

## **BS in Esports Management**

### **Faculty Senate First Reading Address Summary**

Faculty Senate members, the following document has been prepared to address comments and questions presented at the first reading of the BS in Esports Management to demonstrate our proactive, comprehensive, and academically sound proposal. The document provides comprehensive details on the following key points:

- Dual credit agreements, Stockton sponsored tournaments and the Stockton Esports organization will provide access to over 1,000 potential Esports students.
- Esports is a field of academic study in which research can be found across and within various other well-established disciplines.
- The Stockton Esports Committee is highly engaged within various Esports professional associations and have access to existing Esports curriculum and contribute to Esports academic standards.
- The new Esports Management program will remain under the Stockton University School of Business AACSB banner and go through assessment and reaccreditation on a regular basis, which will continue to ensure that the program offers a high-quality education.
- The BS in Esports Management focuses on the business, marketing, production, and event planning aspects of the growing Esports industry and is distinctly different than Sports Management.
- The program is interdisciplinary and includes courses in a variety of established academic disciplines that provide students the ability to build skills that will open career doors not limited to Esports.
- The BA in Digital Studies is focused on audio and digital production, web design, and graphic design, all considerations within the production of an Esports event. Both teams agreed to long-term cooperation in course development/offerings.

We would like to acknowledge the support of our partners to bring this proposal forward which includes IT, Business Studies, Academic Affairs, General Studies, Communication Studies, Digital Studies, Stockton's Esports Innovation Center, Esports associations and industry partners.

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According to [Pew Research](#), “97% of people between the ages of 13-17, the prime college-aged demographic, play some form of video game”. As per Adkins (2022) of Software House International, “The High School Esports League (HSEL) – dubbed the ‘largest high school league in the nation’ – encompasses a community of over 3,400 schools and 140,000 students. Esports has demonstrated a return on investment in student interest, recruitment, and retention (Burns, 2021). Colleges across the United States are launching Esports programs at an increasing rate, including [Pace University](#) and the [University of Arizona](#), adding to well over 100 programs currently in existence (Lyman, 2022). As a case example, [Ohio State](#) launched in 2020 with 40-enrolled with a degree and three tracks. Collegiate Esports has growing support from schools and outside organizations like the [National Association of Collegiate Esports](#) (NACE), which offers membership to more than 170 colleges and universities that have their own Esports leagues. In addition, Esports student leagues provide a direct pipeline for recruitment to such a program.

#### **CREATION OF STUDENT PIPELINE**

- ***Dual Credit Agreements.*** The HTMS Esports team is actively identifying and developing dual credit agreements with high schools in NJ. This includes the identification of schools that currently offer curricula as well as those in the infancy stages of development. As of December 2022, we entered the first dual credit agreement in Esports with Middle Township High School. There are 78 current students enrolled in the high school course and are prospective students interested in taking advantage of the dual credit program as part of this agreement. We have also begun a partnership to support Ocean City High School’s Esports program (course curriculum development) with their announcement November 2022 and have interest for program support from Atlantic Country Institute of Technology as well as Shore Regional HS in West Long Branch. We have scheduled additional meetings with Absegami High School and Cedar Creek High School. Please note that our efforts are on-going in this area.
- ***Tournament Host for Garden State Esports.*** The HTMS Esports team has actively engaged with [Garden State Esports](#) (GSE) and attended their most recent tournament event on December 17, 2022, with support from our Admissions and IT partners. We are currently in discussions with GSE for Stockton to host their annual spring tournament estimated to bring in 500+ students annually. This partnership will allow Stockton and Rider University to be the exclusive host partners of GSE and would provide Stockton access to nearly all high schools in NJ (approximately 25 high schools) that participate in Esports activities.
- ***Tournament Host for Local High Schools.*** Although in its infancy stages, with the opening of the Esports Innovation Center in Atlantic City, we have begun conversations with local high schools to be their tournament site location. We currently have Absegami and Ocean City High School that have shared interest as well as Barnegat High School

that recently toured the campus (tour 1//13/2023). Hosting local high school events will provide Stockton with direct access to those students engaged in Esports.

- ***Stockton Esports Student Organization.*** The Student Esports Organization hosts many events throughout the academic year. These events are live streamed and are accessible to numerous students not limited to NJ. In addition, there are many events that include invitations to local high school Esports teams for students to experience Stockton. Currently, there are 916 Discord Server members (Discord is a voice, video, and text chat app) that provides Stockton access to Esports interested students to recruit. Additionally, Stockton is currently planning a Esports event with Middle Township High School.

