

Getting TAGD

Texas Aggie Game Developers brings the world of video game creation to A&M

By George Deutsch
THE BATTALION

The popularity of video games has overwhelmingly increased over the past two decades, but not all Texas A&M students are content with merely playing them. Long before games are ready for prime time, they must be conceptualized and developed, and one University organization, the Texas Aggie Game Developers, is in the process of creating video games for public consumption.

Video games are increasingly finding their niche within the realm of academia, and no one could be more excited about this than student game developers themselves. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California at Irvine, Southern Methodist University and the Georgia Institute of Technology all now offer at least one type of course in game design or criticism, according to The Christian Science Monitor. Experts

predict that this trend will translate into better game developers, and in time, better games.

TAGD President Jacob Foshee, a graduate computer science student, said he is disappointed that A&M doesn't offer game development courses, but he remains hopeful that they will be offered in the future. Foshee said A&M students are an untapped resource of game-creating talent. He said he hopes TAGD can bridge the gap between industry professionals and aspiring students.

"I believe very strongly that A&M has the academic caliber to create game developers," Foshee said, "but because there's no one on that track, it's hard to recognize that fact."

TAGD's efforts thus far look promising. There is currently a coin-operated game in the works that may one day find a home in a building on campus, and Foshee said he is currently working on an untitled, turn-based strategy game under the code name "space game."

"Imagine playing chess, but with spaceships," Foshee said.

TAGD will soon be a recognized branch of the International Game Developers Association, an industry organization for professionals that allows student members to join.

The IGDA is one of many avenues students have to meet industry professionals.

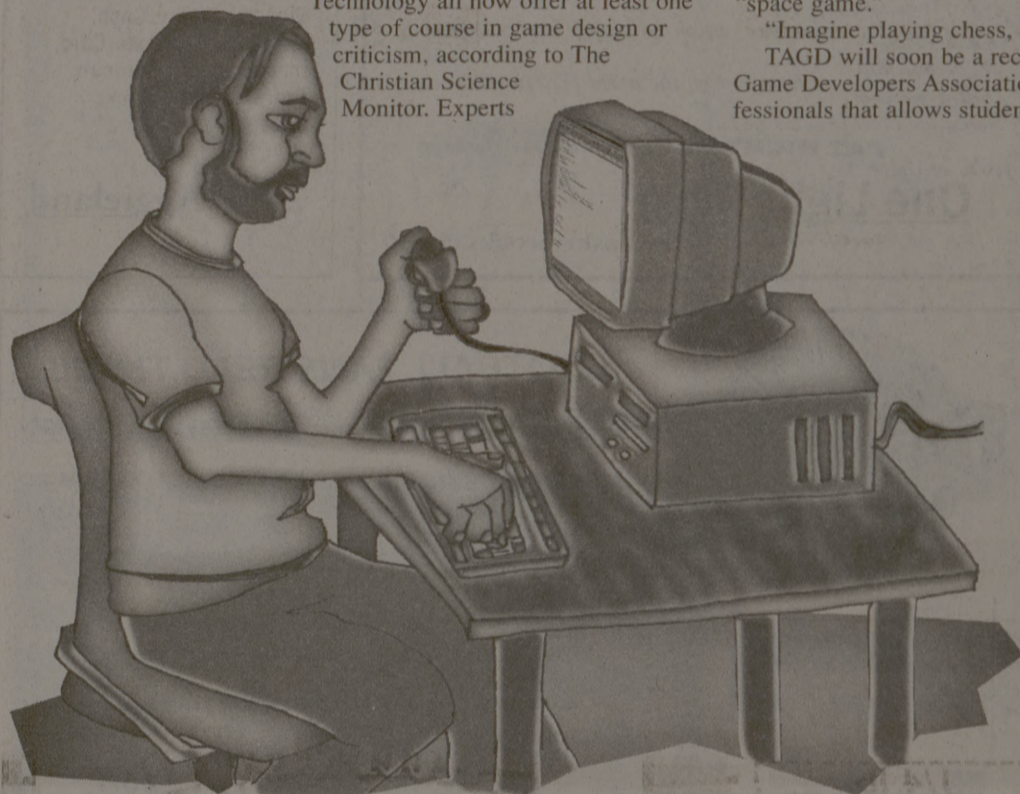
Larz Smith, senior computer science major, said that "as far as what's good about TAGD, it's being able to make contacts in the gaming industry, especially in regards to a potential employment opportunity." Without TAGD, students at A&M would have fewer means of interacting with industry professionals, Foshee said.

The remaining question is whether people will buy and play games developed by students. Freshman business major Colin Weber said he doubts it.

"I probably wouldn't buy (a student-created game) because it's not well known," Weber said. "Best-selling games, well, people buy them for a reason."

The future of groups like TAGD may still be up in the air, but the video game industry has shown no sign of slowing down. As Foshee said, "We want to give people something in addition to their degree."

Aggies interested in TAGD can check out the group's Web site at www.gettagd.com.



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By Daniel
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