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R.T.I.S. senior Chris Hagen works with Learning for Life participants as they create their own video games.

Learning for Life Career Exploration Program at DigiPen

This January, DigiPen collaborated with Learning for Life, a partner of United Way for King County, to offer a series of career exploration lessons to high school students from all over Washington State. Learning for Life's mission is to offer programs designed to support schools and community-based organizations in their efforts to prepare youth to successfully handle the complexities of contemporary society and to enhance their self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. Largely focusing on character development and career education, their programs help youth to develop social and life skills, to assist in character and career development, and to help youth formulate positive personal values. Their programs prepare youth to make ethical decisions that will help them achieve their full potential.

In support of Learning for Life's mission, DigiPen has partnered with the organization for the past four years to

offer a career exploration program in game development. Each January, approximately 50 students attend DigiPen for four consecutive Saturdays to learn about game programming. This year, over 60 students participated from all over Washington State. Some even came from as far as Spokane and Yakima. Current undergraduate students worked as teachers and teacher assistants to provide participants with an overview about the game development process and to help them create a simple video game of their own.

High school students in Washington who are interested in participating in future Learning for Life programs should contact Amy Thammavong at the Seattle Learning for Life Office at athammavong@seattleflf.org. DigiPen looks forward to continuing its partnership with this community organization.

- Angela Kugler



Seattle Code Camp

For the second year in a row, DigiPen hosted the Seattle Code Camp at the Institute's main campus during the weekend of January 26th. This annual event is a free opportunity for software developers in the local area to share their experiences with fellow developers. This year, approximately 150 participants discussed a variety of software development topics. Sessions ranged from informal "chalk talks" to more formal presentations. Session topics covered a wide range of concepts and issues, from "Data Enhancement in Visual Studio 2008" to "Advanced File Transfers with HTTP, FTP, and BITS" to "Integrating Javascript frameworks with ASP.NET MVC." Raymond Yan, Senior VP of Operations, states that, "DigiPen is very pleased to support these types of events where knowledge and experience is shared freely amongst peers." To learn more about the Seattle Code Camp, visit <https://seattle.codecamp.us/>.

- Raymond Yan

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FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Jazno Francoeur

Art Department

After being selected during his sophomore year to attend an intensive, five-month internship in Florida, Jazno Francoeur began his animation career with Walt Disney Feature Animation. He graduated from the Kansas City Art Institute in 1992 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration. He spent most of his thirteen-year-long career at the Orlando studio, where he worked on a dozen feature films and shorts. These titles included *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Lion King*, *Mulan*, *Tarzan*, *The Emperor's New Groove*, *John Henry*, *Lilo and Stitch*, Roger Rabbit's "Trail Mix-Up," *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Brother Bear*, *Pocahontas*, *The Little Match Girl*, and *My Peoples*. He was also an animator for the *Aladdin* video game on the Sega Genesis platform. Additionally, he has been part of animation teams for numerous commercials and projects, including the California Adventure animation tour, which earned his team a Thea Award, given by the Themed Entertainment Association that represents and evaluates theme parks,

rides, malls, and other attractions.

In the fall of 2004, Mr. Francoeur began teaching full-time at DigiPen. He has taught courses on Flash, traditional animation (beginning and advanced), character design, and introduction to art. He currently teaches the sophomore projects class, where his students are working on a 2D animated short, "Calico Martini." His teaching approach is based on the apprentice model, where students first watch him demonstrate on their work, and then they demonstrate it back to him. He and his students find this hands-on approach to be efficient and effective, plus it gives him an opportunity to better know individual students. Mr. Francoeur also lectures to his students in order to teach them abstract concepts and critical thinking skills. However, "I don't think students begin connecting dots until their eyes and hands 'understand' through assiduous application," he recognizes.

Mr. Francoeur wants his students to

learn that "every animation scene is a problem with multifarious solutions." His goal as an instructor is to help them find the best solutions, especially "those that strike the right balance of mechanical proficiency, emotional content, and visual physics." He identifies teaching as his professional highlight, specifically when an artist/student "breaks through a barrier and reaches the next plateau." In thinking back on all his professional activities, he says, "I enjoyed my career as an animator, but teaching full time is much more rewarding, and in many ways more challenging. I love giving back to young artists and to the industry that treated me so well."

