



Digital Art & Animation Program

Advisory Board Agenda & Meeting Minutes | April 18, 2025

Attendees:

- Courtney Caldwell - Google pro, former student
- Paul Naas - Outgoing Digital Art & Animation Faculty Coordinator
- Hyla Lacefield - Incoming Faculty Coordinator

Industry Engagement Review

- Looked back at everything done with industry partners through the year, not just during official meetings.
- Everyone pretty much agreed: all this back-and-forth with industry—especially the feedback sessions and showcase events—has been a massive boost. Students aren't just getting theory; they're getting direct validation that their work *really* matters.

Program/Curriculum Development

- Spent a solid hour hashing out plans for the new Bachelor's in Interaction Design.
- There was a lot of talk about how to streamline the certificates and degrees—everyone wants the programs to be more achievable, basically to help students actually finish.
- **A big theme:** What's better these days, a Bachelor's or a fast-tracked credential? The economy's kind of a rollercoaster, so it's not a clear answer. A lot of back and forth on why one might be more valuable, especially if you're just trying to get hired and pay the bills.

Internal Communication Upgrades

- One reoccurring point: yearly meetings aren't enough. Explored setting up something like Slack or a similar app to keep everyone connected and able to share feedback and insights throughout the year, not just once every twelve months.

Restructuring the Advisory Board

- Floated the plan to split the advisory board into three smaller sections, each focusing on a more specific discipline, instead of trying to cover everything all at once.
- Proposed divisions:
 - Interaction/Video Game Design
 - Graphic Design & Photography
 - 2D and 3D Animation

- Everyone seemed to agree that this would make meetings and planning way more manageable - and a lot more relevant for each area.

Summary:

Students present their final projects and industry folks give specific and detailed feedback, as well as talk about the state of the industry and what skills are important. Although this was NOT an advisory board meeting, the industry feedback and direct student involvement was invaluable. One point that was raised over and over again by the industry partners was that our students were doing work far above what anyone expected from community college students, and that one of the partners who also teaches at a 4 year school noted that he worked directly with upper-level students and the work they generated was nowhere near the quality of these students who are:

- a. community college students
- b. only taken one class.

Student Final Projects & Industry Feedback

Referring to MART 385 Coding for Designers and Artists Final Presentation with the following Industry representatives in attendance:

- Charlie Fink - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/charliefink/>
- Deirdre Lyons - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deirdrevlyons/>
- Paul Hoover - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/pahoover/>
- James Ashley - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/imaginativeuniversal/>
- John Hanacek - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/johnhanacek/>
- Tim Bergerhofer - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/timbergerhofer/>
- Juliana Loh - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/julianaloh/>

- **Student Presentations:**

Students got the chance to present their final projects directly to industry folks - always a nerve-wracking but super valuable experience.

- **Feedback Details:**

Industry pros didn't just pat students on the back, they dove in deep. They gave detailed, actionable feedback, not just about the projects, but also about what's really happening in the industry and which skills are hot (or not) right now. Our students are beating expectations regarding projects on par with or beyond what is expected from upperclassmen at four-year schools. To really emphasize this sentiment, one of the industry partners who teaches at a university repeatedly said the work from these one-class community college students was way ahead of his own advanced students' stuff.

- **State of the Industry Insights:**
The pros didn't just talk shop about student work - they painted a picture of the current reality in their fields. They spelled out exactly which skills get you noticed and why, so students aren't lost guessing what's actually important.
- **Not an Advisory Board Meeting, But Invaluable Feedback:**
This showcase wasn't some official advisory board event - the real-world feedback and direct student-industry interaction was priceless. Having industry weigh in like this seriously shapes the curriculum and student readiness down the line.

Non-Advisory Industry Feedback: Animation Session

- **Industry Professional Guidance:**
Another non advisory board Industry Feedback session was when Animation Directors John Hays and Ed Bell came to give portfolio feedback for students. Approximately 12 students received direct feedback from seasoned Animation Directors. The industry partners said that our students have excellent design skills and a good grasp of the kind of materials that need to be prepared for production. Additionally, one of the students was referred by these experts for possible employment in future opportunities related to animation.
- **Key Takeaways from Industry:**
The feedback was full of praise, particularly for design chops and for how well our students understood what materials are actually needed for real-world production. These weren't empty compliments—one student walked away with a possible referral for future animation gigs. It's proof the feedback was real, not just performative, and that our students are really industry-ready.
- **Not an Official Board Session, But Crucial:**
Again, this wasn't a formal committee thing. Still, the value here? Off the charts. The session reinforced that portfolio quality and practical skills are matching (and in some ways exceeding) actual market demand.