Rees W. Payne

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Projects

Oct. 2024-Present | **Manga Hero** | **DURHAM, NC**

Narrative Designer, Level Designer, Sound Designer
- Formed a development team with 6 other students to release a completed game by the end of a 2-year master's program
- Collaborated on a writing team with 2 others to design an episodic story with character backgrounds and environmental lore elements
- Completed grayboxing and set dressing for the first level of a third-person action game in Unreal Engine 5
- Coordinated with combat team to ensure parity between combat and level features
- Implemented sound effects from free libraries for combat and environmental elements

Jan.-Feb. 2024 | **Boss Rush Jam 2024** | **DURHAM, NC**

Gameplay Programmer
- Worked in a team of five people to develop a game in Godot within a month using the theme "Exchange"
- Brainstormed ideas for a roguelike RPG with randomized spell combinations and a humorous story
- Implemented a battle system with customizable spell loadouts and 5 boss fights to emphasize player expression when facing unique challenges
- Coordinated with design and story team to realize boss designs
- Ran frequent tests to debug features and improve game balance

Experience

May 2024-Present | **Duke University** | **DURHAM, NC**

GDDI Program Assistant
- Tested courses and program materials for the first-ever game design program at Duke
- Curated and added to a database of over 200 game design companies and clubs
- Wrote a one-pager to promote esports funding at Duke
- Produced a game design document for a research project mixing AR games and robotics
- Managed course website and collected submissions from students

May-July 2022 | **Duke University** | **DURHAM, NC**

Data Science Research Intern
- Participated in the 2022 Data+ summer internship program on the AI-Powered Transcription of Historical Manuscripts team
- Tested industry standard OCR models
- Trained the eScriptorium model for recognition of handwritten cursive documents
- Presented research results and model recommendations to the Duke Library staff
- Collaborated with team members on the development of a user interface and project website

Education

Aug. 2024-May 2026 | **Duke University** | **DURHAM, NC**

Pratt School of Engineering
Master of Engineering in Game Design, Development, and Innovation
Related Coursework: C++ Programming for Game Development, Fundamentals of Game Development in Unreal Engine

Aug. 2020-May 2024 | **Duke University** | **DURHAM, NC**

Trinity College of Arts & Sciences
Computer Science Major, Creative Writing/Philosophy Minor, May 2024
Related Coursework: Design and Analysis of Algorithms, Critical Analysis of Video Games, Advanced Fiction Writing
Clubs and Societies: Psi Upsilon Fraternity, Arete Fellowship, Duke Gaming Club