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Columbia College, YouTube to offer students digital training

By Wailin Wong

Columbia College Chicago is partnering with YouTube to launch a program that will train “aspiring content creators” how to produce and market their digital work.

San Bruno, Calif.-based YouTube, which is a subsidiary of Google Inc., is also working with the University of Southern California’s School of Cinematic Arts. The YouTube Creator Institute, as the program is called, is accepting applications through March 12 for its inaugural classes at each of the two partner schools. In Chicago, the program will accept 10 students and run between June 1 and July 22.

Michael Niederman, chairman of Columbia’s television department, said the partnership originated from a series of discussions between the online video giant and Wojciech Lorenc, a faculty member.

“Obviously working with YouTube is a big deal for us,” Niederman said. “YouTube has progressed insanely in the last six, seven years from the early, kitty-doing-kung-fu stages. The truth is YouTube has positioned itself as the major content distributor in the world. They have done a great job of taking that notion and perspective profoundly seriously. Reaching out to their community to support more quality production makes all the sense in the world.”

The curriculum will be a combination of online instruction by YouTube and hands-on training by Columbia faculty. The program will cover all aspects of video production, as well as training in how to build an online audience, craft a brand and monetizing content. Bing Chen, the Creator Institute program lead at YouTube, said students will be encouraged to “create their own branded channels” on YouTube and will receive “new surprising tools to help get them there.”

Chen said the program is seeking not just college-age aspiring filmmakers, but anyone who wants to create professional-level content. The class could include middle-aged parents chronicling the history of their children and family or other YouTube users that are making videos as a hobby but want to develop their skills.

The YouTube Creator Institute is also part of YouTube Next, a new initiative the company announced earlier this week with the acquisition of Next New Networks, a Web video production company. YouTube Next focuses on developing the company’s Partner Program, which allows users to share revenue from their videos with YouTube.

YouTube is “really focused on supercharging content creator development in a meaningful way,” Chen said.