the comm-unity newsletter

The New Major: Game Production & Design

By Analia Santana

This year, Communication Professor Michael Grabowski, Ph.D. became the Program Director of a new major and minor at Manhattan College: Game Production and Design. This interdisciplinary program is a collaboration across the former Kakos School of Science, its Computer Science Department, the Communication Department, and the Art History & Digital Media Art Department to educate students about the different elements of game design.

The program answers a call that is coming from students, gaming companies, and New York City.

"The Mayor's office created a division of its Office of Media and Entertainment to recruit gaming companies, and so I know that these companies are going to be looking for talent in this area," said Grabowski.



Students Testing Virtual Reality (VR)

Before the advent of the program, alumni from the College were able to secure jobs in the gaming industry by taking courses that interested them. Now, majors in Game Production and Design can concentrate on one of three options: coding, game design, or narrative game mechanics. Grabowski describes the three

concentrations as follows:

"The design concentration focuses on building the assets for games like 2D and 3D modeling, and animation. Everything that's involved in creating the art of the game." Narrative game mechanics "focuses on the story world of the game itself: How do you build engaging stories?" Coding is an essential part of games and, as Grabowski said, "that's learning from the Computer Science Department, the different languages of programming so that you can work on those back ends."

Courses that majors and minors can take include The Culture of Games, Game Design and Development, Digital Drawing, 3D Design, and VR: Perception and Production.

The program has already drawn the attention of students and, as of this semester, there are four declared majors and four declared minors. In the future, Grabowski hopes to see the program grow. "120 students in the major is my ultimate goal... I think within four years we'll reach that goal." One prospective major, Madeline Radion, is currently taking The Culture of Games course. Her favorite part of the course is "the essays, but that's just because I'm an absolute nerd. But I love doing all the essays and we go through the games in history." Radion describes how the class operates and what is so unique about it: "Starting from games like pinball and skee ball, all the way into current modern day games such as Halo. And we get a chance to play a bunch of these games. And we do them in class, we study them, and then we write essays connecting the previous history of games into what we did in class - into modern day gaming." Not only do students play games but they learn skills and theories that will help them secure jobs in a $334 billion industry. Radion hopes that a degree in this major will help her in the future. "It may sound

self-explanatory, but that's been my passion for years on end, actually. And it's something I want to do and change the world through powerful storytelling in games."

In the future, all majors will have an opportunity to make games that will go into their portfolio in the final course in the major, Senior Game Seminar. Grabowski describes the class as

"...an incubator. So that the students work together, in different departments, to come up with an original idea for a game and then develop that game through to completion. With the goal of releasing the game to the public by the end of the semester. When the students graduate, the goal is that they will have a portfolio, not only from their coursework, but from the original game that they've worked on together to complete."

Even in this first semester, students are eager to take that class. Radion expressed excitement about the seminar class because of the opportunity to create a game with a team. "You get to meet people of like minds that have the same goals as you. Hopefully to output something beautiful." Through this program students from across the College will be able to work collaboratively in a way, and on initiatives not seen before.