## **ESPORTS AS A FIELD OF ACADEMIC STUDY**

Esports as an industry has rapidly expanded, contributing to the nascency of Esports as a field of academic study and research. Reitman et al., (2020) reported that from 2002 through March 2018, Esports research developed from nonexistent into a field of study although there are some accounts in business literature that date the birth of Esports research to the 1980's. Chiu, et al. (2021) investigated the existing knowledge base of Esports and its research networks through a bibliometric analysis that included 150 sources by 629 authors affiliated with 522 institutions in 45 countries and a total of 12,945 cited references. Highlights of the study are displayed below which support core journal development as well as explain the impact factor associated with many of the exclusive, emerging Esports journals. Furthermore, their study identified Esports studies that have been published in a variety of fields not only due to its nascency but “researchers involved in the early work—and those introducing the space to unfamiliar fields—have an opportunity to shape its growth” (Reitman et al., 2020).

There is currently no generally accepted scientific definition of Esports (Wagner, 2006); although across disciplines, Esports have been defined as “competitive gaming, computer mediated sport, or interactive spectatorship (Freeman & Guo, 2017a), with varying degrees of emphasis on physicality, computer mediation, institutional infrastructure, and spectatorship. Defining Esports is a nontrivial debate that underlies scholars’ framing of their research” (Reitman, et al., 2006). Lastly, published studies spread diverse field journals due to its interdisciplinary and diverse ecosystem. Commonly associated fields include media studies, informatics, business, sports science, sociology, law and cognitive science, to list a few (Reitman, et al., 2020). Figure 1 displays the chronological distribution of the publications in Esports research while Table 1 displays the top 10 journals in Esports research. Note this article was received for publication August 3 2021 / Revised: 27 August 2021 / Accepted: 11 September 2021 / Published: 16 September 2021. Therefore, total articles included in the study are not inclusive of the entire year misrepresenting a decline from the year prior for 2021.

Figure 1 Distribution of Esports Research Publication (Chiu, et al., 2021).

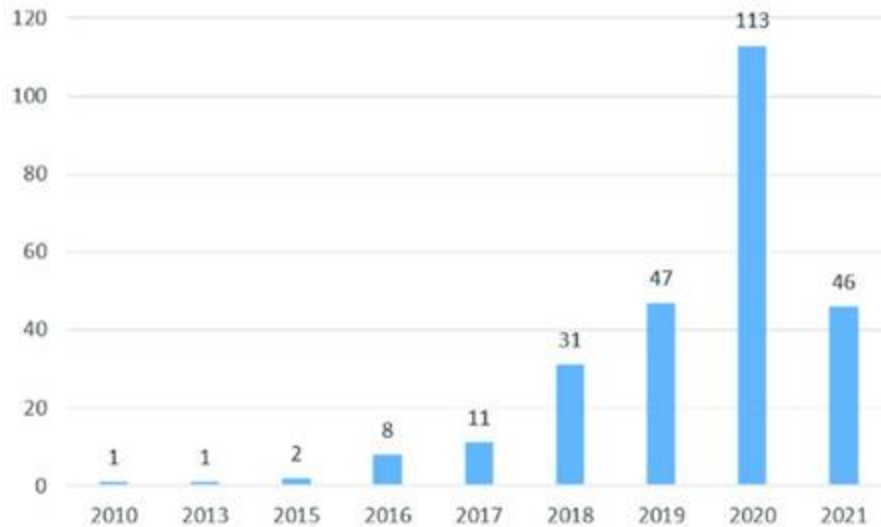


Table 1 Top 10 journals in Esports Research (Chiu, et al., 2021).

