DigiPen Application Essay

DigiPen Application Prompt: Why have you applied to our Bachelor of Arts in Game Design degree, what inspired you to pursue a future in this field, what have you done to prepare yourself for this field, and why is DigiPen the right school for you to realize your goals?

Since I was a toddler I have been interested in game design. From the time I could talk I played video games on a windows XP Atari emulator. By the time I was six I played enough emulated games, on enough platforms, that I could start comparing them. I would question and critique the control ports, how smooth they played, and how well they ran and worked. As I grew up the passion for looking at games, breaking them down, and trying to build them into something better, never left me. Conscious or not I was critiquing the games and trying to design better solutions to problems I identified while playing a variety of early 2000's games.

The biggest reason I started playing games so early was because I must spend several hours a day doing medical treatment for my Cystic Fibrosis. During this time, I am connected to heavy noisy equipment that makes it impossible to move. Video games let me escape the 'reality' of my life, this was a huge draw, even if it just meant that I got to put headphones on to get away from the noise.

When I was six I tried to re-design Cribbage; it didn't go that well. I don't remember exactly what I did, but I do remember that it made the game significantly worse. Despite the failure I loved trying to balance how 'powerful' the crib is. I found it an incredibly enjoyable challenge to make the crib powerful, yet not game breaking.

By the time I got into high school, I knew I wanted to work in game development. Initially I thought I wanted to work on the programing of the games. However, as I explored game design in and out of classes, I realized I enjoyed working on designing the whole of the game, engineering the player's experience, and balancing the game, far more than I enjoyed the programming. I'm not sure why I have always loved doing this, my only guess is that it is the perfect mix of my mother's creativity and my father's engineering skills.

I discovered my love for game design while taking game development courses in high school that taught the basics of 2D game design. I would spend hours working on the games I made. In and out of class, at home and during my medical treatment. I loved trying to add new features and struggling with logic puzzles, I even ended up choosing to work on games over studying for other classes like Math or English. Once I was done with both game design classes I continued making games. With the assistance of YouTube, I taught myself how to use Unity and Blender, I also attended the school game development club. For hours friends and I would discuss ideas for games that we had. One week in the club a friend and I made a game to turn in as a History class assignment. Throughout High School I made an effort to improve my ability to program the games I want to design. I took several advanced computer science classes, including a level 200 three credit Data Structures and Algorithms course during my Junior year that is accredited by Marquette University.

When I first discovered DigiPen I knew it was the school for me. When I read about life on campus I could tell DigiPen was an environment that would let me thrive. Everything I saw depicted a school whose students strived for, and routinely achieved excellence. From the group work and class projects, to the Alumni and their work, I knew DigiPen could teach me what I wanted to know. Furthermore, the student clubs, groups, and the campus events, are all things I was interested in; I felt that these where my people.

When I had the pleasure this summer to visit the Redmond campus, I knew this was the place I belonged. I sat in on a 300 level design course during the summer session. I felt like I should be there. I enjoyed talking with the students about a range of my hobbies, and someone even reminded me to sign in on the attendance sheet while I was working on my own project. The professors I met were also incredibly engaging, telling stories or debating topics; it reminded me of talking with my own friends. Not only does the student body and faculty fit my learning style, the pace of learning and portfolio building that DigiPen requires is how I like to learn. With the hands on and in teams approach DigiPen students don't just study theory, they apply that theory in projects that model a real workplace environment. Graduates from DigiPen have an un-paralleled level of skill and knowledge, as well as a deep respect from employers. This is exactly what I want from a school: to help me achieve my goal of a career in game design.