

# The IMGD Booth at PAX East 2014

An Interactive Qualifying Project  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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# Abstract

Trade shows provide a unique venue to promote WPI's Interactive Media and Game Development program to both prospective students and industry studios. This project centered on designing and building a booth for PAX East, one of the most popular gaming expositions in New England. The goal of the booth is to both bring awareness of the Interactive Media and Game Development Major to prospective students, and showcase student work to employers. We interviewed convention organizers, game developers, and the group who ran this IQP in the previous year in order to gain insight on how to best build our booth. We then designed booth mock-ups, advertisements, banners, and buttons, and selected four MQP groups to show their games at the booth. We had twelve student seven and faculty volunteers. At PAX East, our volunteers spoke to an average of 180 people a day, and we estimate at least 100 people played the games we were showcasing.

# 1. Introduction

Penny Arcade Expo East is a rapidly growing gaming convention currently being held annually at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center. It is just one of four different PAX events being held around the world. Over a three day period, tens of thousands of people attend, drawn to high-profile exhibitors such as Microsoft, 2k Games, Blizzard, and many more.

As the popularity of trade shows such as PAX East grows, an increasing number of colleges are setting up booths to attract prospective students. Local colleges such as Becker College, New England Institute of Tech, and Champlain College typically have booths present for PAX East. This is the second year that WPI has had a booth specifically for the Interactive Media and Game Development (IMGD) Major. This booth provides a unique opportunity to help advertise this relatively new major to the exact demographic that would be most interested in it.

When creating this booth, there were three primary objectives to meet.

**1) Attract Students to WPI and the IMGD Program** – A huge demographic of people attending PAX are teens and young adults who have not yet attended college. Having a booth at one of the largest gaming conventions in the United States allows WPI to market directly to a huge group of potential students.

**2) Present IMGD Student work to potential employees** – PAX East is a convention dominated by both large and small game development studios. Students receive an opportunity to present their work to a multitude of employers in a way they would most likely not find anywhere else.

**3) Advertise WPI's IMGD Program** – WPI's presence at PAX East allows for thousands of people to see the WPI and IMGD name and associate it with game development. Being at this convention also helps advertise WPI and its students to companies and the general public.

Prior to the convention, we researched each aspect of the booth. This included which type of item was most popular to give away, effective branding techniques for advertisements, and effective booth layouts. We also conducted interviews on individuals from the industry, the IQP group that ran the booth last year, and convention organizers. In addition, we interviewed and selected four MQP's to showcase at the booth and selected volunteers to staff it. To help supplement the booth, we also created a full-page advertisement featured in the PAX East handbook and custom booth shirts for our volunteers and student attendees.

Once we had accumulated all this research, we took the 10x20 booth we selected and designed the layout to be spacious and appealing. The main design included a rear-center table supporting a large television playing a demo-reel. To each side, there was a table with two computers and student games loaded onto them. We gave away custom buttons for each game and designed and printed banners to flank the booth and to be hung along the back. In total, we recruited twelve student volunteers and seven faculty volunteers to work at the booth. In addition, we presented four student-made games at the booth and we had an average of two-hundred people ask about WPI during booth hours for each of the three days.

This paper documents the overall process involved in creating our booth at PAX East 2014. It includes relevant background information (Section 2), our methodology and evaluation (Section 3), and a conclusion and results (Section 4).

## 2. Background

To understand the importance of an IMGD booth at PAX East, being familiar with the background of the program in relation to WPI and PAX itself is important. Understanding the importance and influence of PAX itself is also relevant.

### 2.1 WPI and IMGD

When Worcester Polytechnic Institute was founded in 1865, it became one of the first engineering schools in the country. It was founded on the idea of a curriculum that blended both theory and practice. Today that idea still stands at the forefront of the WPI curriculum as students are engaged in project-based courses and are provided with the opportunity to solve real world interdisciplinary problems all around the world. WPI offers over 50 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and the Princeton Review ranks it as one of the top 100 Best Colleges and National Universities.

WPI's IMGD program was ranked #6 by the Princeton Review's 2014 List of Top Undergraduate Schools to Study VideoGame Design, and it is gaining more notoriety every year. Established in 2005, WPI's IMGD program offers two separate degree paths to follow. The first is technical development, which focuses on computer programming, and the second is artistic, which focuses on animation and 3d modeling.

The IMGD curriculum focuses heavily on project-based courses, involving collaboration between students from both tracks of the major. These projects give students hands-on experience in developing applications. With the help of professors with extensive industry

experience, students finish their education with the experience needed to enter the competitive game industry.

## 2.2 PAX East

Started in 2004, PAX, short for Penny Arcade Expo, has evolved from a single venue in Bellevue, Washington, where around 4500 people attended, to an international annual event drawing up to 70,000 attendees at any given convention. PAX East, the East Coast branch of PAX, was created in 2008 and is held annually in Boston, Massachusetts. Since its creation, the convention has continued to grow in attendees and size. PAX Conventions now include panels from industry professionals, live music, gaming tournaments, and exhibit halls. The exhibit hall is considered to be the main attraction at PAX Conventions, where high-profile companies set up booths to advertise new games, services, and technologies. A small section of the exhibit hall showing the WPI booth can be seen in Figure 1.(see Figure 1)

In recent years, more and more colleges have started setting up booths at PAX conventions to showcase their game development programs. This year, ten different colleges hosted booths at PAX East. Having a booth at PAX East allows colleges to showcase student work to potential employers and to find students interested in game design.

**Figure 1: View of expo from above with the WPI banner visible**



## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Information Gathering

In preparation for PAX East, we spent several weeks gathering and organizing information. While we looked at some traditional sources of information, the vast majority of our research came from speaking to people with experience.

#### 3.1 Interviews

While sometimes difficult to arrange, interviews can be an extremely valuable source of information. We focused heavily on interviews as an informative resource. Our first goal was to conduct interviews with various people to learn more about PAX and necessary skills or items needed to successfully manage a booth.

