Proposal to Create a
Creative Media Industries Institute
at Georgia State University, to Facilitate Atlanta's Emergence as a Global Media Capital

Executive Summary

Forming an interdisciplinary creative industries Institute builds on Georgia State University's core existing strengths in media production, research, design, the arts, music management, and digital publishing by training students for careers that transcend specific degree programs in Art & Design, Business, Communication, English, Computer Science, or Music. In today's converged creative economy, student entrepreneurs seeking to design an application or game, or to launch a media company, need some sophisticated knowledge of music and film and graphic design and media production and writing and marketing and computer programming if they hope to succeed in a crowded and challenging marketplace.

This Institute foregrounds incubation and not simply in the common sense of forming start-up business incubators for students (although that is a core feature of its proposed activity). A creative industries institute can create an institutional structure where students, faculty, and industry partners converge to collaborate and innovate, in the process creating economic value: educating and mentoring industry-ready well-educated graduates primed to move into allied creative industries, supported by creative media research outcomes. The prospects for success at Georgia State University, and in downtown Atlanta, are promising. The city is a global music capital and arts center. Film/TV production is booming thanks to legislative support. City leaders have named media production as one of the region's most promising anchoring centers of economic vitality.

An Institute can help the university assert industry and intellectual leadership by pursuing these interrelated goals:

1. Generate cutting edge interdisciplinary research of interest both to industry partners and to our core academic disciplinary work, and to do so in a way that helps shape the public discussion of digital technologies.

2. Create sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with the region's arts and entertainment production centers (film and TV studios, game developers and distributors, design firms, music production and recording companies, production and post-production companies, news organizations, PR and advertising/marketing firms, etc.). In so doing, the Institute will create a model to train media entrepreneurs and provide them with support likely to help launch media enterprises.

3. Develop new degree programs and curricular models for training students to work in environments where digital production skills will be of value across many creative industries. As a result, the quality and quantity of workforce ready GSU graduates competitively poised to join the arts and entertainment industries will be expanded.

4. Establish a premiere, state of the art, interdisciplinary production facility for interdisciplinary creative work and research activity, designed to support faculty in Art & Design, Communication, English, and Music, and other programs whose primary activities would benefit from access to a well-resourced core facility.

The Wider Environment for Creative Partnerships Has Never Been Richer

Regional interest in the entertainment and creative content areas has never been greater. Georgia's tax incentives for media production are accomplishing their purpose: the state now successfully competes for major national and international TV and film projects and a critical mass of production-competent workers, studio production centers, and supporting craft industries has emerged. Film and television production generated nearly $5.1 billion in economic impact in 2013. More than 300 recording studios operate statewide, and a 2013 legislative study estimated that the music industry has an annual $3.8 billion economic impact. A Metro Chamber of Commerce study established, based on workforce trends and actual hiring, that Atlanta has become a "Digital Superhub." The prospects for sectoral growth are staggering: in 2013, the Georgia Game Developers Association estimated that statewide economic impact for game development (now $2 billion) could be transformatively increased, with employment growing from a current 2,000 jobs in Atlanta to more than 20,000 by 2017, multiplied by a factor of four with targeted investments.

A creative industries institute can accelerate economic innovation in the media sector and beyond. Although the production tax incentives require a reasonably high percentage of local investment, too much of the generated economic impact today remains in "below-the-line" craft operations (companies renting lighting gear, set trailers, food services, gaffers and electricians), while "above-the-line" work (project management, post-production, sound editing, visual effects) is still often sent elsewhere. One example is the digital games sector, where metro area game design firms report high success in hiring entry-level staff with technically competent skills, but major challenges in hiring mid-level project oversight (such as artistic team leadership and technical directors) and managerially experienced executive teams. Without GSU's intervention, Atlanta will remain a second tier production center, mostly lacking a media managerial class indigenously cultivated in Georgia and unable to escape the gravitational pull of NYC and LA.

