

# **The UH Esports Business Plan 2020**

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## UH Esports Program

The University of Hawai'i (UH) is in a position to create a varsity UH Esports program that represents something new and important among the existing collection of schools that, over the past several years, have created programs consistent with their missions as educational institutions. The focus for each university or college has included: increased visibility of their schools, retention, or application of digital technologies to competition, sports, entertainment, and the future of work.

What the UH Esports program will represent is comprehensive in scale and scope that will include both 4-year institutions and community colleges. UH Esports will create esports teams located on different campuses under administrative guidance at the systems level. Uniting the different campuses will be a core set of values central to UH Esports that speak to:

- student development
- academics and research
- pathways for careers
- inclusion and diversity
- and community outreach through esports

The center of each UH Esports campus program will be a dedicated location where students can physically gather to embrace their passions for video games and esports as part of a fulfilling college experience. An esports arena will be home to the varsity teams where players can train, practice, and compete against other national colleges (i.e., Boise State, UNLV, SDSU, and many more) in nationally recognized esports tournaments and conferences. Alternatively, the arena will also serve as an important physical space to develop greater interactions between students across the system of UH campuses through intramural competitions and tournaments during the course of the school year.

Beyond competition, the UH Esports program will operate as a venue for new academic courses, student development, and skills training (UH began offering an esports course in 2018 in the School of Communications). A hallmark of the UH Esports program will be a mission to connect students to a growing esports industry. An important part of that mission will be providing students with an education about an expanding ecosystem of careers being created, and an environment to develop skills and talents that are applicable to the field.

The UH Esports program will be engaged in community and outreach efforts. Working with students who may have never made the connections between their love for esports and college, UH Esports will offer a pathway into higher education by connecting with Hawai'i's youth early in their development through a shared love for video games and esports. UH has been watching the esports scene develop over the last two years both locally and domestically across the United States. With nearly 200 programs in the United States, varsity-based college esports are no longer

a novelty on college campuses. While the collection of colleges that were first movers in the space has garnered advantages, there are also benefits from learning what has transpired in the development of collegiate esports over the past six years and for UH to take action now.

## Esports

### What is Esports?

Esports (short for “electronic sports”) refers to the culture and practice of playing video games competitively among professional (or semi-professional) players, often including spectators, prize money, and media production and broadcasting. The game titles that constitute esports mainly range from fighting games, first-person shooters, to multiplayer online battle arenas. Presently, the main hardware platforms used for esports are personal computers, consoles, and mobile phones.

### Professional Esports (League of Legends and Overwatch)

As of 2019, the professional esports industry officially reached one billion dollars (USD) of global revenues (Newzoo, 2019). Core industry growth is measured by overall spending on sponsorships, advertising, media rights, publisher fees, and merchandise & ticket sales directly tied to esports. The major stakeholders in the professional esports industry include teams, organizations, tournament organizers, leagues, publishers, developers, and streaming platforms. 2018 represented a significant point in the development of esports when gaming publishers started to create traditional franchised systems for teams. The two largest esports franchises belong to Riot Games (*League of Legends*) with 10 franchised teams and Activision-Blizzard (*Overwatch*) with 20 participating teams. Team owners for the *League of Legends* franchised system paid around \$10 million for slots into the franchise in 2018, with *Overwatch* owners paying around \$20 million per slot for the Overwatch League.

Other esports titles that continue to drive the games and esports industry consists of Epic Games, which remains a potent force with the continued success of *Fortnite*, along with tournaments and events. Activision-Blizzard’s *Call-of-Duty* will develop into a franchised structure in 2020. Trends in the esports industry show a continued trajectory towards creating franchised systems for various gaming publishers.

### Esports and media

The media production of esports happens on two levels: individual streams created by people who play video games, and traditional broadcasting of large-scale events and tournaments. Streaming media companies are central to the experience of esports, either for professional or amateur players. Twitch.tv represents the core platform for where gamers, streamers, and audiences go for new gaming media experiences. A service that largely caters to people who

stream video games, Twitch was purchased by Amazon in 2014 for close to \$1 billion. Presently, Twitch attracts the lion's share of video game engagement, with 80% of the market coming to their platform. Other streaming platforms, however, have emerged in the video game streaming space, such as Microsoft's Mixer, Youtube's Youtube Gaming, and Facebook Gaming. Youtube Gaming and Facebook Gaming have positioned themselves to contend for viewers where Twitch has not gained a strong foothold (largely international markets), with Facebook Gaming already getting around 700 million gamers coming to its site each month (Raji, 2019).