##### 3.1.1 Last Year's IQP

###### a. Corrine Kennedy

###### PAX East 2013 WPI Booth Organizer

Our first source of information came from Corrine Kennedy, one of the students who organized and ran the WPI booth at PAX East 2013. We came relatively unprepared with only a notepad and paper. While we did not prepare too many questions, the interview lasted over two hours. Accompanying Corrine in the interview was her friend Andy, who also worked on the booth last year. The notes from the interview are as follows:

- There should be 12-15 volunteers at the booth
- There should be a total of 4 computers and 4 MQP games
- Try and bring extra booth supplies in case something breaks

- Find hotel rooms early or plan on commuting
- The booth is 10x20ft and is usually cramped for space
- Snacks, water and hand-sanitizer are necessary
- Conserve energy when working at the booth
- Saturday has the largest crowds, Sunday has the smallest
- If provided the option to pick the location, try to be placed near food stands or bathrooms

#### b. Cian Rice

##### PAX East 2013 WPI Booth Organizer

While arranging our meeting with Corrine, we also contacted another member of the previous group, Cian Rice. Although both Cian and Corrine worked on the same project, they reported very different experiences. While Corrine held more of an organizational position in the four person group, Cian was in charge with communicating with PAX and different retailers. Cian offered an alternative viewpoint on the project, although some of his advice overlapped with Corrine's advice. Additionally, we were significantly more organized for this interview. Listed below are the questions we asked Cian, accompanied by his answers.

#### **1. What did you wish you had last year?**

Padded carpet is a huge improvement over the default carpet and should be considered.

#### **2. Were you able to pick your space last year?**

Yes; you get a map of the floor. People who had a booth last year receive priority the following year. Avoid getting placed near the back of the hall if you can.

#### **3. Who did you talk to for arranging the booth?**

Kyle Marsden Kish and Bill Butler. They were generally unresponsive and only took the project seriously when Trisha contacted them.

#### **4. What items are given in the booth package?**

Two tables for every 10x10 space, 1 chair per table, black unpadded carpet, black tablecloth, and a small banner

#### **5. How much of the budget did the package take?**

10x20 cost \$2600

#### **Additional advice**

- The prize is a bad idea. The guy who won it gave a wrong address and time was wasted trying to get it to him.
- Don't have MQP games that are too similar. Find games that are small, quick and tightly built.
- Make a test for the MQP games to pass. Make sure they are presentable.
- Make about 100-300 postcards. (3000 was way, way too much and too expensive)
- Place buttons in plain sight. That's what a lot of people visit for.
- Have each MQP design a button. Rush delivery for them.
- If you have extra funds, try to purchase colored carpets.
- Ask a professor from the IMGD major to be at your booth.
  - Moriarty, Britt Snider, Dean, or Keith Zizza are good options
- Keep the booth clean and wiped down. Don't let muck build up on the computers.

Even after the interview, Cian continued to assist us with our questions. We kept in contact with him over Skype and regularly asked him for advice.

### 3.1.2 Kelly Wallick

#### Indie Megabooth, Overlord

After our interview with Cian Rice, he sent an email to his friend Kelly Wallick and spoke to her on our behalf. Due to her position of the head of the Indie Megabooth, Kelly Wallick was a valuable resource. We arranged to meet with Kelly Wallick through Skype. Her co-worker, Christopher Floyd also participated in the interview and answered some of our questions. From them, we learned a lot about how to organize the structure of the booth, ways to draw in visitors, and general management tips.

#### **1. What materials are essential for a booth?**

A floor plan should be made. The booth package should supply enough basic materials. Try to place a TV in the back of the booth.

#### **2. What is the best way to draw people to your booth?**

Always have a really friendly and outgoing person standing at the front. Do not be afraid to call people over. Most volunteers should be really friendly and not shy.

#### **3. What is it like running a booth at PAX?**

It can be really hard to endure the entire time. Be sure to rotate out people, and switch volunteers often to avoid making them tired.

#### **4. In your opinion(s), what is the hardest part of running a booth? The easiest?**

Being there and working at the booth is the hardest part. Comparatively, the planning stage is easy if you know what to do. Make sure to give everyone working at the booth plenty of rest.

## **5. How do you handle commuting?**

Hotels can be very expensive and difficult to line up. Carpooling is usually something that is done, and it's best to leave really early to beat traffic. Also, Airbnb.com is a website that can be useful to arrange temporary cost-effective housing, and the train can be useful to travel with.

### **Additional information**

Extra exhibitor passes are \$85. They allow you to get in early.

A greater number of people at the booth can lead to more people showing up.

Drawing people in is more effective than dressing the booth up nicely.

### **3.1.3 Ichiro Lambe**

#### **Dejobaan Games , CEO**

Following our interview with Kelly Wallick, our IQP advisor, Professor Claypool, put us in contact with two WPI alumni running two different game studios. The first of the two, Ichiro Lambe, offered us a lot of interesting advice pertaining to the business side of PAX East. We ended up calling Ichiro Lambe and speaking to him over the phone. As the founder of Dejobaan Games, Ichiro offered us a lot advice in response to our questions, as highlighted below:

#### **1. What do game developers look for at PAX?**

Game developers seek to promote their own games, and only walk around during their free time. Since most developers stay at their booths, you have to let them know that you're there beforehand if you want them to stop by.

#### **2. What is the best way to attract a company to our booth?**

You must come up with a plan to meet them beforehand. Reach out to the small companies in the Boston area and let them know of your presence.

### **3. What do companies seek to gain from colleges? (employees, capital, support?)**

Companies are mostly interested in recruiting employees. Unfortunately, there's not a whole lot of communication between WPI and the industry (including Owlchemy and Dejobaan). Look to Kelly Wallick to help distribute information about our booth to different companies.

### **4. We are interested in attracting both students and companies to our booth. How can we attract both without alienating one or the other?**

Try to get as many students to go to the booth as possible. If you want to get companies to visit, talk to them beforehand.

### **5. What would you personally like to see at our booth?**

I would like to see a grand list of every IMGD student and every IMGD project/game, something that could let companies know what the students of WPI are up to. Try to get as many IMGD students to attend as possible.

#### [3.1.4 Alex Schwartz](#)

##### [Owlchemy Labs, CEO](#)

We also met with Alex Schwartz, the CEO of Owlchemy Labs and a former WPI alumnus. This was our last interview of A-term, and most of our questions had already been answered by our previous interviews, making our interview with Alex comparatively short.

### **1. What do game developers look for at PAX?**

PAX is a consumer-based conference. Developers are there mostly to show off their games.

### **2 . What's the best way to attract the attention of a company to our booth?**

Be very careful about the MQP games presented, and make sure that they are presentable.

These are what companies are looking for. Make sure the MQP developers are at the booth and

are able to answer questions relating to both the major and the games. I would also suggest that you contact Dave Ortendahl, a member of the WPI CDC (Career Development Center). He can help you in dealing with this type of situation.

