

Jeremy Wright
ECE 495 Topics in Game Development
Individual Game Proposal
LoboU Online
jbwright@unm.edu

LoboU Online would serve as a new portal to the University of New Mexico. Each summer hundreds of incoming freshman are introduced to the inner workings of the University via Lobo Orientation. At this orientation students are separated into groups and travel the campus learning about registration, buying books, safety issues, campus layout, and plenty of other subjects. This orientation is valuable to students whether they realize it or not, but they're experiences in lobo orientation cannot possibly cover all of the possible challenges that come with starting one's college education. However, these experiences could be simulated with a fun and unique role-playing game called LoboU Online. This would enable students with issues that conflict with the orientation sessions to experience the campus in a way that prepares them for their first day of classes.

The game would be a multiplayer online role-playing game, where the player plays as a first day student. While not being a marketable game the rating would be most likely Teen, if it were given, as college experiences are for a more mature audience. The intended primary audience would be incoming freshman and possible recruits as well as current students, alumni, and other people associated with the university. The player begins by creating their own student with a broad range of character models and options during a simple registration phase. The character the student plays as would not be interchangeable during mid game. If the player wished to change the appearance of their avatar the player would have to create a new fresh character and lose their current progress in the world. The player would then guide the student through the early tribulations of student life. Typical game play would be conducted in third person for this has been proven to be well suited for games of a similar platform. The world would be the University as well as a limited surrounding area for realism and game objectives. Like many other role-playing games clear-cut winning or losing themes don't really play well into such a game, therefore, there is no ultimate goal except to succeed in the individual objectives presented to the player. The player is spawned at one of several locations that would relate to the students registration with the game. Students that indicate themselves as being commuter students would spawn at one of the parking lots, and would begin by learning about the shuttle system at the university. Students who register as residents would spawn in one of the dormitories. The initial objectives would

be given by some “god-like” presence that instructs the player on where to begin. As the player experiences more of the game following objectives would be given by non-player characters in the world.

The game would have a loose organization giving the player a wide range of options on what to work on. Some objectives would be considered mandatory and would force the player to complete a goal before completing subsequent goals. The game would be organized by objectives that range from important to frivolous. Players in the world would be given money for various tasks to spend on items in the game that enhance the experience. The bookstore would serve as a prominent feature in the game as this would be a place where currency could be exchanged for aesthetic and functional items. The verb set for the character would have to be large for the game to be immersive enough to be entertaining. This would include basic actions such as running, walking, and jumping as well as more complicated actions like communicating and other interactions with other players as well as non-player characters. The player would start with a simple inventory that simulates a bag, as the player progresses they would begin to fill the bag and would have to make decisions on what is important to carry on their person. If the player plays for an extended time and gathers enough in game currency this could then be traded for real world items by the university for recruitment purposes. The element of time would be accelerated for the world so that players could experience different facets of the campus. However, time limitations would not be given for overall progression or the majority of the smaller objectives.

While violence and other issues of safety might be of real concern to students; in this game environment players would not die and violent behaviors would be highly discouraged. Core game-play would be focused on the completion of missions based upon real student tasks as well as puzzles and simple gathering objectives that one would not encounter in everyday life. Non-player characters would range from fictional to the infamous members of the University community. Seeing familiar faces would make the game feel more immersive for the player that is returning to the game to merely enjoy

them self. For new students the majority of characters would be fictionalized for the point of functionality rather than enjoyment.

For the sake of simplicity and ease of use players could elect to use one of to movement interfaces. A click to move system where the player points at a desired location to move to and then clicks beginning the movement of the avatar to the desired coordinate. For some this system is more difficult and a simple shooter style movement system would also be implemented so that the player could elect to use keystrokes as a way of dictating movement to their character. The player interface would include their inventory, a list of current objectives and goals, and maps to facilitate the exploration of the world. At first the map would be really simple but as the player explored the world the map would be appended with the discoveries made by exploration. As the player completes objectives the following given objectives would be of a higher difficulty simulating the effect of levels. The real challenge for the development of this title is to produce objectives that are challenging enough to encourage plays to continue playing.

The principle look of the game would be realistic as the games main objective is to simulate the University experience. Much care would have to be taken in the modeling of the campus and its surrounding areas to be an effective tool. As time is progressing in the game, lighting would have to change depending on whether it was day, night, dawn, or dusk in the world. Being meant for computers the game would not be able to produce tactile feedback for the player. The sounds of campus would have to also be carefully documented to simulate the feel of the campus. These sounds would radiate from different objects in the game and would simulate the real world. However, a music player would be purchasable from the in game vendor to enhance the immersiveness of the game.

LoboU online would primarily serve as a tool for the University of New Mexico. Meaning that the majority of objectives would be based upon real world challenges like registering for courses using lobo web, finding classrooms, understanding the different payment options available through the bursars office, and other somewhat well known

issues to experienced students. However, by having entertaining game play and quests others would be drawn to the game, enabling the game as a recruitment tool for the University as well.