Campus Feud Project

Specifications









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Freshmen FEUD

Table of Contents

I. Origin of the Game 3
II. DVD's, Visual Evidence, and Limitations 5
III. Overview of the Game 6
IV. Logistics 8
V. Materials Needed 9
VI. Assistance Needed 10

I. Origin of the Game

The origin of the *Campus Feud* project dates to the Summer of 2002, when Penn State Abington held its annual orientation program for incoming freshmen. The purpose of the program was not only to pass along important information to incoming Penn State freshmen, but also to make students feel at home by helping them make new friends with each other.

A 35-minute session entitled *Real Life at Penn State Abington* had been designed in previous years to facilitate this goal. In this session, orientation leaders hired by the campus sat in front of a large audience and spoke of their experiences at Penn State. While moderately successful, many freshmen were unimpressed by their peers acting like professors. The session did help freshmen learn about student life, but since the freshmen weren't talking to each other, they had little opportunity to meet new people.

In 2003, I was re-hired by the Office of Enrollment Management and Retention as an orientation leader and asked to sit on a committee to redesign this session. The committee tossed around a number of ideas, but eventually I suggested that a game show like Jeopardy would not only reinforce important ideas about student life, but would also be entertaining and would allow a greater level of participation.

The committee assigned Bridget Daly (bld167@psu.edu) to draft specifications for the new gameshow. It was decided that the show would be designed to mirror a television production in that it would have "commercial breaks," where orientation leaders would take a few minutes to speak to the audience in a manner similar to the *Real Life* session that was scrapped.

Bridget, however, was responsible for perhaps the game's greatest innovation: that it would not be based on Jeopardy, but on the show Family Feud, renamed *Freshmen Feud*. The Family Feud format would allow orientation leaders to express their ideas to freshmen through polls, and would also allow for greater audience involvement.

In May and June of 2003, the game was designed from the ground up, from purchasing supplies to making personnel decisions. Students from the campus were polled on questions such as "What is eLion used for?" Almost as an afterthought, it was decided that a computer-controlled game board would be necessary to involve students of the "MTV Generation." I was assigned the task of developing a simple gameboard application. As with most computer projects, the application ended up including over thousand lines of Visual Basic code, and not only maintained the game board but also played music, managed sounds, kept score, and implemented a "buzz-in" system for "podium questions."

Freshmen Feud was played eight times during the Summer of 2003, with the final game for the 2003 season held on Friday, August 1. The program received some of the

highest ratings in the history of the orientation program, and I have been hired again by the admissions office to make some modifications to the game's GUI to make it easier to operate for the 2004 season.

II. DVD's, Visual Evidence, and Limitations

I submitted a DVD of the last performance of *Freshmen Feud* (see section I) to Zachary Ludescher (zlj102@psu.edu). This DVD includes the entire show on August 1. Because the show was originally conceived as a stage production, the camera operator was not concerned with producing a television-quality show; this DVD was simply recorded for training the 2004 Orientation team. However, it can still serve as an example for the *Campus Feud* adaptation.

For those unwilling to watch the DVD at length, a short video I edited for the Admissions Office will be available before January 19, 2004 at http://www.abington.psu.edu/admissions. Click on the "Orientation" link at the bottom of the page, and then choose "Freshmen Feud." This short video describes the game in about one minute.

Please note that, because the original production was designed as a stage show, the show in the videos cannot be directly adapted for TV. The name will have to be changed, the questions revamped, the "commercial breaks" eliminated, and the opening slideshow canned. These videos should serve as a reference only, not as a pilot episode.

III. Overview of the Game

Campus Feud is loosely based on the rules of the longtime television show "Family Feud." The show airs on the Game Show Network at 5pm on weekdays.

For each episode, two teams of four students are chosen and stationed behind tables on opposite ends of the stage. Prizes are determined beforehand and placed in a prominent place on the stage. In order to keep the game interesting, wacky prizes will have to be chosen (see Part IV.).

The show will be taped somewhere in the HUB at Late Night Penn State on a weekend night. Before *Campus Feud* begins, a public relations effort will be needed to ensure that enough audience members and contestants are available. In order to ensure a high energy level, a live audience of as many as reasonably possible will need to be present. A slideshow of Penn State students and events originally developed for *Freshmen Feud* will help keep the audience entertained during pre-production tests.

When the game begins, the contestants will already be stationed on the stage, and someone with a deep voice will announce something similar to the following:

"Live from the Hetzel Union Building at Penn State University, this is Campus Feud, with your host, [Insert name and nickname here]"

At that point, the host walks onto the stage, jumps into the audience, and high-fives random students while the theme music plays. Cameras, if possible, follow the host around the audience at different angles and catch interesting shots of these high-fives and greetings. After about 20-30 seconds, the host returns to the stage and spends 30 seconds to one minute joking with the audience and briefly explaining how the game works (see Part II for an example). Once everyone knows how the game works, the host walks up to both teams and asks for a brief introduction: name, major, and some funny or embarrassing piece of information to be determined before the show.

The game begins after the introductions. The computer technician operates the effects to bring up the board, and the first two contestants walk out to a podium in the center of the stage. The host continues to joke with the contestants while the cameras show the setup at the podium and the contestants' faces. While joking, the host explains how the buzzer system works. He then reads out the first question, stopping when the buzzer is sounded.