### **3. What can be used to draw attention to our booth?**

Make sure your booth is located away from the edges. Also, the more people you have at your booth, the more people will come. Multiplayer games can be used to draw crowds. Adding vertical height to your booth can be incredibly helpful, as it makes it visible and ensures that crowds don't hide your booth. 8-10ft should be a good height, although more can be helpful.

#### **3.1.5 WPI Marketing**

In mid-February, we arranged an interview with Jillian Ferguson from marketing. While we arranged the meeting with marketing to have them review our advertisement, we also met with them to request promotional banners, tablecloths and pamphlets to use at the booth. Our meeting with WPI Marketing was very different than our previous interviews. We were asked a lot of questions and marketing reviewed a lot of our materials to ensure correct usage of the WPI logo and symbols. We also discussed the possibility of getting a website hosted for the booth, which we later arranged. They provided critique to our advertisement design and our button designs. In addition, several weeks after the meeting, WPI Marketing lent us two tablecloths and a banner to use at the booth. The questions we asked and the responses from WPI Marketing are as follows:

#### **1. How should we go about getting a website hosted?**

Contact the WPI Helpdesk through email to arrange changes to the IMGD homepage.

#### **2. What materials can WPI Marketing provide for the booth?**

WPI Marketing has a couple of gray and maroon tablecloths. Also, Marketing can provide a large WPI hanging banner.

### **3. How should we best promote WPI?**

Hand out items that appeal to people. Buttons or even candy will be things people will readily take or go out of their way to get from you. Include a URL on the item to guide them to WPI afterwards.

## **3.2 Designing the Booth**

### **3.2.1 Initial Design**

The initial design of our booth stemmed from the final design of last year's booth. Our design originally included three tables. Two tables would be facing perpendicular to the back of the booth, and two computers would be set on each of these tables. This is where the MQP groups would have their games set up for display. The final table would be set along the back wall, and on it would be a TV showing a promotional reel. Also on this table would be IMGD and WPI promotional materials like pamphlets and fliers. To each side of the forward tables, there would be a banner stand with a custom IMGD Banner.

### **3.2.2 Improvements from Last Year**

Building off the basis of last year's IQP design, we remedied the major issues that the previous group discussed in their report of the booth. For instance, the individuals who set up last year's booth mentioned that they had difficulty finding a large banner for the booth's backdrop. Last year, they only had a paper printout to put on the back of the booth, and they felt that this detracted from the appeal of the booth. WPI Marketing generously provided us with a large WPI cloth banner to fix this issue. Another problem that we fixed this year related to the uncomfortable carpet provided in the standard booth package. We remedied this by ordering carpet padding to be installed while the booth was being set up. We also wanted to promote the MQP project names at PAX East, so we added small posters that advertised each MQP group's project name to be hung on the backdrop on each side of the WPI banner. In

addition, we reprinted the forward banners and designed them to be more generic so that they can be reused in future IQPs.

### 3.2.3 Booth Materials

The core materials used to build our booth came with the standard booth package. This package included two of the tables, four chairs, the unpadded section of the carpet, the backdrop, two cloth dividers, and a wastebasket. We also ordered an extra table from the PAX third party vendor. Because we were not provided with a drape for this table, WPI marketing provided us with several WPI tablecloths along with a large WPI banner for the backdrop and table tents with IMGD promotional materials. The banners in the front of the booth were ordered from BuildASign.com and were 78" by 33". The computers used to demo the MQP games were borrowed from the basement lab of Fuller Labs, and the 54" TV used to show the IMGD promotional reel was borrowed from the Digital Arts Studio.

### 3.2.4 Mock-Ups

Using Maya and the assumption that the tables provided were 6' by 2', we modeled and rendered some mock-ups of the booth from the side (see Figure 2), the front (see Figure 3), and the top (see Figure 4).

**Figure 2: Booth mock-up from the side**



**Figure 3: Booth mock-up from the front**



Figure 4: Booth mock-up from the top



### 3.3 Advertisement

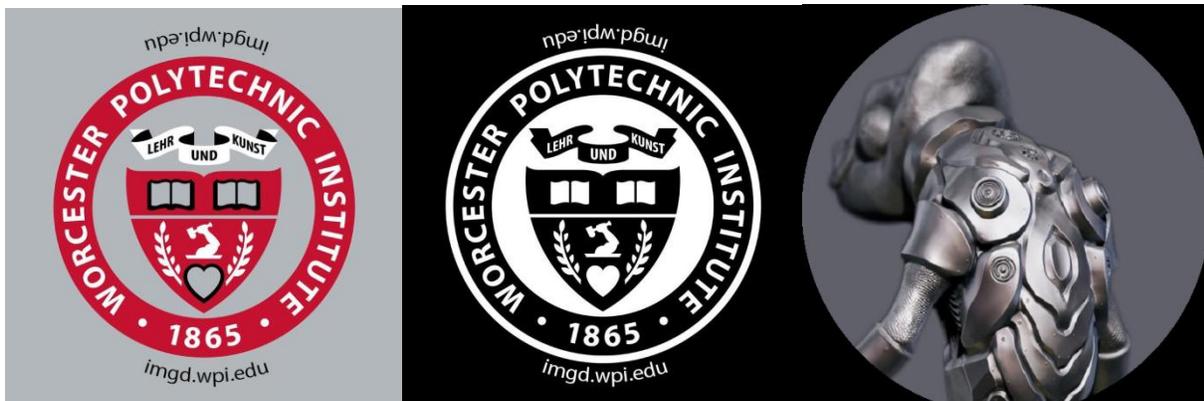
We promoted our booth using several forms of advertisement. Firstly, we paid for a full-page advertisement to be placed in the PAX East booklet. In addition, we asked all WPI students and volunteers to wear WPI t-shirts. We also distributed buttons and displayed banners to advertise our booth to people passing by.

#### 3.3.1 Research

We gathered valuable information pertaining to the type of items that would be beneficial to the booth. We were told that buttons were the cheapest and best option to distribute to people for free. According to the people that we interviewed, although T-shirts create a larger awareness, they are more costly. Therefore, we decided to hand out buttons because they were more less expensive, and they allowed us to spread awareness efficiently and effectively.

