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Schools catch the video-game wave



Erin Greenberg BostonNOW Correspondent

It's a video game junkie's dream - being instructed to play Halo, steal cars in Grand Theft Auto and rock out in Guitar Hero - while earning college credit at the same time.

Colleges are beginning to implement formal education programs around video game development. Wentworth Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) and Boston University have begun - or are in the process of developing - majors, courses and professional certificates in video game multimedia.

"There is so much interest in gaming," says Leon Deligiannidis, a computer science associate professor at Wentworth who headed the development of a course there. "Students are flocking to the industry because they love video games and now they can work on designing them."

WPI was the first four-year school in the country to devote a major to interactive media and game development. Robert Lindeman, a media and game development program assistant professor, worked on its launch three years ago. More than 140 WPI students are majoring in gaming.

"We have a number of students and faculty who were interested in video game designing," says Lindman. "Massachusetts in particular has a critical mass producing games and they are looking for solid local talent."

Northeastern is also developing a game design major, which could be ready as early as this fall.

These classes are being developed in response to the rapidly growing video game industry, one that pulls in \$18.9 billion each year.

"The industry is thriving right now," says Deligiannidis. "Xbox 360, Sony and Nintendo are making so much money. There is a need for more designers in the field."

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