

GAME DEVELOPMENT BASICS

ACM @ UMASS LOWELL + GAMEDEV CLUB

BEFORE WE BEGIN

- Join our Engage Page:
<https://umasslowellclubs.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/acm>
- We will be collecting attendance here as well
- **We will also be using this platform to hold elections (more information after Stephen's presentation)**
- **Please RSVP for future events**



PRESENTER



STEPHEN NUTTALL


- Senior CS Major
- President of GameDev at UML
- Extensive experience with game development

CLUB ADVISOR



MISHA RABINOVICH, M.F.A.

- Associate Professor, Art and Design
- Faculty Advisor for GameDev at UML
- Program Coordinator for Video Game Studies Minor



How I built the GameDev club from scratch

Stephen Nuttall - President of UMass GameDev from Fall 2023 to Spring 2025



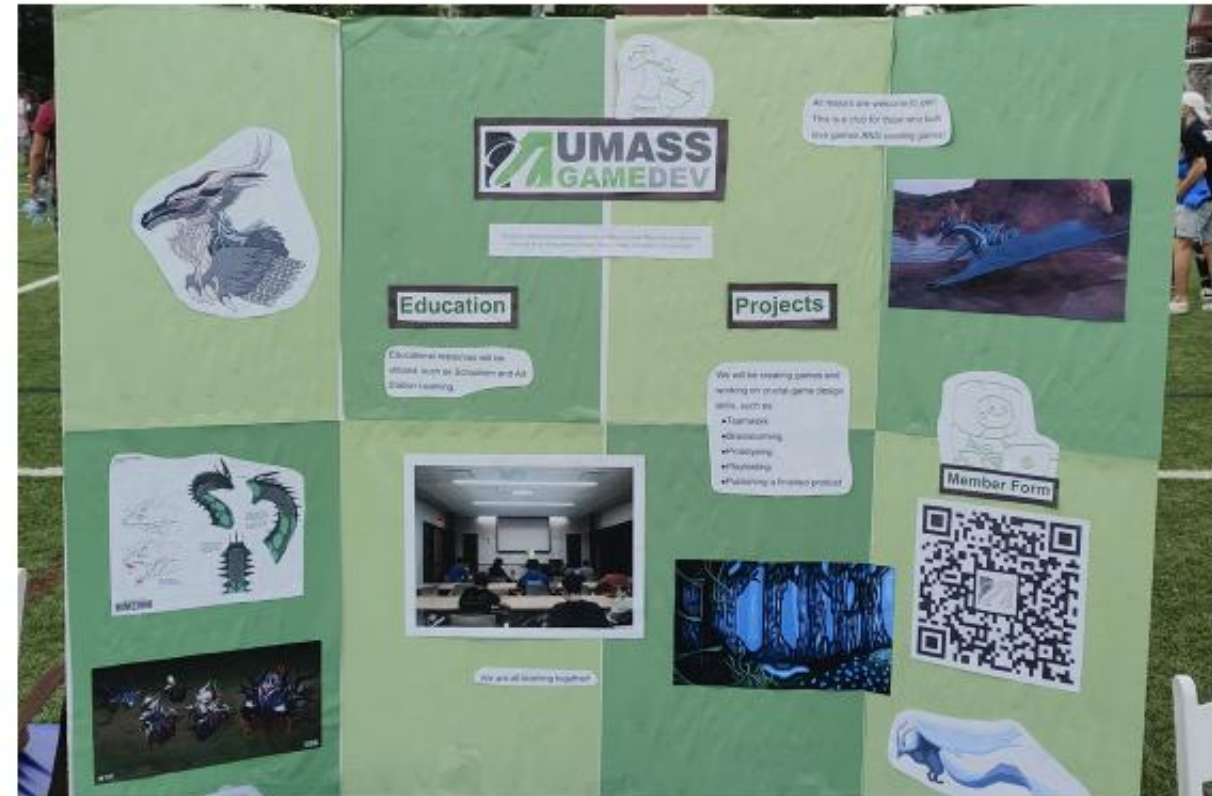
What will I talk about today?

1. How did I become president of a dead club? Why was the club dead?
2. How I brought UMass GameDev back
3. What I learned about running a club and being a leader
4. Promote UMass GameDev! and questions.

Part 1: Becoming president of a dead club

Story of UMass GameDev before I was president

- The club was at least somewhat active in the 2021-22 academic year
- In the 2022-23 academic year though, the club became inactive
- The president was too busy with classes and other responsibilities
- Club met only twice in Fall 2022, zero times in Spring 2023
- There was no promotion for the club
- Very little activity in the Discord
- In short, no leadership to get anything moving
- The club functionally didn't exist






This was disappointing for me

- I had developed games for years at that point
- I wanted to share my passion with others
- Other people also wanted to get involved in something they were interested in
- But without a president to get things started, nothing happened



How did I become president?

