

# Miami University AIMS Higher



Miami University views education and cultural immersion as equally important, and this desire for well-balanced future innovators led Miami officials to envision a program where students had the opportunity to learn in a multi-disciplinary environment and understand a broad array of topics on a basic level.

The ongoing desire for an environment where students can pursue a topic of interest for deeper learning eventually led to the development of the Armstrong Institute for Interactive Media Studies (AIMS Institute). The AIMS Institute was born of innovative thinking and a focus on digital media opportunities, with one overarching ambition of the AIMS creators being to develop an experiential learning environment, and to create “awesome citizens,” according to Artie Kuhn, the institute’s assistant director.

Miami students can currently apply to the AIMS San Francisco Digital Innovation Center. According to the Center’s program director Dr. Glenn Platt, San Francisco was chosen so the Center would be located in the mecca for those interested in startups, digital innovation, and new economy thinking and doing. The Center, originally modeled after the Miami University-Luxembourg campus, focuses not only on digital innovation, but also on entrepreneurship. Students who participate in the AIMS programs have the opportunity to intern with key businesses located near the Center, as well as the ability to participate in business pitches to alumni and staff.

Many students choose to find an internship where they can learn more about an area in which they hope to pursue a career. For those that participate in the business pitches, students have the opportunity to work in groups to design a start-up business and pitch the idea to alumni. The winning group is then placed in a real-world incubator to face all the challenges a regular start-up would encounter, while the students who don’t win also have the opportunity to move on to internships in Silicon Valley.

The experience allows students to learn the traits of both success and failure, while ultimately teaching them what they are capable of achieving. After graduation, many find jobs and stay in the San Francisco area, which creates a dilemma for the program leaders – with the immersive digital environment located on the west coast, many students choose to not return to Ohio.

Miami's solution is to duplicate the San Francisco environment in Cincinnati. The AIMS faculty and staff, along with the Miami Director of Career Services, Michael Goldman, have secured funding and businesses willing to invest. Cincinnati is comprised of a diverse and thriving business ecosystem with nationally ranked incubators and accelerators, and faculty and staff know it is imperative to provide an immersive experience there. A small cohort of students will begin studying at the center in Cincinnati in the fall, with the first full cohort of students scheduled to begin in 2015. This immersion experience gives students hands-on opportunities in a variety of digital careers to find their best fit.

There are several innovative technologies being utilized in the AIMS program, all of which focus on new technology development or old technology improvement (pictures of a few of the innovations accompany this article). Miami is exploring 3D scanner technology with an innovative display system from zSpace, Inc., which allows virtual interaction with 3D objects. One eventual goal is virtual dissections or disassembly in some of the pre-med, biology, anatomy, physiology, psychology, and engineering courses.

