

UNT students don't play games, they design them

DENTON, Texas (AP) — Some University of North Texas students don't play games — they design them.

UNT computer science professor Ian Parberry, who oversees the school's Laboratory of Recreational Computing, is teaching an unusual class called Computer Game Design and Programming. Students insist it isn't all hand games.

"This class is a lot of work," said Byron Goodman, a senior who administers the lab. "It's a lot more work than a typical computer science class."

Goodman says he spends between 10 and 20 hours a week in the lab, but it's helping him achieve a lifelong dream. He's been interested in programming games since he was a kid.

"It's kind of an ultimate reality," Goodman said.

About 22 students have enrolled in the class this fall. It was first offered in 1993, on an experimental basis. At the time, it was the only one of its kind in the country, Parberry said.

"I wanted something that would motivate students, get them excited about computer science, and it seemed to me that the games industry was one marketplace that the university was not addressing," Parberry said.

<http://hercule.csci.unt.edu/ian>

Ian Parberry's website
UNT professor who teaches a computer game design and programming class

Next year, it'll be a regularly scheduled course.

In class, Parberry teaches students about computer graphics, game engineering and other aspects of the game industry. They work in groups to complete projects, creating everything from puzzle games to clones of the popular game "Doom."

There's already been a payoff: The rights to one student-designed puzzle game have been sold to IBM for \$30,000. Proceeds went to UNT's program, paying for new computers, parts, and accessories.

Parberry knows why game programming classes haven't caught on at other schools. "Academics tend to be a bit stuffy," Parberry said. "They don't want to necessarily do the latest and the greatest."

If it weren't for the lab, Goodman said, he would have been struggling to figure it all out

on his own.

"It would have been a lot more difficult if this program wasn't here," he said.

Jeff Wofford, a UNT graduate who now works for Austin-based Origin Systems, Inc., said most programmers in the game industry have to teach themselves.

Wofford said learning how to program and how to work in a group were invaluable skills when he was looking for work.

"I was able to say, 'I've actually worked on games before. I've actually worked on game projects with other people before,'" he said.

Wofford said when he was at UNT, he spent about 20 hours a week in the lab and many more hours outside. The students, he said, lacked social lives and were willing to stay up all night working on projects.

"It's really kind of a cauldron of nerds," he said.

Those so-called nerds, however, face bright futures. Parberry says he gets weekly phone calls from companies looking for prospective hires from his program. The starting salary for any of his students could be \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year. For a recent grad starting out, that's a great deal, the professor said.

"Plus, they're doing cool stuff," he added.

Austin police hear suspect's confession to 14 rapes

Christopher Ted Dye remains in custody at the Travis County Jail on \$1 million bail for a charge of aggravated assault.

AUSTIN (AP) — An unemployed auto mechanic with a criminal record has confessed to 14 rapes in the Austin area dating back to 1993, police say.

Police Sgt. Bruce Boardman said Christopher Ted Dye, 33, of Austin, is suspected of committing one-sixth of the city's history of rapes.

Boardman said Dye wasn't prepared to confess to the 15th sexual assault because he couldn't remember enough details to corroborate the evidence.

"He said he would have to go to the department and look at his request," Boardman said.

Dye was initially charged with aggravated sexual assault of a woman on July 2.

However, Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle said prosecutors will ask a grand jury for "multiple indictments" against Dye, who is being held in the Travis County Jail on \$1 million bail.

Many of the rapes occurred near a heavily-traveled highway known as MoPac, or Loop 1.

Investigators said Dye told them, "I am the MoPac rapist," after being arrested without incident while driving near the University of Texas early Saturday morning.

It wasn't immediately known Monday who would serve as Dye's attorney.

A sexual assault is categorized as aggravated when a deadly weapon is used. Police

said the victims were threatened with a knife.

Dye's arrest was the result of three weeks of work by officer Joanna Gerbrands, who combed the department's computer database, linking locations of thefts and burglaries that Dye had been convicted of to sites where rapes occurred.

According to police, Dye was convicted of stealing property from homes near MoPac in December 1993 and July 1994.

He was sentenced to 10 years probation.

Investigators said the burglaries occurred in the same areas where several rapes occurred.

They said there were several unique elements in the thefts that helped link Dye to the

rapes, but officers wouldn't elaborate.

"It wasn't until recently in this investigation that we had the resources to commit one officer to doing this computer search," Boardman said. "This arrest is a big relief for all of us."

Police Detective Mary Ann Heske said officers had kept Dye's arrest secret until most of the rape victims were told by telephone Sunday that a suspect was in jail.

Dye was under surveillance since Wednesday. Police said Dye had recently failed a drug test, a violation of his probation.

All the sexual assaults for which Dye is suspected happened between 1 a.m. and sunrise, police said.

In most of the 15 cases, the women were raped by an attacker who entered through an unlocked door or window.

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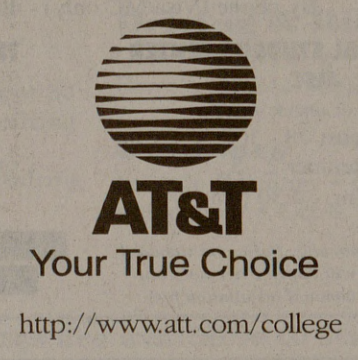
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