RIT | MAGIC Spell Studios

MAGIC Introduction for SOFA Students

Amanda Hughes - 2026-07-06 - School of Film & Animation Policies and Production Equipment Information

Introduction

Welcome to MAGIC! We learn by making things.

This guide was designed specifically for the SOFA community to help you orient to MAGIC facilities, policies, and procedures. But first, let's start with the basics:

What is MAGIC?

MAGIC stands for Media, Arts, Games, Interaction and Creativity. Our facilities were designed to support the RIT and Rochester community interested in learning and exploring all forms of digital mediums, including film, animation, game design, 3D digital design, VR, AR, and everything in between!

MAGIC has both an academic and commercial mission. We are housed within the Division of Research at RIT, which means we do not belong to a specific college, but are available to support those across campus doing research in digital medias. Academics are always our first priority, which includes our support and service to classroom activity and exercises, research initiatives, along with RIT events and lectures.

Our commercial mission affords RIT students the opportunity to get some hands-on experience in their field of interest. We accomplish this by serving as a launching pad and publisher for RIT students and local game developers. We also work in client services as a for-hire studio, developing digital content to provide paid work for students on real-world projects. In additional, our production facilities can also be rented out commercially to external clients, often opening paid positions on set for students.

MAGIC and SOFA

Expanding the facilities and capabilities of the School of Film and Animation has been a part of MAGIC's mission since the building's conception. As such, you will find many of our policies and procedures mimic those that you are used to in SOFA, including trained student employees and RIT full-time staff here to support your ambitions as a filmmaker.

The Gannett SOFA facilities have everything you need to be a successful filmmaker and are your primary resource for equipment and support. MAGIC is a little extra bonus to those who wish to explore our facilities, and how you engage with MAGIC is up to you. Because we are in addition to the facilities within Gannett, not everyone will choose to work at MAGIC and that's okay – you will still make great work and have an excellent RIT career!

Because of this dynamic, MAGIC is structured to be an opt-in experience for those looking to further their own production curiosities. For example, our Arri Alexa Mini is an industry standard camera you will find on professional productions. If you are interested in cinematography, you may choose to take Advanced Cinematography I and II which will teach you how to properly use this equipment. Keep in mind that projects will not require use of the Arri Alexa Mini, and it may in fact be overkill for most assignments. However, the option to learn this camera and check it out for your projects is made available to you through MAGIC.

We support a similar model for our Virtual Production System, Motion Capture Lab, Color Correction Suite, and Sound Design Suite. If any of these disciplines pique your interest, then MAGIC is for you!

Why is MAGIC Different From SOFA?

Both MAGIC and SOFA share the same core mission of supporting student's academic success through providing access to equipment, facilities, and advisement. Because MAGIC's mission is also intertwined with research and commercial activities, we must operate as two separate entities, but please do not let this discourage you from engaging with MAGIC. You will notice a few differences in policy and management, but remember, our goal is to support you in your RIT career. We are always available to address any questions or concerns you may have regarding our facilities, operations, or anything else MAGIC related.

MAGIC and Commercial Use

A commercial project is defined as any production with an exchange of money or production outside academic or research purposes. Checking out equipment for your SOFA productions, projects, or experimenting to learn equipment are perfectly aligned with our academic mission.

Unlike SOFA, because MAGIC has a commercial mission, MAGIC equipment can also be used for commercial projects by students. However, MAGIC must treat students as they would any other commercial client as to remain fair and equitable with local production companies and resources. This means we must bill for any commercial use of our equipment of facilities. MAGIC does offer a discount for facility rentals for students, alumni, and faculty.

MAGIC Hours of Operation

MAGIC's main office suite is on the 3rd floor of the building in the MAGIC Lab, MSS-3120. Located in this lab are faculty and staff offices, along with our MAGIC Tech help desk.

MAGIC Lab Hours:

Monday – Friday, 7:30am – 6pm. Assigned access required outside these times.

MAGIC Production Assistant (PA) Hours:

Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm (Note: hours may vary specific to class support).

MAGIC PA's can be found on the soundstage, MSS-2020 and MSS-2060.

