

Arts & humanities, *made for XR.*

How CNU built a national model in months, not years.
without adding staff, time, or complexity.

Most universities start immersive technology in computer science. CNU asked a different question: what happens when you put this power in the hands of historians, musicians, poets, and theater makers — and trust them to fail forward?

TIMELINE

6 Months

INVESTMENT

\$200k

FACULTY TRAINED

6 XR Creators

PROJECTS DEPLOYED

4 in 2 Months

PARTNERS

Apple - Insight

LAUNCH

Aug. 2025

THE CHALLENGE

Funding without a plan is the most common place to get stuck.

Real budget. Genuine interest. No clear path forward. CNU's situation will sound familiar to any institution at the edge of adoption.

Donor funding had unlocked the door. But four months on a \$150K first allocation leaves no room for false starts. Faculty ranged from experienced digital producers to people who joked they couldn't turn on a computer, all in the same room, all needing to ship real work.

01 No strategic framework

No clarity on what the lab was, who it served, or how it would be sustained.

02 A compressed timeline

\$150K to deploy in four months. Every decision had to hold up on first pass.

03 Mixed technical readiness

Faculty ranged from expert producers to self-described tech avoiders.

04 The fear of failing publicly

Faculty needed a culture of safety, not just a curriculum.

THE SOLUTION

Two phases. One blueprint. No improvisation.

Every Ri engagement runs the same sequence. Foundation makes the lab real; Activation makes it matter.

PHASE 01 - FOUNDATION**Assessment · Roadmap · Lab Design · Build**

We embed ourselves inside your institution to fully understand your culture, your people and your vision, before a single line is drawn or dollar spent on hardware. CNU's former computer lab became a themed "time-ship": a space that earns its place on the campus tour, not just the syllabus. All hardware procured and configured with Apple & Insight Public Sector.

PHASE 02 - ACTIVATION**Workshops · Project Development · Launch**

Six faculty, eight weeks. We start with 360° video, familiar enough to feel possible, immersive enough to feel new. Every participant ships a finished, deployable experience tied to their own discipline. No demos. No homework. Real, published work. CNU joins NEXTWave, Ri's national network of labs sharing talent and content.

INSIDE THE LAB

A creative lab. Not a gadget room.

CNU's leadership refused to build a room full of headsets. They wanted a living laboratory where technology is powerful but invisible, a backbone for storytelling, not the star of the show.

The result is a flexible, multi-platform space designed for capture, create, and deploy with workflows that are AI-ready as the next wave of tools matures.

ENVIRONMENT

A Themed "Time-Ship"

Spatial layout, workstation flow, and thematic detail that invite curiosity from the moment you walk in. The lab earns its place on the campus tour.

CAPTURE

360° Cameras · iPad & iPhone

Field-ready capture for performances, historical sites, and on-location experiences. Faculty took cameras into the field on day one.

CREATE & EDIT

Apple Mac Studio with Apple Silicon

Stitch, trim, annotate, layer in spatial audio and narration. A tech-agnostic toolchain built for faculty creators, not specialists.

DEPLOY & EXPERIENCE

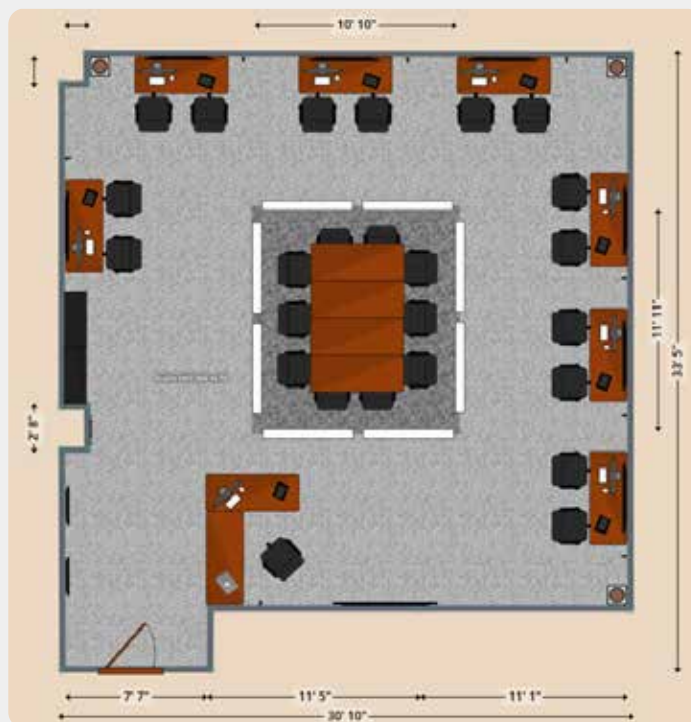
Apple Vision Pro · Meta Quest

Multiple stations, cutting-edge headsets. Students treated as co-creators, not just consumers of someone else's experience.

