



News

[Press Releases](#)
[Event Announcements](#)
[CCT Weekly](#)
[Grants and Funding](#)
[Student News](#)
[Archived News](#)

University Global Game Jam sees improved design quality, increased female attendance

[The Daily Reveille](#)

On Friday at 3 p.m., approximately 85 gaming enthusiasts gathered at the Digital Media Center for the University's third annual Global Game Jam. The event, hosted locally by the campus Center for Computation and Technology, is a 48 hour international design extravaganza bringing together programmers, artists, musicians and more to create original video games.

Global Game Jam, Inc. estimated the 2016 event included approximately 30,000 participants crafting over 5,000 games based on this year's secret theme: rituals. A live stream sponsored by the online gaming community Twitch connected gamers in 23 of the 87 participating countries.

The variety of expertise levels brought the quality of this year's game designs to the next level, said campus Global Game Jam organizer Marc Aubanel. Aside from improved quality, this year's event also featured twice as many attendees, growing from 42 in 2015 to nearly 85.

The number of girls in attendance also increased dramatically, Aubanel said.

"If this was run 10 years ago I doubt you'd see that many girls making games," Aubanel said. "That was a really happy surprise."

Bringing people together to foster creation is central to the gaming industry, he said.

"It's a ritual in the games industry," Aubanel said. "A game isn't made with one person in a room making some decision about what the game should be. It starts with a team."

This year's teams represented 17 cities across Louisiana and were composed of high school and college aged participants as well as non-students. Teams collaborated on design concepts at conference tables in the Digital Media Center, surrounded by coffee cups and sleeping bags stacked in corners.

Ideas ranged from literal to figurative interpretations of rituals as teams worked frantically to take their concept from idea to realized project. Concept drawings dotted white boards and 3-D crafting took place on design platforms such as Unity and GameMaker.

A common theme among the teams was a focus on developing new skills and collaborating to overcome challenges. Though the University jam presents awards for best art, best overall game, best use of theme and best tuning, competition isn't at the heart of the event, Aubanel said.

"It's nice to see people doing something that they're not required to do, just for the love of doing it," Aubanel said.

Computer science freshman Sarah Sicard said she attended the game jam to explore opportunities in the computer science field. For her, the draw of computer science and the game jam centered on learning new things.

"I really like the problem solving aspect of it — being given a challenge and having to overcome that challenge with unique ideas," Sicard said.

Bryson Toups, a computer science junior and Global Game Jam student volunteer, said the allure of problem solving and learning also drew him to computer science. The game jam is a great outlet for learning to overcome challenges, he said.

"A lot of it is teamwork and communication," Toups said. "Until we can agree on something nothing happens."

Aside from the practical benefits, the jam is fun.

"We just like to make video games — it's really that simple," Toups said. "And this gives us an excuse to make them."

Though Toups' interest in game design is just a passion, for others it's a dream career path.

Baylor Hood, an employee at Electronic Arts Baton Rouge, said game design was the ideal career to combine his love of art and gaming.

"I've been gaming since I was kid, since my brother gave me the second controller for the [Nintendo Entertainment System]," Hood said. "When I found out you could do that together as a job, it just seemed to click for me."

Hood said he attended the game jam to gain experience in team dynamics and the elements of collaborative game design. Once his contract at EABR ends, he plans to attend DAVE, the Digital Animation and Visual Effects technical school in Orlando.

Publish Date:
02-01-2016