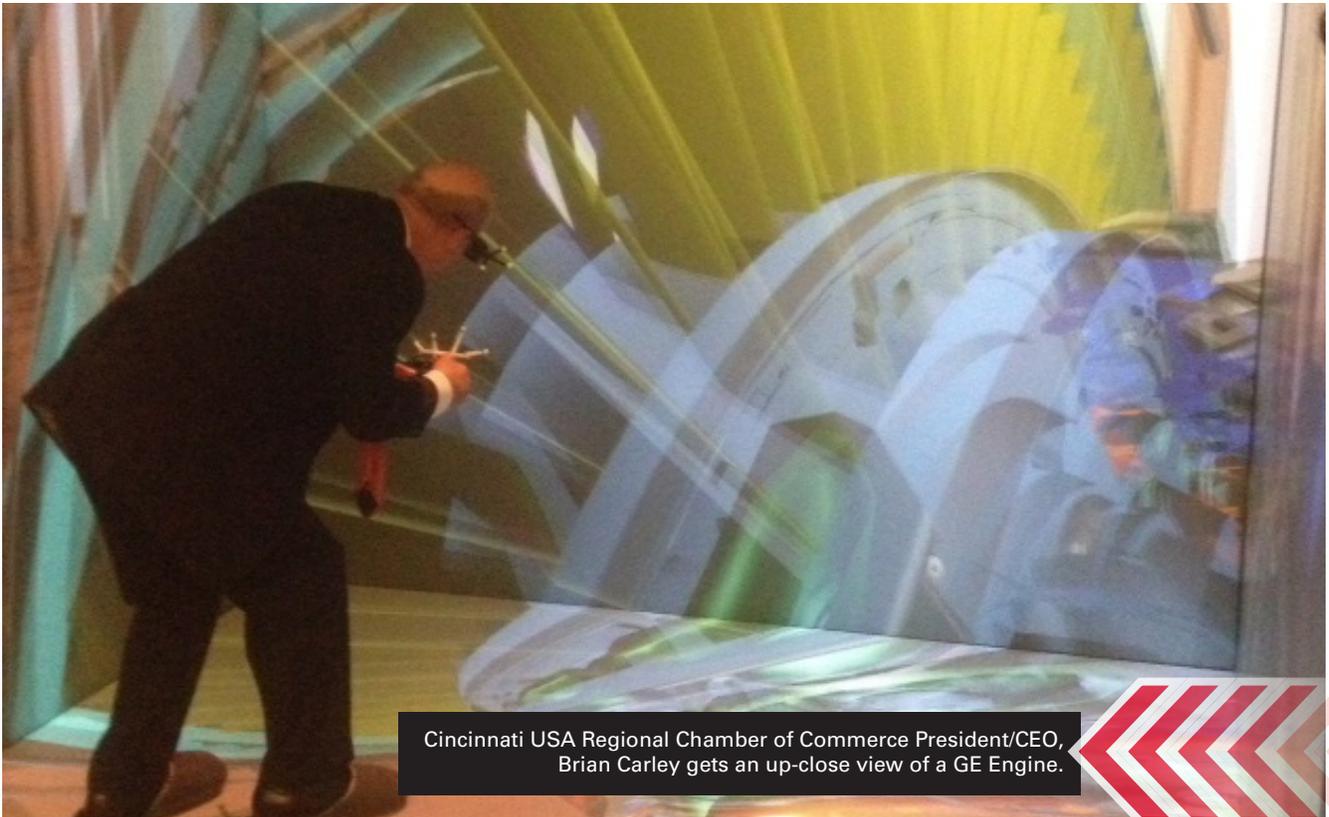


Photo: AIMS Center  
Students are able to grab and virtually disassemble 3D objects with a stylus.

Utilizing CAVE (Cave Automatic Virtual Environments), students are working with technology that has been around since the early 1990s but has traditionally been found in research universities, large corporations, or military training facilities due to cost. CAVE uses motion-tracking cameras on a user's head and hands to dynamically update the 3D display on each wall, and perfectly matches the user's height and field of view to increase realism. Along these lines, Nvis Inc. is partnering with Miami to provide high-end, wide field-of-view systems that could allow exploration of a full-scale reconstruction of businesses or buildings.

Grocery stores are one of many virtual environments used for research studies in Miami's Huge Immersive Virtual Environment facility (HIVE). A combination of HIVE and CAVE technologies has also led students to partner with local businesses to develop a virtual environment outdoors using headsets and body sensors.

The new Center, partially funded through a partnership with the Ohio Means Internships and Co-ops grants program\*, is a blend of innovation and experiential learning, and the ability to utilize a grant focused on expanding internship and co-op opportunities for students is viewed as an amazing start for Miami's investments in experiential learning and the new Center. The collaboration between the Center and Miami Career Services has provided unique funding avenues while furthering the goal of



Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber of Commerce President/CEO, Brian Carley gets an up-close view of a GE Engine.

ensuring students learn for the future and are equipped to pursue careers after graduation.

So what does the immediate future hold for Miami students who will experience this new Center in the heart of Cincinnati? It holds hands-on learning and collaboration with local businesses, the development of new ideas, and the creation of innovative solutions. In other words, for students at the AIMS Institute, the sky's the limit. ■

## Ohio MEANS internships & co-ops

\*The Ohio Means Internships & Co-ops (OMIC) grants program is helping more college students connect with companies and communities in Ohio through internship and co-op opportunities, and also assisting campuses in expanding current programs. In many cases, OMIC grant money provides scholarships to students who successfully complete internships or co-ops, wage assistance to businesses offering additional internships and co-ops, and money to campuses to enhance and expand workforce development programs. The goal is for campus expertise to increase, students to gain workforce readiness, and connections with businesses to flourish. OMIC grants aim to attract and retain both talent and businesses in Ohio.