COLLEGIATE ESPORTS

FROM FAST STARTUP TO BIG IMPACT

IT'S COMPETITION DAY!

Your school has one of the top teams in collegiate esports. Thousands are tuned in to watch the competition—students and teachers, parents, the community, alumni, recruiters, bloggers and podcasters, esports teams in high schools and colleges across the country, and sponsors.

Esports is a billion-dollar industry. With multiple gaming platforms and new games appearing constantly, esports is a program that can start big at your school and keep expanding with demand.

Esports isn't just an extracurricular activity. Your program will draw on talents in many areas of study, including athletics, science, mathematics, computer sciences and even the arts. Similarly, gaming technology can also be incorporated into the curriculum of many areas of study. In fact, in addition to scholarships, major universities have started to offer degrees in the gaming field.

The scoreboard for esports

- Nearly **646 million** people will watch esports across the globe by 2023

- Analysts expect esports will be a **$2.9 billion** industry by 2025

- In 2020, the top 25 esports scholarships were valued at **$160,000**

- The majority of esports players come from the 16-24 age group

- More than 30 percent of internet users in the 16-24 age group are esports viewers

GAME-CHANGING FLEXIBILITY

Facilities flexibility

In traditional sports, it's hard to start small. Even startup programs require building indoor and outdoor courts and fields that conform to specific regulations.

Building an esports program doesn't require years of facilities planning and bottomless budgets. Or consume acres of valuable campus real estate.

One reason your esports program can get started quickly is that a playing field can be virtually anywhere on campus. Your daytime classroom can become an esports practice space at night. And it's not just classrooms—other places on campus can become spaces for practice, playing and even competition, including:

- Communal spaces such as gyms and cafeterias
- Dormitories
- Club or activity rooms
- Pop-up venues

Fiber to the classroom creates flexible learning spaces

Another technology trend that can positively affect your esports program is our fiber-to-the-classroom offering.

Fiber to the classroom makes it easy for teachers and coaches (without special requests to maintenance or IT) to reconfigure a physical classroom for different uses. A perfect example is a classroom that's set up for a lecture during school hours and reconfigured for an esports practice after school hours.

PLAYER AND PROGRAM FLEXIBILITY

You can appeal to and attract different levels of players. This is another asset in strategizing your level of commitment. Do you want to be the best of the best from the start? Or grow your program slowly? There are players you can appeal to at every level:

Player levels of interest and proficiency

Hobbyist/enthusiast	Amateur	Varsity/professional
This player is usually someone who is a casual gamer, playing at home or in the dorm. Amateur players often play with friends or, at least, a familiar circle of fellow gamers. The hobbyist/enthusiast is a great recruiting prospect for a fledgling esports program. Grow your program with players who would like to improve their game and have only been waiting for a program to nurture their interest.	This player is more ambitious, proficient and committed to esports. Instead of playing only with friends, they may be part of club teams. They have most likely played in tournaments. Amateur players may be more accustomed to having better gaming equipment. They may learn from friends and mentors but may not yet have had the advantage of working with trainers and coaches.	This player is already—or working toward—competing at championship levels. These players are probably used to working with trainers and coaches. They may already have a reputation that attracts scholarships, recruiters, fans, broadcasters and more. These players are prime candidates for recruitment for a top-notch program. Either they'll be drawn to your reputation in esports, or they're looking for a strong commitment to building a championship team.

Scheduling flexibility

Another advantage is the flexibility in scheduling practices and games. Traditional sports usually require a commitment to practice on a strict schedule. Students and coaches can't always adjust the demands of school, home and work to these schedules. Distances can factor into sports participation, as can weather.

Esports doesn't require this kind of rigid scheduling. Distance isn't a barrier to participation, and weather conditions don't cancel games. This flexibility can be a big factor in player and fan participation—and the reach and inclusiveness that is such a compelling distinction of esports.

" Right now, our esports program is a club, so it's extracurricular. But we're developing non-credit classes that students can take. We're focusing on non-credit classes because they offer students a low-stakes opportunity to try out careers that they're interested in within the esports ecosystem and the gaming industry."

Community College in California

THE THREE Rs...

Recruitment

Esports can help your institution attract and retain students by showcasing a state-of-the-art digital campus.

Esports is already big in high schools. Your recruiters will know how to play the appeal of esports to youth.

Reputation

Few programs in higher education appeal to such a wide audience and can contribute so much, so quickly to your school's reputation. Especially if you're an early entrant with a successful esports program.

Because of the appeal of esports and its broad reach and inclusivity, your alumni may also be big fans and vocal advocates. Corporate recruiters may be interested in the skills and achievements of students involved in your esports program.
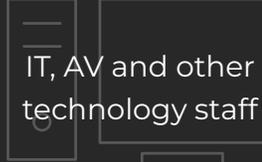
Revenue

Esports can help students financially through scholarships and tournament prizes. Investors, like companies in Silicon Valley, are contributing millions to sponsor leagues—especially college leagues sanctioned by publishers of video games.

