



**Search for the Founding Director of the Endless Lab for Games and Learning
Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts**

Arizona State University
Tempe/Mesa, AZ

THE SEARCH

The Endless Lab for Games and Learning (the Lab) represents a new era in education. Merging cutting-edge technology, engaging game environments, and universally accessible high-intensity learning experiences, the Lab will be at the forefront of developing infinitely scalable learning solutions to reach and impact the lives of millions of learners worldwide. Housed in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University (ASU), the Lab seeks a Founding Director with a passion for scaling innovative game-making pathways and game-based-learning to deliver on this bold vision and play an influential role in shaping the future of teaching and learning on a global scale.

The Lab envisions a world where learning transcends traditional boundaries, harnessing the power of digital creativity to create high-quality, personalized learning experiences that are accessible and engaging for everyone. Almost ½ billion global youth (ages 15-30) are not in school or are unemployed. Existing systems of education cannot reach these young people because they are not designed to be scalable and personalized, meeting learners where they are—in the environments where they play, socialize, and spend time. Educators must find ways to build personalized learning and work pathways that are integrated into the interests, habits, and lives of young people. This requires new educational technology, new models of mentorship and peer learning, new ways to assess knowledge, skills and competencies, and new curricular designs.

The Lab will directly support ASU's innovation efforts across the [five realms](#) of teaching and learning. Specifically, the Lab will advance Realm 5: Infinitely Scalable Learning, focusing on massively distributed, personalized, and adaptive learning solutions. In support of this ambition, the Director will lead the design and development of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary initiative. They will be responsible for building an applied learning and research lab, working with industry partners, teaching and mentoring students, participating in professional and university service, engaging stakeholders in the university and the

community, and demonstrating national and international leadership in their field. They will also lend strategic vision to a newly developed set of degree programs around game development and design. The successful candidate will also be dedicated to advancing the [ASU Charter](#) and realizing ASU's [Design Aspirations](#).

Candidates from outside of academia with demonstrated expertise and thought leadership in gaming, technology, education or educational technology, computer science, engineering, computational media, media arts, or related fields are encouraged to apply. This full-time, twelve-month administrative position also carries a faculty appointment (rank and title TBD) in the School of Arts, Media, and Engineering.

ASU has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in this recruitment. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and resumés/CVs with cover letters should be submitted according to the instructions at the end of this document.

ENDLESS LAB FOR GAMES AND LEARNING

The Lab's Impact

The Lab will be the global leader in advancing knowledge, practice, and policy around Realm 5 learning—attracting the best innovators and scholars, influencing the design of key technologies, and supporting public and private enterprises that are attempting to create infinitely scalable learning and work pathways. It will be unique among academic institutions not only by its audacious goal to reach 100 million learners worldwide but also by its effort to pioneer the integration of all of the key cross-sector areas necessary to achieve this goal. This includes areas that are often not prioritized in the games and learning space, such as the importance of researching and understanding how market dynamics, competitive landscapes, and enabling ecosystems accelerate or inhibit the ability to reach tens of millions of learners. Many games and learning organizations focus on pedagogy, which is absolutely necessary, but not sufficient to effectively scale. These solutions also need to be aligned with market demand and shifting regional and global dynamics, sustainable, impact-friendly financial and revenue models, scalable technology and service delivery infrastructure, as well as operating in an enabling ecosystem with public, private, and philanthropic stakeholder alignment.

The Lab will take an action-oriented approach to research, pioneering critical insights to advance play-to-learn, make-to-learn, and learn-through-making environments, as well as cultivating both 21st-century skills and subject area expertise. The research and learning agenda will also focus on understanding not only the innovative pedagogy—in this case, the Studio-based model of learning—but also the demand for these offerings and the gaps that need to be closed to meet this demand (e.g. closing gaps around funding, device access, connectivity, mentors, accessibility, enabling ecosystems, competition)—especially for underserved youth around the world. It will also involve understanding how new and emerging

technologies and development practices such as open-source software, cloud computing, and AI can enable scaling along with impact-friendly funding and business model innovations.

Partnerships

The Lab will operate independently of—but work closely with—Endless Studios, a youth-focused game-making studio and learning hub. Founded as a partnership between Endless and E-Line Media, Endless Studios has a mission to empower youth, helping them transition from gaming enthusiasts to skilled game creators who can thrive in a multitude of industries. At the core of their work is a belief that building games equips individuals with the skills to build a brighter future for themselves and economic development for whole regions.