## Esports in the Asia-Pacific Region

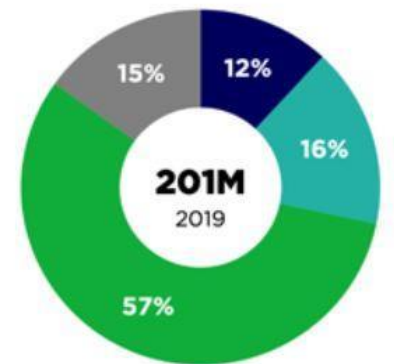
The growth of esports is especially notable in China, South Korea, and Southeast Asia (in particular the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia). South Korea is considered the modern birthplace of esports when it began to take a serious orientation towards creating teams, holding large-scale esports events, and creating professional media broadcasts as early as 1999. Today, South Korea continues to be a powerhouse in the industry, fielding dominant professional teams in *Overwatch* and *League of Legends*

According to Newzoo, a global esports market research firm, the Asia-Pacific region will continue to strengthen its hold over the culture and industry of esports over the next decade. Presently, 57% of esports enthusiasts reside in the Asia-Pacific region. Playing a large part in the discussion of esports growth in Asia-Pacific is the role of China. China accounts for around 300 million personal computer (PC) gamers, generating around \$15 billion in gaming revenues. Finally, the growth of esports in Southeast Asia has largely taken place through the adoption of mobile phones. The next hardware platform iteration in esports is expected to take place with mobile technologies (cell phones & tablets) with projected growth of mobile technologies to outpace consoles (Xbox, PS4) and PCs in the esports market. Presently, mobile gaming brings in around \$70 billion out of a global games market of around \$180 billion<sup>1</sup> (NYT, 2019).

## Collegiate Esports (Development, Careers, and Curricula)

The growth of varsity-based collegiate esports is estimated to reach 200 schools by the year 2020. Schools with collegiate esports programs offer various levels of institutional support, from coaching and training, facilities with on-campus space (specifically designed esports arenas), and scholarships.

Asia-Pacific will  
account for  
**57%**  
of Esports  
Enthusiasts in 2019



● NAM ● EU ● APAC ● REST OF WORLD

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<sup>1</sup> Global gaming surpasses both films and music in revenue produced worldwide

The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) tabled discussions in 2019 on whether the organization will regulate collegiate esports. In response, Riot Games created the Riot Scholastic Association of America (RSAA) to regulate the use of *League of Legends* with collegiate and high school esports in North America. Presently, the RSAA is the only (and first) official governing entity in collegiate esports. So far, gaming publisher Activision-Blizzard has not created a governing body for their game *Overwatch*.

Collegiate esports teams in North America participate in three main competitions: College League of Legends (CLOL), the Collegiate Starleague (CSL), and Tespa. Both CLOL and Tespa are presently the only publisher-run tournaments, with hundreds of schools participating in their competitions either independently or through traditional college sports conferences. The CSL is the only independent (non-publisher) tournament organizer that offers tournaments for popular gaming titles in North America (*NBA2K*, *CS:GO*, *Dota 2*, *Fortnite*, etc).

For UH Esports, the CSL, Tespa, and CLOL tournaments are the primary venues for our teams. Additionally, with the growth of college conferences taking part in esports, UH Esports has participated in the Mountain-West esports conference. This conference is currently working together with Riot Games so that the Mountain-West conference operates as a qualifier for the CLOL tournament.

**Student development and esports.** By creating an esports program, UH can enhance enrollment and harness student interests in games as a means of supporting student development. Research on video games has shown that video games as a technology can be channeled for student learning, development, and growth. With the emergence of esports, educators understand that the passions students have for esports can be concentrated to support collaborative teamwork, problem-solving skills, and career-choice opportunities required for student success.

The benefit that esports offers draws from two distinct learning environments: sports and games. Esports provides students who are not inclined or have the ability to participate in traditional sports with the same benefits seen in athletics culture, such as:

- fostering a growth mindset (practice makes perfect via video games) (Richard & Ares)
- increased satisfaction with school (connecting video games to school) (Astin)
- interactions with caring adults and coaches via mentorships (Fox et al.)

