

Digital Media Arts Alumnus a Winner at CSU Media Arts Festival

November 9, 2010 By [Amy Bentley-Smith](#)

California State University, Dominguez Hills alumnus Todd Smaretsky (Class of '10, B.A., digital media arts, television option) wasn't going to enter the [2010 CSU Media Arts Festival](#) film, video and interactive media competition. But now he's glad he listened to the encouraging words of his professor, Dr. George Vinovich, chair of the [Digital Media Arts Program](#).



Todd Smaretsky

Smaretsky took home first place in the television category at the festival's awards ceremony held at [CSU Fullerton](#) on Saturday, Nov. 6, for his public service announcement (PSA), "Letting Go of Anger." He received a monetary prize of \$500 and a Rosebud Award. The DMA program also received \$250.

"I'm honored and grateful," Smaretsky said. "I feel the program at Cal State Dominguez Hills has really prepared me. Motion picture is my form of expression—and hope to use it as a voice. This award is further validation that I'm doing the right thing."

The 34-year-old joking refers to himself as a "late bloomer" college student. Originally from Ohio, Smaretsky moved to New York to attend college after high school, but left school in 1997 to go into the ministry. But after a decade of ministry work, Smaretsky decided it was time to follow another love, filmmaking, and enrolled in the DMA program at CSU Dominguez Hills in 2008.

"Filmmaking is something I always wanted to pursue. I believe it is a gift God has given me," he said.

About his hesitation to enter his work in the 2010 CSU Media Arts Festival, Smaretsky says it was partially to do with fear of rejection, but also because his work tends to be Christian based.

"I felt worried that they [judges] would have preconceived opinions about it," he said, adding that he ultimately decided to face his fears and his own preconceived notions of what others might think based on his professor's encouraging words. "Dr. Vinovich really pushed me to do it. He really believed in me."

The CSU Media Arts Festival competition serves to highlight the talented film, video and interactive media students from the 23-campus CSU system and give them an opportunity to present their work for critical review and recognition. This year, a panel of CSU faculty and industry professionals reviewed 131 submissions from 15 campuses and selected 32 finalists for consideration in the categories of animation, documentary, experimental, interactive, music video, narrative, television, feature screenplay and short screenplay.

Smaretsky submitted two entries, both of which made it to the final round. In addition to submitting the PSA, he and fellow CSU Dominguez Hills classmates Calvin Ko (Class of '10, B.A., digital media arts) and Jeff Yamahata (Class of '10, B.A.) submitted a project in the music video category. It placed fourth at the awards ceremony.

The 30-second PSA is a spot on anger management that Smaretsky shot and edited as a class project for Professor Vinovich's DMA 322 TV Directing II. His concept for the video was anger as a weight that impedes one's ability to move on. The video features a man who has collected a heavy sack of rocks and is attempting to lug them up a mountain. It is only when he decides to release the sack that he is able to reach the top.

"What I liked about Todd's PSA from the start were the camera angles," Vinovich said. "It's a good spot and makes its point.... It's visually compelling. It was always one of his strengths: lighting, composition, and camera work."

Andrew J. Leist: Alumnus Uses Digital Media Arts Skills in Medical Field

December 3, 2010 By [Laura Perdew](#)

There's an art to surgery, and while surgeons orchestrate and perform, technicians in the operating room also make important contributions. California State University, Dominguez Hills alumnus Andrew J. Leist is one such technician, bringing his digital media arts skills to the medical field.



Andrew J. Leist

After receiving his bachelor's degree in digital media arts in 2008 and while continuing to work in the music industry, Leist landed a job as an audio/visual technician at USC University Hospital Department of Surgery in Los Angeles, where he manages media technology used by surgeons performing endoscopic procedures.

"It's fascinating. Before I started [working at USC University Hospital], I didn't realize how many endoscopic or laparoscopic cases there are," said the full-time media specialist.

"Training at CSUDH was helpful in me getting this job. I was looking for a job during tough times. The competition was fierce," said Leist. "It's smart to be open-minded to other kinds of careers that you might not think of right away. There are cutting-edge media types of jobs that aren't at movie studios producing entertainment."

According to [MedlinePlus.com](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/), there are several types of endoscopic procedures including laparoscopy, which looks into the abdomen or pelvis. All of the minimally invasive endoscopic procedures use tiny cameras (scopes) at the end of long tubes, which are inserted into the body through keyhole incisions in the skin.

“In the past they’d have to cut you open. But with these new procedures, videos allow the surgeons to go into the body through three small one-inch incisions. One incision for a scalpel, one for another tool—like forceps, and one for the camera,” said Leist. “Using video cameras via small incisions, there’s less damage to tissues and patients recovery more quickly.”

The cameras help surgeons as they navigate tissues, organs, and bones inside the body.

“What the surgeon sees with video cameras looks better than what they can see with only their eyes. The cameras produce high-definition, full-color images. They can zoom in and magnify views, and they can get to areas that are difficult to see just by looking into traditional incisions,” said Leist.

Prior to the surgeons’ arrival in the operating room, Leist selects, arranges, and prepares audio/visual equipment based on several criteria.

“The size of the microscope is dictated by the procedure. For instance, for brain cases, which are very small procedures, smaller microscopes are used. How I set up the angle of the lens depends on what view a surgeon wants to see. Where I put the equipment depends on where the doctors, nurses and other technicians will be. Video is mostly used, however some surgeons do request audio, mainly to record their notes during surgery,” said Leist.

Previous work as an information technology manager at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center helped Leist to feel comfortable working in a hospital setting. Once at USC University Hospital he received training for working in a surgical environment, including cleaning and sterilizing equipment to help prevent infection, and working with a medical team in the operating room. But for the technical aspects of his job, he arrived prepared with the education he received at CSU Dominguez Hills.

During his free time, Leist works as a musician and audio engineer. He has recently written original music for “Daughter,” a play by Bradley Rand Smith. His digital media arts specialties include audio recording, editing, and mixing; writing and arranging music; audio and video encoding; and production and management. More information about his musical endeavors can be found on his website, www.agilemusic.com.