Atlanta is perfectly positioned to assert global entrepreneurial leadership in the media production and new media sectors and to help the state create a more balanced media industries profile. Georgia State University's robust creative industries-connected programs (which enroll nearly 4000 majors) are training next-generation diverse media entrepreneurs. Georgia Research Alliance investments in the GSU Digital Arts Entertainment Laboratory fifteen years ago helped facilitate the state's first steps to train an advanced production workforce, but these efforts must be scaled up if Georgia is to become a truly international production center. Employment prospects for students educated in programs connected to the media and information/entertainment industries are significant even in a weak economy. And Atlanta is uniquely positioned to help remedy the wider industry's embarrassing neglect of minority media productions, a potential dramatically illustrated by Tyler Perry's successes (as an exception that proves the rule).

Georgia State University is Prepared to Lead

Every serious research university in America, and more worldwide, is scrambling to develop scholarship and economic activity relating to the emergence of new media. Certainly, serious contributions will come from the nation's leading engineering and applied science universities, whose work to develop the hardware and software for new media expansion is well underway. Globally, universities are realigning to address the rapid emergence of digital media. The most visible facet of this realignment has been the establishment of digital or eHumanities production and research units across the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia. Engineering and applied technology divisions, like MIT's Media Lab, are working to build the systems and hardware for next generation media. Key opportunities exist for comprehensive public universities with intellectually and socially diverse student populations to imagine, enable, and research new media

from the widest range of liberal, fine and applied arts. The prospects for developing new creative modalities and innovative new media genres are available at GSU in ways that do not require a race to catch up on the development of hardware.

A Minority Media Educational Hub. Georgia State University is uniquely positioned to help the city become the nation's leading producer of minority media makers. The mass communication and new media industry workforce woefully lacks diversity, and our communication and arts programs are perfectly poised to claim national leadership in producing a more diverse industry. A study by *Diverse Magazine*, for instance, found that GSU's communication program graduated more students of color than all but two other U.S. universities (only Florida A&M and Phoenix are graduating slightly more). This diversity transcends demographic categorization; GSU students parallel the wide spectrum of new media users and producers most eagerly sought by the creative arts industries.

A Secure Foundation for Creative Industries Executive Development. In our region, only Georgia State University brings together all the core disciplines necessary to train 21st century entertainment industry producers: advanced film/video/emerging media, graphics arts, creative writing, music technology production, business and entrepreneurship, and intellectual property law. GSU's proximity to Atlanta's internationally renowned media industries (film, music, TV, and growing application and game design capacities) also facilitates educational interactions with arts executives critical to the success of the above-the-line workforce development envisioned here.

Formidable connections already link GSU with the region's entertainment and arts industries. Numerous GSU film graduates work or have worked as producers and other senior decision makers in Public Broadcasting (five in Georgia, and one each in South Carolina and Oregon who have stayed in contact with faculty). Some examples of GSU graduates employed in the creative industries include the Marketing Manager for TBS; the Free Radio co-producer for Comedy Central; a director of motion effects at Sony (also winner of two Academy Awards); music project engineers for Elton John, OutKast, and Bruce Springsteen; and the executive director of the Georgia Film, Music and Digital Entertainment Office. Other alumni hold positions at the Weather Channel, CNN, TBS, Crawford Media, GPB, the Home Shopping Network, and Playboy Enterprises. At the 2010 Grammys, two School of Music alumni received awards. Coy Bowles, a member of the Zac Brown Band, won the 2010 Best New Artist Grammy Award. The Digital Arts Entertainment Laboratory has incubated media start-ups, and is piloting a media entrepreneurship curricular model launched in 2012. RCB faculty are serving as Research Chair of the Global Game Jam and co-directing the Southeast Interactive Entertainment and Game Expo (SIEGE) Investment Conference.