### 3.3.2 Buttons

The buttons were designed to represent WPI, the IMGD major, and the MQP's that were being showcased at PAX. Thus, some of the buttons included the WPI logo and a logo promoting the IMGD major. The designs for the buttons went through several iterations before they were approved by WPI Marketing. Some of the rejected button designs included showed actual buildings at WPI, various WPI crest and logo designs, and an IMGD design. The final designs display two different WPI logos and the chameleon mascot (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5: WPI and IMGD Buttons**

The MQP buttons did not require the same qualifications as the buttons representing WPI. These buttons needed to represent the MQP's that were going to be showcased at PAX. Creating these buttons required a great deal collaboration. The MQP groups needed to be reminded several times to create logos for the buttons, but overall, it was a relatively fast process. We simply provided each MQP group with a template, and we requested that they design a logo for their games using the template. The final designs for each MQP were received in about a week (see Figure 6). A large supply of buttons, a little over nine thousand, were ordered from Wackybuttons for distribution at the convention.



**Figure 6: MQP Buttons**

### 3.3.3 T-Shirts

The t-shirts were designed to help advertise the WPI booth while at PAX East. T-shirts were provided both for volunteers at the booth and for IMGD-major WPI students who attended PAX East. Some concepts for the t-shirt included a new mascot, font using a circuit

theme, and logos that had a connotation with video games such as a controller. The final t-shirt design features the classic WPI letters across the front and the IMGD acronym, including what it stands for, across the back (see Figure 7). Last year's design had conflicting colors, so the design was difficult to see. We kept this in mind when designing our shirt, and decided to match the classic WPI burgundy. We felt that this t-shirt design appealed to the volunteers and other WPI students, because the design itself is simple and can be worn outside of the convention. The t-shirts were designed and purchased using the CustomInk website, and we bought them in bulk at a cheaper price.

**Figure 7: T-Shirt design front and back**



### 3.3.4 PAX Advertisement

Originally, we had hoped to use a new mascot other than the chameleon to represent the IMGD major, and we asked IMGD art students to submit prototypes for new mascot to represent IMGD at PAX. However, we did not get any submissions, so we reused the

chameleon. The robotic chameleon, created by Jill Sauer, an IMGD student from the Class of 2012, was featured on standing banners, buttons, and the full page ad that appeared in the PAX East booklet.

The final advertisement (see Figure 8) features the chameleon mascot, information about the IMGD program offered at WPI, and the location of the booth at the convention center. A QR code was also included at the bottom to guide people to the IMGD website.

**Figure 8: Design for full page advertisement**

**WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE**  
1865

# WPI

## Interactive Media and Game Development

Bachelor Degrees in both Art and Technical Development  
Master Degrees in Game Design

**Booth 998**

imgd.wpi.edu

### 3.3.5 Website

We decided that a website dedicated to WPI's presence at PAX East was a useful promotional tool because this IQP will likely continue for years to come. The website, [www.wpi.edu/+paxeast](http://www.wpi.edu/+paxeast) (see Figure 9), provides information about the PAX booth IQP, and it gives a brief summary of the goals and intentions of the IQP. It also displays information about the MQP projects showcased at the booth, giving a brief description of what each game is about. The website is located at the bottom of the navigation menu on the main WPI academics page about Interactive Media and Game Development.

**Figure 9: Screenshot of the PAX East webpage**

myWPI | News | Calendars | Employment | Library | Offices & Services | Directories SEARCH keyword

**Worcester Polytechnic Institute**

STUDENTS ALUMNI PARENTS MEDIA CORPORATIONS

ACADEMICS RESEARCH ADMISSIONS CAMPUS LIFE ATHLETICS ABOUT WPI **if... I GIVE**

**ACADEMICS**

**INTERACTIVE MEDIA & GAME DEVELOPMENT**

- About IMGD
- Undergraduate Programs
- Graduate Programs
- Faculty
- Research
- Facilities
- News & Events
- Student Projects
- Student Resources
- Career Outlook
- PAX East

**Interactive Media & Game Development**

Home > Academics > Departments & Programs > Interactive Media & Game Development > PAX East

TEXT A|A ✉ ☆ +

## PAX East

### The Booth

2014 will be WPI's second presence at the PAX East convention. Originating last year, the annual WPI Booth Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP) was introduced by Professor Mark Claypool at the start of the 2012-2013 school year. All students who attend WPI are required to work on an IQP, typically done during the Junior year, that aims to familiarize students with the connection between science, technology, social issues and human needs. While typical Students in this project are given a budget and work closely with WPI faculty, marketing and other students to bring a WPI themed booth to PAX East.

The goal of the WPI booth this year is mixed. PAX East 2014 presents an excellent chance to advertise the WPI Interactive Media and Game Design (IMGD) department to potential students, employers and the public. This year's booth is being run by students Eric Benson, Timothy Bujnevici and Adam Ansel. Through the booth, a select number of WPI seniors and graduate students are also able to showcase their games to the public. Information on the four projects being showcased at this year's booth can be found below.

### Gone

*Developed by Logan Harrington and Sean Calvert*

Gone is a first person, 3D survival game where the player is thrown into the mind of a mentally ill person. They must survive the journey through a house whose rooms are a visual metaphor for the symptoms and emotions of three mental illnesses: depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder. The player must survive and conquer the struggles of living with a mental health concern. You beat your demons?

### Xeero

*Developed by Eric Anumba and Dan Acito*

Join Xeero as he scours a computer system, stomping down bugs and hunting malware. In this 3D action-puzzle-platformer, the system becomes your tool as you Digitize useful objects, and Materialize them anywhere you see fit. Digitize Blocks to reach distant platforms or Bomb to destroy obstacles in your path. Combine objects to unlock new avenues to hunt your prey. Slay malware, crush bugs, save the system!

### Maternal Instinct

*Developed by Alex Quartulli, Nick Defossez, John Tordoff and Kimani Gyening*

Maternal Instinct is a game that uses sound as its primary sensory component. The player moves through a jungle with heavily restricted sight, and must rely on audio cues to navigate, fight, and survive. Maternal Instinct tells the story of a mother separated from her son. She must brave the hidden dangers of the jungle at night to rescue her child.

