

April 25, 2017

Dr. James Fielder
Secretary of Higher Education
Maryland Higher Education Commission
6 N. Liberty St.
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Secretary Fielder,

Maryland Institute, College of Art (MICA) is proposing a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree in Game Design. This proposed program unnecessarily duplicates the University of Baltimore's (UB) Bachelor of Science (BS) program in Simulation and Digital Entertainment (SDE). The UB BS in SDE program has been game design-focused since it was created in 2003 and also has a game lab. The programs have overlapping student learning outcomes, duplicative courses, and serve the very same market from adjacent campuses.

UB and MICA are situated on either side of Mount Royal Avenue, an easy 5-minute walk from one campus to another; the MICA program is to be offered face-to-face and plans to serve the Baltimore metropolitan region, which the UB program also serves. Page 8 of the MICA proposal erroneously indicates that the UB program is located within the "computer science department," but UB does not have a computer science department. The UB program is within the division of Science, Information Arts and Technology and uses some courses from the Klein Family School of Communication Design. (The course abbreviations at UB may have mislead the MICA writer, but the courses are not computer science courses, and there is an internal process underway to change those abbreviations.) It is true that the BS is not purely an arts degree, but neither is the proposed BFA. The jobs for which prospective graduates would apply overlap (per MICA, software developers and multimedia artists and animators), and the BFA does not appear designed to be a feeder to MFA programs.

The proposed MICA BFA has many courses that are similar to UB's BS courses, and overall the proposed BFA extends into the goals and reach of the UB program, both in its current form and in UB's continuing expansion of game design offerings. The BS and proposed BFA both have a team-based emphasis, similar areas of focus (game design, programming, art production etc.), and, most importantly, are designed to instruct students how to make "games from prototype to finished form"

(https://www.mica.edu/Programs_of_Study/Undergraduate_Programs/Game_Design/Overview.html).

The UB program is described at <http://www.ubalt.edu/cas/undergraduate-majors-and-minors/majors/simulation-and-digital-entertainment/index.cfm>.

The table below summarizes the extensive curriculum overlap:

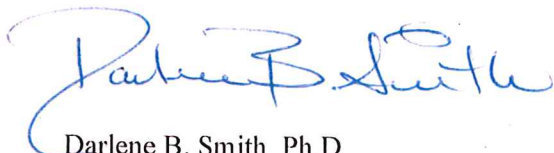
UB course	MICA course	Comments
COSC 150 Intro to Game Design	IAGD 225 Game/Play	
COSC 477 Community-Focused Game Design	IAGD 300 Game Collab Studio	Because the nature of the course is to partner with nonprofits and other local organizations, the proposed course potentially competes for community partnerships in the area. Apart from this class, and despite the wording of the proposal, there does not seem to be much course duplication with UB's serious games/simulation focus.
COSC 370 Level Design	IAGD 220 Narrative and Level Design	UB's course may be for students later in the program and more technically advanced.
COSC 260 Intro to 3D Graphics	AN 203 Intro to 3D Game Animation	
COSC 469/470 Game Development Project I & II	IAGD 400/410 Senior Project Studio & Senior Project Studio II	Same concept: two-semester, team-based capstone project
COSC 324 Designing for Humans	GD 345 Interface Design	Content similar on the human-computer interface theory side
COSC 320 Game Concept and Design	IAGD 222 Tabletop Game Studio	The courses are taught in a very similar way and have similar content. The UB course description (which is in the process of being changed—as often has to happen in rapidly shifting fields like this one) does not fully demonstrate the similarities that are there in practice now.
CMAT 212 Computer Graphics: Imaging	IAGD 230 2D Game Studio	UB uses the CMAT course to teach 2D art to be applied to games; however, the MICA courses on 2D game design, such as IAGD 230, are primarily focused on the basics of digital game design, such as scripted behaviors, which are covered in UB's COSC Game Scripting
<i>27 credits</i>	<i>27 credits</i>	<i>The MICA program has a 36-credit core; more than two-thirds of it has significant overlap with UB's BS in SDE. The remaining third has some similarity as well. See below.</i>
COSC 440 Frontiers of Game Design	IAGD 321 Virtual and Augmented Reality Games	The 321 course is similar to a section of COSC 440; the topic of 440 revolves, so virtual and augmented reality are not taught every semester.
	IL 247 Concept Art for Games	UB has a 400-level 2D art and animation course in the curriculum development process that covers some of the same material, but is not a fully duplicative course.
	AN 202 Game Animation	Again, the duplication is with a course in curriculum development.
		Both programs teach history and theory, but the MICA program is currently lighter on games criticism/journalism.

