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INTEGRATING STUDENT FEEDBACK FOR COLLEGIATE ESPORTS ARENA DESIGN

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INTEGRATING STUDENT FEEDBACK FOR COLLEGIATE ESPORTS ARENA
DESIGN

by

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A Doctoral Project Submitted to,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

Student programming on a college campus is a frequent source of attention from staff that seek to engage the population. Staff may look to emergent trends in popular culture as a source of inspiration for these ideas. Esports, the concept of competitive video gaming by both professional and casual players, is one of these trends that is seeing increased attention in college students. The University of Southern Mississippi's Student Affairs Department took note of this trend and focused efforts on the implementation of these activities within the college union. This study attempts, through structured interviews, to determine what aspects of an esports arena or lounge are most appealing to students. In addition, the purpose of this study is to gather students' insights on what they would like to see in a physical space. Results from interviews show that students expect similar commonalities to professional esports arenas in both facility design and video gaming equipment. A focus on this style of aesthetics helps to define the space and promote student activities around video games and esports.

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I would like to thank all the faculty I have worked with for the duration of this degree. Their expert teaching, mentorship, and advice provided a transformational experience that continually has an impact on my life. Particularly, I owe a sincere debt of gratitude to Dr. Holly Foster and Dr. Courtney Robinson for their efforts in helping me to complete this project.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my father, Phil Sutphin, whose pragmatism and wisdom have inspired me to reach this achievement. To my mother, Peggy Sutphin, whose support continues to motivate me. Also, to classmates, friends and coworkers who offered advice, clarity, and support throughout this project.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USM   The University of Southern Mississippi

NACE   National Association of Collegiate Esports

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities are working extensively to find ways to recruit new students to their campuses due to the continual decrease in state funding and an increased reliance on student tuition dollars to make up these deficits (Marcus, 2019; Simonton, 2019). In addition to finding new students, colleges are working to create an environment for current students with numerous services and creative ways to engage them in college life (Lovett, 2019). College student unions commonly play a role in this by offering the space for students to engage in programming and to be a part of the campus community ("Association of College Unions International" 2019). Union staff seek to do this by creating new and emergent programming for a diverse array of students and build program or facilities that engage them in their interests ("2020 Renovation & Construction Showcase," 2020).

Esports, the concept of competitive video games, is a rapidly growing phenomenon amongst younger generations ("Poll, E-sports are as Big as Football," 2018). As colleges work to provide programming that focuses on the interests of young adults, esports is an area that is quickly gaining attention at many colleges. Kauweloa & Winter (2019) summarize early milestones focusing on video games and college campuses with a *Spacewars* tournament at Sanford University in 1972. However, it is not until 2015 that Robert Morris University offers the first varsity esports scholarship, and the University of California Irvine began an esports program in 2016. It is well known that students have congregated around these activities for several years, but this information illustrates that colleges have only made formal arrangements within recent years.

Other ways of viewing the expansion of esports on college campuses is through an organization setup with intent of offering support to institutions creating esports teams. The National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE) was formed in 2016 as a dedicated non-profit organization whose work focuses on the advancement of varsity level esports competition. Their work as a governing body intends to offer guidelines in areas such as scholarship and varsity level competition. At the time of writing, the online directory lists 179 member institutions and a large group of private industry partners seeking the advancement of collegiate esports (NACE, 2021).

The growth of organizations such as NACE, and colleges offering scholarships to attract skilled esports players, helps show that colleges are supportive of esports and are working to build programs. The purpose of this study is within the same scope and works to gather data that may be beneficial for the renovation of a dedicated esports arena. Following this trend may be instrumental in helping to bring new students and a service to existing students.

Therefore, the goal of this paper is to gain further insight into what students consider the defining characteristics of an esports arena, by asking questions on these aspects. Questions will center on their previous experiences that form these ideas and how these ideas can influence the design of USM's arena. This information may be used by project managers in various design phases and during final stages with décor. In addition, this information may be generalizable to other colleges seeking to provide this service to students.