Rank	Journal	Publications	Citations	Average Citations/Publication	Citescore
1	<i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	15	51	3.4	3.5
2	<i>International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations</i>	12	118	9.83	1.8
3	<i>Games and Culture</i>	9	73	8.11	4.0
4	<i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>	8	348	43.5	13.8
5	<i>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health</i>	8	22	2.75	3.4
6	<i>Communication and Sport</i>	7	43	6.14	3.6
7	<i>Sport Management Review</i>	5	233	46.6	6.5
8	<i>Sport, Ethics and Philosophy</i>	5	66	13.2	1.4
9	<i>Sport, Business and Management</i>	4	7	1.75	1.8
10	<i>European Sport Management Quarterly</i>	4	19	4.75	4.1

Two exclusive Esports academic journals are listed in Ulrich's including [the International Journal of eSports Research](#) (peer-reviewed, scholarly) and [Apunts Educacio Fisica](#) (published in Catalan-Spanish, peer-reviewed). There are several emerging source citation index journals including but not limited to [International Journal of Esports](#). This journal is an open access peer-reviewed journal publishing research in Esports. This journal is unique as it established an industry board. This international board has representation from Dell Technologies in the USA, the head of Education at British Esports Association, the Executive Director of the Varsity Esports, the Co-Founder & Chief Scientific Officer at GScience, a founding member of Association for Continuing Education in Esports (ACES) and the Executive Director, International Game Developers Association and a Performance Specialist & Wellness Director for Mind Body Esports, to list a few. Another designated Esports journal is the [Annals of Esports Research](#). AER is the first North American Esports journal and is an international, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to expanding the scientific basis and qualitative and quantitative knowledge of Esports by publishing quality articles concerning the field. This is by no means an exhaustive list

of research journals in the academic field of Esports nor academic journals that publish Esports related research.

The BS in Esports Management program is positioned within the umbrella of HTMS in the School of Business. The School of Business does not have a policy prohibiting faculty from publishing in journals outside their discipline; however, faculty must publish in journals that meet Business School Standards, while following criteria of AACSB to maintain Faculty Qualifications. As per the [AACSB standards](#), Faculty Qualification status refers to one of four categories designated to demonstrate current and relevant intellectual capital or professional engagement in the area of teaching to support the school's mission and related activities. Categories for specifying faculty qualifications are based on both the initial academic preparation or professional experience, and sustained academic and professional engagement within the area of teaching as follows:

- Scholarly Academics (SA) are faculty who have normally attained a terminal degree in a field related to the area of teaching and who sustain currency and relevancy through scholarship and activities related to the field of teaching.
- Practice Academics (PA) are faculty who have normally attained a terminal degree in a field related to the area of teaching and who sustain currency and relevancy through professional engagement, interaction, and activities related to the field of teaching.
- Scholarly Practitioners (SP) are faculty who have normally attained a master's degree related to the field of teaching; have professional experience substantial in duration and responsibility at the time of hire; and who sustain currency and relevancy through scholarship related to their professional background and experience in their field of teaching.
- Instructional Practitioners (IP) are faculty who have normally attained a master's degree related to the field of teaching; have professional experience substantial in duration and responsibility at the time of hire; and who sustain currency and relevancy through continued professional experience and engagement related to their professional background and experience in their field of teaching. –Additional Faculty (A) are faculty who do not meet the school's criteria for SA, PA, SP, or IP.

Currently the HTMS program has four (4) of six (6) FT Tenured Faculty categorized as Scholarly Academics. This accreditation places Stockton with a significant advantage in the marketplace as less than 6% of Business Schools in the world hold this accreditation.

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

There are several professional associations related to Esports that are shaping curricular standards and these developments have been used as part of this proposal process. Additionally, the HTMS Esports team is highly engaged and active within pivotal associations to not only influence the development of curriculum standards but to continuously evaluate standards based on industry development and workforce needs. Below is a list of associations and boards most critical to mention, this is not an exhaustive list.

- [Esports Trade Association, ESTA](#) is the premier association in the United States for Esports. As per their charter, "ESTA promotes, protects, and advances the broader interests of the esports community through providing forward-thinking professional development programs, networking opportunities, relevant industry research, and

valuable tools and resources to the membership. ESTA focuses on promoting business expertise and sustainable growth of the esports industry by growing the number of participants, sponsors, products, and services, procuring industry research, and executing industry events.” ESTA hosts an annual conference called EsportsNext in Chicago, Illinois. HTMS Associate Professor, Noel Criscione-Naylor represents Stockton University as a current member and sits on the Education Committee of the association. The Education Committee is responsible for overseeing webinars and other educational content for ESTA. The committee works to ensure members and the community have access to current and relevant educational content within the Esports space. This includes identifying current work readiness requirements to support the growth of the industry as well as charter and develop critical educational initiatives to support the positive development of the Esports ecosystem. As such an example, the committee is currently tasked with the development of a mentorship program for women in Esports.