- I don't fucking know
- Previous president graduated
- There were no elections, so new president got the role by default
- Let me show you what happened next...

 @PASTA CAMEL when is this happening?



joonsplant 9/11/2023 10:44 AM

I'm working on getting things set up, would you like to help?



PASTA CAMEL 9/11/2023 10:44 AM

Sure

What do you need help with?



joonsplant 9/11/2023 10:45 AM

Can I dm you?



PASTA CAMEL 9/11/2023 10:49 AM

Sure



PASTA CAMEL 9/11/2023 2:02 PM

Hey guys 🙌 as of 30 seconds ago, I'm the new president 🏆 this club will now be awesome 😎 we'll have our first meeting uhhh... soon 🎉



Part 2: Reviving UMass GameDev



So what now?

- Cool! I'm the president! ...what do I do now?
- Send emails to hopefully the right people, get perms on Engage, Discord
- Created a Google Form to poll members on their preferences
- Outlined a detailed vision for what the club should be

Would you prefer physical meetings or online meetings via Discord? (Check as many as you'd like) *

- ☐ I prefer physical meetings whenever possible!
- ☐ I think some online meetings are ok but in person meetings are better
- ☐ I'm indifferent. I'll attend either physical or online meetings
- ☐ I'm fine with physical meetings, but I would like if there was an online option so I can attend either physically or virtually.
- ☐ I think important meetings should be in person but otherwise they should be online.
- ☐ I prefer online meetings whenever possible!

How can you (or prefer to) contribute to developing a game? (check as many as you'd like) *

- ☐ Programmer 🖥️
- ☐ Artist 🎨
- ☐ Writer ✍️
- ☐ Musician 🎵
- ☐ Level Designer 🎮
- ☐ Other: _____

What should the club be?

- Because the club previously didn't do anything, there were no resources left behind on what it should do
- No knowledge on what works, what doesn't
- No info on logistics (reserving a room, club fairs, etc)
- I had no choice but to reinvent the wheel





Making a detailed plan

- I developed a detailed vision for what the club should look like
- I then made a plan on how to realize that vision
- I planned the first meeting around these ideas
- Finally, UMass GameDev had a meeting!

Concept

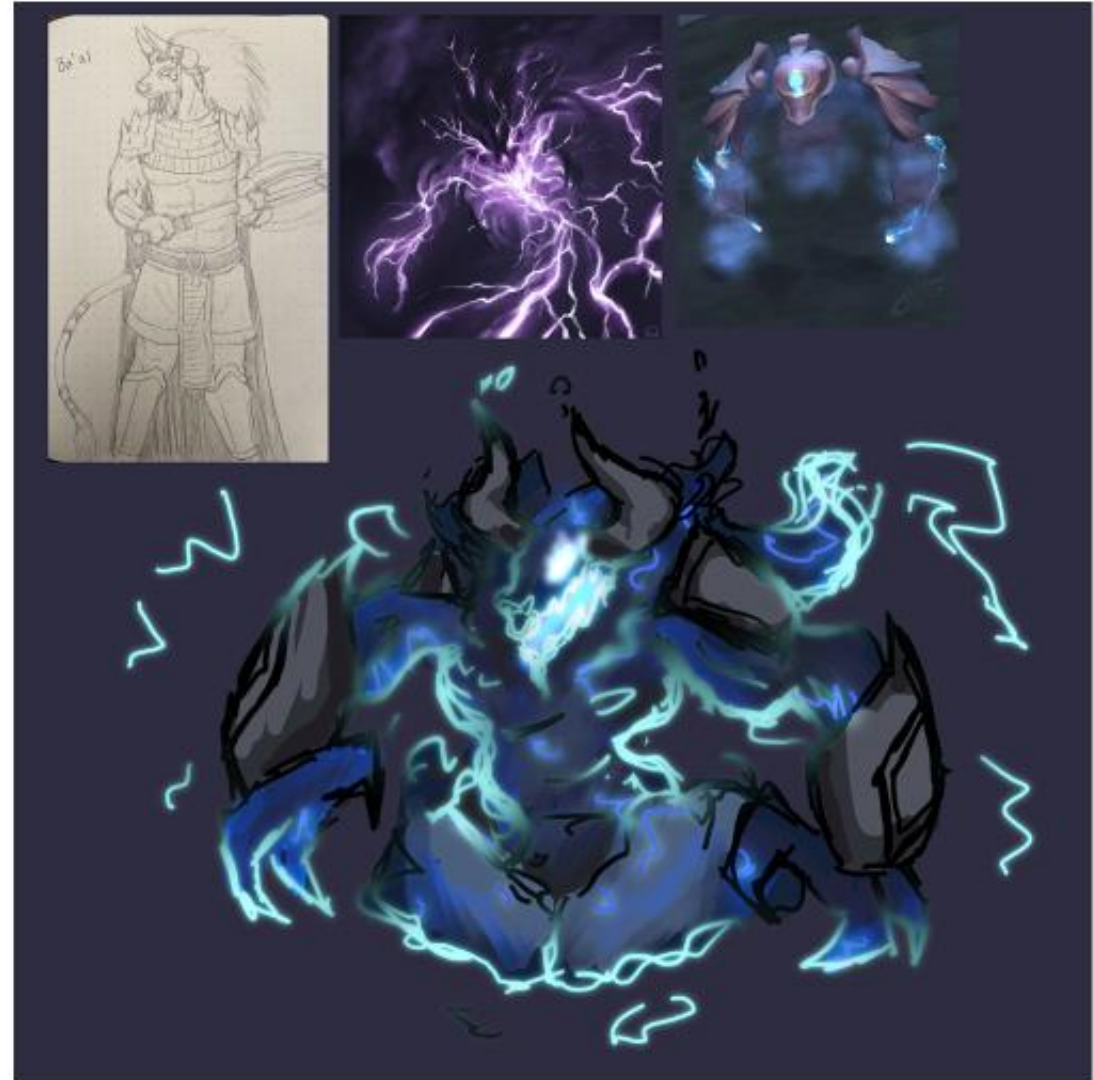
What do I want this club to be?