Background

Discussions regarding an esports program at USM began in 2018 through the interests of various staff within the division of Student Affairs. Individuals began conducting research on the topic and working to determine the feasibility of starting a program. As staff members noticed the growing trends and impacts of this growing competitive sport, further steps were taken to gauge student interest. During the fall 2019 academic semester a student interest forum was hosted during a freshman welcome week event that resulted in much interest from incoming students. From this point, a student organization was created, and efforts began to create an official esports program. By the spring 2020 semester, the campus held an event to introduce the creation of five esports teams that would practice and compete against other institutions.

With these events and initial successes for the program, another primary aspect was the construction of facility space dedicated to esports. The Union Department at USM manages access to numerous facility spaces for the university and community. While many of the spaces are reserved for groups to host meetings and events, other spaces are dedicated to student usage. The spaces focused on student usage may provide entertainment or a community area to gather.

Statement of Problem

The issue being addressed in this paper is if student input can be integrated into the design elements of a new esports lounge or arena. As efforts to create this space come with both monetary and the time commitments of staff, it is hoped that students will gain much value from the new space. As such, to assist in this process, student voices toward

what they would like to see in such a space can be valuable. The goal of this study is to capture these voices and integrate their feedback into the overall renovation of the space.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to conduct interviews with students at the college and gain their thoughts on various aesthetic aspects of esports and gain a deeper understanding of their ideas surrounding esports. This research examines how young adults are the main consumers of esports and seeks to further understand how colleges can provide outlets for this, like traditional college sports.

Research questions

- What are the general concepts and constructs that define an esports arena?

- What is the feasibility of the location within RC Cook Union and does this location present any concerns?

- What is the importance of equipment and mixture of equipment with computers and video game consoles?

- What aspects in relation to aesthetics within the space are important?

Description of the Project

This research consists of specific interview questions developed around the broadly defined questions mentioned above. Questions relate to general concepts and constructs that define an esports arena and focus on the participant's ideas on what they think of when hearing the term esports. These questions involve both the physical characteristics of an esports arena and the aspects that stand out most to them. In addition, the questions focus on the overall size of a typical esports venue and a

participant's thoughts on the proposed location on campus. These questions are designed to help staff determine how to create an esports space into an area much smaller than a commercial esports venue and still meet the expectations of the student body.

The second question asks for additional information on the proposed location on campus. This is due to glass walls and a high traffic hallway connecting the RC Cook Union and Thad Cochran Center buildings. There was initial concern that the visibility from this glass wall may be distracting to players. However, it was recognized that this glass wall may allow other students to see the esports activities and help to promote the program. Therefore, the purpose of these questions is to gain input from students to help address this concern.

The third set of question seeks to address aspects related to the equipment and aesthetics of the space. This set of questions specifically focuses on the concept of the space having both PC computers and console video game systems. The set also focuses on determining if students wish to see a dedicated competitive arena space or if the introduction of console video games with a casual atmosphere is preferred. Also, the questions try to gather feedback to address how many computers would be required for the space or how to divide the space for accommodating both concepts of game play.

The final set of questions relate to gathering information on the aesthetics of the space. This set of questions allows participants to speak on what elements of décor or lighting they find to be important, while also trying to gather thoughts on the mice and keyboards for the computers. These devices are noted specifically due to anecdotal comments from students and others that players of the games may prefer to bring their own devices to use with the computers within the facility.

Assumptions and Limitations

1. Eagle Esports Discord channel does not restrict membership to students of the university. Therefore, it may be possible for others (friends of other students, students at other universities) to notice and sign up for the recruitment.

2. The Union Department is currently in the process of creating the esports lounge with some branding of the space currently in place.

3. Questions accurately gauge student's views

4. Covid-19 protocols in place during the time of study may limit participation and sample size.

CHAPTER II – LITERATURE REVIEW

Dimock (2019) introduces what generational cohorts are and how researchers utilize them to analyze changing viewpoints of groups. As group viewpoints change based on current circumstance, a generational cohort can help researchers understand thought processes based upon age, and the difference in viewpoints amongst age groups. In addition to introducing what generational cohorts are, the author discusses reasoning for the introduction of Gen Z and separating them from the Millennial generation. Aspects of this focus on the impact of technology's impact in comparison to previous generations.

