On April 5, DigiPen held its first-ever gallery night for graduating art students. The event provided an opportunity for industry recruiters to see the work of students graduating from the Associate of Applied Arts in 3D Animation degree program. Representatives from five companies – Sierra Online, Vivendi, Sucker Punch, Handheld Games, and Sakson & Taylor – attended the event and reviewed student work. The event provided the artists with their own night in the spotlight. Along with computers to display their animations, all students had a table and an easel to present their work.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address given by Bob Abrams, an animation artist whose career included extensive work with Disney and Hanna Barbara. His work as a background artist can be seen in classics like Sleeping Beauty (1959), "The Great Carrot-Train Robbery" (1969), and television's Merrie Melodies (1990). Mr. Abrams shared anecdotes about his time during the "Golden Age of Animation" and gave valuable advice on staying flexible. In addition to being a chance to unwind from the hectic pace of preparing for the showcase event, this event was an opportunity for our community to celebrate and to share in the students’ accomplishments. Many students and faculty felt that the event was a success, and DigiPen looks forward to these events becoming an annual tradition.

> “Molly the Dollinator” by Tony Thai
Charles Duba
Physics & Electrical and Computer Engineering Departments

He started at DigiPen during the summer of 2000, teaching Physics 450 to the first batch of RTIS students in the Bachelor of Science program. He currently is the chair of the Physics Department and acting chair of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department. Dr. Duba has taught every physics class DigiPen offers, except Physics 270 (Electricity and Magnetism). He also advises the Computer Engineering program, where, as he puts it, he “commands a small army of misshapen marsupials in the basement.”

Dr. Duba identifies his experience teaching Physics 250 several years ago as the highlight of his career. As he recalls, he had watched an old John Carpenter flick, They Live, the night before teaching the class. During his lecture on the damped harmonic oscillator the following morning, he filled four whiteboards with notes, only to discover that he had subconsciously spelled out OBEY with the equations. Much to his amusement, his students flocked to local video stores to rent the movie that had made such an impact on their instructor.

Fearing that physics can be a dry subject if not taught in an engaging manner, Dr. Duba thinks of his teaching philosophy as “The Tungsten Pipe” — “it is clearly denser than lead and sure to be felt for longer,” he explains. He believes that if he is bored teaching the material, then the class will be bored with his lecture. This philosophy has shaped his interactions with students and made him an engaging professor.

Expressing a clear passion for teaching, Dr. Duba feels that he would be researching physics and “torturing” students elsewhere if he was not working at DigiPen.

Outside of teaching and research, Dr. Duba enjoys participating in a variety of sports. Although he did not take part in any high school teams, he rowed with the varsity crew team at UCSD for three years. At UW, he played volleyball for the men’s club team. He currently plays soccer in local leagues and enjoys softball, football, ultimate frisbee, basketball, and full-contact monkey flinging, his all-time favorite pastime. He has also been known to while away the hours with European social strategy board games like Settlers of Catan, Puerto Rico, and Power Grid. Like everyone else at DigiPen, Dr. Duba has been playing video games for much of his life. However, “Back in the day, in 1978,” he remembers, “I had to play the game in myself before I could play it.” Along with his unique sense of humor, his passions for teaching, research, and games have made a positive and substantial impact upon his students.

May’s PodClass will examine the role of media in video games. Host Omaha Sternberg interviews IGN/Gamespy’s Todd Northcutt about how game media helps game developers. She also speaks with Jeremy Mayes and Tom Rassweiler of Arkadium about advertising and games, including both “advergaming” and advertising within games.

Listeners can subscribe to the podcast via iTunes or can go to DigiPen’s website. If you have a topic you would like to hear about on the podcast, please email your suggestions to podclass@digipen.edu

Financial Aid Goodie Bags
The Goodie Bag Event was a big success. Many students met the deadline to complete their financial aid packets. We still have several goodie bags left, and they will be handed out on a first-come, first-serve basis. If your financial aid packet is complete, come get a goodie bag while supplies last.

