

Fulton County Schools partner with Union City, Atlanta Metro Studios on film industry scholarships

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Fulton County School System, Union City, Ga., and the planned film studio on the old Shannon Mall site, Atlanta Metro Studios, on Tuesday announced a partnership to help fast-track students into Georgia's burgeoning film industry.

The group is creating a scholarship fund for up to six 2015 Fulton County high school graduates to enroll in Clayton State University's Digital Film Crew Training Program.

Now that more productions are moving to Georgia to take advantage of the state's lucrative tax incentives, there aren't enough workers to staff up film and television sets. State officials have looked at various ways to solve the problem, including a planned Georgia Film Academy that would unite the University System of Georgia and the Technical College System of Georgia with local sound stages to step up and unify education efforts.

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Barton Bond, director of Clayton State University's Digital Media Center, said the plan is for one student to be chosen from each of six schools south of the city in Fulton County's school district.

"The scholarships are for two 12-week sessions we do that run back to back," Bond said. "We run them through the program, and it takes another three to six months after that to get them into the union and working on projects."

The goal is for the students to be done with their training by the time Atlanta Metro Studios is slated to open in Union City in Spring 2016.

Funding for the scholarships will come from 404 Studio Partners founders and co-CEOs Ed Richardson and Brian Livesay, who are spearheading the development of Atlanta Metro Studios with their development partner, Rooker Co.

Bond said if this phase of the program is successful, Clayton State plans to implement dual-credit classes in local high schools that would allow students to take the first of its two programs before they graduate to speed up the process even more. He said though dual credit programs are very common for more traditional studies, this program could be the first in the country to extend to film and television production.

Ellie Hensley is an entertainment, health care and general assignment reporter.