traditional one-off releases. We found that 77% of respondents said they only played a few games regularly and only 43.3% regularly tried new games at all. Additionally, 66.7% of gamers said they are more likely to purchase a game if it is part of a series they have already played. As a result of this, more and more studios are focusing on releasing larger, more intensive projects as part of a known IP rather than pumping out new games every year. With increasingly demanding resource requirements to keep up with consumer and financial expectations, mergers and acquisitions have become far more prevalent in the video game industry and will continue to increase in the foreseeable future.

Research advisor Wan Ting Chiu writes: "Charlie and Dustin's research and analysis were very insightful and provided a clear understanding of the reasons behind the increased prevalence of M&A in the industry. Overall, their project was very well written and provided valuable insights into the factors driving the increased prevalence of M&A in the video game industry."

Standard Improvements to Policy for Maintaining a High Leasing Rate on Commercial Properties

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Within a real estate company my group aimed to bring new ideas to five properties with lower leasing rates and determine if the cause of the lower rates were individual or shared, and as such whether fixing them could increase productivity over a portfolio of properties. Our approach was multifaceted and included industry standard research techniques such as a marketing void analysis, while incorporating a wide range of independent research on how the property's physicality and leasing size impacted its allure. Common issues encountered were obstructed signage and the necessity for increased upkeep around curbs and sidewalks. Our recommendation based on our research was for the company to adopt an existing automation software for contacting future tenants, retaining current tenants, and receiving feedback from surrounding communities to increase efficiency, drive occupancy, and gain faster awareness to address issues in the physicality of properties that were causing lower interest in leasing. This is in addition to opportunities for improvement that were suggested for each of the individual properties based on their location and future growth potential. Additional research might look into expanding the methods of communication on signage to increase interaction rates through asynchronous means to save time and drive more active engagement by leasers.

Faculty mentor Kellie Isbell writes: "Scott and his team's research demonstrates industry techniques required to further develop and critique commercial real estate properties. Their project served to challenge and expand their analytical and research capabilities. The findings were presented to the company's executives and used to drive improvements within the business."

Microfinancing and Entrepreneurship in Cocoa Refinement in Côte d'Ivoire

Student researcher: *Erin Soro, Senior*

Côte d'Ivoire produces 45% of the cocoa in the world, but receives only 7% of global cocoa revenue; Ivorian farmers receive roughly $0.78 per day, far below a living wage (roughly $2.50). Developing local refinement of natural resources—allowing Ivorian workers to sell lucrative, refined products on global markets—may increase revenue and wages, but underinvestment persists. Case studies of agricultural microfinance in different developing African countries provide insights into the obstacles preventing investment in local refining capacity. Research from Benin tells us that access to credit helps farmers use more technology, therefore allowing them to go further in refining raw resources. In Mali, targeted microloans in the agricultural field led to higher investment from farmers in agricultural-related machinery. In Nigeria, research demonstrated that government outreach and a simplified lending process led to higher take-up of agricultural microloans. Together, these studies suggest that a program to increase investment in cocoa refinement should make use of loans targeted to agriculture in order to encourage the use of technology, and demonstrate how the efficiency of

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