

# Elizabeth Swensen

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## EDUCATION

M.F.A., University of Southern California, May 2011. Interactive Media.

B.A., Willamette University, May 2008. Classics.

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

Game production in educational contexts, game-based learning, game design education, recombinant narrative, metacognitive development outcomes in games.

## EXPERIENCE

2014-present: Instructor, Interactive Media and Games Division, School of Cinematic Arts, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

2011-present: Research Associate, Game Innovation Lab, Interactive Media and Games Division, School of Cinematic Arts, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

2014-2015: Director of Production, Co-Founder, FutureBound, Inc. Torrance, CA.

2010-2011: Game Designer and Writer, Psychic Bunny, Los Angeles, CA.

2009-2011: Student Game Designer, Research Assistant, Game Innovation Lab, Interactive Media and Games Division, School of Cinematic Arts, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

IndieCade Night Games 2015 (commissioned work) – Any Port in a Storm

Forbes 30 Under 30: Entertainment 2012

IndieCade Finalist 2011 - The Witch

IndieCade Finalist 2011 - Application Crunch

IndieCade Big Game Select 2011 - The Hatter's Table

Independent Games Festival Student Showcase Winner 2009 - Kid the World Saver

## RESEARCH PROJECTS

**2009-present: Game Innovation Lab, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA**

*California! (USC)* 2015-present: Project lead and designer on game for 4<sup>th</sup> grade students of California history. Collaboration with members of the USC History faculty and Huntington Library.

*Mission: Admission* (Department of Education, Gilbert Foundation, TG) 2011-present: Project manager and designer with student team on a game to teach college application strategy. Facebook beta in 2012. Mobile and web edition launching 2016.

*On the Safe Side* (USC), 2014-present. Project manager for student design team to create interactive safety training for the USC campus.

*Life Underground* (NASA), 2014-present. Project manager and designer with student team in an outreach project for middle school students about field science careers and the scientific method.

*Project NextStep* (internal), 2014-present: Project manager, designer, and writer on a game about fitness and narrative.

*Chrono Cards* (Microsoft Research), 2013-2014: Project manager and designer of two card games for middle school students on the causes of WWI and historical thinking.

*Graduate Strike Force* (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Department of Education), 2012-2013: Project manager and designer with student team on a

mobile/PC game prototype about financial aid literacy targeting high school students.

*FutureBound* (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Department of Education) 2011-2012: Project manager and designer with student team on a mobile/PC game prototype about career aspiration and self-advocacy targeting middle school students.

*Application Crunch* (TG, USC) 2009-2011: Designer and Producer on a college access card. 2011 IndieCade Finalist.

## **PROFESSIONAL AND INDEPENDENT PROJECTS**

*The Witch* (independent) 2010-present: Designer, writer, and artist on a mobile game about word manipulation and identity exploration. 2011 IndieCade Finalist. M.F.A. thesis project.

*Any Port in a Storm* (independent) 2015: Designer and artist on a big game exploring asymmetrical play. Commissioned by IndieCade Festival for their Night Games event.

*Nod* (independent) 2014: Designer and writer of an interactive narrative piece exploring doubt, set within the story of Cain and Abel.

*Mission: Admission* (FutureBound, Inc.) 2014-present: Director of production on adaptation of Facebook game to mobile and web platforms.

*The Hatter's Table* (independent) 2011: Designer on a CD-assisted board game and its big game adaptation inspired by the logic puzzles of Lewis Carroll. 2011 IndieCade Selection. Collected by USC Doheny Library.

*SimCoach*, (Psychic Bunny), 2010-2011: Writer and narrative designer a virtual character designed to motivate returning veterans to seek help for PTSD and depression.

## **TALKS, PANELS, AND WORKSHOPS**

“Mission: Admission and Chrono Cards: Participatory Research at the Game Innovation Lab.” Speaker. Playful Learning, Los Angeles, CA, 2015.

“Board Game Design and Prototyping.” Speaker. IndieCade Festival, Culver City, CA 2015.

“Expanding Access to College through Play: A Tale of Four Games.” Panelist. Digital Media and Learning Conference, Los Angeles, CA, 2015.

“Educational Games for College Readiness, Access & Success.” Panelist. The CATS Conference, Redondo Beach, CA, 2014

“Board Game Design and Prototyping.” Speaker. IndieCade Festival, Culver City, CA, 2014.

“Critical Conversations.” Speaker. Serious Play Conference, Los Angeles, CA, 2014.

“FutureBound.” Demonstrator. Players and Professors, Los Angeles, CA, 2013.

“FutureBound.” Speaker. Games for Change, New York, NY, 2013.

“Advanced Participatory Design: Conducting an Audience Design Camp.” Speaker. Digital Games Research Association Conference (DIGRA), Atlanta, GA, 2013.

“FutureBound.” Demonstrator. Players and Professors, San Francisco, CA, 2013.

“Collegeology Games.” Speaker. Games for Change, New York, NY, 2012.