- I want people to make games!
- The club before has done two formats:
 - make one game as a group
 - split into teams and make multiple small games.
 - I think the latter makes more sense.
- Game engine we'll use is either unity or RPGMaker/similar noncoding engine. Depends on the game we decide to make.
- First project(s) should be small and obtainable. Get the ball rolling. Maybe work up from there
- Weekly meetings would be best.
 - First meeting - brainstorm
 - Second meeting - progress update
 - Third meeting - play final game(s), and brainstorm again
 - Repeat with as many progress update meetings as necessary for each project.
- Takeaways from Google Form:
 - Decent amount of people interested (7+)
 - Meetings should be physical
 - Good spread of skills, decent amount of pre-existing knowledge but nobody's made a full game in an engine yet.
 - People are mostly willing to make any genre of games. Specific genres were mentioned though:
 - platformers
 - shooters
 - souls-likes
 - Action-adventure
 - thriller
 - 3D games
 - Party Games
 - Mini Games
 - RPG Games
 - Suggestions for how to run the club:



How that plan turned out

- I planned to start with making multiple small games with limited scope
- That did not happen
- Very quickly, 2 weeks became 2 months became 2 years
- I knew I wanted to limit the scope of the project, but I admittedly didn't know how
- We're still working on our first project, which has an insurmountably large scope





That's ok! We made the most of it

- Who cares about completing the game - we're just here to have fun making it!
- We've developed a "see how far we can get" attitude.
- Left us room to brainstorm big ideas without worrying about them being realistic.
- All art and music made for features we can't complete will go in the art book!



Now, the club is more vibrant than ever

- Engaging weekly meetings
- Passionate and dedicated members
- Lots of people contributing!
- Game jams every semester!
- Our demo will be done by the end of the semester! (hopefully!)



Part 3: What I learned?



Good leadership is extremely important

- Even if a lot of people want something it happen, it probably won't until someone organizes and facilitates it.
 - When the old president didn't do that, the club became inactive
 - Meetings aren't effective unless the president has a plan
- Leadership is also critical to shaping the club.
 - I put a lot of effort into making sure everyone felt welcomed
 - People follow your example



Plans don't always survive reality

- Multiple times, I've had a big vision for the club that doesn't quite pan out
- Meetings especially are hard to get right
 - The weekly meeting format has evolved several times
 - Each iteration has its flaws, some of which I didn't anticipate
 - If people have nothing to say, you won't have any discussion/engagement
- It doesn't matter how good your plan is, you can't account for everything
- What matters more is flexibility - being able to adapt and evolve



Pass on knowledge to who's next

- I could've achieved my original vision of focusing on smaller projects that actually get completed if I knew how to control the scope of the project.
- I could've organized the club much better if I knew what I knew now.
- I'm going to create a document for the next president compiling everything they need to know.
- This goes further than just the president! Think documentation, style guides, etc



Create a welcoming environment

- UMass GameDev has been really good at making everyone feel included
- Anyone of any skill level in coding, art, music, etc is a great fit for our club
 - LOTS of code documentation
 - Non-complex/intimidating art style
 - Providing as much material for inspiration as possible
 - Always answer questions in Discord and help people learn
 - Always compliment other people's work
- This helps bring in new people that otherwise wouldn't join.
- Our club is about having fun! There shouldn't be a barrier to entry.