New Roommate Locator Database
Student Services has updated the software for the Roommate Locator Database. You can link to the database from the Housing webpage located at www.digipen.edu/mai/Housing_Guide. Use your DigiPen computer account and password to login to the database.

Summer Semester Campus Hours & Student Parking
From May 7 to July 27, the campus will be open Mondays through Fridays, 7:30 AM to 10:00 PM, and Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM. Campus badge access is restricted to students enrolled in summer classes or working on campus. Other students who need campus access over the summer and who are enrolled in Fall Semester classes should email facliti@digipen.edu to request access. Campus parking is free to all students during the Summer Semester. Student may park in spots 1-6 and 42-105.
In early April, juniors in DigiPen’s BFA in Production Animation degree program presented cinematic animation project ideas to peers and faculty. The task this academic year was to develop strong concepts that could successfully compete on a world stage. Students provided a variety of ideas from which BFA faculty members selected. They selected projects that best reflected our student’s skills and will be producible to the highest standards. Subsequently, these concepts will enter production during Fall Semester 2007.

The process began this last fall semester when everybody in Projects 300 and Cinematography started developing concepts that they wanted to pitch to the school for the production. Through several of the assignments in Cinematography, they explored what elements compose a successful concept and practiced how to pitch it within four minutes.

Professor Jim Johnson assembled a number of industry professionals, including filmmaker/animator Rick Sullivan, producer Bob Johnson, and writer Jenny Gullian, to review the students’ ideas. In an evening session just after mid-term Fall Semester, the students pitched their ideas, and the industry experts selected the top six. They were “Mask,” “Wishful Thinking,” “Graffiti,” “Lights Out,” “Hold the Mustard,” and “Opusculus.” At this stage, they started with an excess of ideas in order to give the students different production experiences and to have ideas in reserve.

In Professor Johnson’s spring English 315 class, he had students deliver scripts to Professor Tom Price’s Storyboarding class. He organized students into development teams to explore the basic story elements of each idea and to develop the dramatic characters. At this point, “Opusculus” fell by the wayside, and “Lights Out” underwent major renovations. Professor Johnson chose some of the strongest writers in the class to produce the final scripts. The class also created initial shot breakdowns and environment maps.

During week six of Spring Semester, the students began delivering material to the storyboarding class. Then Professors Price and Johnson got the competitive production teams into motion through the pre-visual process. Teams met weekly to work on initial character and environment designs. The breakthrough came when the students underwent a “look-and-feel” exercise through which they created ideas for movie posters. Each week, all members of the art faculty also visited the Storyboarding classes to comment on progress and to make suggestions. At this point, the class focused on creating the character, environment, and storyboarding assets to pitch the project to the school in order to decide on the finalists.

Nicknamed “The Gong Show,” the pitch itself consisted of a presentation to the student body and the art faculty. The decision for moving forward with a concept was assessed on the popularity of the project, on the judgment of the faculty regarding the creative strengths of the projects, and on the feasibility of particular projects given the student and technical resources of DigiPen. The popular vote ranked, in order, “Wishful Thinking,” “Hold the Mustard,” “Mask,” “Lights Out,” and “Graffiti.” After several days of deliberation, the faculty chose to produce “Wishful Thinking” and “Hold the Mustard.” They felt that “Mask” was better suited to a 2D project and that “Lights Out” and “Graffiti” needed more development before moving forward at this stage.

As Doug cooks, Constance walks back to the backyard, where he is tied to a rotisserie with a fire ready to light beneath him. Constance screams that Doug never provides for the family, and that she and their child Prudence (mustard packet) will not be there when he gets back. At Doby’s, Doug decides the marriage is over, and he dumps his wedding ring into an empty shot glass. As he struggles to light another cigarette, Trixy (ketchup bottle), the local vamp, takes up with him. Time passes as Doug and Trixy hit it off, and they stumble out of the bar to a taxi, not noticing Constance waiting in the shadows outside the bar. Doug and Trixy go back to Doug’s for a night of passion. When Doug awakens in the morning, the first and last sight he sees is Constance swinging a frying pan at his head. He awakens in the backyard, where he is tied to a rotisserie with a fire ready to light beneath him. Constance stands nearby with a can of lighter fluid. Doug pleads for his life, and Constance offers him a puff on her cigarette. Then she dashes his hopes by using the butt to light the fire. As Doug cooks, Constance walks back to the kitchen. Prudence asks, “What’s for breakfast?” Constance answers, “Daddy’s cooking in the backyard.”

