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University students code and create games

LSU: [The Daily Reveille](#)

Prototypes, coding, alphas and betas were just some of the foreign vocabulary words used at the Digital Media Center last weekend. The University participated in Global Game Jam, a 48-hour game creation event centered around this year's theme: "What do we do now?"

Participants at 519 sites in 78 countries who developed video games or board and card games convened for the jam.

Marc Aubanel, director of the Digital Media Arts and Engineering program, said the gaming community breaks all language barriers.

"Here's a way of getting a whole bunch of nations together where we can build something positive and work together as teams," Aubanel said.

This is the first year the University participated in the jam after the 2014 event was canceled at the last minute for the polar vortex.

Anyone from students to professionals can take part in the jam. Participants are not required to have any game developing experience, and sites like LSU provide computers to loan.

Teams had 48 hours to work on their games. They were free to come and go, but some dedicated participants brought air mattresses to sleep on at the site.

Teams complete a small portion of their games in a limited time frame but sometimes continue development after the jam to publish their creations.

Computer science professor Robert Kooima said the deadline creates an engaging environment students otherwise would not encounter.

"What a student tends to do, of course, is do their assignment, get it done, hand it in and then do no more," Kooima said. "And this is something more."

He said participating in the event makes the University a greater part of the global world of technology.

"I think a student would expect nothing less from a school like LSU," Kooima said.

Digital art juniors Cameron Bragg and Tylar Spencer were part of "Team Awesome Potato." They both said they had some experience with game development on their own but wanted to participate in the event to learn team dynamics and gain experience.

One day into the jam, the team's room was lined with air mattresses and littered with coffee bags.

"I think the hardest part so far has been getting everyone to agree on certain concepts and key ideas of the game, so I think development was the hardest part, and production has been sort of smooth," Spencer said.

The University began a master's program in digital media arts and engineering last week, focusing on animation, effects and video game development.

Aubanel said if the University was going to offer a game program, it had to participate in the global jam as a "rite of passage."

He said video games go beyond entertainment, emerging in many industries like engine repair, where augmented reality glasses display a simulation of the repair and show the user exactly what to do.

The first Global Game Jam was in 2009. Though many universities host jam sites, companies like Facebook and Google also participate in the event at their headquarters.

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