Leveling the Playing Field: Empowering First-Generation Students through a Community-Inspired Game
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Problem Statement
Students from underserved groups face additional challenges during the college admission process, particularly with the lack of agency and support.
Youth need learning experiences to assist in the transition from secondary education to college.
Gaming serves as a potential avenue to facilitate discussion due to its engaging nature.

Guiding question:
How might we develop a game that uses storytelling to foster critical conversations about post-secondary plans?

Student Body Composition
Storm Lake High School student body is made up of primarily underrepresented students.

Literature Review
- One’s ability to learn or respond to opportunities is influenced by their social network.
- The connection between a community and academia can be nurtured through the acknowledgement of their cultural strengths.
- Incorporating design research is beneficial for developing a game that is not only educational but also reflective.

Game Design Journey Map
1. Concept Development
2. Game Wireframe and Storyboarding
3. Co-design with Storm Lake students
4. Prototype Creation
5. Pilot Testing

Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game elements</th>
<th>Average total</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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- "I'm just gonna get scared because... what if I'm not successful?"
- "I was really focused on the fighting sequences"
- "I really like fighting and looking for things that could have helped me"

References:

Future Work
- Further study implementing fear elements into the game narrative
- Designing a curriculum to incorporate teachable moments from the allegorical narrative
- Implement combat system into a 3D environment
- Develop a bilingual interface in English and Spanish

Results
In open-ended responses, participants appraised action scenes positively and noted curiosity about unraveling the storyline, suggesting engagement with these elements in the prototype.

Fears can serve as tools to motivate the narrative:
1. Financial Concerns
2. Guilt over Leaving Family
3. Fear of the Unknown
4. Internalization of External Fears

Conclusion
Utilizing storytelling, action, and fear-based elements in the game shows potential for fostering critical conversations about post-secondary plans through positive engagement and reflective experiences.