



*#TAKE FLIGHT*

Proposal for the Establishment of Esports at  
Laramie County Community College

**March 5, 2021**

## Executive Summary

In fall of 2018, athletic director, Mr. Clark Rasmussen, developed an Esports committee; they explored the addition of Esports as a collegiate sport. As a part of that exploration an Esports Club was developed and began operating in Fall 2019. The inaugural club membership was six students.

In fall 2019, the committee continued to meet with new Interim Athletic Director, Dr. Cindy Henning. As a result of changes in the athletic department, the Esports Committee was paused until Golden Eagle Athletics strategic planning was developed.

In spring 2020, the Golden Eagles Athletics Strategic Plan was completed and approved. One component of the strategic plan is “wise exploration of areas for potential expansion of Golden Eagle Athletics offerings” (Soaring Into the Future, LCCC Golden Eagle Athletics 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, p. 4).

As of spring 2021, the Esports Club has 31 members comprised of 25 men and six women. The most common programs LCCC’s Esports club members choose are: computer science, cyber security, computer information systems, Art, Multimedia and Music. In addition, English, Human Services, Criminal Justice, and Business Finance/Management are represented.

Although Laramie County Community College and Golden Eagle Athletics experienced budget reductions in fiscal year 22, adopting Esports as an approved athletic offering supports the LCCC Mission, increases opportunities for students, including scholarships, aligns with the Golden Eagles Athletics strategic plan, and can be initiated at a much lower cost than other sports.

## What is Esports?

Esports is “online competitive video gaming played through computers and electronic consoles” (Laramie County Community College, [n.d.]. Esports: Information, p.1). According to Clavio (2017) Esports are the fastest growing sport worldwide.

Competition has existed as long as video games have existed. The first video game competition was held at Stanford University in 1972 (C. Rose, personal communication, February 24, 2021). The prize for the winning team was a subscription to Rolling Stone magazine. For many people games such as Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man or Space Invaders may render times at an arcade playing and trying to break into the top score category. These games were the early genesis of Esports.

The size of teams varies from a single player to six players on a team. In single player games one person is competing against another person. Similar to a singles tennis match or a game of golf. The teams compete against one another online. “Esports require a lot of the same traits sought in traditional athletic programs: student-athletes have to be able to work as a team, to think on their feet, and to have a competitive drive” (Ball, Expanding athletic programs with ‘Esports,’ p. 2).

The viewership for Esports competitions is rivalling traditional sports. According to Heilweil, the 2018 League of Legends World Championships had over 200 million viewers (Heilweil, February 2019, p. 20). This was more viewers than the NCAA Final Four and the Super Bowl.

Competitions occur in ‘arenas’ much like traditional sports occur. For LCCC Esports team, the arena would be the Merrell Student Activity Lounge. The teams work together and compete in a sport season. For fall 2021, the sport season will be 12 weeks in length; the NJCAAE has not yet determined

the exact dates of competition. The LCCC Esports team would have a fall and spring season which mirrors the LCCC Rodeo team.

## Why Esports?

Esports is an emerging sport that directly appeals to the generation of students who grew up with technology which allows them to play interactive, virtual reality, multiple player video games. As Morrison explained “This generation of teens grew up on YouTube, watching streams, communing on internet forums – you name it. And Esports is big business, too; it’s natural that people would wonder what the big deal is. All the hype kind of fuels itself, and that, combined with how many people have now grown up with this as a form of normal entertainment, has made it so big” (Clavio, 2017, n.p).

One example of this growth is the National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) established a governing body dedicated to Esports. The National Junior College Athletic Association Esports (NJCAAE) was established in 2019 and currently has over 80 member colleges and over 1,100 student athletes (NJCAA ESPORTS: Worlds of Opportunity; B. Collins, personal communication, February 23, 2021). Since its inception, NJCAAE has seen over a 300% increase in participation from fall to spring (NJCAA ESPORTS: Worlds of Opportunity). In spring 2021 the NJCAAE offered 14 games for competition:

Game	Team Size		Game	Team Size
CS:GO	5 vs 5		Hearthstone	1 v 1
Fortnite Duos	2 vs 2		Fortnite Solos	1 v 1
Super Smash Brothers Ultimate	1 v 1		NBA 2K21	1 v 1
Rainbow Six Siege	5 v 5		Rocket League	3 v 3
FIFA 21	1 v 1		Valorant	5 v 5
Overwatch	6 v 6		Call of Duty: Modern Warfare—Gunfight	2 v 2
Call of Duty Warzone	2 v 2		Call of Duty—Black Ops—Cold War	4 v 4

Unlike other sports, Esports allows for more diversity of team members. Men and women can compete on the same team. Due to the advancement of technology and assistive devices, individuals with special needs may have the opportunity to compete in Esports. This increases LCCC inclusivity of students with special needs.

As mentioned above, LCCC established an Esports club team in fall of 2019 with six members. The club has continued to grow and currently has 31 students actively participating and competing—25 men and six women. This growth, despite COVID, reflects the interest LCCC students have for Esports.