MAGIC Building Hours:

Monday – Saturday, 7am – 10pm: doors open

Monday – Saturday, 10pm – 12am: active RIT ID required for building access.

After 12am or Sunday Access: All traffic must enter through the main Booth entrance off the breezeway.

MAGIC Production Support Student Staff

MAGIC Production Assistants (PAs)

The MAGIC Production Assistants oversee all MAGIC film production inventory under the supervision of Amanda Hughes, Technology and Studio Manager. Their job is very similar to a SOFA cager, with a few added responsibilities. This includes making reservations, equipment check out and check in, facilities inspection and maintenance, classroom support, and event and commercial production support. MAGIC PA's also help enforce MAGIC policy and procedures to keep our operations running smoothly. MAGIC PAs are your primary resource for all film related MAGIC needs.

Outside of these job duties, the MAGIC PAs also serves as a MAGIC ambassador to help guide SOFA students on

how they can engage with MAGIC. It is their job to be available and supportive when answering questions for fellow students as they learn our operation.

MAGIC Key PAs

The MAGIC Key PAs help Amanda Hughes manage equipment inventory and operations. They have added responsibility and meet with Amanda on a regular basis to address any issues or discuss plans for upcoming events. The Key PAs will review reservations and all specialty request forms, along with assist in maintaining repairs and confirm weekly tasks are being completed. The Key PAs are an excellent resource if you have any questions regarding MAGIC's equipment, facilities, or policies!

MAGIC Production Engineers

MAGIC Production Engineers provide technical support and training for our advanced production facilities, including our Color Correction Suite, Virtual Production, and Motion Capture Lab. These students are here to manage these spaces and further MAGIC's research in these disciplines so we can remain state-of-the-art.

MAGIC Production Engineer's work hours and location vary. The best way to get ahold of this team is to submit a production helpdesk ticket!

Safety and Emergencies

MAGIC has a published and accessible policy regarding our emergency procedures which can be found here.

A printed copy of this document is also located on the sound stage and at the front desk in the MAGIC Lab.

Please note the following emergency resources:

In case of any emergency on campus, please contact Public Safety: (585) 475-3333. If it is a life-threatening emergency, dial 911. Please report all emergencies to a MAGIC staff member.

Please consider downloading Public Safety's official campus safety app: TigerSafe.

The Buddy System

MAGIC allows for late night usage within our labs and specialty spaces. For your safety, please be sure to follow the RIT buddy system policy if you intend to work outside normal business hours: https://www.rit.edu/ehs/buddy-system

Student Expectation and Responsibility

It is our goal to provide students with a safe, healthy, productive, and creative work environment. All members of the MAGIC community are expected to comply with general University policies.

Students assume full responsibility for any loss or damage of equipment or facilities under their care. Replacement and repair costs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Students automatically agree to be financially responsible for RIT owned equipment upon signing the Equipment Loan Agreement. Without signing the Equipment Loan Agreement, students cannot access MAGIC equipment. In cases of obvious equipment abuse or misuse, students can lose access to MAGIC equipment and facilities outside their scheduled class hours.

Insurance

MAGIC strongly encourages students to purchase insurance in case of accidental equipment damage or loss. Just like the SOFA Cage, we recommend the policy found at:

Gallagher College Student Insurance

https://www.collegestudentinsurance.com/

Here, you will find a variety of coverage options based on your rental needs.

Warning

None of the policies offered at Gallagher College Student Insurance would cover full damage or replacement of the Arri Alexa Mini. Students renting the Alexa Mini have two insurance options:

1. Purchase separate insurance for the duration of their rental. We recommend working with Film Emporium

2. Students can rely on RIT's own insurance policy which has a $25,000 deductible. In this case, RIT would pay for $20,000 of that deductible and the student would be responsible for the remaining $5,000.

Facilities Access and Reservations

Please visit our Facilities Access and Policies page for information on all MAGIC facilities, including policies, reservation procedures, and space overviews.

Production Equipment Access, Policies and Procedures

Please visit our MAGIC Equipment Access, Policies, and Procedures page for information on production equipment, including check in and checkout policies, and reservation procedures.