“Wishful Thinking” is about two young friends, Timmy (turtle boy) and Lilana (swan girl), who live in a magical night-world where fish fly using gas bubbles produced by bubble plants. Timmy sees what she wants is not the star, but Timmy. They live happily ever after.

After The Gong Show, students began producing the production bibles for the two concepts, and the modeling and rigging of characters will start this summer, with full production beginning this fall. These students eagerly anticipate completing these animation projects.

- Jim Johnson, professor

Concepts Under Production

“Wishful Thinking” is about two young friends, Timmy (turtle boy) and Lilana (swan girl), who live in a magical night-world where fish fly using gas bubbles produced by bubble plants. Timmy sees what she wants is not the star, but Timmy. They live happily ever after.

“Hold the Mustard” is a dark noir tale of dissatisfaction, infidelity, and revenge... except the characters are a hot dog and condiments. It starts on a rainy night with Doug Bratowski (hot dog) embroiled in yet another argument with his wife Constance (mustard, bottle of the Grey Poupon family). As he leaves for Doby’s (olive) bar, Constance screams that Doug never provides for the family, and that she and their child Prudence (mustard packet) will not be there when he gets back. At Doby’s, Doug decides the marriage is over, and he dumps his wedding ring into an empty shot glass. As he struggles to light another cigarette, Trixy (ketchup bottle), the local vamp, takes up with him. Time passes as Doug and Trixy hit it off, and they stumble out of the bar to a taxi, not noticing Constance waiting in the shadows outside the bar. Doug and Trixy go back to Doug’s for a night of passion. When Doug awakens in the morning, the first and last sight he sees is Constance swinging a frying pan at his head. He awakens in the backyard, where he is tied to a rotisserie with a fire ready to light beneath him. Constance stands nearby with a can of lighter fluid. Doug pleads for his life, and Constance offers him a puff on her cigarette. Then she dashes his hopes by using the butt to light the fire. As Doug cooks, Constance walks back to the kitchen. Prudence asks, “What’s for breakfast?” Constance answers, “Daddy’s cooking in the backyard.”

- Jim Johnson, professor

Concepts Under Production

“Wishful Thinking” is about two young friends, Timmy (turtle boy) and Lilana (swan girl), who live in a magical night-world where fish fly using gas bubbles produced by bubble plants. Timmy sees that Lilana wants a shooting star of her own, and he attempts to get her one. To accomplish his goal, he tries climbing to the moon on a ladder, rising to the clouds in a bubble from a bubble plant, and tackling a star by sheer force of will. Much to Lilana’s dismay, he has a run-in with a flying whale and falls several times. On his final fall from the clouds, he ends up seeing stars from his fall, and he manages to grab one for Lilana. By now, Lilana sees what she wants is not the star, but Timmy. They live happily ever after.

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- Jim Johnson, professor
Students Present Their Work to Professional Audiences

DigiPen students continue to present their research and course projects at professional conferences. Most recently, several students presented at the Mathematical Association of America (Northwest Section) Conference held at Linfield College in Oregon. Mike Anderson and Stephen Niedzielski delivered their paper, “A Method of Calculating Volumes Using Infra-Red Scanner and Riemann Sums,” and Mark Grigsby and Richard Martija presented “Rook Polynomials in 3D.” Dr. Michael Aristidou supervised both pairs of students whose projects came out of his Calculus and Linear Algebra math classes. He also organized the conference panel — “Student Papers and Undergraduate Research Projects” — in which the students presented their work. Dr. Aristidou found that these students impressed the audience and they received positive feedback from the audience. “Events like this definitely advertise our school and display the strong math and physics background of our students,” Dr. Aristidou stated. “This also strengthens student resumes and helps them exchange ideas with scholars from other institutions.”

