

# Value-focused Retrospectives to Guide echoes' Production Process Improvement

## What is *echoes*?

*echoes* is a faculty-led, student-run VIP at Rochester Institute of Technology exploring how developing and playing games can cultivate shared understanding and foster meaningful connections. Students publish sets of games to introduce players to the work & impact of members of the broader Rochester community.



Currently, *echoes* is about paths of change. Life is not a straight line down a flat road. There are twists and hills and forks that derail us on our journeys. Our games are inspired by poets/retired RIT faculty who push back against the well-trodden paths and ponder the marks people leave on our hearts.

# students (# grad)	Fall 2024 15 (3)	Spring 2025 27 (9)	Fall 2025 22 (7)	Spring 2026 TBD
Interactive Chapbooks	Concepts & Prototyping	Production	Publication	
		TBA Theme	Concepts & Prototyping	Production

## Team Organization

The *echoes* team is run using a lightweight indie studio model with leads for each subteam.



## Current Challenges

- echoes* is currently reliant on team continuity
- Limited current cross-team collaboration
- Minimal cross-VIP interaction
- Standardization issues lead to inconsistent practices and redundant information within and across teams
- Difficult to track progress from a production standpoint

## Goals

Establish a production framework that:

- Exposes students to a broader definition of “game” and “publish”
- Ensures consistency with student turnover
- Leverages established industry best practices
- Encourages mentoring & personal growth
- Respects student schedules and external commitments by minimizing overhead
- Adheres to the core VIP Model & Agile Values

VIP Model	Agile Values
Faculty-Led, Team-Based	Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
Active Participation	Working software over comprehensive documentation
Collaboration & Mentorship	Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
Mutual Investment	Responding to change over following a plan

## Retrospective Survey

“The current *echoes* production process & infrastructure supports this value.”

- VIP model
- Agile values

For each Agile value:

- “This was a high priority for my team.”
- “My team's processes supported this value.”

Open Response:

- What tools or practices do you find particularly helpful?
- What do you wish you could spend more time on?
- What do you wish you could spend less time on?
- Are there any process improvements you wish to see or prioritize for future semesters of *echoes*?