While there are some differences in individual courses between the two programs, from a program level, duplication remains. UB also offers both a master's degree and doctoral program that are focused on interaction design and gaming in the wide array of purposes beyond entertainment for which these skills are used. This BFA enters a field in which UB is established and is working to attract more students. As it currently is presented, there is too much duplication and risks undermining the UB program. The UB program has capacity and can serve the market the MICA program targets. Jobs remain unfilled because higher education seats remain open, not because there are not enough of them. UB also offers its program at the Universities at Shady Grove.

Finally, it is our understanding that programs are not to be advertised until approved. The MICA web page says this program is "in development," but all the courses are listed, and there is no mention that it is not yet approved by the Commission. See the enclosures for related material.

Thank you for your consideration of this objection to the proposed program.

Sincerely,



Darlene B. Smith, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President & Provost

Encl.

cc: Theresa Hollander, Associate Vice Chancellor, USM

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From the Baltimore Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/news/2017/03/24/how-i-leveled-up-micas-game-design-program.html>

How I...

How I leveled up MICA's game design program

SUBSCRIBER CONTENT: Mar 24, 2017, 5:30am EDT

Jason Corace said many students from the Maryland Institute College of Art end up working at game studios and gaming companies in Greater Baltimore. But it's almost a kind of "hidden industry" in the area.

Former MICA students currently work at studios like Big Huge Games in Lutherville, Sparkypants Studios in Baltimore and Firaxis Games in Sparks Glencoe.

"MICA has had a role in the game industry and in game art for a long time, but it was never really formalized," said Corace, who is chair of MICA's game design program.

Corace came to MICA in 2013 to help establish a game design minor program. But he wanted to expand opportunities for his students, to give them a better foundation in gaming and art education.

Now, he is heading up the school's first game design degree program, set to launch this coming fall. The BBJ caught up with him recently to talk about how it all came about and what people can expect from the new program.

Why have a whole degree program dedicated to game design? Games are made up of a lot of things. There's the animation aspect, there's graphic design, programming, practical design, user experience design. It's a lot, and with the minor, we had to shove all that into five classes. Oftentimes we were spending so much time on the technical aspects of it all that we never got to focus as much on the art and really have a lot of depth with that. We're not just trying to be a technical school. We want people to go out and be leaders in the industry, and be starting their own studios and have the ability to fill a bunch of different jobs. Now we can have classes just focusing on narratives in games, we can have classes on games and play in culture, we can have classes about using games outside of just the play setting. We can do a much better job of marrying the art and culture aspects of games with the technical side and hopefully give people a really well-rounded foundation in game design.

What is the local job scene like for students coming out of the program? We don't necessarily want our students to just be able to make games all the time. Our students have come out of the minor program and gone on to make apps or websites or different things in the design space. We have other students who have used the ideas of games and play for jobs in exhibition or advertising design. We're not prescriptive, we're not trying to put people into specific roles as animators or game designers. We want to give them the ability to do those jobs if that's what they want to do, but ideally, we want them to be able to get a bunch of different jobs throughout their career and



SACUN REWMAN

Jason Corace during his class at MICA.

really have some flexibility and adaptability in their career paths. We even had one of our students who studied game design and she's now designing fireworks displays. That's a path I wouldn't have expected, but it's great.