Proposed Institute Activity

Georgia State University seeks a partnership with the nonprofit arts sector, corporate and foundation funders, the Georgia Research Alliance, and Georgia's media industries to simultaneously accelerate workforce skill development, arts entrepreneurial business incubation, and entertainment industry-related research. Consistent with a strategy that intelligently launches the Institute in a way designed to capture the region's attention, we prioritize the following activities:

- Forming interdisciplinary degree programs that build on existing unit strengths in computing, film, music technology, technical digital writing, creative writing, and the visual arts. These degree programs will add interdisciplinary opportunities to supplement authorized degree sequences, such as the potential creation of certificate, BIS, MIS, dual degree (BA + MA), interdisciplinary MFA,

and interdisciplinary doctoral programs. In these programs courses will reach across College and departmental lines, and core Institute faculty will provide survey introduction or final capstone/culminating experiences that integrate instruction across disciplinary lines, along with interdisciplinary syllabi reflective of the needs and demands of industry.

- Creating residential faculty research and creative incubation opportunities. The Institute will plan a competition where our faculty with distinguished research and creative trajectories may apply for one- or two-year residencies in the Institute to undertake collaborative project work. Home departments will be compensated to replace instructional effort. Projects will be preferred that organize faculty project teams, that provide research and creative opportunities for the university's most creatively talented and honors students, that connect university work to the region's arts and entertainment industries, or connect to federal, corporate, or foundation grants or contract work.

- Accelerated Programs of Intensive Production Training. Building on the mainly below-the-line training underway elsewhere in Georgia, GSU proposes to expand the quantity of students served by our advanced interactive and media production, graphic arts, computer science, and sound technology programs and to enhance the quality of available above-the-line educational opportunities related to work in the entertainment and information industries. The formation of certificate, undergraduate and graduate degree options will build on existing strengths and partner across GSU Colleges.

- Inside/Out Entertainment Industry Business Incubation. GSU proposes a new strategy to identify and incubate the most promising creative artistic projects, assist in the creation of realistic business plans that can be seeded by angel investors, and nurture their growth as small businesses. Business incubation in the media sector has been transformed in the last decade. Ten years ago the entry barriers to start-up firms were considerable: computing, cameras, film, and post-production technology were exceptionally expensive. Today, of course, some of these technologies are within the reach of anyone who has a high-end computer. The barriers to sectoral growth in the entertainment field today have less to do with expensive technology than with undertrained content creators: brilliant storytellers may not be trained in how to read a spreadsheet or write a business plan, and one-off successes (a hit television show or game) prove difficult to replicate because the designer may not have the managerial training to know how to foster creativity in others on a media production team. A key Institute goal is thus to incubate-inside-out: that is. to pick the most promising students and immerse them in training opportunities and occasions for collaborative team building that will quickly familiarize them with the human resources, accounting, managerial, legal, and content distribution issues unique to the media business. Of a given year's 100 production graduates, the most talented twenty would be further supported, provided incubation office suites and technical support as they launch their enterprises.

- Expanding Robust Research Capacity Utilizing State-of-the Art Technologies. GSU researchers will examine our collective understandings of the social, economic, and technological forces driving global media distribution, while partnering with media firms to help them increase their economic competitiveness. Interdisciplinary teams uniting researchers from communication and computer information systems and marketing would work to develop more sophisticated *data analytical tools regarding the media sector*, aiming to develop more sophisticated data and network analytic tools, able to track the movement of ideas and language from medium to medium. Teams from music and the visual arts would work to undertake research exploring how *sonic and visual environments interact to create new opportunities for aesthetic engagement*. Researchers from communication, computer science, and social psychology would work to understand how new digital technologies (virtual reality, immersive simulation, and mapping technologies of the sort featured in products like Google Glass) shape the entertainment and informational experience of consumers, and *how viewing experiences change given intercultural diversity and across media platforms* (from cellphones to tablets to TV's to IMAX screens). Scholars from the digital humanities and computer science, working together with game developers, would imagine and create *new forms of narrative* so as to better craft meaningful, engaging stories and storytelling methods. And researchers from psychology, the neurosciences, and the digital humanities would work to *map the visual universe of*

moving images to help understand why certain visual messages "go viral," and to better understand how digital technology transforms processes of cognition.

