Not Your Mother's Video Game

A Speech by
Montgomery College President
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Dr. Pollard welcomes Montgomery County High School students to a day focused on learning about the College's Gaming and Web Development field of study. From helping train doctors to perform complex surgeries to reducing obesity in America, the cutting-edge technology touches nearly every aspect of our lives. Video gaming, quite simply, is not your mother's video game.

Let me first introduce myself: my name is DeRionne Pollard and I am the President of Montgomery College. I want to start by extending a big hello and welcome to Montgomery County Public School high schoolers, as well as Montgomery College students, faculty and community members. Today is all about exploring an academic and career future you may have only dreamed about—playing video games for a living! But, we all know gaming and web development is so much more than that. The picture of a teenage boy gaming and creating code in his parent's basement is a stereotype of the past, replaced instead with the picture of a diverse group of professionals who are literally changing our world. Gaming of today, quite simply, is not your mother's video game.

I don't want to date myself here— but I grew up in the age of Atari. And when I neared by teenage years, Pac Man and Donkey Kong were revolutionary. I readily can admit that my gaming knowledge is limited. In fact, my son Miles has surpassed my skills— and he is only four!

But I want to talk about my son Myles a little bit because it is quite possible that you in this room will change his life and the way he learns and interacts with the world.   He already knows how to interact with adult technology— computers, cell phones— but it is his interaction with his Leapster that really reflects the power this industry holds in its hands…literally. Myles thinks he is just playing a game, but every time he picks it up, it is as if he is in a digital classroom with interactive lesson plans. Gaming and web development no longer is about just entertainment; it is about education. You all can predict better than I what new technology

Myles' children will experience in the classroom and at home, but I can guarantee you this field will be on the front lines.

It already is. For those of you new to Montgomery College and our Gaming and Web Development Department, let me tell you about one of the neatest projects in which you as students could have the opportunity to participate. The College has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA, to create a game called Water Life. Water Life is designed to teach middle school students about the environment. It is an interactive game where students make choices, like they would in the real world, and see the direct environmental consequences.

The technology you learn to create while here at Montgomery College not only educates the next generation of the workforce, it also trains the current workforce. Simulation now helps train doctors on complex surgeries, emergency responders on how to control the spread of disease. Gaming technology helps today's military fight wars. Video games fight obesity with interactive workouts that actually measure how hard you are working and whips you out of slacking. This technology helps with rehabilitation for hospital patients and the elderly. Quite simply, it touches every aspect of our lives.

Studies estimate 65 percent of households in our country play video games and that every second 9 entertainment games leave the store shelves. 9 games…every second. A recent Time Magazine article on "Where the Jobs Are" says "for technology companies, it seems, the most recent recession did not exist." Companies specializing in web-based operations, such as Groupon, cannot scoop up trained professionals quickly enough.

This industry is all around us and you are in the right spot to be in the middle of it. First of all, our state is one of the hubs of the industry— Baltimore is known as a center of this technological world. And Montgomery College is at the forefront of training. We offer innovative and salient computer related accredited courses. Here you will learn HTMLS, CSS3, JavaScript, JQuery, Oracle, and on and on…they are just words to me but for you, they could be the ticket to your future. You have an amazing group of speakers her today, including Apple Senior System Engineer, Aaron Davis, NOAA's Marina Krauss, as well as professors, students and alumni. Soak it all in!

This is the place where an artist, a musician, a graphic designer, along with a computer programmer, can find a degree that leads to a cutting-edge career. You are in the right place. We are honored to have you here today and to have you here "tomorrow" as you start to open up the doors to your future.

Let me now introduce Deborah Solomon, coordinator of our Computer Gaming and Simulation program and Melissa Lizmi, coordinator of the Web and Database programs to kick off this exciting day.