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### Teaching with technology



Carnegie Mellon University professor Don Marinelli said there's not one subject that can't be made more interesting through interactive games. Photo by Lauren McFalls.

#### **April 22, 2010**

From puppetry to world history, there's not a subject on Earth that can't be made more interesting through the use of interactive games and lessons, said Carnegie Mellon professor Don Marinelli to a standing-room-only crowd at Northeastern's Teaching with Technology Day on April 14 in the Curry Student Center.

A drama and arts management professor, Marinelli is executive producer of the Carnegie Mellon Entertainment Technology Center (ETC), which brings together technologists and fine artists to collaborate on new media projects.

Marinelli's lecture was part of the mini conference's larger effort to showcase the ways in which Northeastern students, faculty and

corporate partners have incorporated technology into the classroom setting.

Professors from colleges and universities throughout the region — including Harvard University, Boston College and Simmons College — attended the all-day event.

Marinelli, 56, who vowed "never to be the type of teacher I had growing up who told me I would grow out of all the things I enjoyed — rock n' roll, long hair and peace, love and understanding" — landed the perfect gig as executive producer of Carnegie Mellon's ETC, a joint initiative between the College of Fine Arts and the School of Computer Science.

He cofounded the center with the late Randy Pausch, the professor of computer science of "Last Lecture" fame, who created "Alice," a free, open-source educational programming language.

Marinelli touched on the center's educational project-based approach toward teaching and solving real-life problems.

He said that graduate-level students helped drive more traffic to the Carnegie Library by designing a computer program called "My Story Maker" that allowed students to write and print out their own books at the library.

Students also collaborated with the Pittsburgh Children's Museum on a project that enabled children to build downloadable, animated puppets.

Marinelli encourages his students to do the teaching, noting that they're more attuned to the latest trends in video gaming and computing than he'll ever be. "You teach me what's cooking in the world of massively multiplayer online gaming and I'll tell you about money, life, girls and travel," he quipped.

But he's not all fun and games. He recently met with the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss a videogame that the center designed to diagnose traumatic brain injuries suffered by troops in combat.

For more information, please contact Jason Kornwitz at 617-373-5729 or at j.kornwitz@neu.edu.

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