (in-state tuition is \$1,220) jumping-off point for specific entertainment vocations like editing and cinematography. — M.G. AND K.C.

CSUN: COURTESY OF SUBJECT; ACADEMY: GLENISARALAMY; STOCK PHOTO: CAMERA; STUDENT: ADOBE STOCK; SMITH: STEVE GRANTZ/WIREIMAGE

10 ALTERNATIVES IN N.Y. AND L.A.

If the elite schools are off-limits, these robust programs offer plenty of hands-on training in a range of disciplines

NEW YORK
CITY COLLEGE OF NEW YORK
Founded in 1941 as the first film program in the U.S., City College offers a BFA in film and video (the only public NYC institution to do so) as well as MFA tracks in fiction and documentary, where students direct their own thesis projects and serve as cinematographer, editor or producer on another thesis production.

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LOS ANGELES
CAL STATE LOS ANGELES
Part of the state’s expansive public university system, Cal State L.A. recently offered a 15-week educational program, Women Making Film, a collaboration between the school and Canon, with special support from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

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New York Film Academy

I am a SCAD GRAD

DeRon Horton

B.F.A., performing arts, 2015

DeRon shines on the small screen in *American Vandal*, *American Horror Story: 1984*, and *Dear White People*.

Step into the spotlight.
scad.edu/film-tv

SCAD