According to New York-based games research firm SuperData Research, the worldwide interactive media industry is set to surpass $100 billion in 2017. In 2015, only $370 million, or 0.37% of that value was generated in New York state. By adopting forward-thinking economic development policy, New York State has the opportunity to capitalize on this rapidly growing industry.

The Center for an Urban Future (CUF) recognized this opportunity and recommended a course of action in the 2008 report “Getting in the Game.” They noted that New York lacked the large companies needed for the industry to grow and the talent pool those companies desired. CUF recommended expanding academic game programs, fostering connections between industry and academy, and integrating games into economic development strategies. In the decade since the report, those recommendations have been met and exceeded:

- **Expanding academic game programs.** There are now over 20 academic programs related to games in New York, including two of the top-ranked programs in the world, NYU and RIT.

- **Fostering connections between industry and academy.** In 2015, the NYU Game Center was named one of three New York State Digital Gaming Hubs along with RIT and RPI. The Hubs are building infrastructure to bridge the gap between industry and education and have significantly increased the talent pipeline needed to support the games industry.

- **Integrating games into economic development strategies.** Initiatives like NYC’s Applied Sciences Competition has strengthened the talent pool for engineers and programmers who are critical to the game industry. The creation of a centralized position for digital and new media development in NYS Empire State Development has also helped spur industry and government collaborations.

Games are now a major entertainment industry, generating more money than both the music & movie industries. New opportunities in mobile games, game streaming, eSports, & artificial/virtual reality are just a few examples that illustrate the potential for continued growth. New York is already home to a large concentration of entertainment & media companies, making it the obvious place to lead the games industry.

The talent pipeline has been built. Industry, academy, and government are working together like never before. New York is in a prime position to take a larger share of the $100 billion games industry, bringing desirable and stable jobs filled by highly-educated young employees. This document outlines several key, NYU-led accomplishments that have helped make this opportunity possible, and recommends how the industry, academy, and government can act in concert to capitalize on a unique moment.
The NYU Game Center is dedicated to the exploration of games as a cultural form and game design as creative practice. Our approach to the study of games is based on a simple idea: games matter. Just like other cultural forms – music, film, literature, painting, dance, theater – games are valuable for their own sake. As part of the NYU Tisch School of the Arts, our mission is to graduate the next generation of game designers, developers, entrepreneurs, and critics, and to advance the field of games by creating a context for advanced scholarship and groundbreaking work. We offer a MFA, BFA, and minor in game design as well as year-round open-to-the-public events.

Since 2014, more than 100 students have graduated from NYU with degrees in game design. Two-thirds of those graduates have stayed in New York State to work, most in games-related industries, such as game studios, small tech start-ups, academia, museums, media agencies, and as freelancers.

### Success Stories

**Digital Continue: Supporting Early Stage Companies**

In early 2016, Digital Continue moved from Washington to NYC to open a new studio. After a major project fell through, the company reached out to NYU for support. We offered to host them as a Studio-In-Residence for 3 months, providing free office space and other resources. During their time at NYU, the company secured funding for permanent office space & additional hiring, allowing them to keep the company in New York. Since then, the company has grown and employs a number of NYU graduates.

**Swap Sword: Continued Community & Collaboration**

Swap Sword is a mobile game developed by two Incubator participants who took advantage of the free office space offered by the Hub and continued to work at the Game Center after the Incubator. They developed Swap Sword together and released it on iOS in 2016. The game was received positively by the industry and received funding to develop a sequel. Some initiatives include:

- Created an Advisory Board of 12 NYC-based industry leaders.
- Participated in multiple public policy forums and discussions to help New York become a prime location for the game industry.
- Connected local indie developers to top game publishers, including Sony, Devolver Digital, Alliance Digital Media, Buffalo Games, Microsoft, and IndieFund.
- Encouraged community building and collaboration through hosting dozens of events, free and open to the public.
- Welcomed more than 1,500 people into the Hub for an annual showcase of more than 100 games.
- Launched a state-wide Game Developer Census to track the number of companies developing commercial games.
- Organized and hosted the annual professional game design conference PRACTICE: Game Design in Detail.

The NYU Game Center was named one of three Digital Gaming Hubs in 2016. The Hubs cultivate talent the industry needs to further connect academic and industry partners, and promote job creation. The NYU Game Center has become one of the top-rated programs and is an industry leader.

As a Digital Gaming Hub, the NYU Game Center has taken concrete steps to provide value to the industry, pair local job seekers with hiring companies, and bring the NYC game development community together. Some initiatives include:

- Created an Advisory Board of 12 NYC-based industry leaders.
- Participated in multiple public policy forums and discussions to help New York become a prime location for the game industry.
- Connected local indie developers to top game publishers, including Sony, Devolver Digital, Alliance Digital Media, Buffalo Games, Microsoft, and IndieFund.
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The Incubator gives promising games time, space, guidance, and resources to maximize opportunities for commercial success. By providing early-stage companies these resources and connecting them with a community of experienced industry professionals, we encourage their entrepreneurial goals and prepare them for sustainable game development careers in New York. As a result of the Incubator, developers are choosing to start companies in New York, retaining jobs and building a stronger and more diverse industry ecosystem.
Almost a decade out of the “Getting in the Game Report”, and at the halfway point through the Digital Gaming Hubs program, now is the time to celebrate achievements and identify what more can be done to make New York the destination for game development. There is a strong foundation to support growth: A maturing games industry that favors the existing media and entertainment business ecosystem here, the growth of world-class Universities, and initiatives like the NYS Digital Games Hubs present the opportunity for industry, academia, and government to work together to build the future of the games industry in New York.

Small and medium-sized game companies in New York are already growing. Companies like Velan Ventures and Dots are hiring students graduating from New York's game development programs to power their growth. However, a critical mass of diverse companies is still needed to attract studios from other states and help New York home-grow our own larger companies from the ground up. Larger studios provide steady and robust job opportunities, which helps attract and retain top talent in New York. Just as in the tech industry, it is ideal to have a few large, stable companies young employees can start at before spinning off their own games and companies. This diversity creates the ecosystem that truly anchors an industry in a specific location.

The following initiatives will make New York more competitive in this growing entertainment industry:

- **Build the workforce pipeline.** Academics and industry should continue to foster collaborations that increase talent and ensure curriculum meets industry demands. For example, ‘Strategy Guide: Breaking Into the Industry’ an annual event that brings local game companies to NYU for job talks and a career fair.

- **Renew the Digital Gaming Hubs.** Renewal of this program will allow for continued academic-industry partnerships that support young developers. Better branding and marketing for these Hubs across the state can help attract even more talent and diverse studios.

- **Revise business supporting initiatives.** While government has a breadth of programs to help businesses start and grow, many of these programs are misaligned with the games industry. Game development can take years, even a large studio game can take over three years to develop, so companies often lag in job creation. Government should allow game companies to participate in business incentive programs without an immediate requirement of creating jobs.

- **Support tax credit legislation.** The TV and film tax credit has effectively spurred those industries across the state. The Entertainment Software Association is leading legislation that would expand the existing tax credit to digital game companies in a way that ensures small and medium size companies benefit. Passage would help ensure New York’s presence in an industry that has doubled revenues since 2012 nationally.5

- **Create a co-working space.** Academic and industry partners should create more affordable dedicated co-working space and mentorship opportunities in order to help support early-stage game developers bring their products to market.

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