Massachusetts

University
Becker College

Center Director
Timothy Loew

Center Location
Outreach unit

Center since 2011

Center Activities
- Entrepreneur coaching
- Matchmaking
- Networking
- Student internships
- Incubation
- Applied research

Clients
- Entrepreneurs
- Start-ups
- Existing businesses
- Students

Assessment Techniques
- Feedback from staff
- Client interviews
- Case studies

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Massachusetts Digital Games Institute

MassDiGI University Center strives to facilitate strong links among the digital games industry, higher education, and the public sector to strategically foster job growth and economic development in Massachusetts. The Center mobilizes an existing network of synergistic and complementary organizations and leverages the state's unique competitive strengths to create jobs and focus on broader prosperity. The MassDiGI Center's goal is to build on the Commonwealth's primary asset – its knowledge-based economy – to nurture and expand the digital games industry in Massachusetts through academic support, product development, technology commercialization, and targeted activities that cultivate entrepreneurship. The Center is supported by the grant, matching funds from the University, state government funds, foundation and nonprofits funds, and program fees, as well as corporate support.

Activities

The Center's activities focus around increasing the amount of video games published in the region and on training students in the state of the art skills required in this fast moving industry. One way the Center trains students is through a Game Jam where students come for 24-48 hours and work with a group of fellow students to develop a game. The games are judged and the best ideas are developed further during the summer internship program (see success box). The internship
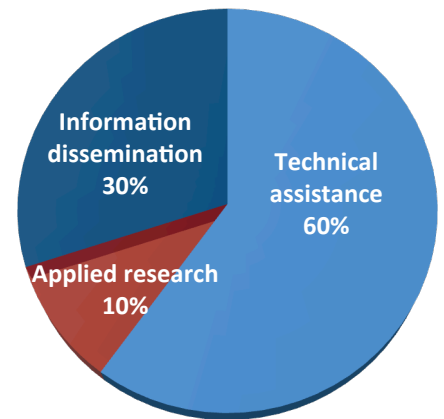
develops the game through technical and business mentoring and also trains students in real-world game development.

The Center promotes the industry to stabilize small- and medium-size developers in the region through public policy efforts, appearances and talks

(both in person and in print), and attendance at a wide variety of conferences and industry events. In addition, the Center's applied research activities include an industry survey on skills needed or technology used that feeds into the college courses at Becker and in the region.

Leveraging

The Center extensively leverages its connections in the digital gaming industry cultivated by the director and his staff. One staff member has many years of experience in the digital game industry. The Center also works closely with higher education institutions throughout Massachusetts, including Worcester Polytechnic Institute, as well as throughout the region. In addition, the Center leverages both university students and faculty to make a connection between training and industry needs, as well as to cultivate entrepreneurship through its programs.

Success

MassDiGI leverages its connections across the gaming sector as well as academic institutions to align student training with industry needs.

The Massachusetts Digital Games Institute (MassDiGI) holds an 11-week summer internship program called the Summer Innovation Program. The program accepts around 20 students, who are given room and board and a stipend. Students are placed on teams to work on a sponsored game idea as a simulated independent studio. Students work on all aspects of the game development cycle from design and planning to coding to business models and project management. Industry representatives evaluate the projects throughout the summer and serve as mentors by giving students advice about next steps for their project and next steps in their careers. The internship simulates a real job and gives students experience that prepares them for their future career. The first Summer Innovation Program (SIP) produced one entertainment game that was provided through Apple's App Store and one non-entertainment game that won an international award.

MassDiGI has aligned itself with one core strength of Becker College (digital game education) and uses its deep connection to industry to align student training with key entrepreneurial skills as well as the needs of future employers.

"I believe the Mass DiGI program to be a great opportunity for students to try their hand working in a semi-real world situation. Because my team and I worked towards the release of our game at the end of the SIP program, we were able to see our work as more than a few scattered assignments for a grade, just like a project would be in the industry. In my opinion, the Mass DiGI SIP program provides better insight into industry work experience than college courses alone can, and it's an experience that every game design student should be allowed to have at some point during their college career."

--Center Client