What are you most looking forward to in the coming semester? This year we've offered more game courses than we have in the past and we've been making a lot more games and the quality of the work is getting better and better and better. I'm excited to see how far we can go when we have that extra time and more classes to really hone in on the different areas of game design. There's also an element of the unknown and experimental that comes along with being at an art and design school like MICA that's really interesting too. People ask me 'what kinds of games are people going to be making' and I'm like 'I don't know,' and that's really exciting for me.

Morgan Eichensehr
Reporter
Baltimore Business Journal



Overview

This program is in development for entering freshman fall 2016/for sophomores fall 2017.

Games have moved from popular entertainment into their own art form. In MICA's BFA in Game Design program, students explore games as a creative practice that can entertain, educate, and create social change.

Working in a team-based, open lab model, students learn to make games from prototype to finished form and are able to focus on individual areas of interest-including game design, narrative, programming, art production, animation, sound, and more-as they work on collaborative projects with a variety of external partners. The curriculum, which expands upon MICA's successful concentration in game arts, reflects the multidisciplinary nature of game development and draws upon the College's renowned faculty in interactive arts, illustration, and animation so that students gain an outstanding technical and conceptual skillset in preparation for a career in game design.

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*1300 W Mount Royal Avenue
Baltimore MD 21217-4134
(410) 669-9200*

Curriculum

The following curriculum is planned for Fall 2017 and is subject to change.

CORE GAME DESIGN: 11 COURSES

Course Title	Course #	Credits
Game/Play: Introduction to Design and Theory	IAGD 200	3
2D Game Design: Introduction to Game Programming	IAGD 210	3
Level and Narrative Design	IAGD 220	3
2D Game Studio: Advanced 2D Programming, Development, and Design	IAGD 230	3
Game Collab Studio I	IAGD 300	3
3D Game Design: Introduction to 3D Programming and Workflows	IAGD 310	3
3D Worlds and Level Design	IAGD 320	3
3D Game Studio: Advanced 3D Programming, Development, and Design	IAGD 330	3
Game Collab Studio II	IAGD 300	3
Senior Project Studio: Team or Self-Directed Project Development	IAGD 410	3
Senior Project Studio II: Professional Development and Project Refinement	IAGD 420	3
Total Credits - Core Design		36

SUPPORTIVE ART & DESIGN: 13 COURSES

Course Title	Course #	Credits
<u>Elements of Visual Thinking I</u>	FF 100	3
<u>Drawing I</u>	FF 198	3
<u>Electronic Media and Culture</u>	FF 210	3
<u>Painting I</u>	FF 150	3
<u>Elements of Visual Thinking II</u>	FF 102	3
<u>Drawing II</u>	FF 199	3
<u>Sculptural Forms</u>	FF 101	3
Foundation Elective		3

Game Design Studio/Sophomore Elective I	3
Game Design Studio/Sophomore Elective II	3
Game Design Studio/Junior Elective I	3
Game Design Studio/Junior Elective II	3
Game Design Studio/Senior Elective	3
Total Credits - Supportive Units	39

This page was last updated on 12/19/2016.

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Course List

Course Descriptions: Core Design

IAGD 225 | GAME/PLAY

3 credits

This is an introductory course about game culture, theory, design and development. Students will play, make and analyze games in order to build a common and more extensive vocabulary to discuss and understand the form. Principles from traditional board games, sports games, and party games will be analyzed and this analysis will then be applied to designing two tabletop games over the course of the semester.

IAGD 210 | 2D GAME DESIGN

3 credits

Prerequisite: IAGD 200

This class will teach the techniques of creating video games from the ground up. Students will learn to program, design, prototype and test their own projects and also work in groups. In addition to creating one's own unique games, students will learn video game history, theory, and production, including current trends in digital games and gaming.

IAGD 220 | LEVEL AND NARRATIVE DESIGN

3 credits

Prerequisite: IAGD 210

This course is an introduction to level design and narrative strategies for digital games. Using the skills learned in 2D Game Design, students learn how to analyze, design, build and test compelling levels and game narratives in 2D environments.

