

Topic: Future Directions of Game Development Curricula

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The Future Directions of Game Development Curricula working group was an informative discussion about gaming academia with representatives of the G.A.M.E.S. disciplines. The desire of this working group was to create an engaged dialog between academia and industry, focused around the key points on how to help facilitate the transition between 'graduate' to 'entry level employee'. Many educators and developers agree that there is a schism between what is being taught and what the industry expects from the students. By engaging in the dialog of the working group, will educators and developers come to understand how to create a more beneficial and suited curriculum.

One of the most prevalent problems of current game development curricula is that it tends to become quickly outdated. Educators must create a continually evolving curriculum to help keep pace with the advancing industry. By insuring a curriculum that is purpose driven and outcome based will teaching methods stay current and applicable to the changing market trends. Incorporating the 'next toolset' or 'near future toolset' skills into education programs will help eliminate software redundancy. Bear in mind, that the goal of educators is to graduate capable and creative individuals who can become valuable assets to the industry, and reduce industry needs to retrain entry-level employees.

Another problem is that schools and universities have great difficulty obtaining tools/source/software development environments necessary to adequately train students on major platforms, and are relegated to training students on PC platforms (DirectX) in rapidly changing software and hardware environments. That is because the industry has this perception that if their source code and/or toolset libraries were exposed in a school/university environment, their code could become public domain and could be used in a way that violates the usage agreement. Developers would then be put in the uncomfortable position of having to sue a university, which they would be reluctant to do for public relations reasons. The mindset of industry secrecy hinders the pace of growth and development of educators improving their curriculums

Lastly, a great concern for schools and universities is the challenge of finding qualified instructors. Individuals with experience developing games may not have the necessary training and education to teach. Skilled teachers with no game development experience would have to learn a blend of technical and creative skills unique to the game industry. Schools and universities need to determine what does and doesn't make for a qualified candidate for teaching game development and implement this to help facilitate a more capable curriculum.

The expectations of the industry to have a competent and technology ready entry-level workforce cannot be met if they continue to employ the mindset of industry secrecy. Educators cannot facilitate the demands of evolving technology if they do not have access to platforms other than the PC. Until educators and industry can bridge the gap of academia and the workplace, there will be no way to circumvent the necessity of retraining new employees. By identifying all the problems and stressing the key issues, the panel was able to illustrate for the attendee's the dialog that is needed to take place if the future direction for game development curricula is to be improved.