OPERATIONS

Managed Apple Device Enrollment · AppleCare

IT overhead stays low so the focus stays on teaching and learning. Managed enrollment means less friction for faculty and staff.



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"Major universities are throwing \$100 million at buildings, but not \$100,000 at students to build something meaningful. Immersive technologies flip that dynamic."

JJ RUSCELLA

Founder & CEO, Ruscella Immersive

OUTCOMES

Measured in months, not years.

A fully operational immersive learning lab designed, equipped, activated, and launched inside a single academic cycle.

4₄FACULTY PROJECTS
DEPLOYED

Every participant published
real work

6_xNEW XR CREATORS ON
CAMPUS

Capability owned - not
outsourced

~6_{mo}

FUNDED TO LAUNCH

Soft launch through public
opening

MINDSET

Cultural Outcome

A shared faculty philosophy emerged: this lab is a safe place to fail. That mantra unlocked creativity and momentum that no equipment list can buy. Peer institutions are already traveling to CNU to understand how so much was accomplished, so quickly.

MODEL

Workshops · Project Development · Launch

CNU is positioned to become a national model for arts-and-humanities-led XR: a recruitment differentiator, a cross-disciplinary hub, and a flagship member of the NEXTWave Network, where labs across the country share talent, content, and innovation.

3

months
post-launch

A federal partnership with NOAA - landed within 90 days of opening.

The lab attracted a research partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, turning a campus learning space into a credible collaborator for government-grade immersive work. The lab is paying CNU back institutionally, financially, and externally.

CLIENT VOICE

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"I came into this as someone who jokes that I can barely turn on a computer. By week six I had filmed on location, edited spatial audio, and published an immersive experience my students could step inside. That's not something I thought I'd ever say. Ri made the technology disappear. What was left was just storytelling."

INSTITUTION LEADERSHIP

CNU Institute for Public Humanities · Newport News, VA

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"We had donor funding and genuine enthusiasm and absolutely no idea what to do with it. Ruscella Immersive gave us a blueprint, managed every decision, and launched us on time. Within three months of opening, we had a federal partner knocking on our door. The lab paid for itself faster than anyone expected."

INSTITUTION LEADERSHIP

THE WORK

Subject-matter expertise is the engine. Technical expertise is just the spark.

Four disciplines. Four published experiences. Built by people whose starting points ranged from "experienced producer" to "zero comfort with the technology."

HISTORY

Phil

"Stand where Henry Knox stood." Phil traveled to Revolutionary War sites with a 360° camera and built an experience that puts students in the landscape while he narrates what happened and why it still matters.

Students describe feeling the weight of what Knox accomplished, something no textbook photograph produced.

ENGLISH

Mary

A literary tour of New Orleans rendered as a 360° reading environment. She began with zero comfort with technology — by the end she was filmmaker, sound engineer, and storyteller in one.

Her students now walk the city with her and find their own stories in each scene.

MUSIC

Max

A playground for spatial audio — cameras and microphones in unusual spaces, mood as curriculum. The lab became his instrument; his students became his collaborators.

Students spend twice as long engaging with the work as any other assignment format.

CLASSICS

David

Years of 360° footage from Rome and Pompeii reshaped into narrated field trips — turning raw walks into pedagogy that makes ancient history feel immediate.

Students call the Pompeii experience the most memorable moment of their semester.

WHY THIS MATTERS

01

The arts & humanities are the right starting point.

Storytellers and historians give immersive tools purpose and emotion. The technical infrastructure is the easy part, the narrative is where leadership is decided.

02

An existing room is enough.

No new building. No renovation. CNU re-themed a former computer lab. Any institution can begin from the rooms they already own.

03

Faculty don't need to be technical.

They need a clear plan and an environment that values curiosity over perfection. "I can't turn on a computer" becomes "I just launched my first XR experience" in eight weeks. Every time.

What CNU demonstrated is that the most urgent question in higher education right now isn't "can we afford immersive technology?" – it's "can we afford to wait while our peer institutions build the workforce capability we don't yet have?"

Ready to build your immersive lab?

Let's talk.

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