IAGD 230 | 2D GAME STUDIO

6 credits

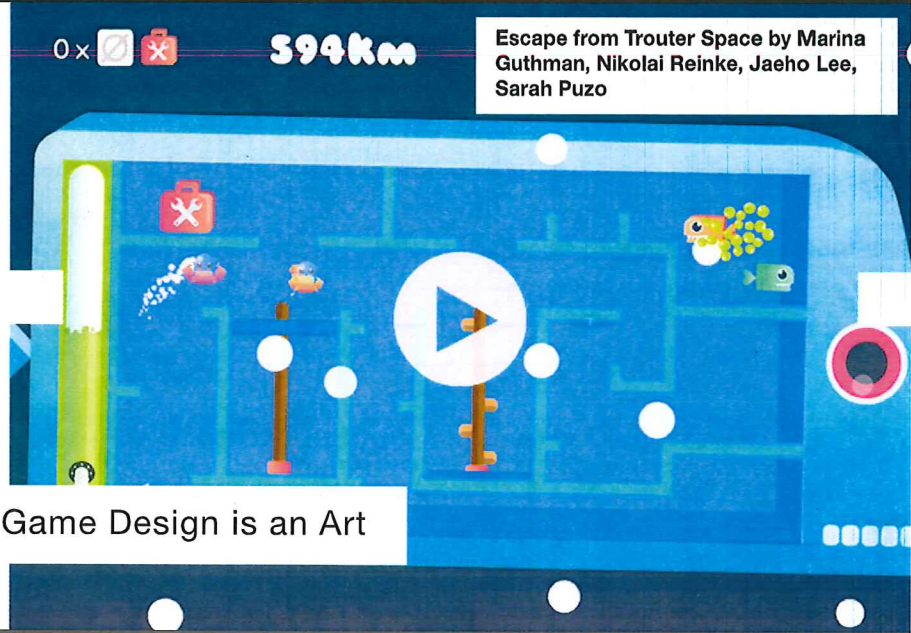
Prerequisite: IAGD 210

At MICA, we explore games from a unique perspective that can only be found at an art and design college. Our program explores the role of play within our culture and questions how games are used to entertain, educate and create meaning.

Students learn to create games from the ground up, building skills in design, programming and prototyping. At MICA, students also have the ability to concentrate in supporting areas like 3D animation, sound design, graphic design and illustration. And they'll do all of this in a state-of-the-art maker space with a designated game lab, serving as a nexus of creative ideas and output.

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At MICA, Game Design is an Art



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Meet Jason Corace, head of the new B.F.A. in Game Design at MICA



Jason Corace is a noted game designer, media artist and educator. Founder of the successful concentration in game arts at MICA, Jason is a recent winner of a Strong National Museum of Play Research Fellowship, and in 2013, he received a Maryland State Individual Artist Award and was named one of Baltimore Magazine's "40 under 40."

Read Jason's full biography [here](#), and visit his [personal website](#) to see examples of his work.

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Alumni in Game Design

The BFA in Game Design was built upon MICA's highly successful studio concentration in game arts. Alumni from that concentration have gone on to work in gaming and related industries, and many of them are:

- Working in the game design industry at companies that include Firaxis Games, Big Huge Games and Sparkypants
- Studios Founders of game, mobile app, and web design companies Interactive designers, art directors, web developers, and production artists for for creative design and communication agencies

Alumni Found Indie Game Company



Karen Chang '15 and Cole Pritchard '15 are co-founders of the independent game company Studio217, named after Studio 217 in MICA's Brown Center.

During their senior year at MICA, Game Design and Interactive Arts faculty member, [Sam Sheffield](#), encouraged the pair to apply to IndieCade East, an international, independent

Game Design students recently showcased their games at Fall Arcade, held in MICA's BBOX.



galleries

application to the festival - and a successful first day showing an early version of their virtual reality game, Mr. Mart - they decided to formally launch a game studio.



[Learn More.](#)

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