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**To:** Jorge Diaz-Herrera, Dean, GCCIS  
Jeremy Haefner, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs  
**From:** Andrew Phelps, Chair, Department of Interactive Games & Media  
IGM Department Faculty  
**Date:** April 28, 2010  
**Subject:** Program Census Review and Response for IGM Academic Programs

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Dear Provost Haefner and Dean Diaz-Herrera,

This memo is in response to the 'program review census' that was conducted by Academic Affairs to determine which programs are viable for semester conversion and which programs should be discontinued. It is our understanding as a faculty that there are three possible categories as outcomes for this review process: (1) auto-convert (meaning that the program should be converted without question), (2) a sort of "middle" state requesting additional information on why a program should be continued in light of enrollment concerns, and (3) recommended program discontinuance (meaning the program is not viable and should be discontinued). The two undergraduate programs within IGM, the BS in Game Design & Development (GD&D) and the BS in New Media Interactive Development, are considered to be 'category 1' programs. The Masters in GD&D is considered to be a 'category 2' program, and as such this memo attempts to provide additional information and insight with respect to plans by which the Masters program will be adjusted to address enrollment concerns, as well as additional rationales for program continuance that may not have been raised as a part of the program census review.

There are several plans for revising the Masters program as a part of the semester conversion process. The faculty of the IGM department view the semester conversion as a broad opportunity to reconstitute the curriculum of the department in each of our programs, and to strategically align the programs with each other and with the newly formed department. Broadly speaking, the changes that the faculty are proposing for the Masters in GD&D are in three broad categories:

1. **To "shrink" the program from its current size of 62 quarter credits** (or SCH equivalent), with an eye towards creating an experience for our graduate students that can be completed in a more reasonable timeframe. This will significantly reduce the overall cost of the degree program, which is currently too expensive given current market conditions. Most students in the program have identified strong resonance with the curriculum, but cite cost as a constraining factor.
2. **To repackage opportunities for our own undergraduates to continue on to the graduate program through a formal "4+1" experience.** Currently, we have only graduated a handful of students from the BS GD&D program (1 in 2009, roughly 30 in 2010), but already some students have chosen to go on to the grad program (and the number of graduates from the undergraduate program will increase dramatically given the enrollment curve). The fact that we have a graduate program is a key distinguishing feature of our offerings in games education relative to the competition, and as the undergraduate program grows, there are significant opportunities to draw from this pool through a combined undergraduate/graduate experience.
3. **To offer more Graduate Assistantships / Teaching Assistantships to attract additional students.** As the undergraduate program continues to grow, it will necessitate additional GA/TA positions to service the undergraduate student body, which will increase the numbers of students that can be attracted through partial awards and discounts.

In addition to these planned revisions, the faculty of the IGM department feel it is important to note several elements of the Masters program that were possibly overlooked in the program census review process, as the process attempted to take an individualized view of academic programs when in fact these programs are integrated within the department. Of particular note are the following ways in which the graduate program impacts the entire tenor of the department, the faculty, and the student body:

First, the notion that the graduate program was fully funded and allocated all requested resources, and then fell short on enrollment is not a realistic view of the complexity of the situation. **Resources allocated to the graduate program, like all other resources allocated to the department, are being used to fuel the explosive growth in the undergraduate BS GD&D program**, which now accepts an entering class six times greater than original projections. Faculty lines associated with the graduate program also service the undergraduate program and vice-versa, there is no division with respect to resource allocation of faculty. The one graduate assistantship that was funded for the grad program was never offered to any student, as the funds from that award had to cover the salary for the GD&D Laboratory Manager position, since that position was awarded to the undergraduate program without a salary attached to the approval. **These are small examples of the large scale issue: the financial model of the program review process fails to take into account the synergistic nature of multiple programs serviced by a single department.**

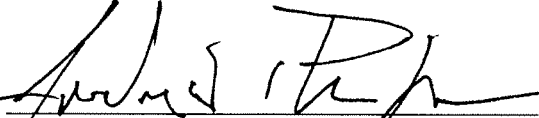
Second, **the graduate program represents a key difference between our offerings in games education and those of our peer-class institutions** such as RPI, WPI, Champlain, Michigan State, DePaul, etc. During open house tours, student recruitment events, college & careers sessions, and regional and national talks and conferences, prospective students and parents consistently remark that "RIT takes this seriously and has a graduate program" and that they "might want to go on for a Masters so RIT was immediately among the choices." **It is the considered opinion of the entire faculty that the elimination of the graduate program would have a significant negative effect on undergraduate enrollment**, which is another synergistic element of the program that must be considered in a wider context.