- [North American Scholastic Esports Federation, NASEF](#) provides opportunities for all students to use Esports as a platform to develop STEAM-based skills and social emotional attributes such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities needed to thrive in work and in life. Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), in collaboration with the North America Scholastic Esports Federation (NASEF) partnered with several middle school administrators and educators from Orange County, California to craft 9-week quarter modules of integrated programs of study, focusing on Esports as a means of facilitating transference of concepts and skills that incorporate CA CCSS, NGSS, ISTE and SEL standards that are appropriate for the target student demographic. Noel Criscione-Naylor is a member and has full access to all curriculum which has been used to assess Esports curriculum relevance and contribute to Esports internal program standards.
- [National Esports Association](#) guides school districts, colleges, and corporations through learning outcomes including making traditional education more relevant by gamifying classrooms and crafting curriculum and experiential learning for our digitized youth and workforce.
- [National Federation of State High School Associations](#) provides guidance and curriculum related to Esports. Noel Criscione-Naylor completed their Introduction to Esports training program 04/2022.
- [Garden State Esports](#) (GSE) is a regional league and association that promotes North American Scholastic Esports Federation curriculum. As per their mission, they are a nonprofit founded by educators, Garden State Esports is the organizing body of scholastic Esports for New Jersey. Furthermore, their mission is to create high-quality, student-centered experiences through scholastic Esports so all students can use Esports as a platform to grow socially, emotionally, and academically. In their last survey as published on their website, of the 5000+ students-athletes playing in GSE: 86% intended to go to college, 75% plan on being part of their college’s Esports team or gaming community, 64% are at least somewhat likely to go to college in New Jersey, and 55% plan on majoring in a STEM field. According to a recent survey, 36.7% of student members identified after high school they see themselves working within the business, hospitality, and marketing followed by 27.6% in AV Technology and Communication. This data further supports Esports Management being a BS degree as well as

demonstrates students have interests within course curriculum areas that are in the program.

## **ASSESSMENT STANDARDS**

Stockton's School of Business and HTMS program are AACSB accredited. As per [AACSB](#), "Business schools accredited by AACSB have met rigorous standards for educational quality, yet they can pursue their own distinct, innovative missions. Although less than 6 percent of the world's schools offering business degree programs hold AACSB business accreditation, more than 90 percent of ranked schools have received accreditation." Below are brief excerpts that pertain to the BS in Esports Management Proposal and the shaping of the specific discipline assessment standards. The BS in Esports Management will automatically roll into the School's accreditation.

### **STANDARD 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING**

The creation of a BS in Esports Management aligns with several strategies Stockton plans to pursue as part of its current Strategic Plan, which focuses on six key areas: Inclusive Student Success, Diversity and Inclusion, Teaching and Learning, Strategic Enrollment Management, Financial Sustainability, Campus Community, Communication, and Shared Governance with the opportunity to expand the applicant pool at Stockton's School of Business by offering prospective students the ability to major in a new and exciting program that will prepare them for a successful career within the rapidly growing Esports industry. As per AACSB, Standard 1.3, school/program requirements include:

- As the school carries out its mission, it embraces innovation as a key element of continuous improvement.
- We identify strategies for maintenance of a high-quality learner experiences, including current and relevant curriculum and strategies for recruitment and retention of qualified faculty.
- We must identify the type of intellectual contributions it expects faculty to produce to influence business education and to connect with the practice of business, consistent with our mission.
- And lastly, we must identify how and where the school is innovative in thought and in action with programs.

### **STANDARD 4: CURRICULUM**

With its new Esports Management program, we seek to build a highly targeted interdisciplinary degree consistent with norms and expectations in this diverse hospitality, tourism, and event centric field of Esports Management. This new program will not result in substantial additions and modifications to existing curriculum; rather, it will carry over a majority of existing curriculum, which is aligned to the industry's needs. Since the new program will retain the faculty and staff from the HTMS program, minimal administrative and faculty support are

required as additional resources at the onset of the program. It is important to note that a detailed P&L was provided and approved by Academic Advising, Finance, and the President's office.

The new Esports Management program will use similar curriculum, learning outcomes, and assessment methods as the existing HTMS program with specifically tailored credit courses related to Esports Management and meeting AACSB standards for accreditation. The new Esports Management program will remain under the Stockton University School of Business AACSB banner, and go through reaccreditation on a regular basis, which will continue to ensure that the program offers a high-quality education that is discussed in-depth below.