In addition to being an accomplished animator and illustrator, Mr. Francoeur works in the photographic medium. He recently wrapped up a solo show titled "Dolls," which led to his involvement with Gallery One's upcoming group show, "40 Artists/40 Portraits." He has also published a book of poetry,



Photo: Katrina Chu

Fountain Street, and he is currently putting together the final galley for his second book of poetry, *Hallucinations*. Additionally, Mr. Francoeur maintains a side career as a professional musician and producer. He has been a part of MercyMachine, a group with which he has performed, produced, composed, and arranged on five albums. He has also spent the last two years producing his wife's debut album, which will soon be released. Together, they have a daughter Bella Rose, who they enjoy taking to the local Children's Museum on the weekends. With his various artistic interests and wealth of experience, Jazno Francoeur brings a unique and rounded background to DigiPen's Art Department.



Announcements

Summer Workshop Applications Due Mar. 3

Have fun this summer and gain real-world experience as a ProjectFUN Workshops instructor, teaching assistant, or after-school activities coordinator. These workshops introduce middle to high school students to video game programming, 3D animation, and robotics. With workshops being offered at the main campus, off-site locations in Washington State, as well as a number of locations outside Washington, this is an excellent opportunity.

Working as an instructor, teaching assistant, or after-school activities coordinator is a great way to expand your professional skills, while still focusing on the video game industry. To prepare you to meet the unique challenges and opportunities of working with workshop students, DigiPen will

provide mandatory training prior to the start of the workshops.

Apply now! Drop off your cover letter, resume, grades, and application form to the Main Office by Monday, March 3. If you have any questions about the ProjectFUN Workshop positions, contact Diann Strom at dstrom@digipen.edu.

Summer Sublets

Leaving town for the summer? Sublet your apartment to a ProjectFUN Summer Workshop participant! For details or to submit an advertisement outlining the cost and amenities of your apartment, e-mail Diann Strom at dstrom@digipen.edu.

Washington State Need Grant: 2008-2009 Academic Year

The state has not given us a budget to

work with for the 2008-2009 Washington State Need Grants, nor have they issued new eligibility requirements. This will happen in late May. When it does, we will notify everyone through an SRS bulletin. Please remember that this is a grant that is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Keep an eye open for the next SRS bulletin. If you have questions about eligibility, go to www.digipen.edu. Click "Financial Aid," then click "Undergraduate," and finally, select "View Grants." In addition, we encourage you to stop by the Financial Aid Office if you should have any questions regarding the Washington State Need Grants.

ACG/SMART Grants: 2008-2009 Academic Year

We will not determine eligibility for these grants until all grades are posted for the spring 2008 and/or summer

2008 semesters. For a SMART grant, you must have a cumulative G.P.A. of a 3.0 by the end of spring term in order for us to take the next step in determining eligibility. For the ACG, you must have a cumulative G.P.A. of a 3.0 in addition to more complex eligibility requirements. However, if you take summer courses, we will have to wait until the end of summer term (and after grades are posted) to determine your eligibility. Please remember that SMART and ACG grants are available for fall and spring terms only. For those of you who have already applied for Financial Aid for the 2008-2009 year, you may receive a revised award letter after the end of spring semester 2008 and/or the summer 2008 term, whichever is applicable. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us in the Financial Aid Office.

The Importance of 2D Animation

Two-dimensional animation – or hand-drawn animation, as opposed to three-dimensional animation, or computer animation – is the main focus of DigiPen students for at least the first two years of the B.F.A. program in Production Animation. Given the prevalence of 3D animation in both the movie and the games industries, one might wonder why DigiPen places such emphasis on 2D animation during these important years. During a recent visit to our campus, Don Crumb, an animator from the 3D studio Pixar, confirmed our belief that a thorough working knowledge of the creative processes involved in creating good 2D animation is invaluable for the 3D artist. At Walt Disney Feature Animation Florida, Don spent a large part of his career gaining a solid emphasis in 2D animation before going on to do 3D animation at Pixar. In his presentation to us, Don showed many pages of drawings that explore the possibilities of a scene before any computer animation was done. Then, when he did begin to animate, he used the same process that he learned as a 2D animator, emphasizing the importance of scrutinizing and adjusting every frame of film. He says that he likes to leave as little work as possible for the computer to execute. "There is no magic button," he remarked.