Third, the graduate program has been the mechanism by which the vast majority of the scholarly activities of IGM faculty have been realized. Since the inception of the Masters program in 2006, IGM grants and gifts have totaled ~\$1M in direct funding to RIT, and significantly more than that if external partner funding and internal cost-shares are included. Nearly all of the major initiatives to date have utilized graduate students in the MS GD&D as a primary mechanism by which these activities were supported, including recent successes such as the cooperative grants with Maryland, Stanford, UIUC, gifts from Microsoft, Red Hat, Sugar Labs, and events such as the Picture the Impossible ARG with the Democrat & Chronicle through the Laboratory for Social Computing. Furthermore, many of these opportunities would simply not be credible or well reviewed by external funding agencies without the MS GD&D program. **The elimination of the graduate program would significantly undercut the ability of both new and established faculty to recruit and supervise graduate students in connection with their own scholarship, and thus to realize their own scholarly potential.**

Finally, related to point three, as the undergraduate GD&D program continues to grow, the faculty of the IGM department will continue to grow, by as many as nine tenure-track faculty over the next several years. The graduate program within the department, and the ability of new faculty to work with graduate students directly pursuing studies in Game Design & Development, is a key attractor to top-tier candidates in the field. It is the view of the faculty, and particularly those serving or that have served recently on the IGM Search Committee, that **should the graduate program be eliminated, the IGM department will be unable to attract and retain a credible faculty to support all of the programs in the department.**

Given both the plans that we have for positive program growth and re-alignment, and the synergistic ways in which the graduate program supports activities throughout all of our academic programs, the faculty of the IGM department feel that discontinuance of the MS GD&D is not only unwarranted, but would represent a strategic error on the part of RIT.

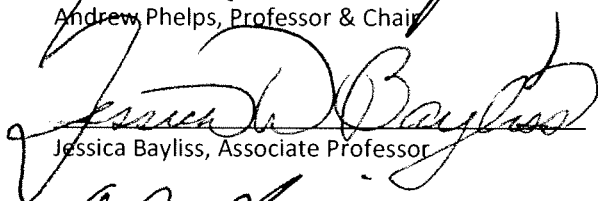
Respectfully submitted,  
The Faculty of Interactive Games & Media, April 2010.



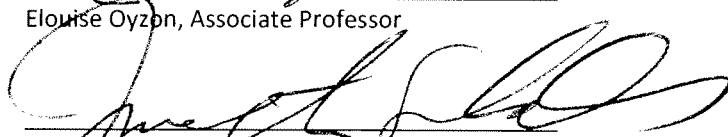
Andrew Phelps, Professor & Chair



Elouise Oyzon, Associate Professor



Jessica Bayliss, Associate Professor



Jonathan Schull, Associate Professor



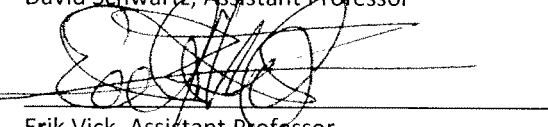
Al Biles, Professor



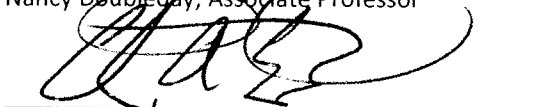
David Schwartz, Assistant Professor



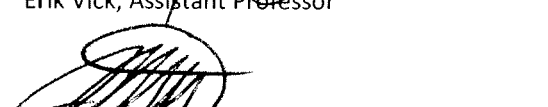
Nancy Doubleday, Associate Professor



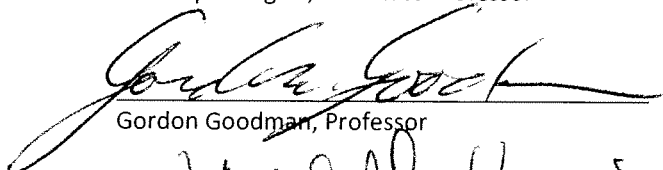
Erik Vick, Assistant Professor



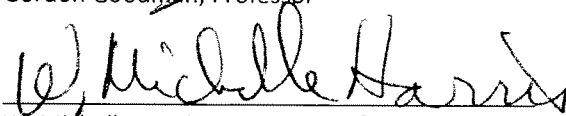
Christopher Egert, Associate Professor



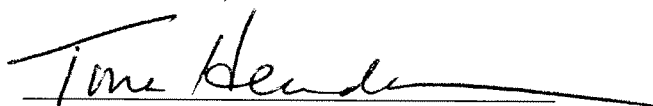
Keith Whittington, Associate Professor



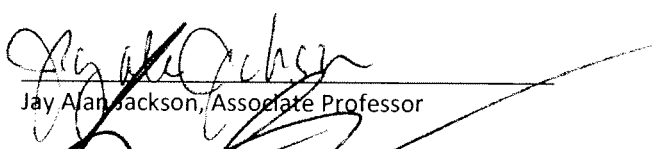
Gordon Goodman, Professor




W. Michelle Harris, Assistant Professor



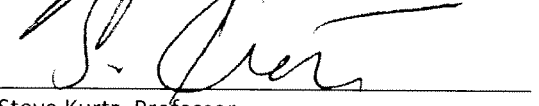
Tona Henderson, Associate Professor



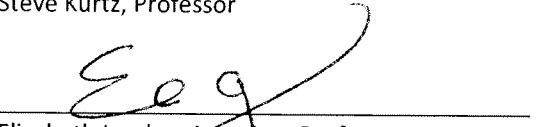
Jay Alan Jackson, Associate Professor



Stephen Jacobs, Associate Professor



Steve Kurtz, Professor



Elizabeth Lawley, Associate Professor