If approved, the first step would be to conduct an internal search for a part-time Esports coach. We have recognized experts on the LCCC campus who have already been working with the Esports club. This approach would allow for an internal, expedited search for the first LCCC Esports coach. Another unique aspect to Esports is the opportunity for scholarshiped student athletes to function as team captains for each game. This aligns with the mission of Golden Eagle Athletics “to inspire champions today as we prepare leaders for tomorrow” (Soaring Into the Future, LCCC Golden Eagle Athletics 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, p. 2). Additionally, the Esports team members would have representation on the Student Athlete Advisory Committee, thus enhancing the diversification of the SAAC committee and the work they do.

One significant difference between Esports and traditional sports teams is fundraising. Esports competitions can be streamed online while viewers pay to watch these competitions on sites such as Twitch. In addition to online viewing, Esports teams may win prize money or equipment. Those earnings, whether prize money or equipment, is given to LCCC and the college determines how those monies and equipment are distributed. Per the NJCAA handbook “Member institutions may distribute prizes and prize money to student-athletes or within the institution as they see fit” (NJCAA Esports Student Eligibility, p. 10).

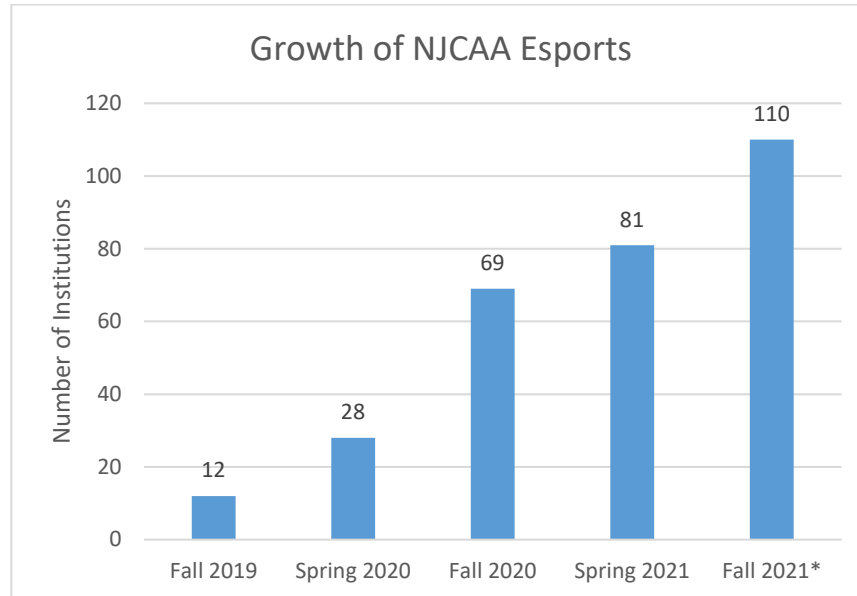
Launching an Esports team puts LCCC at the front of this rapidly growing sport both in Region IX and in the country. Currently three Region IX institutions are launching their Esports team in fall 2021; LCCC can join these institutions and lead our Region. Of the remaining schools in our region, seven institutions expect to add Esports.

The Merrell Student Activity Lounge provides the perfect location for competitions and practices for the LCCC Esports team. This aligns Esports with LCCC athletic teams which use spaces such as the competition gym where volleyball, men’s and women’s basketball practice and compete while also being available for other students to use during down times. The addition of Esports also aligns LCCC with the initiative to increase and recruit more women into STEM programs. According to Pittman (2020), women make up almost half of the United States work force (47%) they represent only 26% of the STEM workforce. Organization such as the National Math and Science Initiative, Women in Engineering Proactive Network, American Association of University Women, and the Association for Women in Science are all entities working to increase the involvement of women in STEM fields (Pittman, 2020).

LCCC has all the components necessary to successfully launch an Esports team: a space for the Esports team to call “home;” student interest in this sport; experts on our campus that can effectively coach our Esports team; and it allows LCCC to continue to be a leader in serving the needs of our students and community.

## Growth of Esports

The field of collegiate Esports is expanding rapidly. The graph below illustrates the rapid growth that is occurring with NJCAA. Fall 2019 membership was just 12 institutions; the anticipated membership in fall 2021 is 110 institutions (B. Collins, personal communication, February 23, 2021).



\*=anticipated membership for FA 2021 (B. Collins, personal communication, February 24, 2021).

## Esports in Region IX

Region IX is representative of the explosive growth in Esports across the NJCAA institutions. The following table illustrates the current status of Region IX colleges and their adaptation of Esports.