Additionally, as the program is interdisciplinary, students will take courses in a variety of well-established academic disciplines. Assessments in those courses will be guided by established assessments in those disciplines as well as the requirements of AACSB. Although Esports as an academic field is in its nascency, the curriculum rests upon several well-established academic disciplines. The course design of the program therefore provides students the ability to build skills in a variety of disciplines that will open a variety of career doors not limited to Esports.

AACSB standard 4.1 school/program requirements include:

- We deliver content that is current, relevant, forward-looking, globally oriented, aligned with program competency goals, and consistent with its mission, strategies, and expected outcomes. The curriculum content cultivates agility with current and emerging technologies.
- Contents of degree program curricula result from effective curriculum management processes and include relevant competencies that prepare graduates for business careers and foster a lifelong learning mindset. This includes the development of an advisory board that meets to review curriculum and assessment results. The HTMS program had already begun to seek out Esports experts to join the board and welcomed two new, Esports Members in June, 2022.
- The program must include an understanding of, and appreciation for, cultural norms across various regions and countries and how such differences impact managerial decision-making.
- Curriculum should reflect current and innovative business theories and practices.
- Current and emerging technology is appropriately infused throughout the program as appropriate for that degree and level of program. A learn-to-learn expectation is instilled in learners to facilitate agility in adaptation to emerging technologies in the future. This is not only evident in the professional work experience and internship requirements of the program, but through core program courses.

Lastly, as part of standard 4.2, the program must manage its curriculum through assessment and other systematic review processes to ensure currency, relevancy, and competency. This includes advisory board meetings and leveraging existing curriculum standards across the high school and the international space.

**STANDARD 5: ASSURANCE OF LEARNING**



- 5.1 The school uses well-documented assurance of learning (AoL) processes that include direct and indirect measures for ensuring the quality of all degree programs that are deemed in scope for accreditation purposes. The results of the school’s AoL work leads to curricular and process improvements.
  - Curriculum management has sound governance, and faculty are engaged in the process in terms of ownership and use of results for implementing changes and improvement.
  - Curriculum management fosters and promotes innovation.

For additional information to understand these specific accreditation standards, [click here](#).

## **ESPORTS AND SPORTS MANAGEMENT**

Esports and Sports are distinctly different and should be considered separate fields of academic study (Wagner, 2006). According to Reitman et al., (2020), the confusion between Esports and Sports is due to their academic research positioning: “Sports science researchers interested in the implications of competitive video gaming are categorizing Esports within the frame of traditional sports. Most publications from sports science are agenda setting—by using the standard of traditional sports, they are evaluating the potential of Esports to be considered sports.” However, from a scientific perspective, Sports Management theorists do not define Esports as sports. Sports require full-body movements and coordination, not just finger and hand movements (Burton, Farnand & Gorbounov, 2021). Furthermore, Thiel and John, (2018) describe the conflict with accepting Esports as a sport:

Esport competitions take place in virtual spaces; the competitive actions are represented by avatars, which are controlled by the players. The execution of movements during the operation of the game console and the virtually mediated movement actions are inseparably connected with each other. However, the physical movement of the player and the actual competitive action takes place in different worlds, in an analogue and a virtual world, so to speak. In discussions on the question of whether or not Esports should be recognized as ‘real sport’ by sports organizations, this fact is often cited as an argument against its acceptance.

According to N. Taylor (2016): Esports involves the enactment of video games as spectator-driven sport, carried out through promotional activities; broadcasting infrastructures; the socioeconomic organization of teams, tournaments, and leagues; and the embodied performances of players themselves. Kane and Spradley (2017) further elaborate on this to describe Esports as including “all the various Esports leagues from around the world. Each league could be compared to a different sports league that plays the same sport such as the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), Bellator and Invicta Fighting Championship. The various Esports leagues have different rules, play different games, rank professionals differently and host tournaments and competitions. The consistent aspect throughout the leagues is that the competitors play video games and the athletes that win matches consistently could progress to a professional level.” Stated by Bernardich (2018), Esports is a generic denomination that is used to describe the competitions and leagues of specific games, so we are not facing a single modality of game or franchise. In the same way that you do not compete in “sport”, but in football, basketball, etc., you do not compete in Esports, but in League of Legends, Call of Duty, FIFA or Hearthstone. Accordingly, our constant and distinct area of focus is event management within the scope of

Esports. This domain requires an interdisciplinary knowledge and skill set to flourish in the Esports ecosystem.