“Choosing Worthy Systems: Strategically Adapting Learning Content for Play.” Workshop. Games, Learning and Society Education Summit, Madison, WI, 2012.

“Gaming in Education,” Speaker/Panelist. The Southern California Technology in Education Conference, Carson, CA, 2012.

“Divide and Conquer: Examining and Confronting the Digital Divide.” Speaker and Panelist. Digital Media and Learning Conference, San Francisco, CA, 2012.

“Mission: Admission.” Speaker. Council on Foundations Conference, Los Angeles, CA, 2012.

“College Knowledge as a Collective Endeavor.” Workshop Facilitator. Games, Assessment and Learning Workshop, Los Angeles, CA, 2011.

“Games for Change Expo Night.” Demonstrator, Pathfinder Card Game (now Application Crunch). Games for Change, New York, NY, 2010.

## PUBLICATIONS

Thalkar, D. & Corwin, Z. B., Swensen, E. & Bouchard, S. (2014). *FutureBound: Modular curriculum for middle school teachers*. Los Angeles: Pullias Center for Higher Education.

Corwin, Z. B., Tierney, W. G., Swensen, E., Bouchard, S., Fullerton, T. & Ragusa, G. (2012) *Gaming the system: Fostering college knowledge through play*. Los Angeles: Pullias Center for Higher Education.

Swensen, Elizabeth (2011). *The Witch: Identity Construction and the Fairy Tale in Interactive Narrative*. Los Angeles: University of Southern California.

## PRESS

KCET, "Game-Based Learning: Playing and Programming for the Future," by Laurel J. Felt <<http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/columns/open-classroom/game-based-learning-playing-and-programming-for-the-future.html>> July 17, 2014.

Computers in Entertainment, "Science Fiction or Future Reality? GLIMPSE: A Star-Studded Digital Technology Showcase at USC," by Newton Lee, Ashley Yeo <<http://cie.acm.org/articles/science-fiction-or-future-reality-glimpse-star-studded-digital-technology-showcase-usc/>> 2014.

Gamasutra, "Gaming the System, the College Application Process through Play," by Leigh Alexander <[http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/178609/Gaming\\_the\\_system\\_The\\_college\\_applications\\_process\\_through\\_play.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/178609/Gaming_the_system_The_college_applications_process_through_play.php)> November 2, 2012.

Forbes, "30 Under 30," Edited by Michael Noer and Caroline Howard, January 16, 2012.

Forbes, "30 Under 30: Entertainment," by Dorothy Pomerantz <<http://www.forbes.com/pictures/mfl45ielh/elizabeth-swensen-game-designer-university-of-southern-california-26/>> December 9, 2011

TurnStyle, "The Spot: The Gaming Frontier W/ Elizabeth Swensen & Sean Bouchard," by Noah J Nelson <<https://turnstylenews.com/2011/11/17/the-spot-the-gaming-frontier-welizabeth-swensen-sean-bouchard/>> November 17, 2011.

## UNIVERSITY SERVICE

### **Safer Spaces Group, 2015-present**

*Interactive Media and Games Division, University of Southern California*

Served on department committee to improve a sense of safety and support for students regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or economic background.

**Game Tasting, 2015-present**

*Interactive Media and Games Division, University of Southern California*

Organized a weekly event focused on increasing board-game literacy among beginning games students.

**Mentor: IMGD Graduate Council, 2015-present**

*Interactive Media and Games Division, University of Southern California*

Served as sponsor and advisor to the graduate student council.

**PlayThink Game Salon, 2013-present**

*Interactive Media and Games Division, University of Southern California*

Served on department committee to organize a salon dedicated to the discussion of art games, reflective videogames, interactive art, and interdisciplinary media.

**PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

IndieCade Festival Activities Co-Chair, 2013-present

IndieCade Festival Juror, 2012-present

**COURSES TAUGHT**

**Game Design Workshop, Instructor, USC (6 sections over 4 semesters)**

Graduate and undergraduate hands-on, introductory design course required by the Interactive Media and Games Division as well as the Computer Science Games division.

**Design for Interactive Media, SA, USC (1 section over 1 semester)**

Graduate-level game design course required by all M.F.A. students in the Interactive Media and Games Division.

**LANGUAGES**

Fluent: English

Reading with Dictionary: Latin, Spanish

Rudimentary Knowledge: Ancient Greek, German, Italian

## REFERENCES

Tracy Fullerton, Chair: Interactive Media & Games Division  
University of Southern California  
School of Cinematic Arts, SCI 201M  
3470 McClintock Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90089  
310-985-1167  
tfullerton@cinema.usc.edu

Sam Roberts, Festival Director  
IndieCade- International Festival of Independent Games  
1228 Cottage Grove Avenue  
Glendale, CA 91205  
310-709-9616  
sam@indiecade.com

Zoe Blumberg Corwin, Research Associate Professor  
University of Southern California  
3470 Trousdale Parkway, WPH 701A  
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