If the answer given is not listed in the current poll, the question is re-asked to the opposite team. If the first answer *is* listed, the other contestant is given the opportunity to return a more popular answer. The team with the most popular answer is given control of the board. If neither contestant at the podium answers correctly, the next contestant from each team is asked for an answer by the same procedure. This

answering round continues until one team finally answers an answer that is found in the poll.

When a team gains control of the board, play progresses from the front of the stage to the back while each contestant is asked the question. No conferring between members of the same team is allowed during this phase of the game. Two things can happen:

1. The team reveals all the answers on the board, in which case the team wins all the points that have accumulated from each answer in the "bank," and play returns to the podium stage (see above).
2. The team states three incorrect answers (each one designated by a large X that will be either displayed on the projection equipment at the taping or later edited directly over the video.

If number (2) occurs, then the opposing team is given 20 seconds to confer on an answer to "steal" the bank. If the opposing team answers correctly, then all of the bank points are awarded to the opposing team; otherwise, the full bank is awarded to the original team. The game continues until three questions are answered.

After three questions, a noise is played to signal the arrival of the "Audience Challenge" question. An audience member is called up to the stage to answer another poll. If the audience member's answer is included in the poll, no matter the rank, the member receives a prize.

Three or four more rounds of questions can be played in a 26-minute show. To ensure the show is within the time limit, if it is time for a new question and show time has passed 20 minutes and 30 seconds, the next question will be the final question, and will be worth double points.

At the end of the game, the host invites the winning team to the center of the stage to collect the prize and carries on for a while to emphasize the victory. The host also sends his/her condolences to the losing team. The host thanks everyone involved, wishes everyone a great night, and the camera pans out to end the show.

Note that I have not included commercial breaks in this overview, because the number and location of such breaks will most likely be determined by PSNtv executive staff.

IV. Logistics

Campus Feud is a complex production that will require the efforts of the host, the lighting technicians, the camera crew, the computer operator, and all others involved to be synchronized precisely. Before the first taping, I would recommend that a practice session or several practice sessions be convened to help the taping go as smoothly as possible. Because the taping will be done in front of a live audience, the live audience must also perceive things to be going as smoothly as possible in order for the energy level of the game to remain high.

If the pilot episode is successful, a seven-episode semester (either this semester or next; preferably this semester) would probably be an attainable goal for the first season. Eight teams can be chosen initially, with each winning team in the first four episodes advancing to the next round. The fifth and sixth episodes could be semifinals, with the championship taking place during the season finale. This format would encourage viewer loyalty (because they want to see their favorites go all the way), and would make it easier to tape several episodes because the contestants will already be experienced with how the game works.

Prizes for *Campus Feud* would have to be interesting and wacky in order for the show to gain interest, but since the prizes for *Freshmen Feud* were simple beach towels, the show would probably work even without expensive prizes. Money would be a great prize, and the Bryce Jordan Center might be willing to donate basketball tickets or other sporting event tickets (they did so for the Council of Commonwealth Student Governments). For one episode, if such a prize can be arranged, a date with a prominent student like the USG President could be an interesting experiment. Other prize ideas could include such things as a special pass to THON, special treatment at the Homecoming Parade, or the like.

Before any production activity occurs, it would be beneficial to hold a meeting of everyone involved, and to continue these meetings throughout the run of the show. This run could serve to allow everyone to introduce themselves to each other, and would allow other members to have input on how the show is run. Perhaps some aspects of the show will be changed at this meeting depending on group consensus.

V. Materials Needed

Campus Feud, unfortunately, is not a cheap game to produce. The following is necessary to operate the game:

- Three or four storage crates to use as the central podium
- Two large tables, about eight feet long and three feet wide (can vary somewhat)
- Three sets of Christmas icicle lights to decorate the tables and podium
- A blue tablecloth and a white tablecloth to cover the tables
- Two or four lavalamps
- About fifty textbooks to spread on top of the tables
- Extension cords and electrical equipment
- Three large pieces of posterboard, a color inkjet cartridge, tape, and thirty sheets of office paper for signs
- Projection equipment capable of projecting the game board
- A white projection screen for the game board
- Wild clothes for the host to wear
- A laptop computer with a decent video card, a headphone output jack, Microsoft Office XP or Office 2003, and 1 GB of hard drive space
- Curtains or other equipment to hide the backstage
- Three inflatable chairs for placement on the stage
- Cardstock on which to print the questions

The total cost for these supplies can range from $100 to $150 or more, depending on the quality of the show that is intended and (more importantly) on the amount of funds available.

VI. Assistance Needed

The following positions are recommended in order to make *Campus Feud* run as smoothly as possible:

- An energetic host
- A stage manager to oversee the purchasing, takedown, and maintenance of set materials, and to coordinate the audience as they arrive for a production
- Stagehands, which can consist of any of the other positions that aren't busy during taping
- Public relations experts to spread the word about the taping before it occurs
- A director to oversee camera logistics
- Video editors to edit the tape
- Graphic designers to redesign the logos for the game and to produce the large signs necessary for the game
- A lighting director and however many assistants are needed depending on the equipment used
- A computer operator to operate the gameboard and multimedia (I can perform this task, since I wrote the program)
- Pollsters to poll students on the game's questions
- Two timekeepers: one to coordinate commercial breaks and the length of the show, and the other to measure the time a contestant takes to answer the question
- Three judges to confer on a contested question and to determine whether the answer given is acceptable

If I missed any positions here, particularly in the video production area, or if you think you can do something that's not listed here, let me know so that I can add the position to the list.