Several authors discuss how this generation of students is much more diverse, hesitant towards accepting labels, and more open about sexuality than prior generations. Many of these individuals have grown up under the economic realities of the 2008 financial recession (Beck & Wright, 2019; Turner, 2017). This, along with the increasing price of college tuition, is creating a group of individuals that are concerned about their personal finances (Loveland, 2017). They are renting more, with less concern for materialistic comforts and a greater interest in affordability (Rudoy, 2019). Market research indicates these individuals do want to purchase a home; however, many are concerned about finances coupled the burden of student loan debt (Somero, 2019).

These trends show a generation of people who experience a different culture than generations of the past. In addition to these ideas, one of the more defining characteristics of this generation is their reliance on technology, particularly mobile platforms (Beck & Wright, 2019; Rudoy, 2019; Turner, 2017). While previous generations grew up having had exposure and usage with technology, this is the first group to grow up consumed by technology. Turner (2017) discusses the extent that Gen Z utilizes technology, spending

as much as a third of their day interacting with various internet-based platforms. Furthermore, the author notes that this consumption spans across socioeconomic demographics, and is even higher amongst minority populations than other individuals. This consumption of online, digital content is one of the prevailing aspects of this generational change (Turner, 2017).

The discussion on technology is a critical part of this Gen Z/technical cohort, as this is the medium in which these individuals interact with one another. Technology provides the way they play video games and consume online content. Numerous articles note that video games are a significant portion of their lives. Reports from the Nielsen Company indicate that 73% of Gen Z own a video game console, with 66% of millennials claiming ownership (Molla, 2017). In addition, Nielsen reports that regardless of platform, many Gen Z are playing and watching video games at higher percentages than any other generational cohort ("Millennials on Millennials," 2019).

Other sources indicate the ways that video games are impactful on this demographic. Researchers such as Woods (2013) discuss this under the idea of escapism and notes that it is a trait passed down from their Gen X parents, acknowledging that frequent engagement with video games is nothing new to this generation and a significant aspect of their lives. Beck and Wright (2019) write that Gen Z have strong relationships with their parents. These authors note that this generation may use these online platforms as their autonomous getaway (Beck & Wright, 2019). This narrative may help explain why individuals of this generation are spending so much time online and developing a rich online social community.

Further exploring the ways in which these individuals experience video games as a part of their lives shows a strong relationship. One study illustrates this subtle change in the phenomenology and how this generation is subjectively experiencing and changing the way teens and young adults are perceiving video games ("Two-Thirds of Gen Z Males," 2019). This study correlates well with previous research on this interaction, finding that 68% of males claim to be gamers and that it is a part of their identity. Additionally, results from this study show a decrease in playing video games as a competition amongst their friends and an increase in using the games as a way to spend time with established friends and establish new friendships ("Two-Thirds of Gen Z Males," 2019).

Video Games and Esports

Literature so far has examined video games and the extent to which these games play a role within the lives of the Gen Z. Studies note that much of the activity towards video games is spent viewing the games, rather than actually playing the game ("Millennials on Millennials," 2019). Esports is the label attached to many of these events (Good, 2017). Viewing this type of content is frequently streamed over websites such as twitch.tv (Gandolfi, 2016; twitch.tv, 2019). These broadcasts of video games are competitive and based around teams or individual players. Players are considered both amateur and professional, and in many ways treated similar to those in traditional sports such as baseball or football.

Defining Esports

Literature on the definition of esports reaches consensus in certain aspects of defining the term esports. Research emphasizes the defining factors of esports as

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competitive and based on the usage of computers and network equipment (Hamari &

Sjobom, 2017; Rothwell & Shaffer, 2019; Wagner, 2006;). However, the literature

remains divided on if esports is true to the term sport. Thiel and John (2018) examine

how it shares certain aspects with sports, such as the usage of standardized rules for a

specific game, while other authors justify esports as sports as the games can increase

heart rate and outcomes are based on skill rather than luck (Kane & Spradley 2017).

