

New program combines technology and creativity

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Algonquin College's Game Development program responds to students' and industry's needs

By VIOLETTE STEPANIUK

THE ROAD to becoming a game developer just got shorter thanks to a new advanced diploma program offered by Algonquin College's Faculty of Arts, Media and Design. The innovative three-year Game Development program combines programming and design, usually considered two separate aspects of game development.

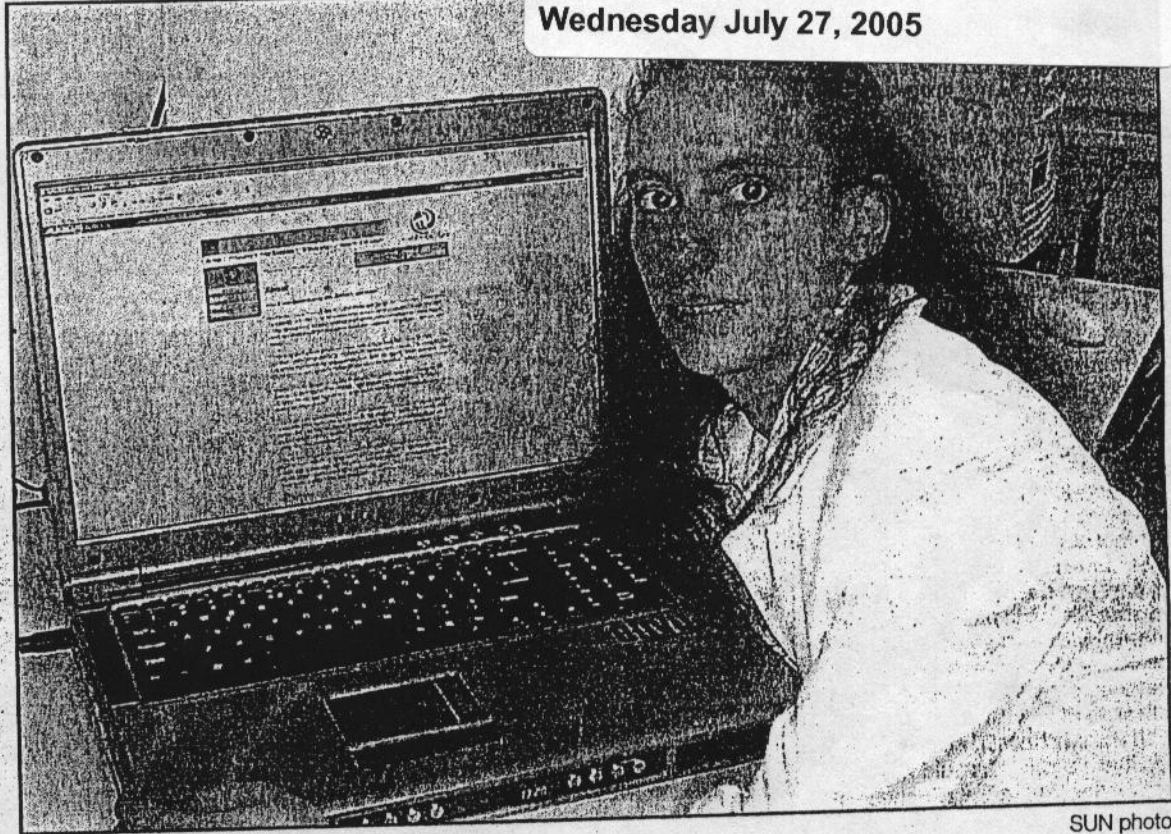
"Normally you would have programming people working with artists," says Tanya Hawley, co-ordinator of the Game Development program at Algonquin College. "But I don't want to train just programmers, and I don't want to train just artists because it has been proven in the past that just isn't enough. It really needs to be a packaged element, exactly the same way we run every other program at Algonquin College."

Hawley, who is also the co-ordinator of Algonquin's Interactive Multimedia Developer and post-graduate Interactive Multimedia programs, has developed the Game Development program in response to students' and employers' demands.

"This (program) evolved from the Interactive Multimedia program," Hawley says. "I was finding that so many of our national and regional clients were looking at gaming projects in addition to the staple ones such as web programming, web development and interactive CD-ROMs."

Employers were also contacting her looking to hire students able to work on gaming, but Hawley didn't have enough interactive multimedia students to meet the demand of both gaming and other multimedia clients.

"There was an expressed industry need. There was an expressed student need. And there was certainly regional if not national demand for this type of program because nothing like that existed."



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TANYA HAWLEY, co-ordinator of the Game Development program at Algonquin College, developed the only three-year diploma program in Ontario concentrating on game design and development that is recognized by the Ministry of Education.

Until now, students wishing to work as game developers had to take multiple levels of education. They had to enroll in a computer science diploma or degree program, and then take a secondary multimedia or animation program.

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creating educational and entertainment games and game components, rather than writing tests, exams or essays. Hawley says that educational games are going to be a large focus of this program because they are a large share of the market, in particular in the category for children five years old or younger.

The demand for game developers comes from a variety of industries including entertainment, education, government, and consumer products. In Canada, the majority of employment opportunities in commercial entertainment game development are in Montreal and Calgary.

The market does exist in other parts of the country, including Ottawa, but most of the 1,000-plus-employees companies are located in those two centres, says Hawley. Employment opportunities in educational games development are more readily available throughout the country, she says.

Game development program candidates need a high school di-

ploma, including a college-level math. A college-level physics will also help, but it is not mandatory. Students should have some knowledge of programming, design, and multimedia, and need to submit a portfolio. "It's not to say that students without this background could not do very well in this program. It's just that they would have a much better chance if they had already been exposed to it in high school," says Hawley.

As the program will go into its second and third year, students with previous applicable education or training may receive exemptions from courses or terms. Hawley says that computer science, industrial design and graphic design graduates, as well as psychology graduates have already expressed interest in joining the program.

First students in Game Development program will begin classes last week of August 2005. For more information and to apply call 727-4723 ext. 5503.