Approved by the Board of Trustees

March 28, 2024

**13**

Board Meeting

March 28, 2024

ESTABLISH THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN GAME DEVELOPMENT, SCHOOL OF INFORMATION SCIENCES AND THE GRADUATE COLLEGE, URBANA

**Action:** Establish the Master of Science in Game Development, School of Information Sciences and the Graduate College

**Funding:** No new funding required; existing resources and tuition revenue will support the new program

The chancellor, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and vice president, University of Illinois System, with the advice of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate recommends approval of a proposal from the School of Information Sciences and the Graduate College to establish the Master of Science in Game Development.

It has been estimated that more than three billion people on the planet play games on phones, tablets, computers, consoles, VR headsets, and tabletops. The global mobile game market is responsible for $100.0 billion of the more than $180.0 billion global game market. The number of employees in the video gaming industry has grown significantly in recent years, and the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects continued growth. Within the state of Illinois alone, a recent search on Indeed.com found 83 openings for game artist, 78 for game developer, and 23 for game designer.

The innovative, interdisciplinary Master of Science in Game Development (MS in Game Development) will be organized around university-studio partnerships, with students gaining industry experience throughout the program. The proposed program will provide technical training and practical experience for students interested in work in professional game studios, game-adjacent industries, or other businesses where game-related skills are increasingly in demand. The MS in Game Development will foster critical collaboration, communication, and professional business practice integration skills. Related report items request the establishment of concentrations in Art, Design, Production, Programming, and Narrative. Students will focus their technical skills in one of these areas depending on the concentration they choose to pursue in the program.

The MS in Game Development will be offered entirely online, which is advantageous for scalability, access for international students, and access for non-traditional students, including professionals desiring retraining for the game industry or those already in game development who wish to further their skills in other design areas.

The proposed program will be administered by Informatics Programs, hosted by the School of Information Sciences. Given its interdisciplinary nature, the program, curriculum, and admissions committees will have representation from Informatics Programs, as well as from departments across campus, including art and design, computer science, theatre, music, and English.

Hiring of faculty and staff to deliver and administer the program and purchasing of equipment that will be used to deliver program content is being funded through an initial investment from the Office of the Provost, committed support of the School of Information Sciences, anticipated tuition revenue from program enrollment, and anticipated income from grants for research by program faculty. The School of Information Sciences plans to hire 6.5 FTE specialized faculty and 5.0 FTE administrative staff. Funding for these hires and equipping and maintaining a game design studio is coming from four sources: 1) an Investment for Growth grant from the Office of the Provost for program start-up; 2) committed support from the School for Information Sciences; 3) program tuition revenue – as a self-supporting program, when at capacity, the program is expected to generate more than enough tuition revenue to cover expenses within two to three years of launch; 4) contracted research and development revenue for the program’s research grants and partnerships.

The Board action recommended in this item complies in all material respects with applicable State and federal laws, University of Illinois *Statutes*, *The General Rules Concerning University Organization and Procedure*, and Board of Trustees policies and directives.

The executive vice president and vice president for academic affairs concurs with this recommendation. The University Senates Conference has indicated that no further senate jurisdiction is involved.

The president of the University of Illinois System recommends approval. This action is subject to further review by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.