

# News Release

For immediate release

## **Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab students remain high in demand despite economy downturn last year**

**Singapore, 2 September 2010** – In its fourth year of running the annual summer internship programmes at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab (GAMBIT) continues to see high demand for its interns who have benefited from the programmes. Not only have 86% of its interns from the 2008 and 2009 batches found employment in the Singapore games and media industries despite the gloomy economic outlook last year, some of the GAMBIT alumni have also gone on to win international awards and set up their own games companies.

These developments were shared at the Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab Industry & Media Day, where 39 new students fresh from a 9-week internship at MIT showcased seven newly developed game prototypes to some 90 industry players, representatives from tertiary institutes, members of the media, and others. Among them were representatives from Lucasfilms, Ubisoft and Boomzap, which have been sending representatives to attend the annual GAMBIT event for a first look at its latest crop of interns and their game prototypes (please refer to Annex A for details on the game prototypes this year).

Said Mr Olivier de Rotalier, Managing Director, Ubisoft Singapore said, “Having worked with GAMBIT over the past two years, I would say this programme presents a fantastic opportunity for both the students and the video game industry. The management team of the programme is doing a great job in selecting students of a certain caliber and sieving out only those with the right motivation for the industry. In addition, this internship also enhances the maturity level of participating students by enabling them to understand the challenges of complex projects earlier than their counterparts.”

Dr Milagros Rivera, Head of the Communications and New Media Programme at National University of Singapore, agreed. She said: “GAMBIT’s Summer Internship Program has created opportunities for our students that we would have never been able to provide in the

classroom. Spending uninterrupted time with students from other institutions at MIT and immersing themselves in a creative environment has been very enriching for those students who have participated. I think this program has done more than just provide the games industries in Singapore with trained professionals. For those students who have participated, the internship has been life transforming; and that is something you cannot measure.”

Building on its strong momentum of talent and game development, the GAMBIT programme was recently awarded the Eighth Best Game Design Program out of 500 in North America and Canada by The Princeton Review, a non-profit establishment in the United States that provides advisory services for pre-college students. It was also the only non-degree programme listed in the top 10.

The event also recapped some of the notable achievements resulting from GAMBIT’s past summer game prototypes. Among these was a 2009 summer game prototype entitled *Waker*, which was nominated as one of the Top Six Finalists in the non-professional category at the Indie Game Challenge 2010 held in Las Vegas. It was featured at the PAX East Boston Indie Showcase in March 2010, together with *Dearth*, another 2009 summer game prototype.

The 2008 alumni has also made much headway, with the popular *CarneyVale: Showtime* turning into a runaway success, becoming one of the first Singapore games available on all three Microsoft platforms - Xbox Live, Windows-LIVE on the PC platform and Windows Mobile 7.

For the first time, GAMBIT students have set up their own games companies. Three Singapore Management University students from the 2008 GAMBIT batch founded The Dumpling Dimension, which successfully released an educational iPhone game *Bee Spelled* earlier this year and is planning for more releases in the pipeline. Notably, another GAMBIT student from the 2007 batch, Travis Ho, also found success through his own start-up company called Touch Dimensions. Its flagship game, *Autumn Dynasty*, beat over 100 entries from the Asia Pacific to win the “Best Student Game” at the inaugural Independent Games Festival China 2009. The company was also recently commissioned by Microsoft to create some 20 free casual entertainment applications on the Windows Mobile operating system.

The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT game lab is a five-year initiative involving the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) and MIT, and is supported by the National Research Foundation in Singapore. It aims to address important challenges faced by the

global digital game research community and industry. The core focus is to identify and solve research problems using a multi-disciplinary approach that can be implemented and applied by Singapore's digital game industry. It involves a summer internship programme where local tertiary students are attached to MIT to create new innovative games based on research topics.

Apart from talent and game development, GAMBIT's primary focus is on research, innovating on the artistic, creative, business, technical and social aspects of games. To date, GAMBIT has published 75 research papers in international journals/conferences and books, with 11 new papers this quarter alone – a positive indication of the maturation of game research work in Singapore. These papers have been actively sought by the industry, enabling professionals and researchers to share their insights and develop ground-breaking gameplay.

Dr Christopher Chia, Chief Executive Officer, MDA said: "The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab has established itself as the cornerstone for grooming talent for the games industry, and we are encouraged to learn that the skill sets acquired by GAMBIT students and the training they have received continue to be highly valued by reputable industry players, even with the economic uncertainty last year. With GAMBIT approaching the 200-mark in terms of student participation thus far, it will continue to enhance its internship programme with greater value-add, thereby inspiring future batches of young talents to mature into competent and capable games professionals who will help project the Singapore brand name far and wide in the future."

"GAMBIT is a great demonstration of a successful collaboration, not just between countries, but between students, faculty, and industry," says Professor William Uricchio, Director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies programme. "More than just teaching students how to develop games, GAMBIT provides an opportunity to rethink the types of games that can be made. More than just taking a course, the students are an integral part of the research process. Research publications, new start-up companies, and ongoing collaborations with the Singapore-based games industry all work together to push the envelope of games with the GAMBIT imprint of innovative thinking."

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**Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA)**

Formed in 2003, the Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) plays a vital role in transforming Singapore into a Global Media City and positioning it at the forefront of the digital media age. MDA spearheads initiatives that promote developments in film, video, television, radio, publishing, music, games, animation, media services and Interactive Digital Media. At the same time, in ensuring clear and consistent regulatory policies and guidelines, MDA helps to foster a pro-business environment for industry players and increase media choices for consumers. For more information, please visit [www.mda.gov.sg](http://www.mda.gov.sg) and [www.smf.sg](http://www.smf.sg).

**The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab (GAMBIT)**

The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab is a five-year research initiative that addresses important challenges faced by the global digital game research community and industry, with a core focus on identifying and solving research problems using a multi-disciplinary approach that can be applied by Singapore's digital game industry. The Singapore-MIT GAMBIT Game Lab focuses on building collaborations between Singapore institutions of higher learning and several MIT departments to accomplish both research and development. For more information, visit <http://gambit.mit.edu>.

**The National Research Foundation (NRF)**

The National Research Foundation (NRF), a department under the Prime Minister's Office, sets the national direction for research and development (R&D) by developing policies, plans and strategies for research, innovation and enterprise, funds strategic initiatives, builds up R&D capabilities and capacities through nurturing our own and attracting foreign talent, and coordinates the research agenda of different agencies to transform Singapore into a knowledge-intensive, innovative and entrepreneurial economy. It provides secretariat support to the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC), chaired by the Prime Minister. A five-year budget of S\$5 billion has been allocated to the NRF in 2006 to achieve this mission. For more information, please visit [www.nrf.gov.sg](http://www.nrf.gov.sg).