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Cleveland Business

Cleveland Institute of Art is rolling the dice

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Education Cleveland Institute of Art

MORNING ROUNDUP

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Students at the Cleveland Institute of Art are getting real-world experience and helping a local start-up get off the ground.

The school has partnered with a Cleveland-based casino game development company, Deck of Dice Gaming LLC, through CIA's community projects class.

Deck of Dice is creating a simulated gambling game for mobile, with plans to move onto regulated digital gambling for online or slot-machine applications in the future, said founder and CEO Tom Donelan. The company started in 2014 and plans to launch commercially by mid-2016.

The institute's community projects class operates like a studio, where students work on community or industry projects, said Anthony Scalmato, chair of the animation program and interim chair of the game design program. The two programs have been doing this for about two years, Scalmato said, and a lot of the other departments at the school already require it or are starting to. The projects give students experience in working with companies to match styles and in meeting specific requirements.

"They're not just developing work for themselves," Scalmato said.

Currently, two students are working on the project for Deck of Dice, while others are working on a feature film or a project for a museum. The institute and Deck of Dice were connected through Case Western Reserve University's Blackstone LaunchPad, Scalmato said. The company's CEO visits the school, and students teleconference with the team in San Francisco.

Donelan said the young company's game design leaders are based in San Francisco, but he's committed to Cleveland and wanted to tap into the talent here. That made the relationship with the institute a good fit, and not just because it has a dedicated game design program.

The community projects program operates almost like a studio for area businesses, he said. So, the company gets great interns, he said, but also the oversight of the institute's management.