Video games provide an added layer of learning opportunities for students with:

- increased problem-solving and analytical skills (Adachi & Willoughby)
- the development of technology fluency (Hayes)
- the use of scientific reasoning as an important component to gameplay (Gee, Leander, & Steinkuehler)

**Careers, new media, and esports.** Opportunities for development and growth for students also take place outside of being a player. Esports offers a variety of roles and career paths into a new media industry that is continuing to grow. A UH Esports program would be active in creating

positions and opportunities for students that touch upon several vectors in the industry beyond being a player, such as:



- streaming & content creation
- esports media production
- commenting & analyst work
- marketing and public relations
- business management
- web development & data analytics
- art, animation, and creative media creation

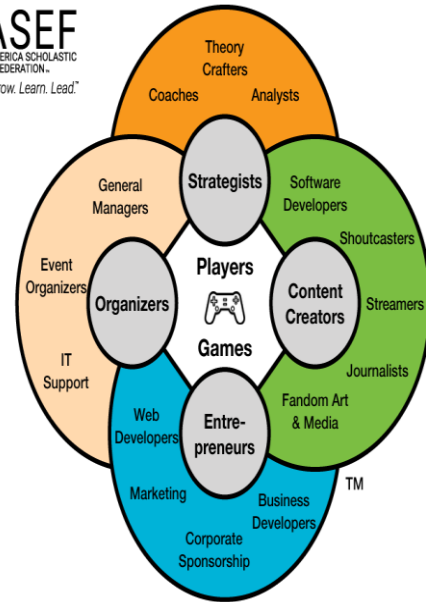


Diagram Citation: Anderson, Tsaasan, Reitman, Lee, Wu, Steele, Turner & Steinkuehler (2018)

**Education and curricula.** Universities have started to offer courses and certificates in the realm of esports. UH Mānoa (UHM) offered one of the first semester-long courses on the development of esports at the School of Communications. Offerings in esports education have focused on courses related to marketing, business management, events planning, and sports psychology as applied to the topic of esports. In the last two years, some universities have started to create certificate courses for students interested in the field of professional esports (such as the University of California, Irvine). Finally, other universities (most recently Harrisburg University) have moved into offering degrees (such as Ohio State University for graduate and undergraduate) tracks in esports management and game development. In total, there are over 10 universities now offering some form of esports education in North America.

## Where Should it Go?

Schools that have created esports programs have housed them through different departments on college campuses. From 2014, when the first program began at Robert Morris University, colleges began to place their esports programs in athletic departments because of the existing strengths athletics brings to recruitment, competition, and scheduling. Since then, schools have thought about departments outside of athletics where esports could be a conduit for student success. The University of California, Irvine, for instance, aligned its program in 2016 with Student Affairs to highlight strengths unique to that department. Alternatively, the University of Utah created its esports program under its Arts and Engineering program to leverage its already renowned video game design and development degree. Overall, there is no single model presently guiding how universities are creating collegiate esports programs. There has been a trend to think widely beyond athletics (but to always include it), and to see what other synergies exist between departments and esports. Given that esports encompasses a variety of strengths (competition, technology, communications, and entertainment), schools are finding that while a

single home for the esports program is required, having supporting departments in the mix has been very helpful.

Institutionally, the UH Esports program could fit into several institutional locations on a campus. An important question is whether relevant organizational units would see the benefit of supporting an esports program within the context and culture of their own departments. Leadership that is open to providing an institutional home for the esports should work closely with UH Esports to articulate a path forward in building out a program. While this topic is still in development, there are several factors to consider in finding a home for UH Esports on campuses:

**Program leadership:** The leadership from the selected organizational unit and the UH Esports program on campus should have set common goals in working together, where the values from each organization are mutually reinforcing.

**Governance:** Decision-making and planning are clear and transparent procedures that are understandable to organizational stakeholders.

**Strategic planning:** The incorporation of esports includes meaningful integration into the organizational unit, with benchmarks and assessments of the program.

**Resources:** Sufficient resources are secured to pursue program goals and missions.

**Branding Relevance:** Esports is utilized as a part of the university's branding. The start of the program may be more aspirational (i.e. "intends to offer"). As the program grows, however, esports should take a front-facing role in the marketing of the university.