Commonly, Sports Management programs prepare students for careers as athletic trainers' college athletic administrator, player or coach agent, operations manager, team marketer, athletic team manager or the coach, ticket sales specialist, a director of communications or even a sports event planner. Some students also choose careers focused more so related to sports and the fitness nutrition fields. So, you will find some general overlaps with skills and abilities for overlapping career clusters. Common CIP codes associated with this academic program of study include 31.0508 Sports Studies (3-year historic growth -17.4%), 09.0906 Sports Communication (3-year historic growth -1.3%, 31.0504 Sports and Fitness Admin/Mgmt (3-year historic growth -8.4%). In retrieving Gray Associates data for these CIP codes, their 3-year historic growth trends, current employment and job postings in the last 12 months are below the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile within our competitive set. This data does not suggest a strong opportunity for the university to pursue Sports Management currently.

Regarding our BS Esports Management proposal, we have positioned ourselves to produce highly competitive graduates as the Esports industry continues to develop and leverage the resources we have surrounding Stockton such as the Esports Innovation Center. Common CIP codes associated with Esports programs include: 11.0204 Computer Game Programming, 52.0201 Business Administration and Management, General, 36.0113 Computer Games Programming Skills, and a few others. There currently is no designated Esports CIP code, however Grays Associates data does include an augmented CIP 31.0701 Esports. This does make it difficult to specifically identify trends using only existing CIP codes which is why the program proposal included a job analysis from Hitmarker, the world's largest job platform prior to a CIP code selection. Based on analysis, Stockton's program proposal selected CIP code 52.0907 Meeting and Event Planning with current employment, job postings in the last 12 months, and job posting per graduate all within the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile or higher. Furthermore, this aligned to existing expertise within Stockton's HTMS program.

We have discussed the use of this CIP code and justification with the NJ Department of Education. Furthermore, to influence development and positioning at a state level for Esports CIP code positioning, Jennifer Aarons and Noel Criscione-Naylor sit on the Office of Career Readiness Advisory Committee for the Hospitality and Tourism Career Clusters. As committee members, we are charged with identifying strategies to increase the number of students from underrepresented groups in the career cluster, strengthen the link between secondary schools and postsecondary institutions to increase credit-bearing opportunities, identify current and potential apprenticeships for students enrolled in state-approved career and technical education programs in the field, and align new and emerging fields to current CIP programs. Accordingly, we are contributing to the curriculum standards for the State of New Jersey relative to Esports.

Drexel University's Esports Business degree requires students to take a total of 180 credits. Drexel is a private research university, and for the 2022-2023 academic year, the estimated cost of tuition (list price) at the school is \$56,595. The University of Delaware offers a BA in Game Studies and eSports. Their program has a greater focus on video game design and development and the gaming culture. A review of the course requirements for their 124-credit program

indicates that students take only 3-4 gaming specific courses, while the remaining courses are in computer design, communications, marketing, and electives. Their program does not include the robust business management courses included in our proposed BS in Esports Management degree that aligned to core skills and abilities within the related career clusters Stockton has selected. Additionally, and like Drexel, the estimated cost of tuition exceeds Stockton's fees. For the 2022-2023 academic year, the University of Delaware's estimated cost of tuition is \$54,964. For these reasons, we do not think Drexel University, or the University of Delaware are direct competitors to Stockton. Stockton's ability to fill the initial projected number of seats in the program is independent of Drexel's Esports Business degree or Delaware's BA in Game Studies and eSports since students who plan on attending either of those Universities are not likely to consider Stockton as an alternative.