Those who enter the field of computer animation looking for this "magic button" will not find it. However, in the creative process involved in doing 2D animation, one may find a kind of magic that is

applicable to whatever medium he or she chooses to use. This is the magic that flows directly from the human brain. It begins with learning to draw, which is, perhaps, the oldest form of art created by humans. Witness the Lascaux and Chauvet cave drawings created some 17,000 to 31,000 years ago, which still speak to us with a striking immediacy. With drawing as a solid foundation with which to communicate ideas, students of 2D animation go on to gain experience in design, concept, composition, the physics of movement, timing, acting, staging, layout, cinematography, tone and color theory, lighting, art history, history of film, and storytelling. This list is by no means exhaustive. All of this experience will continue to serve DigiPen B.F.A. students for the rest of their artistic careers, no matter what medium they choose to use.

In addition to its value as a foundation in a student's education, I believe that 2D animation as an end in itself is still as valid as it ever was. I recently asked my students a question regarding the film *The Triplets of Belleville*, which was nominated for two Academy Awards, including Best Animated Feature: "Do you think this film would have been better as a computer-animated feature?" The overwhelming response was "No!" This illustrates simply that there is some inherent value in looking at drawings executed by hand. As one who simply loves to draw, I am encouraged.

- Dan Daly

Important Dates

Feb. 2	Withdrawal deadline for 75% refund
Feb. 3	Founder's Day
Feb. 15	Tuition deposit for Summer Session due
Feb. 18	Presidents Day – no classes
Feb. 18-23	Spring Break – no classes
Feb. 27	Final day to receive a "W" on transcript for Fall Semester withdrawals, 50% refund; withdrawals from institute after this date will receive "F" grades on transcript; final day to drop a class
Mar. 20	Balance of tuition for Summer Session due
Apr. 21-25	Final exams
Apr. 25	Spring Semester ends
Apr. 27	Commencement
Apr. 28 - May 2	Intersession – no classes
May 5	Classes begin – Summer Session
May 26	Memorial Day – no classes

BFA Student Gallery

2D Characters

Regardless of the entertainment market, every animated film or video game project begins with a traditional 2D visualization of the characters, as well as their props and environments. It is more efficient to explore iterations of a character's design in rough thumbnails and color comps via sketchbooks or digital tablets; this allows the artist to establish a quick graphic read of shapes and silhouettes, multifarious emotional states, costume elements, and coloring. Once a character is fleshed out in a "supercomp," or a final model sheet, it can be translated into virtually any animation medium: traditional, vector, stop-motion, computer (cinematic and video game), motion capture, etc. This month's gallery exemplifies some of the color comps done by DigiPen students



Nadine McKee



Dave Bolton



Cody Flynn

bachelor of fine arts

Student Association President's Corner

One of the activities that SA has started doing in recent years is planning events. It might seem a little strange for a student government to divide their resources between planning events and solving issues related to the students. As most of us here learn very quickly, DigiPen has the reputation of sucking any free time out of our lives. Making time to relax and have fun is a skill many of us have to relearn once we spend a few months in the Pen. SA tries to improve student life by setting up events where DigiPen students can not only attend but also often participate.

Last semester, we had the annual Halloween Pageant. In order to memorialize the evening, SA is once again selling DVDs of both this year's and last year's Halloween pageants. These DVDs capture the entire events, including the hilarious antics that occurred during intermission. Special features are also included, like photos and interviews. Selling for \$5 each, all proceeds go to SA. We plan to use the money we earn to make our events better for everyone. If you would like to purchase a DVD, find a member of SA and ask them for one, or email sainfo@digipen.edu, and we will find you.

We have already got a few events planned for the student body this semester. The ever-famous and always-awkward Talent and Comedy Night will return to the DigiPen Main Campus in Plato Auditorium for one night only on February 29 starting at 5 P.M. Be there for the amazing acts, funny moments, and the free pizza at intermission. In order to be in the talent show, you will have to audition on February 13, 14, or 15. We will be filming auditions and showing the footage at the end of the show. Be there for a fantastic time!