### 3.3.6 Banner

For the booth design, we planned to have two standing banners, one for each side of the booth. Unlike the banners from last year, we designed our banners with reusability in mind. Last year, the banners included logos for each of the MQP's that were being showcased. We felt that this was unnecessary and uneconomical, as it would force future IQP groups to purchase new standing banners each year. Although the banners were inexpensive, reusing them will allow for extra money in the budget to be put toward other sections of the booth. The banner uses the same logo we used for the t-shirts, and it features the chameleon mascot from the advertisement (see Figure 10)

Figure 10: First design for the standing banners



### 3.4 Budget

The budget for the booth this year was \$8000. This was determined based off of the expenses and budget from last year's booth.

**Figure 11: Budget**

Item	Quantity	Cost	Purchased From
Booth Space	1	\$3000.00	Pax East
Full Page Ad	1	\$1775.00	Pax East
Passes for Volunteers	13	\$1585.00	Pax East
Padded Carpeting	1	\$325.80	Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
Watt Box	1	\$211.00	Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
Power Strips	3	\$44.97	Staples
Counter	1	\$161.34	Freeman
WPI Buttons	7000	\$288.98	Wacky Buttons
MQP Buttons	2000	\$396.54	Wacky Buttons
T-Shirts	54	\$876.44	Custom Ink
Standing Banners	2	\$201.28	Signage
Booth Supplies (Water, Snacks, Tape, etc.)	N/A	\$94.94	BJ's
Reimbursements	N/A	\$326.31	
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>\$9287.60</b>	

Figure 11 details all the expenses made for this year's booth. The table indicates that we exceeded the budget by \$1287.60. The 10' x 20' booth space and the full page ad already accounted for over half of the budget. The 200 square foot space for the booth was perfect for allowing people to enter the booth and viewing the MQPs shown. In the interview with Kelly Wallick, she advised that we forgo purchasing the ad, saying that it was a waste of money because most people do not read the information guide. However, since we are trying to promote the IMGD program at WPI, this is not an easy decision. We still believe that the advertisement is beneficial. In the future, to save money, we recommend the purchase of a half-page advertisement instead of a full-page advertisement.

The t-shirts and the passes for the volunteers ultimately put us over budget. We purchased 54 shirts to give to the volunteers and other WPI students that were attending PAX. However, many of the students who indicated that they wanted a t-shirt did not pick their shirt up, leaving us with a lot left over. The price of the t-shirts was somewhat unexpected as well. The website, customink.com, provided a price quote option so that we could see an expected price. The price quote for 54 t-shirts in various sizes came out to be about \$537.84, but the actual cost was \$876.44. That was roughly a \$340 increase, which is quite a significant amount of money. We also bought 13 passes that were either an Exhibitor or 3-Day pass, which gave the volunteers who were only at our booth for one day, more time to browse PAX at the expense of our budget.

In addition, the carpet padding may seem unnecessary at first glance, but it was strongly suggested by members of last year's PAX East booth IQP. Volunteers standing for hours and

greeting people is a daunting task, and to make it a more enjoyable experience, carpet padding was a highly recommended addition to the booth. We personally believe that the padding was beneficial not only to us but also to the volunteers, and despite the added cost, we recommend that it be used for future booths as well.

## 3.5 Major Qualifying Project Games

### 3.5.1 MQP Selection Process

One of the most important issues that we faced during this process was our selection and presentation of student-made games. Addressing this issue in C-term, we searched for games that were visually appealing, well-made and easily presentable. While picking the four best games would have been the most logical step, we quickly realized that it would be difficult compare the games, since we had a wide range of options. Additionally, other factors dictated that we should not necessarily choose the four *best* games. Instead, we had to decide on the four most *presentable* games.

Prior to looking for groups, we worked together to create a rubric through which we would grade the student games. We compiled a list of characteristics and created a rubric by which we would measure both the quality and the appeal of the games during our playtest. While we established eight different metrics, not all of them were weighted equally. The eight metrics were *gameplay, graphics, appeal, scope, polish, learning curve, pacing and sound*. Gameplay, graphics, appeal and scope were all considered to be of the utmost importance. Polish and learning curve were valued about equally, and pacing and sound/music were weighted the lowest. The scores were recorded out of a total of 32 points which we used to

compare the effectiveness of the games. We then selected the four games with the highest scores. In addition, we also documented a group contact email, their advisors, the date, and a handful of important questions. To ensure complete and total fairness to the groups, we filled out our forms individually and combined our results. This process ensured the fairness of the selection process, as the games were graded on three separate experiences. If we had decided the scores as a group, they probably would have been biased. Listed below is a copy of our evaluation sheet (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: The Evaluation Sheet

## Evaluation Sheet

Project/MQP Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Email: \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_\_

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-Questions

- What's the name of your game? What's it about?
- How many players does it have? If more than one, can it be played online or alone?
- Are there any major bugs or crashes we should know about?

Gameplay	/6
Graphics	/5
Appeal	/5
Scope	/5
Polish	/4
Learning Curve	/3
Pacing	/2
Sound/Music	/2
<b>Total</b>	<b>/32</b>

### Post-Questions

- Do you think your game will be in a playable state by April 11th (PAX East)?
- Will any of your team-members be able to volunteer at our booth? (April 11th-April 13th)

### 3.5.2 Selected Games

We started off our selection process by sending out an email to all IMGD students, graduates and faculty. The email explained the purpose of the IMGD booth, the date of the convention and our contact information. We created an alias ***wpipax2014@wpi.edu*** for groups to contact us with, which would forward their email to all three members of our team. This ensured that all of us received their emails, and that we would not accidentally miss any groups seeking to work with us. While we received very few responses at first, we received a steady flow of emails over the following weeks. Since we predicted this would happen, we allocated enough time between the first email and the convention, about a month and a half, to select the groups, prepare their games and order buttons. In total, we considered six different games: *Gone*, *Grail to the Thief*, *Maternal Instinct*, *Xerro*, *Hyper Groove* and one untitled game. Due to scheduling conflicts, we managed to narrow down the selection to the first five games.

#### ***Gone***

*Produced by Logan Harrington, Shawn Calvert and Cian Rice*

*Final Score: 28/32*

*Gone* was the first game we playtested during our selection. We met with Logan Harrington, one of the game's developers, in FL222 on February 12, 2014. The game itself is visually and aesthetically pleasing and features a 3D environment set inside an extravagant looking house. While we previewed the game without sound, we found it to be very visually pleasing and easy to understand. Set in the mind of a person with three different mental illnesses, the game demonstrated to players through abstract means how it feels to have these conditions. Because of its high appeal, clean artstyle and stability, *Gone* was ranked highly on our list from the start.