Presently, Information and Technology Services (ITS) has been the organizational force in getting an esports program started at the UHM Esports (with support from UHM Athletics, and the Academy for Creative Media). ITS has led this development as Hae Okimoto holds a dual position as the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and the Director of Academic Technologies for the UH System. Hae understands the benefits to students that esports brings to the university and has played an important role in articulating the foundational goals (teams, arena, and scholarships). The esports program has successfully outlined its missions, values, and goals. During the developmental stages of UHM Esports, there is a strong case for ITS to continue in its role as the institutional home for the program. Monthly meetings with Dr. Okimoto, Nyle Sky Kauwelo, and Kevin Nguyen (hires in helping to build and run UHM Esports) have resulted in building up a greater knowledge base concerning a variety of important issues (governance and branding) for UHM Esports.

With ITS serving as a home for UHM Esports, the program has also established partnerships with UHM Athletics and other units, both academic and student services, as it seeks to fulfill its foundational goals. The benefit of UHM Esports working with UHM Athletics comes from highlighting how video games as an activity span both student communities on campus (i.e., *NBA2k* and *Madden NFL* are two popular emerging esports titles). Moreover, a working



relationship with UHM Athletics (and other athletic programs at UH) will be important to UH Esports as the growth of college esports conferences becomes a preferred avenue for publishers in their tournaments (i.e., Mountain-West). Vince Baldemor and Troy Yamamoto of UH Athletics have been helpful by working with Mountain-West officials in setting up competitive schedules for matches.

UH Esports will be working closely with Student Affairs as it pursues its mission of finding a dedicated location on campus for UH Esports. Dr. Lori Ideta, Interim Vice Chancellor for Students, has been working with UHM Esports to find a space on campus for students who are interested in gaming. Working with Student Affairs is also important for UHM Esports because a significant part of the mission of the program is student and career development. Leveraging the relationship with Student Affairs will bring the program away from a strictly competitive focus and show students the possibilities for growth in this industry.

## The Pillars of UH Esports (Systems)

UH Esports will operate on a set of values as it pursues the development of college esports. These values are supportive of a program that is tied to the community of the university, focused on student development, supportive of academics and research, and centered on inclusivity and diversity.

### **Community**

The University of Hawai'i has a legacy of vibrant video gaming communities at its various campuses. UH Esports wants to continue that legacy by providing consistent institutional support in a burgeoning esports industry by developing a comprehensive college esports program. Looking to the future, UH Esports seeks to work with schools in our community to understand how our esports program can be a destination for Hawai'i's youth as they look towards a future in esports.

### **Student Development and Careers**

Student development lies at the heart of our mission at UH Esports. While competitive play remains an important part of our program, students can use their time at UH Esports to gain a more complete and complex understanding of skills relevant to a new media and digital games environment that lies beyond playing games. By the time students graduate from the University of Hawai'i, they should have a better sense of where they see themselves and their careers relative to a rapidly expanding ecosystem of jobs in the video games and esports industry.

### **Research and Academics**

The growth of esports has expanded into fields related to digital technology, law, business development, marketing, sports performance, and entertainment. Both the faculty and students

at the University of Hawai'i have a shared interest in looking at esports and video games as a serious topic of inquiry. The UH Esports program aims to be a hub of academic activity in the Asia-Pacific region by working with other universities that have developed research agendas designed to understand the continued development of esports.

## **Diversity and Inclusion**

UH Esports believes in actively creating environments welcoming students from diverse backgrounds as an important part of our mission. While esports continues to grow, historically, there have been barriers to participation for women and LGBTQ players in esports. UH Esports encourages greater participation by students, at all levels of involvement. We understand that marginalized communities can feel uneasy in environments that place a focus only on competition. UH Esports, therefore, seeks to present creative opportunities for our students to interact with a more diverse video game culture on our campuses.

## **UH Esports Foundational Goals**

The foundational goals for the UH Esports program are threefold: to find a dedicated location on campuses for the UH Esports teams to be housed (an esports arena); get two (or more) collegiate esports teams on a competitive schedule; and turn the program into a scholarship-based esports program.

## **The UH Esports Arena (Competition and Media Production)**

The first step to building a successful collegiate esports program at UHM is finding dedicated locations for an esports arena or gaming room on different campuses. The arena will be a local area network (LAN) center, outfitted with high-speed networks, high-end performance gaming computers, and esports media production capabilities. The specifications of the facility (physically) would need to take into consideration size, location, room for spectators, an esports media production section (streaming), and a community/non-esports gaming area for the general student population. The arena would be open to all students on the campus.