Usually at this time of year, students start getting together to polish up their *Counter Strike* skills in anticipation of the yearly contest against the faculty and staff. This year we have decided to update the yearly tradition with a new Valve classic, *Team Fortress 2*. Start practicing now, because once March rolls around, we expect nothing less than victory. To wrap up the year, we will be bringing back the Cook-Off in April. This event will be held at the Art Campus parking lot. Expect more prizes, more food, and more categories to enter.

And with that I leave you with a thought to ponder: What is the most awkward moment you have ever experienced at DigiPen?

- Brittany Aubert



February's PodClass presents a roundtable discussion about women in game development. Host Omaha Sternberg will discuss this topic with Cindy Ball, co-owner of Global Wonder Entertainment, a media production company; Tara Brannigan, program manager at Microsoft Game

Studios; Brigitte Samson, technical artist at Midway Seattle; Suzanne Kaufman, art professor at DigiPen; and Joanna Wang, texture artist at Sucker Punch Studios. Christa Phillips of GamerChix and community editor of Xbox.com will also discuss gaming communities. Additionally, Ms. Sternberg will interview Greg Street, Lead Game Designer at Ensemble Studios, about level design.

Listeners can subscribe to the podcast via *iTunes* or can go to DigiPen's website. If you have a topic you would like to hear about on the podcast, please email your suggestions to podclass@digipen.edu.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Stephen Niedzielski Computer Engineering



Photo: Katrina Chu

Born in Erie, Pennsylvania, Stephen Niedzielski was homeschooled from third through tenth grade. He grew up biking often, kayaking in Lake Erie, and acting in local theaters. Shortly before turning seventeen, his family moved to Prattville, Alabama, and Stephen began attending high school as a junior. After graduating, he enrolled in a local university, taking a physics course and pursuing a personal study in gymnastics, textile screen printing, guitar, and film production. One year later, he matriculated to DigiPen's R.T.I.S. program. After his first year, he switched into the Bachelor of Science in Computer Engineering program. "Although I find games and simulation fascinating," he explains, "the ability to develop systems that interface with real-world things, such as a guitar, for example, is very powerful and much more intriguing."

Stephen does not remember how he came to find out about DigiPen. He does not even play many video games, identifying *Super Mario Brothers 3* and *Ico* as his all-time favorites. "However, when I researched the school," he recalls, "I was struck by the laser focus on education, which seemed very atypical." Now that he is here, Stephen appreciates DigiPen's serious approach to education and the fact that it is rooted in teaching students how to apply concepts in practical ways. The highpoint of his time at DigiPen came when he realized that what he was doing on a daily basis had been impossible up to a few years ago. Over his years at the Institute, Stephen has come to learn that working on campus and in teams has made a positive difference in his education experience. "The on-campus learning environment is the quintessential

aspect of this school," he has learned. "You're getting robbed if you work at home," he reminds his peers.

Outside of school, Stephen enjoys listening to music, watching films, and "keeping good company." An avid cyclist, he has even learned how to navigate the region's bike paths so that he can travel to and from Seattle "without ever having to pedal on the street." Stephen also battles idiopathic thrombocytopenia purpura (ITP), a non-communicable blood disease, which causes the body to lose its ability to clot. After the disease had been in remission for several years, it recurred last semester, and Stephen had to cope with the high DigiPen workload in parallel with fighting the disease. "Fortunately, not only did I beat the disease," he says, "but I also made a portable gaming device, vector graphics controller, and the dean's honor list." This semester, Stephen hopes to develop a handwriting recognition engine and a thrombocyte counter, while continuing to work on a large, multi-touch screen.

According to Stephen, he "can't wait to get out and work." He is very interested in digital photography, musical instruments, and flight, and he would love to pursue these subjects in some capacity. "Who knows?" he muses. "Perhaps there's a job for making flying cameras that hum 'Flight of the Bumblebee' as they drone by!" Ultimately, his greatest career aspiration is to "work on a team with other motivated professionals and to develop amazing products." With a dedication for overcoming obstacles matching his passion for his work, Stephen will go on to create innovative products.

