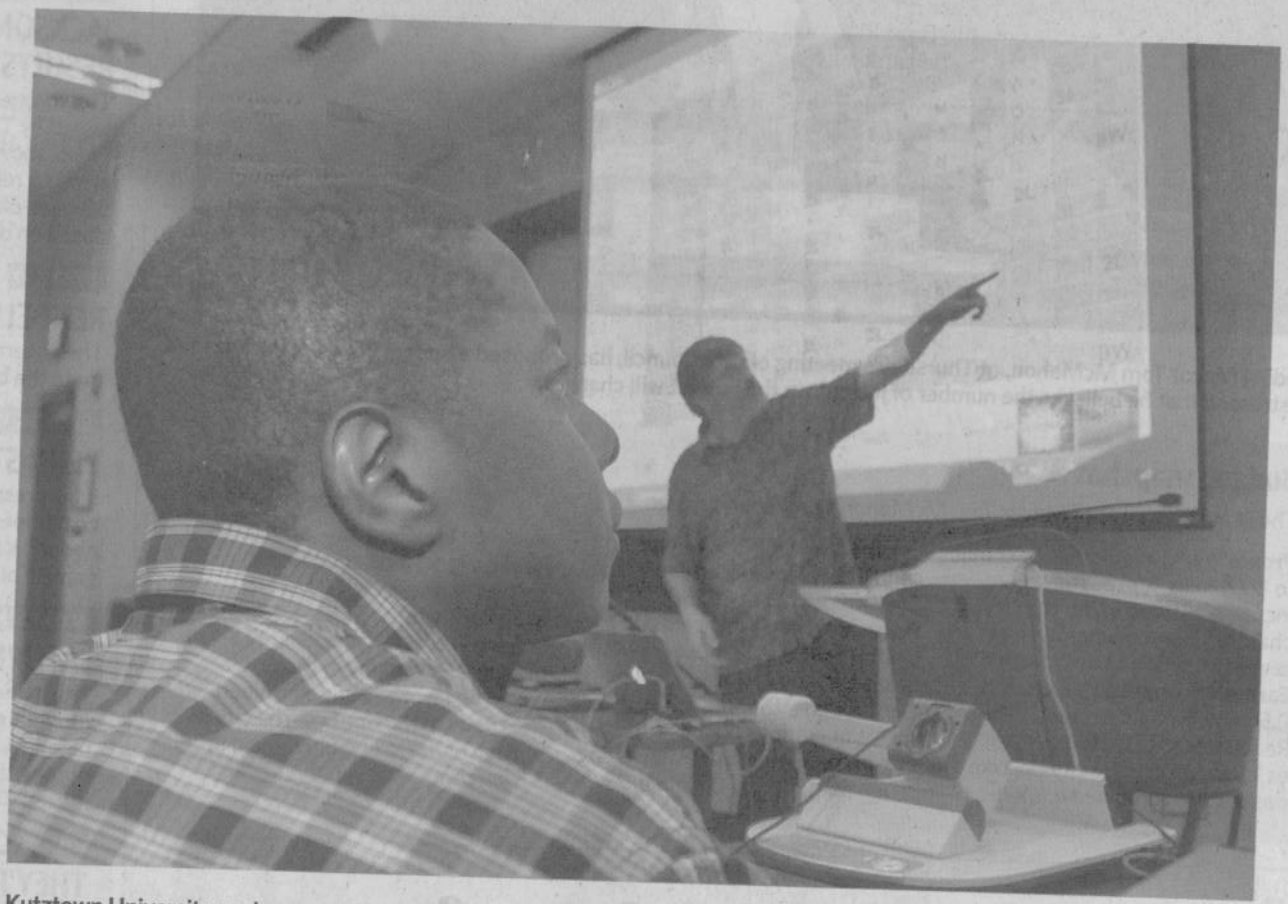
Good morning reader

KU students spell ingenuity: musical Scrabble



READING EAGLE: BEN HASTY

Kutztown University senior computer science major Raphael W. Francis, 24, of Philadelphia plays a musical Scrabble game that he helped develop while assistant professor Dale Parson displays it on an overhead during a university seminar.

By Greta Cuyler
Reading Eagle

We've got robots that talk, so why not Scrabble tiles that sing?

At Kutztown University they do.

Computer science students studying Java programming have created a musical application that maps letters and words played on the two-dimensional board game into electronically generated musical notes and chords.

Senior Raphael W. Francis of Philadelphia helped demonstrate the project at a university seminar Wednesday.

When Francis played the word "F-A-T," the computer played a series of notes, which it repeated until he played another word.

Once the new word was spelled out, it, too, was converted to notes and played, followed by the notes for F-A-T, in a loop that continued until the next word was in place.

Each subsequent word played also took its place at the front of the lengthening musical loop, with F-A-T always at the end.

It was like a maze — a continuous musical maze.

The result wasn't exactly easy listening, but the students welcomed the opportunity to show what they could make computers do.

"I think there are a lot of misconceptions that computer science is lackluster and boring," said senior and computer science major Steve M. Solomon of Allentown. "This was a chance to show that it applies to everyday life via music."

Assistant professor of computer science Dale Parson began the game project with students last fall.

The students first designed the two-dimensional board game, then they mapped it for musical translation.

The project was not only educational, but fun, Parson said.

"It's something interesting to do with a computer application so you're not just doing spreadsheets," he said.

The project also ventures into some uncharted computer programming waters.

"People do music on video games, but it's not generated by the game rules, which this is," Parson said. "It's a small step forward."

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