**Size:** An esports arena should be roughly within the 3.5 to 4.5 thousand square-foot range to accommodate different communities of gamers and esports media production

**PCs:** A minimum of 22 (ideally, 50) gaming (and streaming) computers would be used in the arena

**Location:** The arena should be centrally located on campus or situated where students can easily use the facility between classes and throughout the school day

An important element in the use of the arena will be esports media production and streaming. To effectively have an esports media production area, the arena needs to provide separate rooms or space away from where players are competing, where production equipment, "shoutcasters,"

and announcers can be housed without external noise interference. The arena, therefore, has the capacity to serve as both a place for competitive gaming and a space where the media and video production of esports takes place simultaneously.

The UH Esports arena will also serve as a place of learning for students wanting to gain knowledge about the gaming and esports industry. The arena will house various workshops and speaker series (the first set of esports/gaming speakers' series having been successfully held fall of 2019 at UHM). The arena would also be a location for hands-on experience for courses offered in esports at UH. Future courses exploring the topic of esports will utilize the space to demonstrate the various pathways and industries in esports that lie beyond simply looking at competition alone.

The esports arena will be home to the varsity UH Esports teams (in *League of Legends* and *Overwatch* presently) and serve as the location where the college esports players hold their weekly practices (scrims) and competitive tournament games (both online but also in-person matches). For the competitive teams, usage of the computers for the collegiate players often takes place during the weekends or later in the evenings or nights on weekdays. Please see the section under "UH Esports Program Summary" for further details about facilities used for esports on different campuses.

## The UH Esports Teams

The second step in creating a UH Esports program across the system campuses is to actively maintain both *Overwatch* and *League of Legends* teams on a competitive schedule throughout the academic school year.

**Teams.** UH esports will be active in both *Overwatch* and *League of Legends* tournaments. Therefore, the program should always have at least one team in *League of Legends* and one team in *Overwatch* for the academic year. The number of players for a *League of Legends* team is 5, and the number of players in the game *Overwatch* is 6. The goal for UH Esports, however, is to have a varsity (A team) in both games and a scrim team (B team) to practice with throughout the school year. UH Esports, therefore, will seek to maintain 22 students for program participation by students. In addition to players, the teams should have game-specific coaches and team managers (students) as a support structure to get the teams competition-ready before each academic year begins.

**Recruitment.** Unlike traditional collegiate sports, collegiate esports isn't limited in its method of recruitment. Open calls (online) before the academic year (July) will be announced for students to come try out for UH Esports. UH Esports will engage in face-to-face recruitment strategies by visiting high schools with competitive gaming scenes as one method of vetting talent. Based on funding, UH Esports will host scholarship tournaments throughout the school year, allowing coaches and management for our esports teams to access potential students for our program. Scholarships tournaments are open to domestic and international high school and college students.

**Tournaments & college conferences.** The UH Esports teams will be competing in the Collegiate Starleague (CSL), Tespa, and the College League of Legends(cLoL) tournaments for fall and spring semesters. The CSL holds competitions with a variety of video games supported by their tournament. Tespa supports Activision-Blizzard games only, such as *Hearthstone*, *Overwatch*, and *World of Warcraft*. The College League of Legends tournament is Riot's publisher-held collegiate tournament only for the game *League of Legends*. For CSL and Tespa, the competitive seasons run through the entire academic year. For cLoL, the tournament takes place in the spring. Finally, the UH Esports program will be participating in the yearly Mountain-West Esports Series conference. The conference welcomes Mountain-West colleges to take part in a collegiate esports tournament in the games of *Overwatch* and *League of Legends*. For the 2019-2020 year, CSL offers the largest pool of monetary prizes to students.

## **UH Esports Teams (System)**

The creation of a UH Esports program can be implemented to fit into the system of 10 campuses based upon the development and existence of gaming communities on campuses. The initial development of an esports program across the system of campuses should unfold in 3 stages. Once a structure is set up with clubs, teams across the system can begin to hold intramural competitions.

**First phase.** The development of an esports program across the system would require a fact-finding excursion into campuses to locate the existence of gaming communities at each campus. The result of that mission should be to locate student-leaders on campus who have an interest in video games to explore the option of turning an informal community of gamers into a formal student club (if none exists).