Chance Lyon, a senior in the RTIS program, presented a paper at the International Symposium on Intelligence Techniques in Computer Games and Simulations held at Ritsumeikan University in Shiga, Japan, in early March. Titled “Optimized Spatial Point Detection for Computer Vision in Gaming,” the paper presented a novel methodology — using point-light detection with a common webcam — for controlling video games without the need of expensive and dedicated image processing hardware. Jointly authored by Noah Hopson-Walker and Adam Demers, the paper also presented an alternative to the current spatial control schemes. As part of this research project, the team created an inexpensive and replaceable controller that proved to be functionally similar to Sony’s EyeToy and Nintendo’s Wiimote.

Chance found traveling to Japan and the conference itself to be an “amazing experience.” He took special note of the other presentations. “Many of the research projects presented by Ritsumeikan students were culturally oriented,” he noted. “For instance, one presenter was researching ways to reproduce a Japanese painting style in 3D, mimicking the material, the strokes, and the colors. Another showed research on importing traditional Japanese masks into a 3D environment, scanning them for the shape and color.” He found that many of the projects took some aspect of Japanese culture and used technology to transpose it into a virtual environment. Chance was also struck by the diversity of presenters and the types of research that people around the world are doing.

The successes of these students and others who have presented at professional conferences and meetings have interested more students in doing interdisciplinary projects, especially projects that combine other fields with game development. Dr. Aristidou also finds that the work of these students has given a “good boost” to the Undergraduate Research Group that he and Dr. Rania Hussein co-founded last semester at DigiPen. As increasingly more faculty steer DigiPen students towards these presentation opportunities, we should continue hearing about more students getting out their research projects to professional audiences.

While in Japan attending the International Symposium on Intelligence Techniques in Computer Games and Simulations, Dr. Li and Chance Lyon network with a conference attendee at a local ramen shop.

Chance Lyon offers some advice for other students interested in presenting:

> **Be thorough and do your research:** If what you have done has already been done in some fashion, it is important to not only give them credit, but also to make sure that you are adding something interesting or significant.

> **Give a clear presentation of the material:** At conferences, everyone will have a different specialty and will not know the material in depth like you do. For this reason, you need to clearly explain what you did in terms anyone can understand. The presentation is simply a lure to whet their appetite and to get them to read your paper.

> **Have proven results:** The questions “What have I demonstrated about my research?” “Have I demonstrated my research?” and “Have I forgotten to demonstrate something?” are key to determining if your work is a valid research project.

> **Remember that technology and science is incremental:** Your research does not have to be a breakthrough but merely an interesting advancement or demonstration in an existing field.
Another class of outstanding DigiPen students has graduated. Before heading into the real world, we asked several a few questions about their experiences at the Institute and what they will be doing afterwards.

Michael Dawe – MS in Computer Science

After he earned his undergraduate degrees in 2002, Michael worked as a consultant, programming on large internal business systems for a major telecommunications company. While he enjoyed programming itself, he was not terribly excited about what he was programming. He considered switching to the entertainment industry and applied to several game development positions. His efforts, however, met with little success – his prospective employers advised him to learn some techniques and create several games on his own before applying again. Knowing that the hours required for his full-time job would prevent him from doing this on his own, he looked into graduate studies geared towards the gaming industry. DigiPen was the best choice for him, so he relocated from New York to Redmond and joined the Institute’s graduate program in Computer Science.

Michael has enjoyed his two years here. “DigiPen’s strength lies in knowing what the prize is,” he explains. “You’re surrounded by like-minded fellows who love games and are passionate about what they do.” Reflecting on his DigiPen experience, he advises other students to keep a balance among work, friends, games, getting outside, or whatever they like to do. He found it helpful to start assignments early so that he had time to ask questions and to pursue other interests, like skydiving, something he has done about 150 times in the last three years.