## Postmortem Meetings

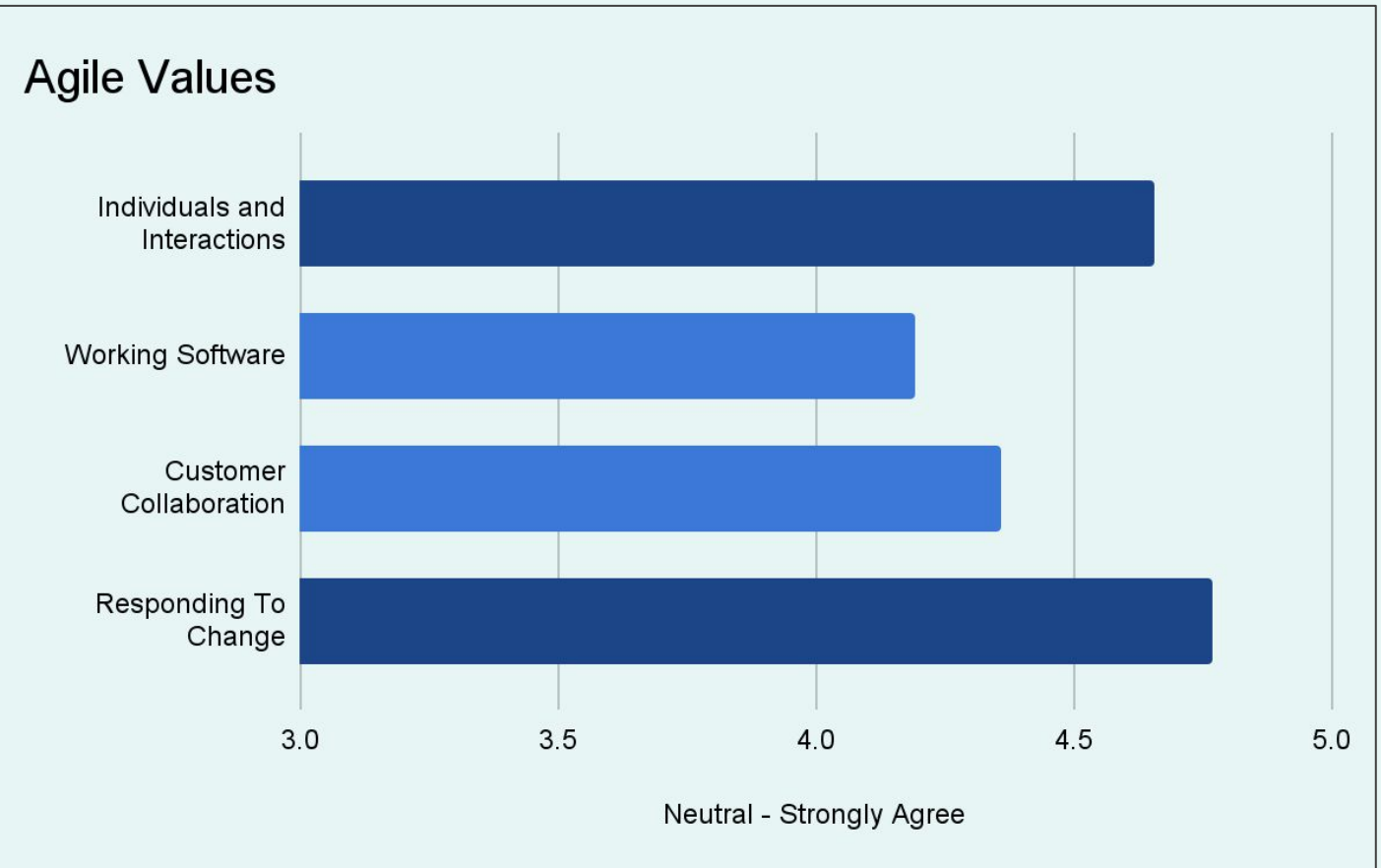
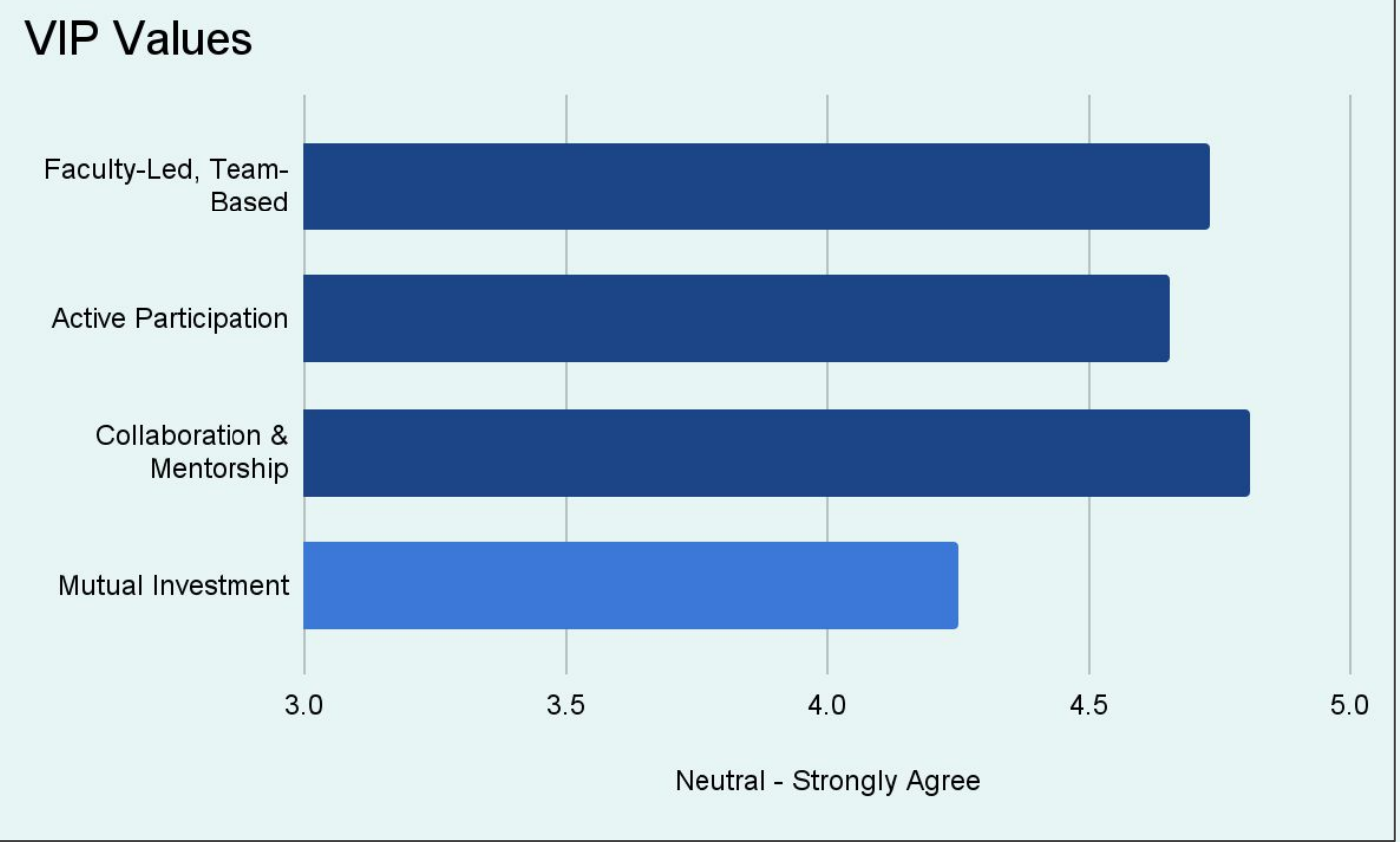
Discussions led by each subteam lead:

