Academic Residencies for Game Designers

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Charles Palmer
Lisa Brown
What is an Academic Residency?
What is a Residency?
Caveat

- Not just for game designers!
- US-centric
Benefits

- Introduce new opportunities to the classroom
- Augmenting teaching staff
- Frequently rotating talent
Benefits

- Circumvents academic hiring requirements
- (No PhD required)
Benefits

- Stronger ties to current industry practices
Benefits

Resident Perspective:
- Funding!
- Academic Trial
- Mold the next generation
Benefits

- Wins all around!
What will we cover today?
What will we cover today?

1. An overview of the HU program
What will we cover today?

2. Quick tips for setting up your own
What will we cover today?

3. Common obstacles to overcome
An overview of the Harrisburg University Game Dev in Residency Program
Lisa’s Roles as Resident
Lisa’s Roles as Resident

- Advising Student Game Projects
Lisa’s Roles as Resident

- Periodic guest lecturing in other classes
- Co-taught Game Design
- Seminar Class
Lisa’s Roles as Resident

- Organizing extra learning opportunities
Lisa’s Role as Resident

- Summer Game Academy
Lisa’s Projects
Lisa’s Projects

- Prototyping and learning new tools
Lisa’s Projects

- Streaming and Writing
Lisa’s Projects

Game Devs of Color Expo

Game Design In Detail

Lisa Brown @ wertle | Charles Palmer @charlespalmer
Lisa’s Projects

- Continued consulting
Lisa’s Projects

Death Jeopardy
Made on Train Jam for an audience of one
Other

Imperfection
Impish take on an old childhood game
Action

How to Kill a Project
An exploration of abandoned games
Other

Bring Your Camera
Go for a stroll, and bring your camera this time.
Adventure
Lisa’s Projects

Death Jeopardy
Made on Train Jam for an audience of one
Other

Fill Move Queue...

Stance
Hi
Lo
Tail Atk
Nose Atk
Idle
Block

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Bring Your Camera
Go for a stroll, and bring your camera this time.
Adventure
Resident Conclusion...

Wins abound!
Student Testimonials

“She had great contacts and always connected us with someone who would help us if she couldn't. She would also give fantastic feedback on anything we gave her. She did everything to help us.”

“She would always go the extra mile to help us with finding information or with contacting other designers, and was willing to spend hours helping us solve problems with our games.”
Residencies at other schools

- **Recent**
  - Eastern Kentucky University
  - NYU Game Center
  - Maryland Institute College of Art

- **Past Programs**
  - UC Santa Cruz
  - Full Sail
Setting up and Running YOUR Residency
Setting up a Residency

1. Convincing the Administration
Convincing the Administration

Funding options

- Endowment
- Annual budget
- External grants
The 10 most successful states for video game development

John Caudrely
Feb 24, 2015

The proliferation of smartphones and tablets, along with new free-to-play games having a new audience of gamers, has helped the United States video game industry to see consistent growth despite a global recession. According to the Entertainment Software Association, the video game industry grew four times faster than the American economy between 2009 and 2013.

Video game jobs have flourished across the country, growing at 9% each year since 2009, thanks in part to tax incentives in a growing number of states and more video game programming at colleges and universities. The game industry directly employs more than 42,000 people in 36 states, a more than 50% increase since the 2009 report.

It's not a bad gig, either. Industry employees earning an average annual compensation of up to $93,000, and total direct compensation for all workers directly employed in the video game software industry was more than $4...
Convincing the Administration

- Tie Residency to Program Goals
  - Program Goal 4: *Production and Teamwork Skills*
  - Program Goal 6: *Professional Skills*
Convincing the Administration

Professional Development for Faculty

- Improving skillsets
- Inspiring collaboration
Convincing the Administration

Long term relationships with residents

- Potential recruiting
- Expanded network
Setting up a Residency

1. Convincing the Administration
2. Adapt to your Resident
Adapt to your Resident

- Shape program to resident’s strengths/interests
Adapt to your Resident

John’s style

- Unity development
- Production
- Business and funding
- Formal class structure
Adapt to your Resident

Lisa’s Style:

- Design thinking
- Industry professionals
- Advising/mentoring
- Informal Learning opportunities
Adapt to your Resident

Mike Stout

- Project advising
- Mentorship
- Client work
Adapt to your Resident

Jerry’s Style (EKU)

- Experimental Hardware
- Physical Prototyping
- Narrative

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Setting up a Residency

1. Convincing the Administration
2. Adapt to your Resident
3. Flexibility is Key
Flexibility is Key

- Freedom of schedule
Flexibility is Key

- Encourage the resident to continue their professional work
Flexibility is Key

Help them navigate academic hoops

- Co-teaching
- Help with grading
- Manage funding expectations
- School year scope
Flexibility is Key

● Students are hard! Help your resident
Flexibility is Key

- Supporting attendance of industry events
  - Manage expectations
A few other tips:

- Budgets can change, so be flexible
- Shop around
- Find opportunities to share your resident with other programs or departments
Challenge: Reaching the right applicants

- Too many applicants from pure academic background
  - Where it was posted
  - Wording
- Emphasis on teaching - scared people away
Solutions

- Mind your words
- Get listing posted where talent is actually looking
- Foster direct relationships
Challenge - Availability

- Most people can’t leave their job
- Semesters never line up well with development cycles
Solutions

- Catching people in transition
- Studio sabbatical
Challenge - physically relocating

- It’s hard to get people to leave their base of operations
- Specific problem to schools not in hubs
Solutions

- Can you provide housing
- Cover relocation expenses
- Be flexible about letting people travel
- Communicate all these things!
Conclusion
Conclusion

Setting up a successful residency requires flexibility within the academic structure to allow the resident to thrive (and subsequently bring the best experience to the students)
Conclusion

Wins all around!
Thank you, questions?

Charles Palmer @charlespalmer
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Please check your email and complete the SESSION EVALUATIONS!