Hamari and Sjoblom (2017) show that the primary difference between esports and

traditional sports is the place where "outcome defining events happen," and that with

esports, the place is within a virtual world rather than the real world (p. 5). This research

indicates there is an ongoing argument to classify the phenomenon as a sport or limit it to

forms of competition. Reaching a consensus on this argument is not a primary thesis of

this paper, as previous discussions show growing interest amongst large numbers of

college-aged individuals. As such, this research desires to acknowledge these

counterarguments to prepare any professionals seeking information on the topic.

     Some research focuses on the limited muscular movements of esports, thus

researchers deny it being within the category of traditional sports due to it being a chair-

based competition (Jenny et al., 2017). Similar to games like chess, there are

resemblances to traditional sports, but there is little argument that chess is a sport.

Research such as this is better understood under social constructivist theory. This theory

implies that an objective or phenomenon is what we say it is based on a shared

understanding of it (Gergen, 1985). Funk et al. (2018) briefly discuss the historical aspect

of the word "sport" and note the term's usage with hunting. This is another activity that

may lack muscular movements as well, yet at one time was referenced as a sport.

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Research into why defining esports as a sport or not can prove to be important. Without the support of established media and governance organizations, esports may have a more difficult time gaining mainstream acceptance (Martinelli, 2019). In 2014, Chmielewski reports that the president of ESPN once announced at a conference that esports is not qualified to use the term "sports." However, this stance has changed as their website now features esports articles and a subsection of the website for esports ("ESPN," 2019). While ESPN now airs and reports on esports games and topics, it still can be considered a niche area, as the major governing body of college athletics, National College Athletic Association (NCAA), still avoids oversight of it.

The NCAA oversees the majority of varsity level athletics within America. It states its purpose is to ensure the success of student athletes and provide a governance structure ("NCAA," 2019). This group defines sports, under the Emergent Sport for Women program, as "an institutional activity, sponsored at the varsity or club level, involving physical exertion for the purpose of competition against teams or individuals within an intercollegiate competition structure "("NCAA," 2019, para 9). A second portion of the definition states that sports "[o]perate under standardized rules with rating/scoring systems ratified by at least one official regulatory agency and/or governing body" ("NCAA," 2019, para 9). Hallmann and Giel (2018) discuss this definition and find that esports fails to meet the expectations of governing bodies for college sports, although these authors acknowledge it has many of the components and they speculate that it will become a sport in the future. Accordingly, the NCAA has agreed and has not enacted a governance structure for collegiate esports (Schad, 2019). Groups such as The National Association of College Esports are working to fill this gap and offer

organization oversight and structure to colleges with official programs ("NAC Esports," 2019).

The National Association of College Esports was founded in 2016 as a member driven group to assist in the development of collegiate esports. By creating bylaws and other standards, this group is one of the first and largest groups to act as a governing body for college esports programs. Aspects of being a part of this group include student GPA requirements to be on a college team. This group offers insights and best practices toward forming and growing a team, advice on coaching, wellness, and access to industry partners to help legitimize esports within the collegiate space. In addition, the group hosts conferences to build the community of college esports ("Information Package," n.d).

Rising Popularity of Esports

Esports are rapidly becoming a widely watched spectator sport worldwide. Heaven (2014) discusses that it is quickly becoming comparable to well-established sports like football. Esports now has well-established athletes competing for significant pools of prize money in heavily viewed tournaments. This author notes as well that high school students are one of the main spectators and fans of this growing area. In a recent study on sports viewership, males within the Gen Z aged cohort prefer watching esports to other live sporting events. Also, females responded with relatively high interest. In addition, this study mirrors other research on why people are watching esports, noting such themes as spending time with friends and making new ones ("Poll: E-sports are as Big as Football," 2018). Ellefson's (2019) September 2019 report claims that streaming hours are up 41% with 746 million more hours streamed than the previous year.

