

Game Art and Design Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 29th, 2024

11:00 AM Pacific Time

Via Zoom

Hosts:

1. Nicholas Garcia - Professor of GAD and Animation
2. Dean Priscilla Lopez - Dean of the Humanities Department

Committee Members

1. Stephen Hilbert - Microfun
 - a. Game Design Director
2. Ryan Kaufman – Probably Monsters
 - a. Narrative Director
3. Manny Vega - TLM
 - a. Senior Level Designer
4. Eric Elder- LACCD
5. Dan Cohen - Long Beach CC
 - a. Game/Animation Instructor

Part I - What is the objective of the CoA?

Start: 11:00 AM

Conversation Summary:

1. Nicholas Garcia initiates the discussion by emphasizing the importance of gathering feedback and suggestions for improvement.
2. The conversation revolves around developing a program to prepare individuals for entry-level positions in various fields related to animation, art, design, and programming.
3. Garcia clarifies that the program aims to cater to a wide range of entry-level jobs, avoiding focusing solely on QA roles.
4. Stephen Hilbert shares insights based on his experience, suggesting that while programming jobs often require a 4-year degree, opportunities in art or animation may be more promising due to a lesser-known pipeline of candidates.
5. Discussion arises regarding the required classes for earning the certificate, with considerations for potential adjustments and the need to gauge success criteria for the program.
6. The group discusses the importance of practical skills, adaptability, and the changing landscape of technology in the industry.
7. Suggestions are made to incorporate practical projects and specialized certificates to enhance the program's appeal to potential employers.

Takeaways:

1. The program aims to prepare individuals for various entry-level roles in animation, art, design, and programming.

2. Consideration for practical skills, adaptability, and staying updated with technological advancements is emphasized.
3. Specialized certificates tailored to specific areas of expertise can enhance employability.
4. Practical projects and artifacts, such as game design specs or economic models, can serve as valuable assets for job applications.
5. Certificates should be named to reflect specialized skills, making them more attractive to potential employers.

Part II -

Conversation Summary:

1. Nicholas Garcia highlights the significance of networking and personal initiative in entering the industry, sharing his own experience of landing a job through unconventional means.
2. The conversation delves into balancing specialization with the broad skills needed for entry-level positions, considering the challenges and time required to develop expertise.
3. Stephen Hilber argues for the value of QA roles as a foot in the door and emphasizes the importance of imparting necessary skills to succeed in interviews.
4. The discussion expands to explore specialized certificates, practical projects, and the need for networking opportunities within the program.
5. Suggestions are made for specific course offerings, such as object placement, game balancing, and professional communication.
6. The conversation concludes with considerations for program framing and the importance of specialization in enhancing employability.

Key Takeaways (continued):

1. Networking and personal initiative play crucial roles in securing opportunities within the industry.
2. Balancing specialization with broad skills is essential, acknowledging the time required for skill development.
3. QA roles can serve as entry points, leading to further opportunities within organizations.
4. Specialized certificates and practical projects enhance students' employability and readiness for industry demands.
5. Networking opportunities and professional communication skills should be integrated into the program curriculum.
6. Specialization in specific areas, such as mobile game content creation, can increase visibility on resumes and appeal to potential employers.
7. Framing the program with a focus on specialized skills improves its value

proposition for students and employers alike.

Part III -

Conversation Summary (conclusion):

1. Nicholas Garcia summarizes the discussion, emphasizing the need for either a generalist approach to gauge interest or a hyper-focused approach to prepare students for specific job roles.
2. Certificate types discussed include QA, technical artists, mobile game designers, and assistant producers, with an emphasis on roles that AI cannot easily replace.
3. Concerns are raised about pigeonholing students into specific niches and the potential limitations of specializing in mobile game design.
4. Realities of industry challenges, such as crunch time and job instability, are discussed candidly to prepare students for the realities of game development careers.
5. The conversation concludes with a plan to reconvene for future advisory meetings to refine the program curriculum.

End: 11:45 PM

Final Takeaways

1. There is a need for a balance between generalist exposure and specialized training to cater to different student goals.
2. Certificate types should focus on roles that require human expertise and are less susceptible to automation.
3. Specialization in mobile game design offers opportunities but may limit career flexibility.
4. Industry challenges like crunch time and job instability should be openly discussed to prepare students for the realities of game development careers.
5. Ongoing advisory meetings are essential for refining the program curriculum and staying updated on industry trends and demands.

Main Takeaways:

1. **Balanced Curriculum:** The program should strike a balance between generalist exposure and specialized training to cater to different student goals.

2. **Certificate Types:** Emphasis should be placed on certificate types that require human expertise and are less susceptible to automation, such as QA, technical artists, and mobile game designers.
3. **Industry Realities:** Students should be prepared for the realities of the game development industry, including challenges like crunch time and job instability..

Jobs:

1. Quality Assurance (QA): Entry-level positions in QA are seen as valuable for getting a foot in the door, with opportunities to advance within organizations.
2. Technical Artists: Technical artists are described as unicorns in most companies, with a shortage of skilled professionals in this role. They handle tasks such as rigging and other specialized areas that require human expertise.
3. Mobile Game Designers: Designing games for mobile platforms is highlighted as a specialized skill set that is in demand due to the significant revenue generated by mobile games.
4. Assistant Producers: Junior positions in production, such as assistant producers, are mentioned as potential entry-level roles with responsibilities like tracking hours and project management.

Additional Feedback from GAD LACCD Regional Advisory Meeting:

1. The current curriculum aligns with Los Angeles Community Colleges established GAD Certificate.
2. The hiring managers from EA, Survios, and Respawn all agree that Technical Artists are in high demand.
 - a. Focusing on building a GAD degree with an emphasis on Technical art will help satisfy demands within the industry.
3. High level of interest was shown by the board in regards to a possible crossover of animation and GAD disciplines.
 - a. They are interested in seeing how we will utilize the Motion Capture Hardware for GAD.

Proposed Certificate to Advisory Board:

Media Arts Game Art and Design Certificate of Achievement

Semester 1

1. ART 634 - Computer Graphics I
2. Intro to Game Design
3. Concept Design and Visual Development

Semester 2

4. Game Technologies and Visual Development
 5. Level and Environment Design
 6. Computer Graphics 2
- Production Studio I

Conclusion:

The advisory board believes the current curriculum is feasible and would help fill high demand jobs within the Game Art and Design Industry,

Status: APPROVED