### ***Grail to the Thief***

*Produced by Elias Aoude and Anthony Russo*

*Final Score 19/32*

We met with Elias Aoude representing the game *Grail to the Thief*. Elias, a WPI alumnus, was working on the game from outside WPI. We spoke with Elias through Skype and he answered many of our questions. Interestingly enough, we learned that *Grail to the Thief* contained no graphics, and was done entirely through audio. This was intentional, as the game was purposefully designed for the blind. This, however, created a problem. Our current rubric relied heavily upon the presence of visual graphics, while sound was not as important, and we devised an alternate rubric through which to grade *Grail to the Thief*. Elias provided us with an online version of the game to demo. When considering *Grail to the Thief*, we realized that, although the game was very intriguing and appealing, it would be difficult for us to present the game. By the time we had to make our final decision, we realized that in order to draw attention to *Grail to the Thief*, we would have to find a way to advertise it. Having already submitted our final version of our ad, we eventually decided against taking *Grail to the Thief* with us to PAX East.

### ***Xeero***

*Produced by Eric Anumba and Dan Acito*

*Final Score 30/32*

*Xeero* was originally introduced to us under the name *Debugger*. We met with Eric Anumba, one of the game's two developers, in late February and he allowed us to try several demo levels he had created. As a traditional 3D platformer, *Xeero* offered fluid gameplay, reactive controls and appealing graphics. With five different levels, *Xeero* also introduced more and more mechanics as gameplay progressed and was easy for players to pick up. We were very impressed by *Xeero*, and it attained a near perfect score on our rubric.

### ***Maternal Instinct***

*Produced by Alex Quartulli, Kimani Gyening, John Tordoff and Nick Defossez*

*Final Score: 22/32*

A few days prior to reviewing Xeero, we were contacted by Alex Quartulli, who wanted to show us his game, *Pending Mama's Boy*. Later established under the name *Maternal Instinct*, the game was still in development by the time we previewed it. *Maternal Instinct* is a 3D sound-based adventure game set in a jungle. While we thought the graphics, the scope and the appeal of the game were all superb, we did worry about the stability of the game. *Maternal Instinct* was prone to numerous bugs and glitches and required further development prior to its exhibition at PAX East. Despite its technical shortcomings in certain areas, the game itself was very visually appealing and presentable due to its unique art style.

### ***Hyper Groove***

*Produced by Cian Rice*

*Final Score: 23/32*

*Hyper Groove* was the final game we tested during our selection process. This game was developed by Cian Rice, one of the members from last year's booth project. We met with him on February 28th. *Hyper Groove's* strengths lay in its visual appeal and presentation. Similar to the famous *Guitar Hero* and *Rockband* series in gameplay and design, *Hyper Groove* was one of our more unique submissions. Due to its reliance on sound, it lost some points on our rubric, but it made up for these losses with its unique art and color usage. This game, alongside *Gone* is visible in Figure 13.

Figure 13: Hyper Groove and Gone at the PAX East booth



### 3.5.3 Conclusion

After meeting together, we compared the scores of all the games we interviewed. We came to the decision that the four games we would show were *Gone*, *Xeero*, *Maternal Instinct* and *Hyper Groove*. We proceeded to contact the groups to let them know about our decision, and offered to answer any questions. Finally, we requested from each of the selected groups a button design alongside a roster of group members willing to volunteer at the convention. As a baseline requirement, we requested that each group provide a minimum of one volunteer. Once we finalized details with our selection process, we moved on to other issues.

## 3.6 Volunteers

### 3.6.1 Volunteer Selection Process

Shortly after selecting the four games we were to present at PAX East, we focused on gathering a staff of volunteers to help us run the booth at PAX. Following the suggestions of Corrine, Andy and Cian, we aimed to have twelve volunteers. We sent out an email in March to all IMGD majors and graduates and offered passes in exchange for volunteering (see Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Screenshot of the Volunteer email**

Hello!

Are you interested in volunteering at the WPI booth at PAX East 2014 (**April 11-13**)?

In exchange for your help, we will reimburse you for your time. If you do not have a pass, we will be happy to provide you with one for the days you want to volunteer. For those who already have passes, we will reimburse any money you spent on your pass.

Please contact us at ***wpipax2014@wpi.edu*** with the following information:

- 1) What days/times you are willing to volunteer at PAX. (e.g. Friday Morning, Saturday Afternoon)
- 2) Your major (and any minors)
- 3) Your shirt size (if you do not already have a shirt)
- 4) If you have a pass/need a pass

Thanks!

Over the following week, we received a large amount of responses. Prior to sending out the email, however, we had contacted the groups presenting games at the booth and asked them if they were willing to volunteer any group members. We required each group to offer at least one volunteer at the booth to accompany their game. We made the groups aware of this requirement during our evaluation of their games in February. We received a total of six volunteers from the four groups, meaning that, ideally, we needed six more volunteers. Most of the students who offered to volunteer did not possess a pass. The two individuals who already had passes were supplied with forms through which they could receive reimbursement.

**Figure 15: Student Volunteer Schedule**

<b>Friday Schedule</b>	<b>Volunteer 1</b>	<b>Volunteer 2</b>	<b>Volunteer 3</b>
10:00AM-11:00AM	John Tordoff	Alex Quartulli	Tim Bujnevicie
11:00AM-12:00PM	John Tordoff	Alex Quartulli	Tim Bujnevicie
12:00PM-1:00PM	Khalif Mitchell	Eric Anumba	Adam Ansel
1:00PM-2:00PM	Khalif Mitchell	Eric Anumba	Adam Ansel
2:00PM-3:00PM	Brittany Owens	Adam Degenhardt	Eric Benson
3:00PM-4:00PM	Brittany Owens	Adam Degenhardt	Eric Benson
4:00PM-5:00PM	Logan Harrington	Kimani Gyening	Cian Rice
5:00PM-6:00PM	Logan Harrington	Kimani Gyening	Cian Rice
<b>Saturday Schedule</b>	<b>Volunteer 1</b>	<b>Volunteer 2</b>	<b>Volunteer 3</b>
10:00AM-11:00AM	Ceren Savansan	Marco Duran	Adam Ansel
11:00AM-12:00PM	Ceren Savansan	Marco Duran	Adam Ansel
12:00PM-1:00PM	John Tordoff	Alex Quartulli	Eric Benson
1:00PM-2:00PM	John Tordoff	Alex Quartulli	Eric Benson
2:00PM-3:00PM	Kimani Gyening	Logan Harrington	Tim Bujnevicie
3:00PM-4:00PM	Kimani Gyening	Logan Harrington	Tim Bujnevicie
4:00PM-5:00PM	Christian Manuel	Khalif Mitchell	Cian Rice
5:00PM-6:00PM	Christian Manuel	Khalif Mitchell	Cian Rice
<b>Sunday Schedule</b>	<b>Volunteer 1</b>	<b>Volunteer 2</b>	<b>Volunteer 3</b>
10:00AM-11:00AM	Alex Quartulli	John Tordoff	Cian Rice
11:00AM-12:00PM	Alex Quartulli	John Tordoff	Cian Rice
12:00PM-1:00PM	Khalif Mitchell	Eric Benson	
1:00PM-2:00PM	Khalif Mitchell	Eric Benson	
2:00PM-3:00PM	Kimani Gyening	Tim Bujnevicie	
3:00PM-4:00PM	Kimani Gyening	Tim Bujnevicie	
4:00PM-5:00PM	Christian Manuel	Adam Ansel	
5:00PM-6:00PM	Christian Manuel	Adam Ansel	