- Expanding Partnerships with the Region's Media Firms. Georgia State University strives to build start-up entrepreneurial activity applicable to multiple career paths so students might find high-paying work in firms ranging from multinational corporations to small start-ups.

- Organizing Activities to Showcase Georgia State University's Leadership in these Scholarly and Creative Areas. An annual research and creative symposium at GSU, potentially organized around a specific theme (e.g., "mobility") that brings industry executives, academics, content creators, writers and artists together for a regional, and then national/international media industries summit would be an impressive way to launch Institute partnerships. Faculty will be invited to produce white papers on timely research topics and on issues of interest to the wider arts and entertainment industries highlighting the work of GSU scholars, performers, and artists, graduate students, lead researchers, and postdoctoral appointees, and to be disseminated to city partners and online. We will create a vital public presence via a lecture series to foster campus conversation; the production and national circulation of innovative curricular and training models in the media arts, arts education, new media technology, digital literacy, and other areas appropriate to the widest possible educational platforms; and the development of a visually compelling website.

The Administrative Model

Led by a senior Director, a key goal should be to attract an individual with a track record of achievement in one of the arts industries, able both to present an engaging public profile for the Institute and to successfully organize industry/academic partnerships. Given the central importance of fostering research, production partnerships, and creative industries entrepreneurship (three areas of effort that require specialized and not necessarily overlapping competencies), the Director may want to put in place an Associate Director model so that full time attention is focused on each of these missions. The Director should prioritize forming a sustainable revenue model for the Institute and building credible staffing to support Institute work; initiating new degree proposal planning; navigating the Institute through accreditation; and organizing a central production and interdisciplinary facility. The Director should organize two advisory boards. The first would appoint regional arts industry executives to help undertake strategic planning for initial programs and initiatives; the second would name core affiliated faculty and administrative leadership from closely aligned departments to assist in negotiating degree development, internal research, facilities management, and relationship-building research partnerships across faculties and colleges.

A core faculty group should be hired with joint appointments anchored in the Institute but also connected to a second department. Professors of Practice will physically work in Institute offices, and have structured access to graduate student support, either funded on external grants and contracts, or on appointments connecting to existing arts and communication programs in other units. The goal is to hire a Professor of Practice in each of these areas and connected to a specific second department, as follows: Games and application development (Computer Science), Media production (Communication), Sound engineering (Music), Graphic arts (Art & Design), Media entrepreneurship or analytics (Robinson College of Business), and Digital Storytelling (English). While these hires might have traditional academic histories, hiring strategies should also aim to attract industry executives, artists, media and music producers, and others whose history anticipates success in forming collaborative interdisciplinary and external partnerships.

An affiliated faculty model should be implemented as soon as possible. We will encourage faculty from any university program whose core research or creative work might be nurtured by an Institute affiliation to apply for either a formal joint appointment or status as a faculty affiliate.

Affiliated faculty should be provided access to offices and administrative staff support, should be afforded highest priority access to constructed interdisciplinary production core facilities and equipment, and provided first access to residential appointments to undertake collaborative projects that might span as long as two years. Smaller seed funding for start-up projects should also be made competitively available. A central goal of the affiliated faculty model is to elicit the serious and sustained engagement of professors with colleagues from other specializations, including potentially explicit collaborations involving the Russell Center for Entrepreneurship, and creative industries interested research faculty in law, education, and policy studies.

Given fast-changing industry trends in this area, one model to test the waters for new research and industry collaboration would be to employ a limited cohort of postdoctoral appointees on a two- or three-year contract basis. Searches for postdocs (including MFA-credentialed candidates) should be undertaken so that promising new directions for funding and research can be initiated, and on a model where postdocs who succeed in generating revenue or significant research/creative outcomes could them be shifted onto permanent faculty or staff lines.

A Model for Attracting Distinguished Visiting Artists and Industry Mentors. Existing models for employing part time instructors and organizing short-term intensive curricular opportunities can be difficult to adapt to media industry artists given hiring rules and seminar clocks created for more traditional academic work. The opportunity costs created by these challenges are considerable. The Institute should prioritize the creation of innovative curricular opportunities (short courses, master classes, distance and online classes, offsite and experiential learning, coop and study abroad, etc.) that can connect to industry and nonprofit sector professionals so that senior creative talent and executives can be brought into sustained mentoring contact with GSU students.