**Table. Esports Status at Region IX Institutions**

Currently Offering Esports	In the Process of Adding Esports	Esports Under Consideration	Esports Part of Long-Range Plans	Not currently Considering
Trinidad State Junior College (FA 21)	Northeastern Junior College	Lamar Community College	Casper College	Western Wyoming Community College
Northwest College (FA 21)		North Platte Community College		Luna Community College
Central Wyoming College (FA 21)		McCook Community College		
Laramie County Community College (proposed FA 21)		Otero Junior College		
		Western Nebraska Community College		

## Proposal for Esports at LCCC

For fall 2021, the team would be comprised of a minimum of 20 student athletes. It would be a co-ed team comprised of approximately ten male and ten female student athletes. As we have an Esports club, it is feasible that members of the club would become Esports team members. We anticipate a minimum of ten new students to LCCC with the addition of Esports. The geographic breakdown of the ten new students would be approximately five in-state student athletes with two coming from Laramie County. The remaining three would come from the state of Wyoming. This approach aligns with the Golden Eagle Athletics recruiting philosophy “At LCCC, we recruit individuals who will help us achieve excellence. We accomplish excellence by striving to recruit student athletes who provide a diversity of backgrounds, abilities, and potential, building team rosters that include a balance of regional, national, and international representation (LCCC Golden Eagle Athletics Soaring into the Future 2020 – 2025 Strategic Plan, p. 2.) The remaining five would be recruited from the surrounding region and focus upon the Western Undergraduate Exchange (WUE) states.

### Financial Forecast for Esports

Item	Revenue/ <b>Expenditure</b>
<b>Coach, part-time</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
<b>E-Sports Scholarship</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>
<b>NJCAAE Membership</b>	<b>\$ 1,500</b>
<b>Team Uniforms—Jersey (20 X \$30)</b>	<b>\$ 600</b>
<b>Playing Facility--Merrell Student Activity Lounge</b>	<b>\$ 000</b>
<b>Equipment—Bring Your Own Device</b>	<b>\$ 000</b>
<b>Three in state tuition, fees, room &amp; board</b>	<b>\$ 46,116</b>
<b>Two in state tuition, fees, (no room &amp; board)</b>	<b>\$ 15,744</b>
<b>Five WUE tuition, fees, room, &amp; board</b>	<b>\$ 84,810</b>
<b>Ten State of Wyoming FTE/student</b>	<b>\$ 34,008.70</b>
<b>Net</b>	<b>\$143,578.70</b>

(Laramie County Community College [LCCC], 2020)

### Tentative Timeline to FA 2021

- Approval by President’s Cabinet (March 2021)
- Approval by Board of Trustees (March/April 2021)
- Internal search for Esports Coach (March/April 2021)
- Recruiting of EAthletes (April – August 2021)
- Join NJCAAE (July 2021)
- Team arrives on campus (August 2021)

- Season commences 12 Week Season (NJCAA has not finalized dates)

## Conclusion and Recommendation

Esports is an emerging sport that is growing at an explosive rate with millions of participants and spectators of the sport. It has the potential to provide Laramie County Community College with unique untapped revenue streams. Avenues that are not available with our traditional sports teams.

Laramie County Community College is in a unique position as our students have displayed a high interest level in this sport. The LCCC Esports club has more than doubled in size since its inception in 2019. LCCC has all the needed components for this sport to successfully launch, and allow LCCC to be on the leading edge within our Region IX and the country.

The addition of Esports would provide a new avenue for recruiting and would enhance the student experience at Laramie County Community College. It provides another avenue for inclusivity and provide another avenue to develop connections within our student body.

For these reasons, the Golden Eagle Athletic Department requests that the Board of Trustees approves the addition of Esports at LCCC.

## References

- Ball, D. (2018). Expanding athletic programs with 'Esports'. *American Association of Community Colleges*. Retrieved March 2, 2021 from <http://www.aacc21stcenturycenter.org/article/expanding-athletic-programs-with-Esports/>
- Clavio, G. (2017). Are Esports the next major league sport? *The Conversation*. Retrieved March 2, 2021 from <https://theconversation.com/are-Esports-the-next-major-league-sport-74008>
- Heilwell, R. (2019). The college Esports boom. *Wired*, February, 2019, 20-21.
- Laramie County Community College. (n.d). Cost of attendance. Retrieved February 20, 2021 from <https://lccc.wy.edu/services/financialaid/CostofAttendance>
- Laramie County Community College. (2020). LCCC golden eagle athletics soaring into the future 2020-2025 strategic plan.
- National Junior College Athletic Association Esports. (2019). Student Eligibility.
- National Junior College Athletic Association Esports. (n.d). Worlds of Opportunity.
- Pittman, O. (2010, July 14). 7 Organizations working to promote women in stem. *College Raptor*. Retrieved March 4, 2021 from <https://www.collegeraptor.com/find-colleges/articles/college-majors-minors/7-organizations-working-to-promote-women-in-stem/>
- Rose, C. (2019, October 8). *Board of trustees Esports presentation*. [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from [https://docs.bartonccc.edu/trustees/studysession/fy1920/201910/Esports%20Presentation%20-%20Board%20of%20Trustees%20\(10-8-19\).pdf](https://docs.bartonccc.edu/trustees/studysession/fy1920/201910/Esports%20Presentation%20-%20Board%20of%20Trustees%20(10-8-19).pdf)