Stockton has its very own premier collegiate esports organization featuring both competitive play and community events. We compete in several game titles including League of Legends, Overwatch, Rocket League, Valorant, Fortnite, and others. Our Rocket League Esports team is **SECOND IN THE WORLD** following its impressive showing at the Collegiate Rocket League World Championship Tournament June 2022. This is highly attractive, and we have already experienced students seeking Stockton to participate. Furthermore, the Esports Innovation Center (EIC) at Stockton is targeting development in this new and growing industry. The center is a nonprofit that was set up in partnership with the NJEDA and Stockton to promote Esports in South Jersey and Atlantic City. As per the NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan, "The EIC will be a driver of strategic workforce development and will help to attract industry-supporting businesses and events. Governor Phil Murphy's economic development plan is focused on bolstering high-growth sectors that create inclusive career opportunities. The EIC, as a center of knowledge and innovation, is adding to the momentum in this emerging and particularly exciting industry" (Melhourn, 2022). Internally, we have seen first-hand how quickly interest in Esports has grown. "Our university's Esports team has grown from just 12 students in 2019 to nearly 800 today," shared by Chief Information Officer Scott Huston (Melhourn, 2022).

## **SYNERGIES BETWEEN ESPORTS MANAGEMENT AND DIGITAL STUDIES**

During the first reading of the Esports Management degree proposal, faculty senate members suggested that there may be room for mutually beneficial cooperation between the BS in Digital Studies and the proposed BS in Esports Management and that we explore the presence of synergies between the two degrees. In response to this suggestion, we met with Dr. Jung Lee – the chair of the BA in Digital Studies. Digital Studies, like Esports Management, is a highly interdisciplinary degree designed in response to the growing need for a "digital generalist" or a "jack-of-all-trades" type of user interface designer. Unlike the proposed BS in Esports Management, which primarily focuses on the business, marketing, production, and event planning aspects of the growing Esports industry, the BA in Digital Studies is focused on audio and digital production, web design, and graphic design. All these areas of expertise are important in the successful hosting of an Esports event. As such, together with Dr. Lee, we have identified opportunities for long-term cooperation between the two degrees. Specifically, Dr. Lee has suggested that the future Esports Management course "Esports Event Production" could be incorporated into the Digital Studies curriculum. Further, Dr. Lee stated that Digital Studies students had expressed interest in taking a course related to game design. During our meeting,

we agreed on long-term cooperation between the faculty in both degrees. As part of that cooperation, faculty in both programs will hold future meetings to discuss all (present and future) courses within the Digital Studies and Esports Management curriculum that can become part of the curriculum of the other program. Lastly, considering the synergies we identified between the two degrees, we recognize that cooperation between the two programs is essential for attracting new students willing to major in either degree since Digital Studies was also recently introduced (Fall 2022) as a new degree at Stockton. We want to thank the faculty senate members who suggested we explore synergies between the two degrees.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Esports team has taken a proactive approach to generating demand for the new program by engaging with local high schools to create a pipeline of new students interested in majoring in the new degree. Further, we have provided sufficient evidence that Esports is a separate and growing field of academic study. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that per AACSB accreditation requirements, faculty are not required to publish in the academic field they teach in. For instance, a faculty in FINA can publish in hospitality and tourism journals that meet School of Business standards. Similarly, a faculty in HTMS can publish in finance journals. AACSB requirements allow researchers to publish in any field of study as long as the journal is part of a strictly approved list of journals to maintain publication quality standards. Further, we have demonstrated that the standards set by AACSB will guide all degree assessments. As presented, this degree is highly interdisciplinary, and students will take courses in a variety of well-established academic disciplines. Assessments in those courses are guided by established assessments in those disciplines. This interdisciplinary degree benefits students as they build skills in a variety of disciplines that will open career doors in and beyond Esports.

We also recognize the Senate's concerns regarding the distinction between sports and Esports and hope that we have provided sufficient clarification regarding the distinction between the two fields. The Esports team fully recognizes that the success of this program is not guaranteed. Early iterations of the Esports degree curriculum involved the creation of two new faculty lines. However, the Esports team recognized that an investment of this scale is not justified considering the risk involved. Therefore, the Esports team designed a curriculum that requires a minimum investment of financial resources but a curriculum that, at the same time, aligns with the curriculum of other Esports programs (such as the curriculum of the Esports degree offered by the University of Delaware). Stockton's proximity to Atlantic City and the extensive casino infrastructure uniquely positioned to host large-scale Esports events provide Stockton's Esports program with a competitive advantage. Further, with Stockton University's assistance over the long term, Atlantic City has the potential to become a regular host of many Esports events. This development will allow Stockton's Esports students to get internships in helping to organize and manage these events, thus gaining real-world experience in Esports and Event Management. This experience further strengthens those students' job market prospects after graduation. Lastly, the significant potential of our program is also recognized by the Provost and the President, who have provided their support for this program.

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