

## **Reflection on Teaching: Assessing independent problem-solving in a creative endeavor**

As students gain knowledge and ability throughout the program, and as they approach a stage where they need to start acquiring internships and employment in the field, they need to progress toward having independent problem-solving skills. This is not the easiest quality to evaluate however. Two students may produce a similar artifact of similar quality, with one arriving at this goal independently while another asked for and received help on an ongoing basis. Applying a rubric that evaluates the two artifacts will lead to similar results for both students. An extension of this example means two graduating students could have portfolios of similar quality, yet the independent problem-solver is significantly more prepared to enter the industry. Once on the job, these graduates will likely perform quite differently and produce disparate employer satisfaction ratings.

In many fields of study, knowledge and problem-solving are commonly evaluated through exams. To produce a more comprehensive assessment for my students in a course, and for our program as a whole, I have recently considered implementing some performance-based tests that would occur during class. Examples might include modeling a form based off reference images (as in my speed-modeling competition), rigging a simple character based off a provided 3D model and a handful of pose drawings, animating a jumping box using proper principles of animation, or texturing and lighting a scene to a given set of parameters like construction materials and time of day. During these tests, no assistance would be given to the student, so the evaluation can assume independent problem-solving is a major factor in the process of creating the artifact.

My intent is to begin implementing these tests next quarter. My hope is that students will gain a greater appreciation for the skill of independent thinking and industry-based problem-solving, while I will gain another dimension in my evaluation metrics.