This research indicates changing preferences in the Gen Z cohort from the Millennial generation. Sources indicate the extent that these individuals are utilizing and engaging with multiple technology platforms. Even changing the types of content, from traditional live sporting events on TV to streaming esports events. If this generation continues to consume esports content at a growing rate, colleges may benefit from the development of esports teams and facilities.

CHAPTER III – METHODOLOGY

This study used interviews to gather information on esports arena design. Participating students were part of the Eagle Esports Student Organization. As this organization will play a future role in esports related events, understanding their viewpoint will assist the development of the overall arena. Through open-ended questions, students provide their thoughts on topics related to design, aesthetics, and equipment. These student's perspectives are analyzed for themes that may influence the physical design of the space. Interview questions were designed to answer the following research questions.

- What are the general concepts and constructs that define an esports arena?

- What is the feasibility of the location within RC Cook Union and does this location presents any concerns?

- What is the importance of equipment and mixture of equipment with computers and video game consoles?

- What aspects in relation to aesthetics within the space are important?

Research Design

This study presents interview questions to undergraduate students using the *Discord* text, voice, and video communication platform. Discord is broadly utilized by casual and enthusiast players of competitive video games for in game and general discussion. One feature of the application is that it provides the ability to create subcategories that organize communication by topics. Within these categories, it is

common to have an announcement channel and members will post messaging related to updates or upcoming events. Through this service and announcement channel, the researcher recruited participants for the study. This platform was also used to conduct the interviews for the study.

Instrument

This study used interview techniques to ask questions to participants. These questions were developed based on departmental needs and ideas common to esports arenas. The questions themselves attempted to gather information on the students' previous experiences with esports arenas and what they would like to see in the new facility. The instrument included seventeen questions with the intention that interviews would not take longer than one hour.

Timeline

Questions were created in the Spring semester of 2020 and revisions made based on faculty reviews. As this the study involves questioning students, the researcher completed Institutional Review Board (IRB) application with The University of Southern Mississippi in February of 2020. The researcher received approval to proceed with study on September 30, 2020. Following this, the announcement was made in the Discord channel, #announcements on October 4, 2020. Interviews were conducted in November of 2020 and analysis occurred in Spring of 2021.

Assumptions/Limitations

This study worked under the assumptions that individuals in the Eagle Esports Discord channel were students at the university. However, there are no restrictions or

verifications to ensure that only students at the university joined. Friends or students from other universities may be present on this channel for communication purposes to organize esports matches or events. In addition, the Union Department, at the time of this study, had made progress towards an esports arena on campus. Students involved with this organization were knowledgeable of these activities. Assumptions also include that the questions accurately gauge student's views.

At the time of the study, Covid-19 protocols were in place and this may have impacted student participation within the group. This may have led to lower participations rates within the student organization, and therefore, fewer students taking notice of the announcements seeking students. While attempts were made to reach students through general announcements, few students elected to participate.

Participants for these interviews were undergraduate students active within the Eagle Esports channel. The announcement in the channel described the nature of the study as the opportunity to provide their thoughts on the upcoming arena. At the time of announcement, RC Cook's lounge had been renamed to the Eagle Esports Lounge with logos and other identifying images in place. Students still in the channel were then asked to email the researcher to sign up for the study.

Data Collection Procedures

Initial discussions with participants for the interview involved selecting a time and date in which both parties were available. Upon beginning the interview, the researcher mentioned that participation is voluntary, and they may quit at any time. Participants were told they could discuss anything that they wanted to inform the research

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in relation to the questions. The researcher informed the participants that their views may not necessarily be used for the project, but that the research study, once completed will be shared with Union Department Staff. In addition, benefits and risks were noted and that their responses would remain anonymous. Neither their discord screennames nor legal names would be disclosed within any of the research.

After the researcher conducted the interview with participants, research questions and answers were transferred from Discord direct messages to a word processing program for archiving. During this process, Discord screen names were removed to protect identity. This information was then analyzed for themes and provides the data for this document.