Worried that the job hunt was taking too much time away from his class work, Michael found searching for a job to be tough but manageable. However, he discovered that considering so many companies ensured that he found the position best suited for him. Michael advises future job seekers to be prepared for interviews. “Don’t stress about things you don’t know about,” he recommends. “Try to relax and have questions of your own ready to go.” Additionally, he found that having an online presence helped – recruiters contacted him after finding his website and online resume. With his graduate degree in hand, Michael is headed back to the East Coast to work at Big Huge Games in Maryland. “I’m excited that DigiPen has helped me to achieve my original goal of getting into the industry,” he feels.

Jonathon Junker – BS in RTIS

Jonathon began his long relationship with DigiPen back when he was in high school at the New Market Vocational Skills Center in Olympia, WA. Already enrolled at New Market before the DigiPen Technology Academy program started, he jumped on board as soon as he heard about it. “I learned that I loved programming and game development, Jonathon remembers, “so DigiPen Institute of Technology was an obvious next step.” Once here, Jonathon found the curriculum to be challenging. “I love the subject matter, but there is so much work to be done that you can get burnt out,” he explains. “I have to give credit, though; I am extremely happy with my education and couldn’t imagine being better prepared to enter this industry.”

Jonathon found DigiPen’s annual Career Day event to be a big help that resulted in several legitimate leads. Throughout the job search process, he discovered that interviews come in many different flavors – some are grueling problem-solving sessions, while others try to find out about past projects and how an applicant would fit into a team. Jonathon offers a few words of advice to fellow job seekers:

- You will be asked about your past game projects, so be prepared to give good answers. Interviewers commonly ask about a problem you faced during a previous project, and how you solved it.

Despite his preparation, Jonathon still found the job hunt to be a “grueling, weeks-long process with far too much waiting. The day I got my first offer was a huge relief.” His hard work landed him a position as a programmer at Airtight Games in Redmond. “I am excited about working on an ambitious, professional project that will have the opportunity to be played by a large audience,” he says.

Katie Merrill – BS in RTIS

Like most others at DigiPen, Katie has loved playing video games her entire life. She also happened to like math and the sciences, so, after one summer as an intern at a small game company, she knew that she wanted to be a game developer, which brought her to DigiPen. Katie found the best part of her Institute experience to be the opportunity to work on interesting projects. “Despite being a curse on time management,” she explains, “the multitude of projects-oriented classes here have ensured that material is learned in a practical manner.”

When it came time to begin the job hunt, Katie handed out her resume to “just about anyone who would take it.” At the GDC, she felt that she managed to “come off the right way, at the right time, to the right people.” This netted her several informal interviews on the spot and, more importantly, some on-site interviews afterwards. Several companies flew her out and made immediate offers. Katie eventually settled on a position with Blue Fang Games in the Boston area, where she “looks forward to being able to work with code in a truly professional setting and to try out some of the progressive development techniques they’re using.” After having navigated the job market successfully, Katie feels that DigiPen’s RTIS program is a “good preparation for a junior programming position in video games.”

(continued on page 6)
2007 Graduate Profiles

(continued from page 5)

Tony Thai – AAA in 3D Computer Animation

DigiPen was Tony’s last try at getting into the industry. Tony, a Chinese Canadian, had attended other schools, like the Art Institute of Vancouver, and was unimpressed with the training and education he received there. Following the advice of a mentor from Paydium Mississauga – choose a route in life, and follow it to fruition – Tony stuck with his passion for art and decided that DigiPen was the best way to accomplish his goals. While here, he enjoyed being swamped with work and the camaraderie that came from being part of a small class that faced big challenges. He especially liked the social interactions, like a recent barbecue the AAA students held. Currently, Tony is sorting out his job options and trying to decide which offer will best suit him.

