

June 9, 2006

Richard Hughey, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

Re: CPB's Response to the Proposal for B.S. Computer Game Design

Dear Richard;

CPB reviewed the Computer Science: Computer Game Design Proposal, as well as ancillary documents (Charter, letters from the VPAA and the acting Deans of Engineering and Arts). Our overall assessment of the proposal was positive. It fills a niche that is currently empty around the country, but one that is likely to grow fast. It will be good to have the jump on other programs. As the proposal notes, recent decreases in enrollments in Computer Science (nationally and locally) have created excess "capacity", so the program should not create undue stresses on the existing Computer Science track and CS faculty. We recommend that it be approved expeditiously, so that it can be offered in 2006-07.

We do have the following comments and recommendations.

- 1) It was difficult for us to assess the equipment and software budget for the instructional game development laboratory. The proposal seems to assume that the much of the equipment will be donated. What is the budget if these donations do not materialize? Has the Dean made a firm commitment to fund these costs? We assume so, as the entire undergraduate degree program is dependent on the existence of this laboratory.
- 2) The arrangement to offer TAS funding to Film and Digital Media should students from the program lead to significant impacts makes sense. We note that the commitment from the SOE does not seem to be permanent, but there is a genuine tone of collaboration in the letters from the acting Deans, and we expect the SOE to continue to follow through with this arrangement should the program be successful.
- 3) As noted, the Computer Science department currently has unused capacity. At the same time, the SOE academic plan calls for aggressive growth in this department (from 19 to 28 FTE), with 3 of the 9 positions planned for Computer Game Design (one of which has been filled with the successful recruitment of Michael Mateas). We note that our endorsement of this proposal should not be viewed as endorsement of the plan to grow Computer Sciences by 9 FTE. We expressed concerns about the SOE academic plan in our comments to the CPEVC on the academic plans, and do not view that document as the final word on either the size or distribution of FTE in the SOE. If enrollments and majors remain low in Computer Science outside of Computer Game

Design, it is possible that the two additional FTE needed for Computer Game Design should come through turnover of existing FTE, not from new FTE.

4) The proposal notes that the Computer Game Design major is likely to attract a more diverse/more gender balanced student body than the standard Computer Science major. No justification is supplied for this statement, but we accept that it may be the case. However, we believe it is unlikely to happen without active and serious attention to the factors that dissuade a more diverse constituency from majoring in Computer Science, including the curriculum, faculty diversity, and cognate requirements. We recommend that one measure of the success of this program, which along with other factors might guide future campus investments, should be that it does, in fact, attract a more diverse student body than the standard CS major or than typical SOE majors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Koch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul Koch, Chair
Committee on Planning and Budget

cc: CPEVC Kliger
VPAA Alison Galloway
Acting Dean Issacson
Acting Dean Miller
Chair Lord
Chair Pohl
Principal Analyst Moses
Assistant Professor Whitehead