Mixed Reality Program Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 9th 2018, 4PM – 5:30PM

NSC 254

Attending:

- Robert Littlefield
- Eddie Lohmeyer
- Rick Hall
- Matthew Mosher
- John Murray
- Amanda Beaver
- Peter Smith
- Gideon Shbeeb
- Paul Varcholik

4:00   Dr. Littlefield's Charge to the Committee

Overview

Robert charged the committee with providing recommendations around two primary goals:

1. Finding an academic home for FIEA faculty
2. Creating something "exciting and new" in UCF downtown with respect to the Game Design undergraduate program, through collaboration between FIEA and GaIM

This charge, and the discussion that followed, formed the core of this meeting. It clarified the purpose of this committee and that the term "mixed reality" is not related to augmented or virtual reality. Rather, this committee's purpose is to recommend if and how we mix the "realities" of the GaIM department and FIEA.

Robert made it clear that "all options are on the table" and that he wants this committee, and by extension other faculty members of GaIM and FIEA, to recommend how we proceed. Questions were asked on constraints and guidance, and Robert did provide the aforementioned goals, but he did not want to dictate "his direction" for the outcome of the committee. Instead, he has asked us (this committee as representatives, and the larger groups of GaIM and FIEA) to recommend a plan.

A good question was asked about the spectrum of interaction (on one end: status quo – separation between FIEA and GaIM; on the other: full integration) and if there was an expectation of where we could or should land within that range. Robert's response further supported his wish for us to find consensus on how we proceed, that anywhere on that

spectrum was possible, but that all recommendations had to be supported with thoughtful analysis and a collaborative process.

Finding an academic home for FIEA faculty

As rationale for this charge, Robert made a number of statements regarding the current status of FIEA faculty:

- None of the FIEA faculty are tenured or on a tenure track
- That FIEA faculty do not have equivalent status as other NSCM faculty
- That FIEA is not a department
- That, because of their different status, FIEA faculty don't have the same raise/promotion rules as other NSCM faculty, likewise for funding and awards
- That FIEA faculty are evaluated like other NSCM faculty, but are not operating like other NSCM faculty

Robert also recognized the success of FIEA and his wish not to harm the program. Rather, he stated that his wish is to enhance the program through collaboration and an academic home for its faculty.

When pressed that some FIEA faculty may not wish to be tenure-track, Robert responded that faculty would not be forced to do something they did not want to do. But it was his earnest wish that we begin to collaborate with other groups in the school, particularly with GaIM. He noted that GaIM and NSCM faculty and staff would be moving to the CEM, and that this is an opportunity for us to find ways to interact and support each other.

As additional rationale for this charge, Robert also cited FIEA's recent program review; which recommended that FIEA look to hire or promote tenure-track faculty. He further cited the review's recommendation that FIEA begin to incorporate research into the program. He suggested that a possibility would be to begin collaborating with GaIM's existing research efforts. Looking a bit further into the future, Robert noted the possibility of a games-related Ph.D. program.

A concern was raised concerning course load on FIEA faculty – specifically that, if organized under GaIM, that FIEA faculty members could be required to teach undergraduate courses in the Game Design program, and how that might negatively impact student outcomes at FIEA.

Creating something "exciting and new" in UCF downtown with respect to the Game Design undergraduate program, through collaboration between FIEA and GaIM

The conversation, around the second charge to the committee, emphasized enhancing the undergraduate games program. Robert discussed how the program engaged a large number of students and asked how we might improve the student experience. Again, he asked that we (GaIM and FIEA) come together to develop a recommendation on how to proceed. However, he did offer a number of examples or ideas.

He mentioned the possibility of employing technologies, like Lynda.com, and leveraging partnerships, including the recently announced Microsoft-UCF partnership, to help teach large

classes. Robert also discussed the possibility of a production-focused program – perhaps something entirely new.

There was further discussion around large class sizes and the potential for reducing class sizes if appropriate. Robert encouraged the group to explore ways to integrate FIEA (possibly faculty, current students, and alumni) in undergraduate games instruction and the possibility of collaboration (students and faculty) on research efforts.

