

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT
ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY BOARD
MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 27, 2023, AD HOC GAME DESIGN MEETING

Present:

Chris Fria - Assistant Chair, Design Technology
David Javelosa - Full-time Faculty in Game Design, SMC
Luke Johnson - Full-time Faculty in Interaction Design, SMC
Jake Street - Senior Game Design Manager, Riot Games
Jo Wright - Studio Line Director, Ripple Effect Studios
John Yoo - Principal Designer, Blizzard Entertainment

Absent:

Brandon Cating (submitted feedback separately) - Game Designer, Phoenix Labs

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM.

Discussion of the proposed certificate program in Game Design was the single agenda item. After brief introductions, Chris Fria gave an overview of the Design Technology Department and its programs and certificates. David Javelosa gave an overview of the current game design courses, and Luke Johnson gave an overview of the Interaction Design (IxD) bachelor degree program.

Details of the proposed certificate program include course requirements and descriptions were sent out for review in advance of the meeting. The discussion was lengthy and productive. The following are the main concerns raised by the advisory members:

1. Program Focus

John Yoo expressed concern that the focus was concentrated too heavily on User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI) design as he felt it might be too niche an area for larger game developers such as Activision/Blizzard.

Jo Wright made the point that students coming from a two-year program would have more opportunities with small developers where those skills are more integral. This was supported by Jake Street who mentioned that Riot Games have an express need for experienced UX designers who are passionate about games. Luke Johnson stated that IxD students have increasingly expressed interest in careers within the game industry.

The recommendation was made to consider retitling the program to acknowledge the broader focus of the curriculum.

2. Technological Concerns

A good deal of the discussion was devoted to the technology requirements for the program. Jake Street strongly suggested that, given the two-year time frame, students should use a primary development tool and focus on rapid prototyping. Jo Wright concurred with this. Unreal Engine was suggested due to its relative ease of use and wide use within the game industry.

The group also discussed the need for students to have direct knowledge of coding. Chris Fria read from Brandon Cating's notes on this, saying that game designers need enough technical knowledge to communicate effectively with developers but are not expected to have strong coding skills. The other advisors agreed with this. Jake Street added the "blue prints" feature in Unreal Engine is a robust tool for interactivity that doesn't require coding.

John Yoo expressed the importance of thorough critique in all of the game courses. Students need to be able to identify why certain game elements work effectively while others do not in any given game. David Javelosa confirmed that critique is an essential part of the game courses.

The recommendation was made to update the existing game courses to reflect the adoption of Unreal Engine and to further emphasize critical analysis.

Overall, the group felt enthusiastic about the potential for the proposed Game Design program. The general consensus was that it be unique in its synergy with the Interaction Design proposed and that demand for UX/UI skills extends beyond the game industry. Faculty agreed to follow the advisors' recommendations, beginning with the course revisions.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 AM.