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68°F, Fair

Video Game 'Energizes' Climate Change Solutions

By UCF Staff

Dec. 14, 2010

A game created in partnership between the Orlando Science Center and the University of Central Florida's Florida Interactive Entertainment Academy took first place in the student game category of the 2010 Serious Games Showcase & Challenge competition.

In the game, "Energize," players power a fictional city using a selection of energy sources such as nuclear, solar, wind and fossil fuels. As they employ each of these energies, they see the benefits and limitations of their selections. The goal of the game is to raise awareness about how to effectively utilize energy sources to help solve energy problems and combat climate change.

Play the game at www.energizgame.com.

"Working on Energize was fulfilling because it was a great collaboration about an important topic," said FIEA faculty member Ron Weaver, who oversaw the project. "But also because we felt that it became a genuinely fun and challenging game to play."

The game, made possible by a grant from the Progress Energy Foundation and with additional support from the Turner Foundation, is now a featured component of the Science Center's H2Now exhibit, which explores hydrogen power and alternative energy solutions.

Kim Hunter, the Science Center's senior director of exhibit development, echoed Weaver's words on collaboration, adding "the ability to infuse proven informal learning techniques into a video game and then use a real world problem to actively engage the user in finding real world solutions was one of the most rewarding aspects of working with FIEA. They truly understood what learning in a science center environment is all about."

The game was started in fall 2009 and took about one year to make. The development team included FIEA students and alumni Reid Bond, David Blosser, Donald Branch and David Verble. In addition to Weaver, Lynn Sand and Hunter from the Orlando Science Center and Christopher Gillman from Progress Energy provided oversight and subject matter expertise.

The Serious Games Showcase promotes innovative game-based solutions to education and training problems. Finalists in each of the three categories—student, government, and business—were selected by a panel of serious game leaders from military, industry and academia. All entries were judged in three primary areas: solution to a stated problem, technical quality and playability/usability.

The award was announced Dec. 3 at I/ITSEC, the Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference, held annually at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando.




"Energize" is a video game that challenges you to provide electricity to a growing community while keeping pollution minimized.

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