Robert Nally
Teaching Philosophy Statement

When I was at Full Sail working on my Game Art degree I remember saying to my friend Jon, who now works at Hi-Rez Studios on Paladins, that what I really wanted to do was to work in the labs at Full Sail. I said it somewhat sarcastically at the time, but there was some truth in it and I think he could tell from my explanation of why I wanted to work there. Before I give my explanation, I should explain a little bit about what life and school at Full Sail was like. The day generally started with 4 hours of in class time for a single class and was followed by 4 hours of lab time for that same class. Class time covered some of the practical nature of what we would learn, but it would also cover some of the theory behind what we were learning and it was a good time to ask a lot of questions. Lab time was much more practical. It was about executing what we had learned in class and working on class projects. At Full Sail, students complete a 4-year degree in about 2 years. Registered or logged in- class time was enough for a full-time job in and of itself, but of course, there was homework, projects, and portfolios to work on during "off" hours. For many of us at Full Sail, we lived in their labs and would only go home to sleep and pay the bills.

I told my friend Jon that I wanted to work as a Studio Artist or Lab Specialist at Full Sail because they had the perfect life. They had the freedom to work on whatever subject matter they wanted and whichever software best suited their needs. They only had to worry about getting better. They did, also, need to help us out when we needed it, but they were experts compared to us. They had years of experience and great portfolio pieces already in the bag. Our questions and issues were trivial to them and it was obvious by their demeanor and tone of voice. I loved working in those labs. I loved the great sense of humor and camaraderie between the students, lab artists and teachers and the ability to discuss and work on what I was and still am most passionate about.

My experience at Full Sail has had a strong impact on how I teach and how I hope my students view their classroom experience. I recently had a student state to his classmates as he was walking out of class that this was the class he was, "least looking forward to because of the 6 pm – 10 pm time", but which was his favorite class now. Games should be fun and making them should be fun. There should be some theory behind what you are doing, but there should also be some practicality and real world experience behind it as well. Games should guide you and give you room to grow, learn, fail and play. They should avoid dictating to you and engage you in as many different ways as possible. These are some of the things I learned from the labs at Full Sail and which I try and impart on my students, but perhaps the most important thing I learned from working in the labs is the mentor – apprentice relationship. It can be easy to look at the person in charge in a very authoritarian light. If the person in charge is someone you can relate to, however, that doesn't judge, that looks for effort above other characteristics and has been in your shoes, then it makes it a lot easier to ask questions, to ask about process and workflow, to inquire about someone's mindset for solving problems, to give and receive inspiration, to try things, to grow and to learn.

I learned from my time as an IT professional teaching lawyers and receptionists about client-relationship management software that a lot of questions is not necessarily a good thing though. When

I first started teaching I thought things would go as smoothly and as wonderfully as Ralphie handing in his Red Ryder BB Gun essay in *A Christmas Story*. Over the subsequent semesters I've learned to simplify information and the delivery process. One of my toughest challenges when starting my game design class was learning where my students were at, setting up some basic vocabulary for the class and getting them to open up about their ideas. I started to have the entire class create a game, specifically a game design document, together, with myself as the moderator leading the charge, so we could work through some of those early challenges. It has turned into one of my favorite and, I believe, one of the students' favorite classes. Last year, we created a game design document called, *The Sheeping – The Untold Story of the Sheepocalypse*, a first-person, physics-based, comedy game centered on rampage and destruction, mainly through the shooting of sheep from a gun. Keeping the classroom loose and light-hearted presents its own challenges and classroom management as well as understanding new and existing teaching strategies are areas of focus for me in regards to education as a subject.

Whenever students have a lot of questions or I can tell they are stressed or nervous about their homework, workload or even current demands from life I like to remind them that I am always available and around for questions. My current Facebook avatar is the teacher from *Stranger Things* who receives a midnight phone call from his students and can't resist helping them out despite being on a date. My girlfriend, who is Chinese, reminded me when we watched that episode that I had a student call me late at night one night to ask about their grades. I hadn't even remembered, but I found the similarities between my life and the teacher's life on the show to be really humorous. For me, I am just over here working in my little lab and if you have any questions I would be happy to help.