While the partnership with Endless Studios is key to the Lab's founding, it is not exclusive, and the Director will be expected to convene, incubate, and accelerate other relevant initiatives and partnerships across the commercial, public, philanthropic, NGO, investor, and academic sectors (e.g. partnering with organizations like Minecraft, Roblox, and Scratch and use game design to facilitate learning; collaborating with national governments to address critical skills gaps that contribute to youth unemployment; attracting private and public investment to accelerate the development and implementation of new technologies emerging from the Lab's research). By connecting the full-scale research and learning assets of ASU and Endless to a range of partners and platforms where youth spend time playing and making games, the Lab will catalyze a worldwide ecosystem that fosters both professional development and academic growth for learners of any age around the planet.

Investment and Budget

The Lab will be supported with in an initial investment of five million dollars over three years to support its founding, development, and accomplishment of activities and outcomes. This initial funding, in the form of a grant from the Marino Foundation, is anticipated to be the first in a number of investments that will enable the Lab to scale and move quickly to a sustainable business model of diverse funders and revenue streams. Future funding for the Lab will be expected to come from a mix of additional philanthropic contributions from major foundations and donors, large grant applications to public funding agencies, large contracts with clients (including school districts, foreign governments, and NGOs), and educational programs leading to micro-credentials and certificates.

Governance and Organization

The Lab will be organizationally housed within the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, and the Director will report to the Dean and Director of the Herberger Institute. The Lab will be physically housed within the Media and Immersive eXperience (MIX) Center in downtown Mesa, AZ but will amplify and benefit from connections across the entire University, including with the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers

College, the Fulton Schools of Engineering and the Thunderbird School of Global Management. The Lab Director will also engage with ASU's Presidential 5th Realm Learning Group and an advisory council that includes executives and leaders from the gaming, education and technology sectors, along with key ASU leaders from the [Academic Enterprise](#), the [Learning Enterprise](#), the [Knowledge Enterprise](#) and [EdPlus](#).

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

[Arizona State University](#) is a new model for American higher education, an unprecedented combination of academic excellence, entrepreneurial energy and broad access. This New American University is a single, unified institution comprising four differentiated campuses in Arizona in addition to locations in Washington D.C. and Los Angeles. The university's charter states that ASU is a comprehensive public research university, measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed; advancing research and discovery of public value; and assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves. Its research and teaching are inspired by real-world applications, blurring the boundaries that traditionally separate academic disciplines. In 2022, ASU was named a Hispanic-Serving Institution and in 2023, ASU joined the prestigious Association of American Universities. ASU is deeply committed to advancing in innovative ways while sustaining a welcoming, supportive, and empowering environment for all members of our community. Ranked #1 in innovation for eight consecutive years and #2 in the world for global impact, ASU is the ideal home for the Lab, as it brings together researchers and industry experts in the fields of games, learning, and work.

Five Realms of Learning and Teaching

ASU is pursuing innovation in educational delivery across five realms of teaching and learning, each of which bears the hallmarks of technological enhancement and broad educational access. Through robust collaboration with educational technology partners, ASU is delivering personalized learning at scale, ubiquitous content-delivery mechanisms, and artificial intelligence-based advising.

The five realms of learning are:

- ***Realm 1: Campus Immersion:*** Fully immersive, technology-enhanced, campus-based learning for traditional P-20 and post-graduate learners
- ***Realm 2: Digital Immersion:*** Digitally immersive, online, asynchronous learning for P-20 and post-graduate learners
- ***Realm 3: Digital Immersion – massively open:*** Digitally immersive, online, open scale, individualized and flexible learning for P-20 and post-graduate learners
- ***Realm 4: Education through Exploration:*** High-intensity, technology-based learning experiences for P-20 learners and beyond

- ***Realm 5: Infinitely Scalable Learning:*** Massively distributed, personalized, adaptive learning solutions

Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts

ASU's [Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts](#) is the largest comprehensive design and arts school in the country, located within a dynamic research university focused on transformative change. Built on a unique combination of disciplines, the Herberger Institute comprises the Schools of Art; Arts, Media and Engineering; and Music, Dance and Theatre; and ASU FIDM; The Design School; The Sidney Poitier New American Film School; and the ASU Art Museum. The Herberger Institute is committed to developing and scaling ideas that strengthen the role of designers and artists across all areas of society and culture, and increasing the capacity of artists and designers to make a difference in their communities.

School of Arts, Media and Engineering

The [School of Arts, Media and Engineering](#) is a leading transdisciplinary program in media arts and sciences with degrees at all levels. The school has state-of-the-art facilities for the development of embodied interactive media systems with focuses on rehabilitation, education, cultural networks and enactive art. AME houses artists, designers, engineers, and humanities scholars to leverage emerging technologies for public impact.

