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The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences and The Guildhall at Southern Methodist University Announce Second Academy Scholar

Prestigious Scholarship Awards Recipient with \$10,000

CALABASAS, Calif. – June 24, 2010 – The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences (AIAS) and The Guildhall at Southern Methodist University (SMU) announced today Victoria Smith, a graduate student at SMU, as this year’s Academy Scholar and recipient of a \$10,000 scholarship award. This marks the second year for the biannual scholarship that recognizes students who exemplify the AIAS’ commitment to advancing the interactive entertainment industry.

“SMU and AIAS share a vision to cultivate creative talent and a new generation of industry leaders,” said Dr. Peter Raad, founder and executive director, The Guildhall at SMU. “We are thrilled for Victoria, who truly represents the spirit behind the Academy Scholar.”

Smith graduated from Rice University with a bachelor’s degree in science in Electrical Engineering and a bachelor’s degree in arts in French Studies. Following her graduation, she worked at Hewlett-Packard as an engineer for several years. She then volunteered as a lay missionary in Cameroon teaching math, physics and basic computer science to junior high and high school students. Upon her return to the United States, Smith taught high school algebra and geometry. It was during her tenure as an instructor that she decided to pursue an education in game development from The Guildhall at SMU.

“My experience teaching has shown me that our educational materials are so outdated in relation to the current state of our advanced social and digital technology,” said Smith. “Students who struggle with algebra suddenly are able to perform an enormous amount of math craft in games like World of Warcraft without even realizing it. My goal is to create games that tie in what students are learning in schools with what they are already performing in games to provide a successful learning vehicle for future success.”

Smith will graduate in 2011 and is hoping to produce educational games about technology that work in and out of the classroom to help students succeed in the long term.

A combined panel of AIAS and SMU review board members evaluates each SMU admission portfolio. The top individuals with the highest rankings are invited to submit an essay for consideration to win the coveted scholarship.

“The AIAS is honored to have Victoria as this year’s Academy Scholar,” said Joseph Olin, president, Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences. “Her commitment to tapping into the power of video games as an educational tool is something that we feel could be a great contribution to the future design of video games. This has potential to really reshape learning and education, and we’re looking forward to seeing what Victoria has in store for us in the future.”

About the Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences

The Academy of Interactive Arts & Sciences (AIAS) was founded in 1996 as a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to promote, advance and recognize common interests and outstanding achievements in the interactive arts and sciences. The Academy conducts its annual awards show, the Interactive Achievement Awards, to promote and acknowledge exceptional accomplishments in the field. To further enhance awareness of the Academy’s vision, the organization created the D.I.C.E. (Design, Innovate, Communicate, Entertain) Summit in 2002, a once yearly conference dedicated to exploring approaches to the creative process and artistic expression as they uniquely apply to the development of interactive entertainment. With the success of D.I.C.E., the Academy took the exclusive event to Singapore in September 2009 to launch the first ever D.I.C.E. Summit Asia. With more than 24,000 members, including Electronic Arts, Microsoft, Sony, Nintendo, Ubisoft, THQ, Day One Studios, Epic Games and Insomniac Games, The Academy is the leading advocate of video games worldwide. More information can be found at <http://www.interactive.org> and <http://www.dicesummit.org>.

About The Guildhall at SMU

The Guildhall at Southern Methodist University is the premier graduate video game education program in the US. Many of the school’s founders are industry icons, and classes are taught by industry veterans. In seven years, the program has graduated over 350 students and alums have worked at more than 100 video game studios around the world, with several graduates now serving in leadership positions. SMU offers both a Master’s degree and a graduate Professional Certificate of Interactive Technology in Digital Game Development, with specializations in art creation, level design, and software development. For more information, visit <http://guildhall.smu.edu>

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