Esports is not a single game, but a universe of games, each requiring its own expertise. Colleges organize teams to compete in specific games, such as League of Legends, the Overwatch League, and Rocket League. Some viewership estimates for the League of Legends championship put the competition close to or even higher than Super Bowl viewership (at approximately 100 million viewers). That's bankable popularity.

PLUS REACH

In addition to recruitment, reputation and revenue, the potential reach of esports can have an immeasurable impact on your school. Esports has the potential to reach more people and be far more inclusive than any program you ever imagined, including:

Hobbyists/enthusiasts, amateur, varsity/ professional esports players	Esports coaches and trainers	Parents	Remote participants
High school esports players and fans	Teachers from multiple disciplines	Your community	Fans/spectators in your school and across the esports collegiate world
College alumni	Students from multiple disciplines and all walks of life	IT, AV and other technology staff	Corporate recruiters
Podcasters, bloggers, sports writers, broadcasters	Injured players from traditional sports	College recruiters	Sponsors
Students with disabilities	Players who didn't make the cut for a traditional sports team	Professional esports teams	Video game publishers

THE ACTION YOU DON'T SEE:
THE NETWORK BEHIND THE GAME

A high-performance network is essential for any level of play. If you already have an enterprise-grade campus network, you have the foundation you need. Later in this eBook, we cover more about network capabilities and how and why they can affect the success of your esports program.

What kinds of network capabilities do you need behind the gaming scene to give your team a top playing field?

Reliable connectivity in high-density environments: The ability to connect and support a lot of gamers, as well as guests, bombarding the network simultaneously.

Express lane for delay-sensitive traffic: The mechanisms to prioritize latency-sensitive voice and video in order to eliminate jitter and lag time.

Speed: Ultra-fast, high-bandwidth Wi-Fi, switching and fiber that provides multigigabit speeds to gamers, with up to 100 Gbps uplinks.

Interference mitigation: Wi-Fi radio technologies that ensure uninterrupted play even in spaces where walls and doors can weaken or block wireless signals.

"For any digital sports, the prominent factor is latency, as the millisecond of difference is the difference between success and failure."

**CIO
Community College in Massachusetts**

RUCKUS NETWORKS: YOUR ESPORTS NETWORK EXPERTS AND GAMING ENTHUSIASTS

Ruckus Networks is an esports networking expert and unabashed fan. We understand both the game and the online playing field—a combination that makes us the best partner for your institution.

Esports programs in schools: We're a leader in the education marketplace. Primary and secondary schools, colleges and universities around the world trust RUCKUS wired and wireless networks for speed, capacity, reliability, scalability and security.

Professional sports complexes: Some of the best-known sports and entertainment complexes rely on Ruckus Networks technologies, including the Golden 1 Center in California, the Ford Center in Texas, and the Entertainment & Sports Arena in Washington, D.C.

Professional esports teams: We sponsor the Philadelphia Fusion, a professional esports team that competes in the Overwatch League (OWL). The number of OWL players is estimated at over 350,000.
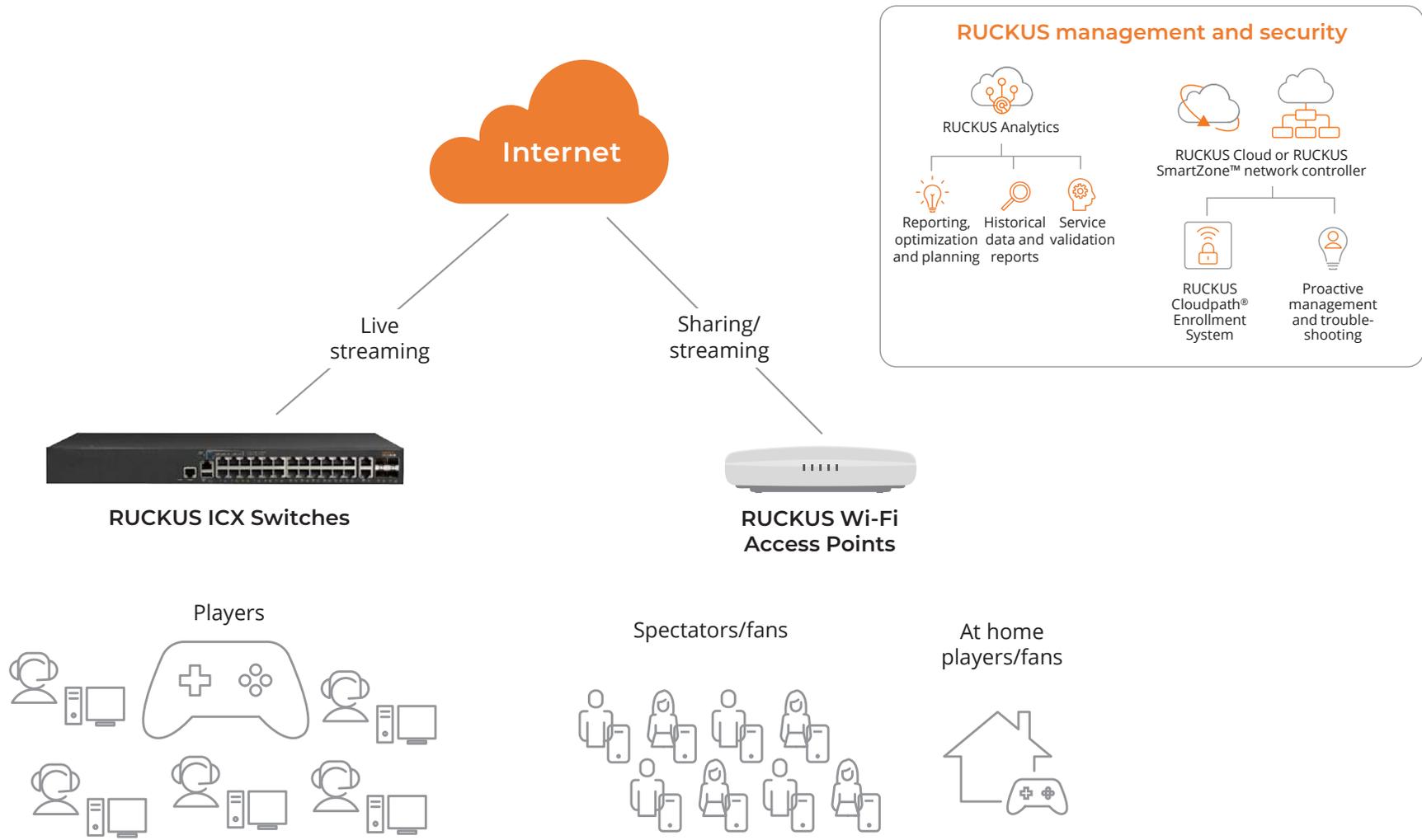
If you're just thinking about starting an esports program at your institution, we can help you right from the planning stages. If you're expanding your program, or want to add or strengthen capabilities, we can help. You can also optimize and enhance your existing RUCKUS network by adding capabilities (like secure guest access), scaling capacity, adding analytics and upgrading to Wi-Fi 6 access points (APs).