MIX Center

The [MIX Center](#) is part of the ASU at Mesa City Center complex, a collaboration between ASU and Mesa, Arizona, a city rich in history, art, community and industry. Located in the heart of Mesa's Innovation District, the site serves as a laboratory for advanced media technologies and media production, a platform for game development and a driving force for entrepreneurial solutions. The nearly 118,000-square-foot building draws thousands of ASU students, faculty and staff to downtown Mesa. Large program areas include an enhanced-immersion studio, interactive and immersive experience pods, four sound stages, a 280-seat screening theater and an 80-seat screening room and advanced digital and analog maker spaces. The building also contains high-tech sound-recording studios, control rooms, display areas, editing rooms, classrooms, and office-support spaces, as well as a sizeable high-resolution screen on the exterior of the building. Here, a new generation of creators from Arizona and beyond develop into the media and technology professionals of the 21st century.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Position the Lab as the global leader in scaling game-making pathways and game-based learning as a Realm 5 initiative

The Lab will be a signature component of ASU's Realm 5 strategy, incorporating the growing demand for game design education and addressing the needs of a new generation of learners. Within the first two years, the Director will be expected to meet certain milestones including launching the Lab with strategic events and convenings, beginning several pilot projects with learners around the globe, hiring researchers and launching high-impact research projects, and hosting programs like a global game jam and an international convening. As the Lab grows, it will also explore new technology solutions to enable coaching, mentoring and teaching; develop micro-credentials tied to educational pathways related to game making and playing; build and test assessment tools; examine market conditions and business models for Realm 5 learning; and conduct research on student outcomes. The Lab will generate publishable research, field reports, and other insights that can inform the evolution of game-based Realm 5 learning. Examples of potential research workstreams include developing AI-powered tools for creating and learning, understanding how learning occurs and is most effectively guided in an immersive digital environment, examining inequality in learning outcomes across different demographic groups, examining the ethical and social implications of game-based learning, and research into understanding the overall landscape and dynamic, rapidly evolving market for games and learning. To support this ambitious agenda, the Director will have access to resources to attract faculty, post-docs, graduate students, and other thought leaders working to advance infinitely scalable learning and work pathways.

Secure long-term financial support for the Lab

The Lab has secured funding for the first three years of operation, focused mostly on supporting the director, core operations, capital and technology, and ramping up research capacity with post-docs and research faculty. As this support will decrease annually throughout the term of the three-year grant, the Director will be expected to lead significant fundraising efforts to shift core research support to other private philanthropy over a five-year period. These new donors are expected to include major foundations and other philanthropists aligned with the interests of the Lab and ASU. The Director will also leverage early findings from pilot programs to inform much larger grant applications to the NSF, Department of Education and other public funding agencies that are interested in technology, education, scale, and economic development. They will also seek out large contracts with clients (including school districts, foreign governments, and NGOs), and develop a business model around micro-credentials and certificates that will provide a sustainable funding source. Marino Philanthropies and Endless Studios will use their global network and influence to help the Director and ASU secure additional investments.

Establish strategic partnerships and collaborations that extend the Lab's global reach and impact

The Director will lead efforts to extend the benefits of the Lab's pioneering research and innovative approach to learners from diverse backgrounds and communities, thereby fostering a more equitable and inclusive global society. The Director will develop new and leverage existing relationships with international partners in industry, government, and civil society to achieve these ambitions. To this end, the Director will guide the Lab to work with partners—in developing economies and critical areas of the world where youth are underserved—to share insights (through convening and consulting), extend its research on the effectiveness of game-based learning in different cultural contexts, and accelerate game design education and Realm 5 learning at a global scale.

Develop an ecosystem of credentialing and learning pathways that is infinitely scalable

One of the most critical assets for Realm 5 learning is ASU's ability to develop an entire learning ecosystem. Within five years, it is expected that the Lab's research will inform the technology and educational design necessary to reach millions of learners. To support these efforts, the Director will lead curriculum design for a range of micro-credentials as well as a full game degree organized in part around the Lab's core research on how students learn and grow while playing and making games together. This new ASU degree will be designed so that students can participate in the Endless Studio ecosystem from day one – building games on the Endless Platform; teaching and mentoring other learners and game makers, and leading teams and projects.

Other learning pathways can take the form of individual micro-credentials that can stack into universal learning courses, which can in turn be converted into college credit towards certificate programs and degrees. In addition, the Director will oversee the Lab's work with ASU Preparatory Academies and ASU Prep Digital to open up the potential for high school curricular integration at scale.