**Second phase.** The campus must commit to providing both infrastructure and student development support for esports and club gaming activities. The club should find a leader and student coaches for teams to begin club development. Depending upon the culture of the gaming community on each of the campuses, the clubs could orient themselves as general gaming clubs (open to a variety of genres, one of which is esports) or the clubs could be created to cater specifically to esports interests.

**Third phase.** The club should field teams into competitive collegiate tournaments. If rules allow, the clubs at different campuses can compete in the same tournaments (CSL, Tespa, cLoL) as the Mānoa UH Esports teams without selecting a single team to represent the university (a single university or college is allowed to enter multiple teams into a single tournament). Alternatively, tournaments may require one team to represent a single university/college.

Having a competitive UH Esports program with multiple teams across the system will allow the UH Esports program to hold intramural games between different campuses. Holding competitions between campuses can be beneficial by:

- determining which clubs/teams get to represent the university in major tournaments if tournaments require a single representative team
- generating school/campus pride via esports teams & competitions

- creating teams that can be composed of students from a variety of campuses (a *League of Legends* team with students from Maui College and UH Mānoa, for instance) to collaborate across campuses through esports

While each campus may have different interests in games, levels of commitment, and orientations towards competition, the initial goal is to have one competitive *League of Legends* and one *Overwatch* team as these are the two competitive games across the collegiate esports environment.

## Scholarships

The final step of the foundational goals is to make UH Esports a scholarship-based program that provides aid to players (and coaches) on the competitive teams at UH Esports. Scholarships should be specific to the program (or to the activities supportive of esports) and additive to the financial aid students receive to pay for tuition costs.

## Academics (UH Esports Courses and Certificates)

According to the mission of UH Esports, the different programs will support the development of academic courses related to the development and emerging critical issues in esports. Courses will offer students a comprehensive and updated overview of the industry and the development of applicable skills in a constantly evolving landscape, including:

- the historical context of esports within the larger multi-billion-dollar games industry
- how the industry approaches sustainability
- the multitude of spill-over industries that support the entire ecosystem of professional and college esports

The School of Communications at UHM offered one of the first courses on the topic of esports titled “Esports and Society” (created by Nyle Sky Kauweloā whose PhD research centers on esports) in the United States. The course focused on the growth and development of professional and collegiate esports and offered students an understanding of the industry. The course garnered the School of Communications national attention in *Fortune Magazine* at the start of 2019.

Once students have an understanding of the industry, the next iteration of classes for the UH Esports program could be focused on the development of an undergraduate esports certificate that looks at media production, streaming, and business management within the context of a professional esports environment. These courses could be expanded to be certificates providing students with an enhanced esports experience geared towards the application of skills relevant towards a career in the esports industry. These certificates could be in the following areas:

**Esports media production.** This certificate will lay the foundations for running large-scale events in esports broadcasts. Instructional expertise will be leveraged by the public-private partnerships the program will maintain with local and national esports businesses and events. Graduates of the certificate could move into the production of esports events (for instance, at Kawaii Con, one of Hawai'i's largest yearly conventions)

**Esports & communications.** The development of esports with well-known news publications (i.e., the Washington Post) has led to greater interest in esports and game writing. The course would draw from the wider field of communications but would also focus specifically on the emerging business and cultural components of global and regional esports.

**Esports & business management.** These certificate courses would dive into the marketing, public relations, and business aspects of running esports teams, organizations, and large-scale events. Professional and college esports teams are looking for individuals with the right skills to manage teams that are now estimated to be worth millions of dollars.

## Outreach (High School Esports)

The UH Esports program is committed to outreach as part of its overall mission. An essential part of that outreach is connecting to high schools in our community. There are over 20 high schools and intermediate schools that offer a competitive structure for esports. Currently, high school esports in Hawai'i is largely organized by PlayVs, a company that has structured high school esports across the United States via their software platform online. A list of schools that were playing competitively in 2019 includes:

Campbell High School	Moanalua High School
Damien Memorial School	Konawaena High School
Hawai'i Preparatory Academy	Leilehua High School
Hilo High School	Maui Preparatory Academy
Honokaa High & Intermediate School	McKinley High School
Iolani High School	Pacific Buddhist Academy
Island School	Pahoa High & Intermediate School
Kamehameha Schools	Roosevelt High School
Kapaa High School	Saint Francis School
Ka'u High School	St. Joseph Catholic High School
Kauai High School	Seabury Hall
Kea'au High School	Waialua High & Intermediate School