Again Robert stressed that everything is on the table.

To assist in this endeavor, Robert advised the committee to seek information and to pull in other staff and faculty (who might help provide additional insight) as necessary.

Further Discussion

At the outset of the meeting, Robert proffered a set of "ground rules" that the group could adopt. These rules are attached to the end of this document. An additional rule was proposed:

That while discussing our respective programs, we begin with the understanding that any criticism is intended to be constructive. Our charge requires that we learn about each other; and that means asking questions. Thus, may we adopt a default view that any questions or observations are not intended to offend or demean individuals or cast a bad light on either program.

4:50   Individual Introductions and General Discussion

We went around the room and introduced ourselves. This generated some wonderful impromptu discussion and it was clear (at least to this writer) that we were finding much common ground.

5:20   Meeting Locations and Schedule

We briefly discussed the next meeting location and schedule. We are shooting for another meeting two-three weeks from now (Doodle pool forthcoming). It is likely that we will meet at FIEA for the next meeting.

5:30   Meeting Adjourned

Establishing Ground Rules for Groups

Ground rules can be very useful indeed in group work contexts. The following suggestions include some of the issues and starting points from which groups can be encouraged to agree their own set of ground rules.

1 Create ownership of the ground rules.

2 Foster a culture of honesty. Successful group work relies on truthfulness. Suggest that it is as dishonest for group members to 'put up with' something they don't agree about, or can't live with, as it is to speak untruthfully. However, it is worth reminding learners about the need to temper honesty with tact. Seek common ground; explain the why.

3 Remind group members that they don't have to like people to work with them. In group work, as in professional life, people work with the team they are in, and matters of personal conflict need to be managed so they don't get in the way of the progress of the group as a whole. Assume good intent and make connections with one another. Seek common ground.

4 Affirm collective responsibility. Once issues have been aired, and group decisions have been made as fully as possible, the convention of collective responsibility needs to be applied for successful group processes. This leads towards everyone living with group decisions and refraining from articulating their own personal reservations outside the group. Speak with one voice.

5 Highlight the importance of developing and practicing listening skills. Every voice deserves to be heard, even if people don't initially agree with the point of view being expressed. Only one conversation will go on at once (unless working in subgroups).

6 Spotlight the need for full participation. Group work relies on multiple perspectives. Encourage group members not to hold back from putting forward their view. Group members also need to be encouraged to value the opinion of others as well as their own. All participants' inputs are equally valued.

7 Everyone needs to take a fair share of the group work. This does not mean that everyone has to do the same thing. It is best when the members of the group have agreed how the tasks will be allocated amongst themselves. Group members also need to be prepared to contribute by building on the ideas of others and validating each other's experiences. All members are responsible for deliverables.

8 Working to strengths can benefit groups. The work of a group can be achieved efficiently when tasks are allocated according to the experience and expertise of each member of the group. We will take responsibility for and forgive mistakes. Confirm the plan. Recognize courageous decisions.

9 Participants are expected to share all relevant information so working groups have access to the information they need to make sound recommendations. Express appreciation.

10 Help group members to see the importance of keeping good records. There needs to be an output to look back upon. This can take the form of planning notes, minutes or other kinds of evidence of the progress of the work of the group.

11 Group deadlines are sacrosanct. The principle, 'You can let yourself down, but it's not OK to let the group down' underpins successful group work. Sessions will start and stop on time.

12 Cultivate common courtesy. Be present in meetings. Silence cellular phones, don't answer or respond to messages during meetings. Allow people space and time to vent.

13 Help people to value creativity and off-the-wall ideas. Don't allow these to be quelled out of a desire to keep the group on task, and strike a fair balance between progress and creativity. "Park" off target discussions for later consideration.

15 Cultivate the idea of group rules as a continuing agenda. It can be productive to review and renegotiate the ground rules from time to time, creating new ones as solutions to unanticipated problems that might have arisen. It is important, however, not to forget or abandon those ground rules that proved useful in practice, but which were not consciously applied.