

# RIT | MAGIC Spell Studios Maker Program

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## MISSION:

The goal of the MAGIC Maker program is to provide students with the funding and support to manage and publish their own entrepreneurial digital media project. Whether the goal is to publish a polished media project to the marketplace or spawn a full business around the produced work, the MAGIC Maker program supports students through the full lifecycle from prototype to production to launch. Eligible projects include games, films, animations, AR/VR, and other exploratory applications in digital media. This program also offers students the opportunity to earn experience equivalent to co-op credit.\*

## PROGRAM DETAILS:

- All members of the core team must be current, traditional full-time undergraduate or graduate students in good academic standing at RIT to participate in the program and receive funding. Faculty, staff, and non-RIT affiliates are not eligible.
- There are three (3) tiers of the Maker the program (described in detail below):
  - Prototype Edition - for very early concepts
  - Production Edition - for full production immersion
  - Publisher Edition - for completed projects seeking publication
- Funding will be provided in the form of a stipend intended to cover the full semester's effort for each awarded team (up to a maximum of \$10,000 per project for the Production Edition and \$1,000 per project for the Prototype and Publisher Editions). The funding itself serves as "seed capital".
- Preference will be given to concepts and teams that cross disciplinary boundaries.
- Your project idea must be digital in nature (i.e. film, game, app, service, experience, etc.).

- Participants will submit project deliverables at the program's end for review.
- Requirements specific to each project and plan will be established upon admission.
- Participating students retain their intellectual property (IP) and control their market reach.

\*With the permission of your home academic department, the MAGIC Maker program qualifies as an entrepreneurial co-op at RIT and may be used to satisfy degree co-op requirements. You must meet with your academic advisor to determine how this fits your plan of study. Regardless of whether the co-op is needed to fulfill degree requirements, students accepted in the program will be expected to be registered for either a full or part time co-op to formalize participation in the program.

## **PROGRAM TIERS**

The MAGIC Makers program includes three tiers: Prototype, Production and Publisher. Each tier has different goals and you should consider carefully where you think your project may fit when submitting. Note: the program selection committee will make the final decision regarding which tier your project is accepted into.

### **Prototype:**

Meant to support student projects that are in early stage pre-production with the goal to create a full prototype or proof of concept. The intent is to position the 'product' developed for full production, making it (while not a guarantee) an ideal candidate for the Production Edition of the Maker program in a subsequent semester.

### **Production:**

Recognizes that a project has demonstrated the appropriate progress beyond a prototype or proof-of-concept and needs to step more heavily into a production phase that typically requires more resources and tools. *Acceptance into the Production Edition excludes projects from entering into the prototype edition at a later time.*

### **Publisher:**

Targets projects that are beyond the traditional pre-production and production phases and are on a faster track to take their product to a commercial outlet. Teams will work with MAGIC and its extensive network of affiliates and partners to help push the product further with marketing initiatives and assistance with the provisioning of the product.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO APPLY?

In the world of digital media production, creative pitches are how projects are greenlit. With that in mind, we are asking you to submit the following:

**1. Demo:** If you are submitting a game/app, please provide a playable version of what you are developing. Give us the ability to play your game and be sure to include any special instructions for running your game along with a summary of gameplay controls. Please build for PC/Windows. If it is a film, please provide a trailer/treatment/animatic.

## 2. Supporting Submission Materials:

**2a. Video** – 2 minute (or shorter) video description of the project. Note: your video must SHOW us what you are creating (i.e. gameplay, an animatic, etc.) narrated by a member of your team. You should also describe how you and your team plan on expanding that during the program and can include the following elements:

- Describe what you are making. Consider:
  - What is it? What is your inspiration?
  - What Makers tier do you *believe* your 'product' currently sits in (see tiers section below)?
  - What are the most important attributes/components of your project? As examples: "our game is all about fast-paced combat," "our game is about emotionally-driven dialog," "our film is about creating a sense of loneliness in space," etc.
  - What is the competitive landscape for what you are making? Reflect on and list what games/media are your closest comparisons: what do they do well, what strategies do they employ, and how has the genre evolved.
  - What about your project is unique? Think about how it will stand out (i.e. what's the twist or unique mechanic?).
- Describe your final deliverable. How will you use the MAGIC Maker program to develop your project?

