

News Release

For immediate release

More than half of Singapore- MIT GAMBIT Game Lab students find employment in game companies

25 summer game prototypes and 41 research papers published

1 Sept 2009 – Since running yearly summer internship programmes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) from 2007, the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab (GAMBIT) has trained 77 students from various local tertiary institutes in games research and development. Of these, 41 of them have since found employment in the Singapore games and media industries while the remaining is largely still serving national service.

Hired as artist, programmer or game designer in games and media companies such as Ubisoft, Boomzap, Double Negative and NexGen Studio, these students have put their internship experience at GAMBIT to good use and their employers generally agreed that the students have brought value to their companies.

These developments were announced at a GAMBIT media briefing today where 40 new students (from the 2009 batch) showcased their six newly developed game prototypes to the media. These students had just returned from a nine-week internship programme at MIT.

A pioneering collaboration between MDA and MIT with support from the National Research Foundation, GAMBIT is a five-year research initiative that addresses important challenges faced by the global digital game research community and industry, with a core focus on identifying and solving research problems using a multi-disciplinary approach that can be applied by Singapore's digital game industry. It involves a summer internship programme where local tertiary students are attached to MIT to create new innovative games based on research topics.

Mr Olivier de Rotalier, Managing Director, Ubisoft Singapore said: "The internship at MIT is a very good launch pad for the students and I believe it has benefited them tremendously judging from their performance in Ubisoft. Although still fresh in terms of their experience in game development, they have demonstrated a strong urge to learn and are able to grasp the concepts quite readily. We will continue to keep in close contact with GAMBIT and hope to recruit more students in the near future."

Mr Lim Chong Jin, Deputy Director of Projects and Capability Development, Temasek Polytechnic also agreed. He said: "The GAMBIT internship programme has developed a fertile ground for new insight, inspiration and imagination for the games and media industries. A survey of the GAMBIT alumni from Temasek Polytechnic reveals that many have not only found employment but are working in some of the best games and media companies. Backed with strong credentials, some students have set their sights in related fields, in furthering their academic aspirations. This programme has provided a stimulating environment that encourages interdisciplinary convergence – achieving higher order learning through collaborations and immersion. The seeds have taken roots, it will continue to blossom."

GAMBIT has also published 25 summer game prototypes (<http://gambit.mit.edu/loadgame/index.php>). Of these, several have won accolades. *CarneyVale: Showtime* was among the "Top 10 Independent Games Showcase Winners 2009" by PAX 10 (Penny Arcade). It was selected by game industry experts from over 150 submissions of independent games worldwide. The game will be showcased at 2009 Penny Arcade Expo (in Seattle), a prestigious international event that highlights the best of indie games.

Last year, *CarneyVale: Showtime* beat 350 entries from 10 countries to win the grand prize Microsoft's "XNA Dream-Build-Play" Challenge 2008. It became the first Singapore game that was published on Microsoft's Xbox Live XNA Community Games Channel (XBLCG). It is now the top five most downloaded games on the channel with 48,000 downloads to date by gamers from United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy and Spain. It was also a finalist at the 2009 Independent Games Festival (Seumas McNally Grand Prize) and voted the No.1 XNA Community Game of 2008, by Gamasutra.

Other noteworthy games are mobile game *Backflow* which was a finalist in two categories at the 2008 Independent Games Festival (IGF) Mobile competition: “Best Game” and “Innovation in Mobile Game Design”; *Picopoke*, a Facebook game nominated for “Next Great Mobile Game” at the 2009 IGF Mobile competition; *Phorm*, a puzzle game was exhibited at 2009 IndieCade Independent Games Showcase at E3, Los Angeles; and *Akrasia*, an abstract game was a finalist at the 2009 IndieCade Festival of Independent Games. *Akrasia* was also exhibited at SIGGRAPH 2009 and nominated for “Best Interactive Art or Puzzle in JaysGames” at the Best of Casual Gameplay 2008 awards.

On top of talent and game development, GAMBIT also develops research, connections and multi-disciplinary approaches to research problems that can be applied on Singapore’s growing games industry. It has so far published 41 research papers and publications in well-respected journals as well as leading game publications and portals such as Gamasutra, Game Developer magazine and Game Career Guide. The games have been exhibited at international game conferences like the Game Developers’ Conference, Casual Connect, IndieCade, SIGGRAPH, and Games Convention Asia.

Dr Christopher Chia, Chief Executive Officer, MDA said: “The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab has accomplished a remarkable feat by achieving all these within a short period of time. It is encouraging to know that some of the major game companies like Ubisoft have approached GAMBIT regularly for recommendations on students that they can recruit. GAMBIT will continue to work closely with industry players to uncover trends and requirements so as to better groom future batches of students into gaming professionals and ensure that their skills sets are relevant to the industry.”

Professor William Uricchio, Director, Comparative Media Studies, MIT said: “The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab offers a bridge among Singapore’s various tertiary institutions, and between them and MIT, and this in itself has been rewarding. But it does more. GAMBIT bridges game research and game development in a highly innovative manner, and the proof of concept can be seen in the range of academic papers and game prototypes produced, and the embrace of GAMBIT by the games industry.”

Moving forward, GAMBIT will continue to enhance their internship programme with possible tie-ups with game companies based in Singapore. Some of the new games showcased at today's media briefing will also be made available at the coming Games Convention Asia at Suntec Convention Centre.

Annex A: List of GAMBIT's achievements

Annex B: Fact sheets on the six newly developed game prototypes (year 2009)

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Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA)

Formed in 2003, the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) plays a vital role in transforming Singapore into a Trusted Global Capital for New Asia Media. MDA spearheads initiatives that promote industry growth in film, television, radio, publishing, music, games, animation and Interactive Digital Media. At the same time, in ensuring clear and consistent regulatory policies and guidelines, MDA helps to foster a pro-business environment for industry players and increase media choices for consumers. For more information, visit www.mda.gov.sg and www.smf.sg.

The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab (GAMBIT)

The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab is a five-year research initiative that addresses important challenges faced by the global digital game research community and industry, with a core focus on identifying and solving research problems using a multi-disciplinary approach that can be applied by Singapore's digital game industry. The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab focuses on building collaborations between Singapore institutions of higher learning and several MIT departments to accomplish both research and development. For more information, visit <http://.gambit.mit.edu>.

The National Research Foundation (NRF)

The National Research Foundation (NRF), a department under the Prime Minister's Office, sets the national direction for research and development (R&D) by developing policies, plans and strategies for research, innovation and enterprise, funds strategic initiatives, builds up R&D capabilities and capacities through nurturing our own and attracting foreign talent, and coordinates the research agenda of different agencies to transform Singapore into a knowledge-intensive, innovative and entrepreneurial economy. It provides secretariat support to the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC), chaired by the Prime Minister. A five-year budget of S\$5 billion has been allocated to the NRF in 2006 to achieve this mission. For more information, please visit www.nrf.gov.sg.