A UH Esports program on different campuses would work with the Hawai'i High School Athletics Association (HHSAA) in establishing relationships with various high schools. The HHSAA has given support for esports, but the organization has not officially sanctioned it as a sport. The goals of

UH Esports in creating relationships with high schools are to create pathways for students to see college as a viable option and fit for gamers. UH Esports would work with high schools by:

- setting up inter-collegiate and high school competitions between high schools and UH Esports to be held on UH campus
- holding educational workshops with high schools and parents about the growth of esports
- creating long-term relationships between the high school students and mentors (coaches and players) at UH Esports

UH Esports has been approached by Gear UP Hawai'i, an early awareness and readiness program for low-income families, to work with a cohort of high schoolers that the organization has been federally funded to support in their efforts for college preparation. Gear Up Hawai'i sees the benefits of using esports as a means of appealing to students' interests in video games as a pathway into college. A comprehensive UH Esports program that offers students access to gaming technologies, relationships with mentors and coaches, and a pathway to college could serve a tremendous community benefit to Hawai'i's youth.

## Management and Positions

### **Director of UH Esports (Systems)**

The UH Esports Director will oversee all aspects of the UH Esports program. The director will be responsible for creating a sustainable esports program. Core responsibilities will include engaging with faculty and departments to develop courses and seeking sponsorship and fundraising opportunities. Initially, as UHM is the only campus with a competitive team, responsibilities will include assisting with recruiting players and managing the operations of an esports arena/training facility.

The UH Esports Director will contribute to the academic and research mission of the program. Beyond running the program, the director will teach esports courses, and contribute peer-reviewed academic research exploring various topics related to professional and collegiate esports. Lastly, the director will contribute to the instructional component of the program by teaching a yearly course that provides a background, overview, and critical assessment of the esports industry.

### **UH Esports Program Assistant (Campus-based)**

The UH Esports Program Assistant will run daily operations of the UH Esports program and assist the UH Esports Director with core responsibilities. The main roles of the UH Esports Program Assistant will be to work with head coaches to make sure teams are competition ready. The duties of the program assistant will also extend into working with student gaming communities on campus, coaches, and team managers for teams.

## **Content & Media Creator (Campus-based)**

The media production specialist will be responsible for conceptualizing, designing, and creating media projects for UH Esports. The media production specialist should be able to produce content about the esports teams, whether that may be creating graphics, commercials, films, short videos, audio messages, and more. The media production specialist should also have skills with streaming and an understanding of social media and marketing.

## **UH Esports Head Coaches (Campus based: League of Legends & Overwatch)**

The UH Esports Head Coaches will be the primary leader for our esports teams and are expected to assist the director and program assistant in identifying and recruiting new talent. The head coaches will be responsible for creating strategies for competition, teaching relevant skills (tactics, and techniques), and providing feedback to players.

## **Systems & High School Outreach Assistant**

The Systems & High School Outreach Assistant will be the main contact for all UH esports programs and high school programs. As the UH Esports program expands, the outreach assistant will work with other UH campuses to see the progress of their esports initiatives. In addition to systems work, the outreach assistant will help high school campuses in creating their own esports programs under the guidance of the director and program assistant.

# UH Esports Program Summary

## **UH Esports Foundational Goals (2019-2021)**

The UHM Esports program has been able to meet one of the foundational goals set out in this document by creating teams in two esports games: *Overwatch* and *League of Legends*.

**Competitive teams.** UHM Esports has successfully launched a total of five competitive teams in the game *League of Legends* (3 teams) and *Overwatch* (2 teams) for the academic year of 2019-2020. The teams have entered into a competitive schedule with Blizzard's Tespa tournament, the Collegiate Starleague, and Riot Games' College League of Legends for the fall of 2019. The UHM Esports program, additionally, will be taking part in the Mountain-West Esports Series conference for the academic year of 2019-2020 (previously participating in it for the 2018-2019 year).