Part 4: Promoting UMass GameDev and Q&A

You already know some of what we do

- We're working on wrapping up a demo for our long running project
 - Specifically, a 2D platformer (metroidvania genre)
 - Set in a cartoonish version of Egyptian mythology
 - Coded in Unity and C#
- We need coders, artists, musicians, everyone!
- No commitment or pressure
- Meetings are optional, but we have them every week!
- To join, just join our Discord server using the QR code





Let's play what we have so far!

(if time permits)

This is a short version of the game made for the engagement fair

It does NOT represent the final demo we'll be releasing at the end of the semester

Questions?

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ELECTIONS

ACM @ UMASS LOWELL



ELECTION INFO

- Requirements:
 - **Must be an undergraduate student through Spring 2026**
 - Must fill out the nomination form to qualify for the election ballot
 - Cannot be on co-op in Fall 2025 (for President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer)
- Roles:
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Graphic Designer
 - Director of Partnerships
 - Director of Public Relations

- The **Chair (President)** is the principal officer and is responsible for leading the Chapter and managing its activities in accordance with the policies and procedures of the ACM and these bylaws. The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the chapter and of its Executive Council. The Executive Council shall consist of the Chapter officers, the Student Chapter Sponsor, and chairs of the Chapter's standing committees.
- The **Vice Chair (Vice President)** shall direct the Chapter's efforts to hold events, hackathons, small projects, and any other duties that may be assigned by the Chair and shall preside at meetings in the absence of the Chair, assist the Chair in the management of the Chapter, and perform other duties that may be assigned by the Chair.
- The **Treasurer** should maintain the chapter's financial records. Other duties include:
 - Pay all bills, and maintain records for the chapter
 - Perform other duties as assigned by the Chair.
- The **Secretary** shall keep the minutes of all Chapter and Executive Council meetings. Other duties include:
 - Preparation of the Chapter's annual report and officer contact information, and submission of these to ACM Headquarters via the Chapter Administrative Interface.
 - Submission of any proposed amendment to these bylaws to the ACM Chief Operating Officer. Proposed amendments must be approved before they can be submitted to the Chapter's membership for a vote.
 - Perform other duties as assigned by the Chair.
- The **Director of Partnerships** shall coordinate the relationships that the Chapter holds with faculty, industry, and other groups, and will book speakers and events with them.
- The **Director of Public Relations** shall work with the student body, the University's means of promotion (website, newspaper, etc.), and local media to raise interest and awareness in the Chapter's activities.
- The **Graphic Designer** shall create visual advertising for the Chapter, including advertisements for meetings and promotional materials for events.

HOW TO APPLY

1. **Submit Your Nomination (Feb. 26th to Mar. 30th):**
<https://umasslowellclubs.campuslabs.com/engage/submitter/election/start/673666>
2. **Campaign:** Once nominated, you'll have the opportunity to campaign before the elections.
3. **Elections:** Speeches and voting will take place on Wednesday, April 2nd, 6:30 PM at DAN-321. All ACM members are encouraged to participate.



WHY YOU SHOULD RUN

- **Develop Leadership Skills:** Enhance your ability to lead teams, manage projects, and make impactful decisions.
- **Network and Connect:** Work closely with faculty, industry professionals, and other student leaders.
- **Influence ACM Initiatives:** Have a say in the events and workshops we organize, focusing on what you're passionate about within the computing field.
- **Boost Your Resume:** Add substantial experience to your resume, showcasing your commitment and leadership capabilities in a recognized student organization.

UPCOMING EVENTS

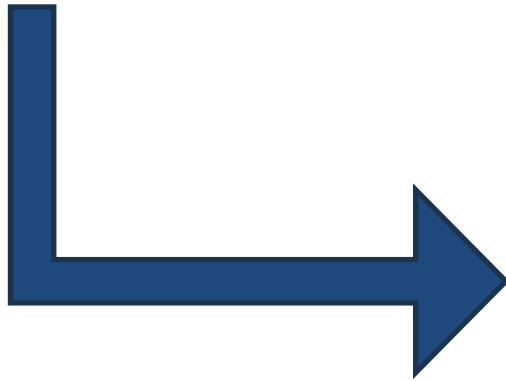
- **Spring Break**: March 10th-14th
- **Fourth Meeting**: March 19th: CS Resume Review Workshop (Speaker: Ravi Patel, former President of ACM @ UML) (Pizza will be served)
- **Spring Career Fair**: March 26th in Tsongas Center (4-7pm): [Register on Handshake](#)
- **Fifth Meeting**: April 2nd: Game Night w/ Prizes (Pizza will be served)
- **ACM Election Nominations**: February 26th – March 30th
- **ACM Elections**: April 2nd, In-Person

MEETING ATTENDANCE



CONTACT INFO

Our Linktree!



Instagram:
@uml.acm