Chapter IV – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Interview questions were organized into three major themes. The first theme was composed of questions to gauge general constructs on students' thoughts regarding an esports arena. Questions within this section asked students to reflect on their experience with esports arenas, and their thoughts in relation to esports located on a college campus. The second theme related to the location of the esports arena itself. This location, at the time of study, featured a glass wall. Questions within this section attempted to gauge perceptions of being highly visible when playing esports games and if this would be a deterrent. The third theme tried to gather information on the types of gaming equipment that should or should not be within the space, specifically if the space should only be composed of PCs for game play, or if console equipment is acceptable. It also tried to quantify the number of computers that would be appropriate for an arena. The final theme asked questions related to aesthetics, focusing on lighting and the design of computers and peripheral devices.

Participants were students from the Eagle Esports Discord channel. Two participants took part in the interviews on separate dates in the Fall 2020 semester. These two interviews were coded for analysis to complete the study.

Questions & Analysis

Theme 1: General information on esports arenas and their location on college campuses

Esports arena: As a term.

Participant's answers to this question primarily focused around professional esports events. Giving reference to games and their tournaments or to the production aspects of these theatrical events. One participant speaking on the usage of lighting,

discussed that these arenas are very dim and that this design is created so spectators

notice the RGB lights from both the computers and theater lighting on the main stage. An

emphasis was placed on this colored lighting as a critical element of arena design. Other

noteworthy comments acquired from this question are in relation to furniture; the gaming

chairs used by the players are also considered to be an important design element. This

participant concluded that these arenas are intended to provoke a "futuristic," theme park

type response from the spectator.

Size

While the term arena may be a bit misleading as participants answered questions,

they did recognize the importance of having room for spectators of the activity. Noting

the comparison to traditional sporting events, that the size of the audience is "necessary

for you to have a good experience." However, it is acknowledged that college campuses

may not have the resources to fund operations of significant scale. All participants in the

study expressed interest in having enough room for spectators to view players as they

would at other college sports events.

Atmosphere

Aspects related to the aesthetic design of the space was frequently noted by both

participants to be important. As previously noted, RGB lighting, lighting from the

computer case and other areas are of importance when designing a space. Other aspects

that were brought forth in these interviews are the importance of having consistency in

the build of PCs throughout the space. These PCs need to be the same in order to provide

the area with a professional look and feel. Other aspects deemed important by one

participant are the usage of stickers and other decals to decorate the space around esports.

Design elements that are noted to be less of a concern are within peripheral devices, such as the mouse and keyboard. While these elements may be an important aspect of esports areas in their overall look and feel, they may not necessarily need to be purchased by the college creating the arena. As one participant notes, this part may be brought in by the players themselves. However, keyboards and mice will still need to be available within the space as not all students may own a keyboard and mouse.

Theme 2: Location of USM Eagle Esports Arena

One area of interest for interviewing participants for this research is regarding the location of the esports arena itself. While there are not a great number of locations to choose from, the area selected for the arena does have the advantage or disadvantage of being placed in a high visibility and trafficked location on the college campus. The location in the student union consists of two adjacent rooms, a game room and esports arena, separated by a hallway. In addition, these two room's walls that face the hallway are primarily glass, allowing individuals walking the hallway to view activity in each space.

To get an idea of student's thoughts regarding the space, questions were posed directly to students to gather information on the practicality of the location. This was done to gauge if students will find the lack of privacy during practice sessions or competitive events to be problematic. Responses indicate that they see it as a positive benefit. One participant noted that players are engrossed in the game, and therefore, not as concerned about these secondary matters. It is noted that it may be beneficial for increasing student interests toward esports, as passersby will take note of the space and may be more inclined to become involved in esports activities on campus.

Theme 3: Types of equipment, gaming PCs and consoles.

The third theme that was investigated in this study was to determine what students may expect in a combination of gaming PCs and consoles. Most esports arenas, at least considering them from a professional league perspective, will only include gaming PCs. However, this space is intended to be mixed use and the combination of gaming PCs and consoles are important to provide programming opportunities for both casual and structured gameplay. Questions relate to the mixture of PCs and gaming consoles and their preferences toward the number for each type of asset.