Reflecting back on his time at DigiPen and the recent job hunt process, Tony has some advice for his fellow peers:

• Don’t consider deadlines as just school project deadlines. Consider them as real deadlines in a workplace, and get this idea ingrained into your skull.
• Leave your ego at the door. Don’t come into the classroom thinking that you are better than people around you. Similarly, don’t go into an interview thinking you are the hottest applicant they’ve seen – you’ll get dropped as fast as you walked in.
• Learn what you can from your professors. They’ve been there, and they know a lot more than you think. Ask them as many questions as you can.
• Show respect and courtesy. Don’t forget to thank people for helping you. When you get a job, try to help a friend find one. Be sure to congratulate your comrades and their successes; it’ll boost your morale as much as it will boost theirs.
• When you get into interviews, stay focused. For example, don’t start talking about your pet – they don’t care. If you have a group interview, pay attention to what everyone else has to say or show. Above all, be vocal.
• Since you can’t be great at everything, learn to vocalize your talents and focus on what you are best at, like modeling and texturing, for example.
• Consider everyone you know to be a potential contact in the industry.

Christopher Theriault – BS in Computer Engineering

Christopher, who thanks God for presenting him with the opportunity to come to DigiPen, started in the RTIS program but switched to the CE program at the earliest opportunity. When he decided to go back to school, he examined several gaming-themed schools, but only DigiPen offered a serious, four-year degree. As he believes, “I can’t imagine any employer giving one of these 14- or 18-month programs much value.” Christopher identifies the faculty and staff at DigiPen as the Institute’s best asset. He feels, “It’s amazing for me to be able to just round up one of my professors at a moment’s notice to have a discussion, and they all seem very dedicated to helping students succeed. I think this is something a lot of my fellow students, who haven’t spent time at larger campuses, take for granted.” He found that the small class sizes in the CE program allowed him to develop close relationships with the faculty.

His DigiPen experience is a large part of the reason as to why he has chosen to join the Institute’s staff. He is excited about the opportunity to continue working on interesting projects, like the tools introduced everyone to Lebanese cuisine.

Claude oversees the making of one of his famous sandwiches.

Student Association Hosts DigiPen’s First Cook-Off

In April, the Student Association (SA) held DigiPen’s first cook-off. The goal of the event was to bring together the student body and faculty once last time before the end of the school year and to relieve some of the stress that seems to accompany this period. The event began with the usual light drizzle, but none of the contestants seemed to mind. Initially, the organizers ran into a glitch when all the contestants fired up their stoves and began cooking – all those stoves kept tripping the breaker. But staff member Joel Smith came to the rescue and ran multiple extension lines so that everyone could cook at the same time.

The contestants whipped up a wide diversity of tasty dishes, including lemon-garlic chicken, gyros, fusion-style pork chops, deep-fried hot wings, and guacamole. The SA tapped several SA staff and faculty members – Paul Zampetis, BJ Becker, Angie Kugler, Lindsay Jones, and Dmitri Volper – to judge the dishes. Mikhail Davidov’s ribs earned him the Audience Award, Dan Miya’s bananas foster was awarded the Best Cold Dish, and Sam Robinson’s and Steve Chiavelli’s Hash Brown Burger won the Best Hot Dish category. With his Stuffed Pork Cutlet Roll, Paul “Jay” Austria took home the Best Overall Dish prize, 200 one-dollar bills neatly stacked in a briefcase connected to a set of handcuffs. Other prizes included wacky trophies the SA salvaged from Goodwill, Penny Arcade t-shirts, and Wii games like Cooking Mama and Super Paper Mario. As if the enticement of food was not enough, the SA also raffled off prizes every fifteen minutes.

DigiPen President Claude Comair and his Lebanese culinary arm provided the highlight of the event. While they were the final contestants to arrive, they brought a car packed full of food. Less concerned with competing in the contest, Claude and crew fed the students and introduced everyone to Lebanese cuisine. After setting up, they created an assembly line that pumped out sandwiches to the crowd. Most contestants had attitudes that were less geared towards winning and more focused on sharing their own unique culinary creations with their peers. Students, staff, and faculty loved the cook-off, and the SA organizers plan on making this an annual event.

Jay proudly shows off his grand prize.