**Figure 16: Faculty Volunteer Schedule**

<b>Friday Schedule</b>	<b>Professor #1</b>	<b>Professor #2</b>
10:00AM-11:00AM		
11:00AM-12:00PM	Professor Snyder	
12:00PM-1:00PM	Professor Snyder	
1:00PM-2:00PM	Professor Zizza	
2:00PM-3:00PM	Professor Zizza	Professor Moriarty
3:00PM-4:00PM	Professor Moriarty	
4:00PM-5:00PM	Professor Moriarty	
5:00PM-6:00PM		
<b>Saturday Schedule</b>		
10:00AM-11:00AM		
11:00AM-12:00PM	Professor Linderman	
12:00PM-1:00PM	Professor Linderman	
1:00PM-2:00PM	Professor Farbrook	
2:00PM-3:00PM	Professor Farbrook	
3:00PM-4:00PM		
4:00PM-5:00PM		
5:00PM-6:00PM		
<b>Sunday Schedule</b>		
10:00AM-11:00AM		
11:00AM-12:00PM	Professor O'Donnell	
12:00PM-1:00PM	Professor O'Donnell	
1:00PM-2:00PM	Professor Claypool	
2:00PM-3:00PM	Professor Claypool	
3:00PM-4:00PM		
4:00PM-5:00PM		
5:00PM-6:00PM		

### 3.6.1 Volunteer Schedule

Before finalizing our volunteers, we created a volunteer schedule, visible in Figure 15. Keeping in mind the days and times our volunteers supplied, we created a three-day schedule fairly quickly. In addition, Corrine advised that we include ourselves in the schedule. She stated that adding our names to the list would ensure that everyone would be clear about the schedule that was to be followed. In addition, we tried to have at least one unofficial manager at the booth at all times. We arranged to have two or three people running the booth at all times. Each volunteer was given a single, two-hour shift on each day that they offered to volunteer. Below is the final schedule:

In addition to student volunteers, we also had several WPI professors volunteer at the booth. Each day, we had two professors from 11:00am-1:00pm and from 1:00pm-3:00pm. The faculty volunteers proved to be especially effective at booth during the convention itself due to their knowledge about the school and their public speaking skills. The Faculty Volunteer Schedule is visible in Figure 16, above.

### 3.6.3 Volunteer Information

After establishing our schedule, we arranged an informative meeting with all our volunteers a week before PAX East. There, we informed the volunteers of their responsibilities, our booth location, reimbursement for passes and travel and answered questions. After the meeting, we sent out an email summarizing all of the information we provided alongside a copy of the volunteer schedule which we also showed at the meeting. The information included was as follows:

## General Information

- Volunteers will be manning the WPI Booth (#599, located near the Indie Megabooth). The booth will have about three people at any given time.
- For each day you're signed up for, you'll have 1 two-hour shift. Other than that, you're free to enjoy the convention as you wish.

## Volunteer Responsibilities

- Try to draw in interested convention-goers to the booth. Don't pressure people, but if they seem intrigued don't be afraid to call them over.
- Be able to answer general questions about WPI and the IMGD major. Try to promote WPI as much as possible to anyone who may be interested!
- Help show off the games we are showcasing! The four games at our booth are *Gone*, *Maternal Instinct*, *Xeero* and *Hypergroove*.
- Record the number of booth visitors using the provided materials (checklist or clicker depending on availability).
- Distribute buttons and postcards. You're also free to take a button or two if you'd like!
- Keep the booth clean and well-maintained and make sure nothing is stolen from the booth.

## Additional Information

- Remember to take all of your belongings with you after your shift! You can keep your bag at the booth during your volunteer hours, but we can't hold onto your things for you.
- The schedule isn't final. If any time doesn't work for you, see if you can find someone else to switch with you and we'll be happy to accommodate!
- We will be providing hand sanitizer and snacks! We're looking at getting granola bars for snacks.
- Unfortunately, we can't provide transportation. We will, however, be able to provide compensation for commutation and travel fees. Keep your receipts if possible! Unfortunately, we cannot refund lodging.
- Passes and shirts can be collected from FL B24. The shirts are available and we will notify you when the passes come in!
- We'd prefer if you wear the WPI booth shirt, but we'd completely understand if you'd like to bring a backup.
- For those already with passes, we will provide reimbursement for any days you volunteered following the weekend of PAX.

Our email and our meeting proved to be very helpful for the volunteers, and we encountered almost no problems or difficulties with the volunteers themselves from our end.

We delivered the passes and shirts to the volunteers the day prior to the convention with no issues.

It could have been beneficial to have fewer volunteers working more hours. However, we did have an incident where a volunteer failed to show up for one of his three days, and it resulted in a minor scheduling inconvenience. Had we used fewer volunteers, this scheduling gap could have escalated into a major problem. However, both our student and faculty volunteers worked well together and helped draw in a lot of potential students, as seen in Figure 17.

**Figure 17: Professors Zizza and Snyder, and Eric Anumba in the WPI Booth**



## 4. Results

The effectiveness of our booth is evident from our results. We considered six groups to show their games at our booth, and of that six, we picked four: *Gone*, *Maternal Instinct*, *Xeero* and *Hypergroove*. We had six different button designs, a banner design and an advertisement. In total, we spoke to around 600 people at PAX who asked about WPI and our booth. We estimate that around 350 people playtested the student-made games we were presenting, and we handed out a lot of postcards and buttons. We had twelve student volunteers and seven faculty volunteers at the booth. We had very few, if any, technological or scheduling errors, and the booth was orderly, properly staffed and well-maintained throughout the convention.