**Facilities.** Since spring 2018, UHM Esports has used the iLab (with computers purchased by Chris Lee) with the permission of Chad Walton as its location for esports-related activities (weekly practices and competitions). Starting in spring 2020, the iLab will be under new leadership and guidance. UHM Esports has started exploring options to find a location for the program by petitioning the Campus Center Board Facilities Management Committee and Campus Center Operations for space. UHM Esports was declined occupancy in the fall of 2019 for what was



previously the “Gamesroom” in the campus center. The relevant campus authorities plan to conduct a survey that includes esports as part of their efforts to expand student programming on campus.

With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the world, the university was forced to run at a limited capacity. This saw the iLab have no use for all departments, allowing UH Esports to take hold of the space. The iLab is now the home of UH Esports and will be the designated space for our teams to compete, stream, and host activities.

UH Maui College has established a designated area with 8 gaming stations. UH West Oahu (UHWO) plans to have a dedicated esports arena with 24 gaming computers starting the fall of 2020, when the new ACM building opens, with the possible expansion of up to 50 gaming stations if needed. UHWO’s ACM building will also have space for spectators for fans with a large LED wall for viewers located in the lobby area.

**Scholarships.** Students participating in our *League of Legends* and *Overwatch* teams are not under scholarships for the 2019-2020 academic year.

**Systems (Maui College).** Besides the efforts on the UH Mānoa campus, Maui College has begun in earnest to create esports teams on their campus with exhibition matches and games having already taken place, with one international match between Maui College and a sister college in the Philippines completed.

**High Schools.** UHM Esports has been contacted by multiple high schools to begin working together on their own programs, to come for workshops, and speaking engagements with parents. Presently, UH esports has only made commitments to Moanalua High School for the spring semester to formally establish connections with high schools for spring 2020.

## Future UH Esports Projects

In addition to the foundational goals of UH Esports, the program is currently working on major projects for the future development of esports at UH and for Hawai‘i.

**UCI college esports consortium.** UCI has organized a working group of colleges to begin the process of developing collegiate esports standards (how to define varsity esports, student eligibility, research, and outreach) for varsity programs, aligned with the academic mission of university members and focused on student development outcomes. UHM (through the participation of Nyle Sky Kauweloā) has been asked to take part in the development of the consortium. When completed, the consortium will seek to get recognition from Riot Games, the publisher of the game *League of Legends*, as an official governance structure for collegiate esports in North America.

**Aloha Stadium.** At the state level, interest around esports has been growing in the attention it has received by state leaders. Most notably, Senator Glenn Wakai has expressed interest in building into a renovated \$350 million-dollar Aloha Stadium that has functions partially as a future esports arena (with streaming). Over the past several months, Senator Wakai has sought guidance from UH Esports (through the participation of Nyle Sky Kauwelo and Kevin Nguyen) on the issues of developing esports in Hawai'i.

**Hula Bowl:** UHM Esports has started to work with esports organizations and the Hula Bowl itself with esports events for the 2020 Hula Bowl. UHM Esports participated in the "gaming lounge" tournament for the game *Madden NFL* with Hula Bowl football players. The goal is to have another event next year, with a larger venue and collection of players.

## 12-Month Timeline 2020-2021

- 1) August: Recruit players and hold tryouts  
Pitch for scholarships/Look for sponsorships
- 2) September: Begin fact-finding mission for system campuses (gaming)
- 3) October: Get *Overwatch* Teams ready for Tespa preseason  
Get *League of Legends* Teams ready for Collegiate Star League
- 4) November: Pitch to selected high schools on the growth of esports
- 5) December: Deliver summary of systems fact-finding mission (gaming)
- 6) January: Begin second round of systems research (individuals)
- 7) February: Have the *League of Legends* & *Overwatch* teams compete in the Mountain West matches  
Have *League of Legends* team compete in Riot's cLoL  
Have *Overwatch* team compete in Tespa
- 8) March: Start to implement systems esports plan on UH campuses
- 9) April: End of *Overwatch* Mountain West esports conference  
End of *League of Legends* Collegiate Star League
- 10) May: Creation of esports education
- 11) June: End of Riot's cLoL
- 12) July: Recruitment for new hires

Budget:

200,000      Gaming equipment - per campus

60,000	Streaming, production equipment - per campus
80,000	Esport director (APT BandC: Step 11)
45,000	Esport program assistant (APT BandA, step 2) - per campus
44,500	Content Media Creator (APT BandA, step 1)
41,600	coaches (\$20/hour x 2 teams)