Build relationships across ASU to ensure the Lab's successful integration into the University

One of the Director's key responsibilities upon arrival to ASU, will be to develop relationships across the University's various units. While the Director will have the opportunity to reimagine an ecosystem of research, activities, and credentials anchored in game-based and digital learning, achieving the Lab's goals will require coordination with other teams supporting current, and sometimes overlapping and complementary efforts at the University. For example, the [EdPlus Action Lab](#) is a world leader in testing, evaluating, and launching educational technologies. [Luminosity](#), envisioned to be one of the Lab's primary "skunkworks" research sites, excels in rapid prototyping and building engineering and design solutions to solve educational challenges. Additionally, the [Thunderbird School of Management](#), with its global network and top researchers, and deep expertise in entrepreneurship, is poised to assist the Lab in securing global partnerships to expand the scope and impact of its research through its [100 Million Learner Initiative](#).

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

Required Qualifications

Candidates for this position must have:

- An advanced degree in computer science, engineering, computational media, educational technology, media arts or related fields by the start date of the appointment, or its equivalent in industry. The committee welcomes applicants with significant and impactful industry experience in lieu of an advanced degree or traditional academic leadership background. International candidates must hold a completed graduate degree.
- Demonstrated expertise and thought leadership in one or more of the following: gaming, technology, education or educational technology, computer science, engineering, computational media, media arts or related fields.
- Demonstrated excellence in leadership of complex organizations or endeavors in gaming, technology, education or related fields.
- The ability to develop and sustain a national or international research and/or creative portfolio.
- The ability to secure resources through philanthropy, private investment, or partnerships.

Desired Qualifications

The desired qualifications represent the search committee's intention to recruit a wide pool of candidates who meet the required qualifications above and who wish to join a mission-driven, hard-working team of researchers and practitioners driven by creativity and curiosity. No candidate is expected to satisfy all desired qualifications in order to be considered. Desired qualifications include:

- Commitment to research, creative activity and/or scholarship that has public impact outside of the academy, including work related to community engagement, communication of science, cross-cultural communication or similar endeavors.
- Experience teaching in higher education or other formal educational environments, or equivalent industry experience
- Experience in a startup environment, especially in the fields of gaming and/or digital media technology.
- Evidence of ability to inspire and connect to learners with varying interests and backgrounds.
- Ability to communicate effectively in and across multiple disciplinary cultures; expertise in engaging multiple viewpoints and audiences in a variety of formats.
- Experience as a faculty member or in a leadership role at a research university or relevant industry.
- Experience with leading or facilitating international collaborative projects and endeavors.
- Experience collaborating with colleagues from different disciplines (including engineers, game designers, and/or artists, among others) to develop and grow dynamic research and academic programs.
- Demonstrated experience in working with external stakeholders and communities in a highly collaborative or co-creative manner.
- Experience teaching online or creating resources for training/education in an online environment.

- Expertise in one or more of the following knowledge areas: software development (including programming in C#, C++, Python or similar languages), 3D modeling/animation, game design and development, cloud-based services, UI/UX design, artificial intelligence, machine learning, worldbuilding, educational assessment, learning technologies.
- Experience scaling an innovative tech-enabled offering on a global scale.

LOCATION

ASU's mission is directly tied to the economic, social, and cultural vitality of Arizona and the growing Phoenix metropolitan region. The University serves one of America's youngest, largest, and fastest-growing cities. To learn more about Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa and the surrounding region, see www.visitphoenix.com, www.tempe.gov or www.mesaaz.gov.

TO APPLY

All inquiries, nominations/referrals, and applications (including resume and letters of interest responding to the requirements outlined in the position profile) should be submitted via Isaacson, Miller's website:

Andrew Lee, Managing Partner

Raul Bernal, Senior Associate

Isaacson, Miller

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/arizona-state-university-herberger-institute-design-and-arts/founding-director>

Electronic submission of application is required.

The application deadline is March 1, 2024. Applications will continue to be accepted on a rolling basis for a reserve pool. Applications in the reserve pool may then be reviewed in the order in which they were received until the position is filled.

ASU conducts pre-employment screening for all positions which includes a criminal background check, verification of work history, academic credentials, licenses and certifications.

Arizona State University is a VEVRAA Federal Contractor and an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other basis protected by law.

(See <https://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/acd/acd401.html> and <https://www.asu.edu/titleIX/>.)

In compliance with federal law, ASU prepares an annual report on campus security and fire safety programs and resources. ASU's Annual Security and Fire Safety Report is available online at <https://www.asu.edu/police/PDFs/ASU-Clery-Report.pdf>. You may request a hard copy of the report by contacting the ASU Police Department at 480-965-3456.