We did, however, exceed our funding for the booth. In total, we spent \$9,286 of our allocated \$8,000 budget (see Figure 11).

### 4.1 Booth Effectiveness

The main objectives of WPI's booth are to bring awareness of the Interactive Media and Game Development Major to prospective students and to showcase student work to employers

Measuring the booth's effectiveness can be done in several ways. We considered buying a handheld tally counter and counting the number of people who visited the booth. We also thought about asking the MQP groups to implement code into their games that logs the number of times the game is played, and gathering data that way.

We could also track the number of visitors to the booth by counting the buttons and postcards leftover after the convention. However, while counting the number of postcards might have been effective, counting the number of buttons leftover would not have been as

reliable of an indicator because many people came to the booth simply for the buttons, which were located next to the television and the computers (see Figure 18). Therefore, this might have resulted in skewed data.

**Figure 18: Television setup for the booth alongside the button supply**



#### 4.1.1 Metrics

We decided to tally the number of people who talked to volunteers in the booth and the people who played one of the MQP projects. We did this by using Notepad and by asking the volunteers to keep track of whom they talked to and to put a tally corresponding to the situation. This was done on both Saturday and Sunday of the convention. On Friday, while we

were in a hurry to set up the booth, we encountered problems with the laptop. Since we were keeping the tallies of who visited and data on the laptop, we were not able to gather data for that day.

The data is as follows:

Saturday:

People Talked To:	186
Played Games:	114

Sunday:

People Talked To:	187
Played Games:	142

There were three people who returned the postcards with their email information for more information about WPI. The postcards we used were the postcards from last year's, but since we did not have a raffle this year, half the information on the back of the postcards was useless. The other half of the card consisted of contact information for the raffle, so we did not expect people to fill it out.

## 4.2 Evaluation

We believe that our data is an accurate representation of the amount of visitors we had.

The increase in the number of people who visited the booth on Sunday compared to Saturday was unexpected, since we were told many times that Sunday is less crowded than the

other two days. It is possible that visitors from the previous days helped to spread the word about our booth, resulting in an increase in booth traffic on Sunday.

The most unexpected data we have is that there were three people who returned the postcards with their email information for more information about WPI.

## 5. Conclusion

Considering the growing trend for colleges to represent themselves at conventions such as PAX East, it is important that WPI maintains and expands its presence at PAX East. The convention attracts a demographic that fits the potential student profile for IMGD majors perfectly.

Future IQPs doing this project should focus on building the booth in a more reusable and extendable way to cut costs. We attempted it this year with a generic banner and buttons that can easily be reused, and this practice can be extended to more aspects of the project in following iterations. Looking back on the project, we decided that more thought should go into the visual appeal of the booth in order to draw in more people. Another change we considered was changing the placement of the booth. There is currently an unofficial “college row” on the exhibit hall floor, where most college booths are grouped together. Moving to this location could be beneficial, since it might help to define us as a college booth. Given feedback from PAX attendees, we feel the booth projected a positive view on WPI’s IMGD major and helped generate interest in potential students.

## 5.1 Post-Mortem

During the 3-term IQP, there were some areas that were more challenging than other areas, and there were times when everything went as planned. Some of the main issues we had in our group were communication and organization. An area that went well for us was teamwork.

### 5.1.1 What Went Wrong

As mentioned above, we struggled to communicate effectively with one another. A prime example of this occurred at the end of B-term. Before the long winter break, Professor Claypool wanted a progress report of what we had done, along with information about what planned to do for the next term. Some of the group members were pre-occupied with end of the semester projects and finals, and another member was having issues receiving messages from the other members. This blunder served as a good reminder to us that problems may occur and it was up to us to try and avoid issues like this in the future.

Organization was another noteworthy issue that occurred within our group. We were clear as to what our end goal for this project was, but we experienced difficulties as we strove to achieve this goal. At the beginning of the process, our group rarely collaborated outside of scheduled meetings, and this caused problems in developing structured and effective plans. Communication difficulties also contributed to this problem, and some group members did not

show up to some of the meetings and interviews. After creating a schedule of tasks that needed to be completed, we developed an organizational plan that helped us prepare for PAX East.

### 5.1.2 What Went Right

Although our group encountered disagreements in some areas, disagreements lead to innovations. In addition, our ability to work as a team improved steadily throughout the term, and we were strong individual workers. We did not assign a group leader, and instead supported one another with regards to pushing the group in the right direction. Although we encountered many problems throughout, we believe that we were able to overcome many of these challenges and that the final outcome of our project reflects this.

## 5.2 Recommendations

We thought the project was a great experience and are grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it. Regarding the future booths, we thought it was a good idea to design some of our materials to be reusable. This allows more money to be delegated to the design of other areas of the booth. In addition, our booth did not allow passerbys to see the MQP's being played by the visitors. Making this visible could increase booth awareness in the future. We also noticed afterwards that the design of our booth made it difficult to hand out postcards. In the future, perhaps a small table or stand at the front of the booth with postcards will allow people to easily obtain information about WPI and IMGD.

## 6. References

### People

Corrine Kennedy	Class of 2014	Interviewed 11/16/2013
Andy Lukas	Class of 2014	Interviewed 11/16/2013
Cian Rice	Class of 2014	Interviewed 11/25/2013
Kelly Wallick	Indie Megabooth Overlord	Interviewed 11/04/2013
Ichiro Lambe	Dejobaan Games CEO	Interviewed 12/08/2013
Alex Schwartz	Owlchemy Labs CEO	Interviewed 12/11/2013
Jillian Ferguson	WPI Marketing, Programs Manager	Interviewed 2/05/2014
Jill Sauer	Class of 2013	Provided Mascot

### Games

<i>Gone</i>	Developed by Logan Harrington and Sean Calvert
<i>Maternal Instinct</i>	Developed by Alex Quartulli, Nick Defossez, John Tordoff and Kimani Gyening
<i>Xeero</i>	Developed by Eric Anumba and Dan Acito
<i>Hyper Groove</i>	Developed by Cian Rice
<i>Grail to the Thief</i>	Developed by Elias Aoude and Anthony Russo