- Current status/next steps
- Process strengths and weaknesses
- Lessons learned

Follow-up questions from production team:

- Areas of redundancy/frustration
- Support needed

## Results



## Supporting Effective Game Production Practices

Helpful Tools/Practices	Time Priorities	Improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Structured documentation</li><li>GitHub Project boards</li><li>Semester calendars with sprints</li><li>Standardized processes and onboarding</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Better documentation</li><li>Game planning</li><li>Organizing goals and tasks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Better deadline management</li><li>Flexible project boards</li><li>Organized shared resources</li><li>Updated website with clear info</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Daily standups</li><li>Working meetings</li><li>Weekly check-ins</li><li>Clear role definitions</li><li>Quick feedback response</li><li>Regular playtesting</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cross-team collaboration</li><li>Mentorship</li><li>Pair programming</li><li>Community building</li><li>Leadership opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Formal mentorship programs</li><li>More in-person meetings</li><li>Regular team updates</li><li>Cross-team collaboration</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>GitHub PR templates</li><li>Discord</li><li>Quality resources</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Asset creation</li><li>System architecture</li><li>Dialogue development</li><li>Development work</li><li>Focused research</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prioritize concept art</li><li>Formal playtesting/QA</li><li>In-person All Hands meetings</li></ul>

## Next Steps

Formalize processes that are working well:

- Pull Requests
- Meeting Notes
- Small group working meetings

Streamline & standardize redundant processes:

- Remove the need for duplicate documentation, such as devlogs
- Consolidate & organize existing documentation
- Add task management integrations into Discord
- Create task management templates & associated training materials

Establish production-led support for continuous process improvement:

- Repeat these value-based surveys at regular intervals
- Continual retrospectives on both a production and team level.

Increase cross-team and cross-VIP collaboration:

- Workshops led by graduate students
- Formalized playtests across teams
- More gatherings across VIP projects at RIT

## Future Work

Long term goals based on this work include:

- Creating a framework for analysis that can be used to support iterative process improvement for game-centric VIPs.
- Standardizing the *echoes*' production workflow & infrastructure for reuse on future VIPs and other team-based courses.

## References

How VIP Works | VIP Consortium. (2025). vip-consortium.org. <https://www.vip-consortium.org/how-vip-works>

Agile Manifesto (2001). Agile Alliance. <https://agilemanifesto.org/>

What is a Sprint Retrospective? (2019). scrum.org. <https://www.scrum.org/resources/what-is-a-sprint-retrospective>

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