**2b. Document** – 2 pages (or shorter) detailing the logistics and challenges associated with the project:

- What are your creative goals?
- Explain what you and your team hope to learn from this experience. Consider:
  - How do you define success?
  - How are you going to evaluate and measure your growth? How will you *know* if you are successful?
- What are the risks associated with your project?
  - Consider your key milestones and deadlines: what stands in the way? Reflect on your potential deficiencies, missing skillsets, scope, and creative challenges.
- What is the timeline and scope of your project? Consider:

- What are your priorities?
- What can you realistically execute over the duration of the Maker program?
- Do you have any other long-term plans for the project?
- What kind of mentorship support are you seeking? If you have worked with faculty, who are they and have they expressed a willingness to continue working with you?
- List the RIT students\* who will be participating in the project and program. Please provide:
  - Their year and major/school.
  - Their full legal name.
  - Their role on the project.
- Provide a bulleted list of software and hardware you are seeking for your product development, testing, etc. Note: if you are expecting to publish what you are developing, you will most likely need to utilize commercial software licenses.
- Provide a bulleted list of software and hardware that you have been using to date. Please indicate if you are utilizing commercial and/or educational licenses.

**Optional:** If your project is nearing completion at the time of your submission and your goal is to publish it, explain what your plan is for distribution and marketing.

\*For non-RIT students and other developers, you should list just their names and roles on your project.

**KEY DATES:**

- Applications open: October 13
- Deadline for applications: November 14, 11:59PM
- Application review: November 21
- Finalist interviews: November 24-28
- Participant notification: December 5
- Spring semester begins: January 12, 2026

**HOW TO SUBMIT:**

Create a sharable folder by following these steps:

1. Create a Google folder
2. Use this naming convention: Maker\_Application\_Spring\_2026\_[StudentName]
3. Add Aaron Nieboer ([amnigm@rit.edu](mailto:amnigm@rit.edu)) with editor permissions
4. Email [amnigm@rit.edu](mailto:amnigm@rit.edu) with the subject line: Maker Application [ProjectName]

**WANT FEEDBACK BEFORE YOU SUBMIT?**

You may schedule a 15-30-minute appointment (in-person or via Zoom) with Aaron Nieboer, at [amnigm@rit.edu](mailto:amnigm@rit.edu), but it is strongly recommended that you schedule the appointment as early as possible. The days leading up to the deadline become increasingly difficult to schedule and may not be possible if there are large volumes of applications to the program wanting to meet. Come to your appointment with submission materials in their current state of development and Aaron will give you feedback to ensure you are on the right track.

### Funding Guidelines:

Funding awards for individual MAGIC Makers projects range from \$1,000 up to \$10,000 and is available at the following levels:

For students participating in the program\* **full-time** (i.e. Production Edition) for a given semester (>35hrs/wk in Makers for full duration of the academic semester), a Maker stipend payment of \$5000 per team member and \$10,000 maximum per team will be paid.

For students participating in the Production Edition **part-time** for a given semester, while simultaneously taking a normal academic load of classes (<20hrs/wk in Makers for full duration of the academic semester), a Maker stipend payment of \$3000 per team member and \$10,000 maximum per team will be paid. Students participating in Maker projects which are also part of their program academic requirements (capstone, thesis, or research/production studio projects) will be eligible for \$3000 per enrolled team member for the full academic semester. Funding in this scenario is calculated based only on team members receiving RIT course credit for the specific submitted project. Project team members who are not currently-matriculated RIT students are not eligible for direct funding from MAGIC and are excluded in determining the funding awards against the above guidelines.

For students participating in the Prototype and Publisher/Distributor Editions of MAGIC Makers, the total project stipend per semester is \$1000.

*Students in the Maker Program will be at-will employees of RIT and will be paid in the form of a stipend. The total amount received will be divided into payments (per team member) and paid out throughout the semester as determined by the RIT payroll schedule.*

### Example Funding Scenarios:

Full Edition Program Enrollment Status	Award
2 RIT Full Time Participants	\$10,000
1 RIT Full Time; 1 RIT Part Time	\$8,000
3 RIT Part Time	\$9,000
1 RIT Full Time for Thesis/Capstone	\$3,000
1 RIT Full Time; 3 Non-RIT Participants	\$5,000

<b>Prototype Edition Program</b>	\$1000
<b>Publisher Edition Program</b>	\$1000

\*Participating students are considered to be any RIT students, specifically, who are enrolled in the program.

**Have questions or need more information? Contact Aaron at [amnigm@rit.edu](mailto:amnigm@rit.edu).**