**SARA VERRILLI:** So the course evolution has actually been more a refinement than any really big evolution. We've always had the four project structure. We have done some juggling of the amount of time allotted to each project, and what we're asking for the goals for each project.

The first year we ran the course we were kind of asking for a full game prototype from each of the iterations. And we were asking them to do everything for every project, which was a little much to ask them, although they did it. I mean, they did it. We've been refining each of the projects as it goes to try to emphasize a particular thing we're trying to teach, especially in the first three projects.

So the first project is prototyping, and the second project is project management, and the third project is now user interface and interactions, feedback especially. And then the fourth project remains tie it all together into one overall synthesis.

Also, I think that our use of guest lecturers has gotten better over the years. We've been able to reach out to more people and we've realized more and more the value that they bring into the course, having people to come in and talk, often agreeing with what we've said, but giving a different perspective and rooting it back into the game industry. The students really like to hear that this is actually what's going on in the game industry. They're not just being taught this stuff in a course.

**PHILIP TAN:** When we first started teaching this class we were primarily looking at the skills that MIT students had and didn't have when they came and joined our lab as undergraduate research assistants. And we found that there was a certain skill gap of things that we had to teach every single new student who came. Even though they may have been very skilled programmers, they didn't understand what it was like to work in a team.

And so a lot of the genesis of this particular course comes from just us trying to increase that pool of students that we could hire as undergraduate researchers. And of course, in the process of teaching a class about making video games, a lot

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of the students taking the class were also interested in working professionally in the game industry. And so we expanded the content on the skills that you're going to need outside of MIT. But we've always been very, very careful to make sure that a student who comes out of that class is in good shape to be able to get a research internship here in our lab.

**RICHARD EBERHARDT:** So this semester, product three is different than last year. Last year the focus was on the aesthetics, so think about how art and sound and visual combine to make it an aesthetic experience. That's not as important this year for our final project. So we changed it to something that's actually going to help them with their final project a little better.

So this case it's user interface. We're asking them to make these decision making strategy-like games. There's going to be a lot of elements on the screen that a player is going to have to understand immediately what they do and how they interact with each other. So focusing on that user interface and that user experience is important for us, and in particular, feedback systems.

So because our theme is meaningful decision making, if I'm making a decision, part of it is I should know what the decision was that I just made and how it affected the rest of the world and how it affected my own play. So that kind of reinforcement, that kind of feedback loop is going to be very important for that third project.

**PHILIP TAN:** We've also brought back something that we temporarily departed from, and that's the idea of having a client, a real client who has a need for the games that need to be made. In reality, if you go out and work in the game industry, you're not making games for yourself most of the time, you're making games for someone else. So in this case, we're going to be working with the Climate Center and the Humanitarian Response Lab here at MIT to talk about issues of climate change, and more importantly about preparing for disasters.

We feel this kind of topical relevance will make this class additionally more interesting for certain students who aren't just enamored with the technical challenges of making a game. But I think this might also be the first time that we

specifically had the client give us a design theme as opposed to a technology to work with.

**RICHARD EBERHARDT:** Yeah.

**PHILIP TAN:** So it's a departure, but in many ways it's taking what we've learned from the previous two iterations of this class when we didn't have a client or when we had students working on a design theme rather than a technology and putting it together this year.