AN ESPORTS NETWORK PERFORMANCE CHECKLIST

With an esports program, a strong network foundation is essential to success. Even the highest level of player proficiency can't compensate for even the slightest degree of pings, latency and jitter.

Wi-Fi radio technology for coverage, connectivity and interference mitigation	RUCKUS Wi-Fi is known for patented technology that optimizes radio signals, including: • BeamFlex+® smart antenna system uses a multitude of built-in antenna patterns to ensure the best path to client devices, including mobile devices that constantly change position • ChannelFly® uses live channel activity to find and switch to the channels that will provide the optimum throughput • SmartCast® quality of service (QoS) engine maximizes the reliability and performance of delay-sensitive applications such as voice and video

Wi-Fi bandwidth for connectivity, performance and reliability	• RUCKUS Wi-Fi provides the bandwidth for the demands of esports, as well as the participation of everyone involved in a practice or competition, including:
	
	  – Team members – Administration
	  – Guests – Bloggers, podcasters and broadcasters
	  – Coaches – Sponsors

Product choices for indoor wireless	• Choose from a large portfolio of indoor and outdoor APs, including Wi-Fi 6 and Wi-Fi 6E APs as well as private LTE and inbuilding 4G and 5G DAS solutions
Switching and fiber speed and capacity	• Stackable multigigabit switches provide high-capacity, low-latency throughput for voice, video and data • Fiber cabling provides up to 100 Gbps uplinks • Fiber to the classroom supports flexible learning spaces—making it easy for teachers and coaches to repurpose a physical classroom for an esports practice or competition
Management	• RUCKUS SmartZone network controllers simplify the complexity of managing your wired and wireless equipment • RUCKUS Cloud provides AI-enabled converged network management-as-a-service
Security	• RUCKUS Cloudpath® Enrollment System provides secure onboarding, the ability to set up secure guest access for competitions, and protection against hackers
Analytics and reporting	• Use RUCKUS Analytics for tracking and measurement of network and applications utilization for reporting, optimization and planning

STARTING OR EXPANDING YOUR ESPORTS PROGRAM

RUCKUS management and security

RUCKUS Analytics

Reporting, optimization and planning

Historical data and reports

Service validation

RUCKUS Cloud or RUCKUS SmartZone™ network controller

RUCKUS Cloudpath® Enrollment System

Proactive management and trouble-shooting

Internet

Live streaming

Sharing/streaming

RUCKUS ICX Switches

RUCKUS Wi-Fi Access Points

Players

Spectators/fans

At home players/fans

RESOURCES

Learn more about how you can create a high-profile esports program for your institution:

Contact your local CommScope representative for more information:
commscope.com/contact-us/

Find out more about public financing options for programs like esports:
commscope.com/da/steps-to-public-funding/

See all the ways we support innovation and success in higher education.
https://www.commscope.com/solutions/solutions-by-industry/higher-education