Comments regarding this mixture varied amongst participants. One answered directly with a number of 25 for PCs that would be needed and did not comment on console gaming devices. Another participant mentioned a lower number of computers, and a collection of three to four different consoles. However, it is noted that this would need to be based on what is currently popular on campus.

Recommendations

This research provides administration with details regarding participants' thoughts on what defines an esports arena. While the proposed location will function as more of a lounge than esports arena, specific elements from these will be incorporated into the design. This research helps to show what some of these specific features are, such as the importance of RGB lighting throughout the space and within the computers, and their necessity in defining the space. While many of these aspects may seem clear and obvious, having a student to confirm this idea can be helpful.

In addition to these ideas, the research also shows that having standardized keyboards and mice may not be a critical part of the space. One participant mentioned

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that players may prefer to bring these devices with them as they are comfortable with their own equipment. As such, these students will need to ability to connect and install their devices on the host machines throughout the space. This is a point worthy to consider if working with the IT department to create a technology policy for the esports computers and devices.

Other important aspects brought up for students and worthy of future considerations are noted in the discussion on console and gaming PCs. The student mentioned during the discussion of console gaming that it is important for the administration to be consistent with the current interest of the students in their selection of gaming consoles. As the trending games may frequently change, periodic surveys may need to be sent out sampling the students on their interests and then making changes based on the results.

Conclusions

Esports are discussed as an emergent trend that has captured the attention of younger generations. While it is still in its early years, at least in comparison to traditional college sports, it is worthy of attention of campus administration. Building facilities focused on this interest, colleges may be able to help more students become involved with campus activities and be more engaged. In addition, this type of programming may speak to students who have historically not participated in campus programming or traditional sporting events. While this does add a significant amount of work to existing employee workload or require the creation of new employees, it may be a great benefit to several students.

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APPENDIX A – Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

General

What do you think of when you hear the term esports arena?

Describe your experience with esports arenas?

What aspects of esports arenas stand out most to you?

How large do you envision an esports arena being?

What do you think of esports facilities on college campuses?

Location – Arena is projected to be in a glassed in area. These questions are to gauge

their perception of being highly visible when playing and if this may be a deterrent.

How does it make you feel when others watch you play video games?

What size group did you imagine watching you?

How long did they view your game play?

As you may know, the upcoming arena will be in the Game Room. This area is surround

by glass. How does this affect your perspective of the arena?

Mixture of PC and Console Gaming Systems

How would you like to play video games within the arena?

What do you think of a mixture of PC esports competitive games and more casual

console gaming in the same space?

Describe how you think this mixture would work?

How much of the esports arena should be dedicated to PC esports games?

How much of the arena should be dedicated to console games?

How many computers are required for an esports arena?

Aesthetics of space

Provide in detail aspects of an arena that are important to you? This can involve lighting,
wall décor, and other materials necessary for an appealing space.

How important is RGB lighting and custom LED fixtures.

How important is the design of the computer case.

How important are peripherals?

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NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.
- FACE-TO-FACE DATA COLLECTION WILL NOT COMMENCE UNTIL USM'S IRB MODIFIES THE DIRECTIVE TO HALT NON-ESSENTIAL (NO DIRECT BENEFIT TO PARTICIPANTS) RESEARCH.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: IRB-20-95
PROJECT TITLE: Eagle Esports Lounge Redesign
SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Education, Educational Research and Admin
RESEARCHER(S): William Sutphin, Holly Foster

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved
CATEGORY: Expedited
　　　　　7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: May 7, 2020

Donald Sacco, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chairperson

APPENDIX C – Student Recruitment Announcement

Discord recruitment & email announcement

Request for focus group participants to discuss renovations of the Eagle Esports Lounge. Researcher is looking for undergraduate participants to answer questions through general discussions on what they would like to see out of a redesign of lounge space. Participation is completely voluntary.

To sign up, please contact william.sutphin@usm.edu

This project has been approved by USM Institutional Review Board, protocol number (20-95).