An Institute staff will be built as quickly as budgetary commitments allow. Staff hiring is necessary to organize general administrative, development, and grants work, as well as to staff a core production facility and work with faculty on funded and pilot or demonstration projects.

Building a Core Production and Research Laboratory Space

The most important piece in implementing this overall vision is the creation of an integrated production center where the advanced training needed to produce film, television, music, graphic, text-based, and online entertainment content is integrated with new production technologies that enable shaping that content across media platforms and facilitating interdisciplinary team project design. The three-story building attached to 25 Park Place is the perfect location for this facility. Its iconic presence as a sleek architectural cube in the heart of downtown Atlanta resonantly reinforces the Institute's "cubed" focuses on creativity, convergence, and collaboration. The center of the open concept first floor can be readily converted into a 25 x 25 soundstage where students can rig lights, build sets, and cleanly record voice, music and effects. This work is achievable in so compressed an environment thanks to the emergence of compact green screen composite technology for motion capture, moving image compositing, and multi-camera live video streaming equipment. Adjacent spaces would be dedicated to studio control of audio and live video streaming from the inner studio and post-production suites dedicated to audio recording/mixing. Earmarking this small cube-within-a-cube still leaves considerable open access and balconied space that can be configured to project other kinds of creative activities with movable furniture, computing devices, and portable equipment to facilitate innovation and collaboration.

The cube's second floor requires modest reconfiguration for small business incubation and entrepreneurial training. Organized around twenty small offices, the space must be network upgraded and existing conference rooms modified to facilitate new media team project work.

Facility investments can organize interdisciplinary <u>media industries research activity on the third floor</u>. The components needed for building a cutting edge, mobile technology research facility will require investments to enable application development and testing; audience response and digital analytics; virtual and augmented reality research; and a computing infrastructure robust enough to securely handle large media files and computationally intensive tasks.

Securing a Stable Revenue Stream

For the Institute to succeed as viable in the long-term, multiple streams of revenue should be organized as early as feasible. Federal research grants would generate indirect cost recovery and project revenue. Pilot projects that could produce revenue over time include work funded by NSF and <u>private foundations</u> on these topics: entertainment media analytics, entertainment technology development, investigative journalism, humanistic "big data" research, and scholarship on computational narrative. A <u>supplemental tuition charge</u> made to students enrolled in Institute degree programs could also underwrite Institute activity. This model, which would add a tuition-surcharge given the extensive and high cost of providing state-of-the-art content production equipment and the high-end computing power needed to organize projects to scale, is in line with revenue models in place across the University of California system, as well as programs such as the University of Southern California and NYU.

<u>Industry-academy collaborative contracted research and creative production</u> is key to our success. We will invite industry partners to choose the creative or research problem, and then design advanced courses and research projects to solve the problem. The industrial partner would sponsor the program, with royalty and intellectual property to be divided as negotiated. The effort proposed might mirror activity at the MIT Media Lab, deployed in the AT&T Foundry or Verizon Innovation Labs model. This model can also be organized in the <u>nonprofit sector</u>. Theatrical, design, non-profit agencies with significant media production needs, and other firms could be brought into contractual relationships that would reduce costs for them and still generate revenue for the Institute. Students interested in content-creation career paths could be connected to these partnerships, and in-house GSU "firms" could produce content on a contract basis. These efforts underwrote the successful model for university and arts organizational partnership at Queensland, Australia, and the model of in-house "firms" is a common one in graphic design and public relations programs.

Implementation & Timeline

The Institute's first year goals are hiring an Institute director, initiating searches for a core faculty group, moving to design a core facility, and initiating media industry partnerships. In the second year, student and industry-partnered cohorts will begin formalized media entrepreneurship activity and facilities construction will be started.