



Photo credit: Ethan Seifert

Education

Making esports accessible to all

Ohio University

Building an inclusive, welcoming space on campus for gaming enthusiasts with Lenovo Esports solutions and services.



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Who is Ohio University?

Ohio University is the oldest public research university in the state, with a 200-year tradition of academic excellence. With 13 colleges and 27 research centers, the university delivers more than 250 undergraduate and graduate courses to a community of 28,000 students online and on campus.

OHIO
UNIVERSITY

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The Challenge

Once seen as a niche interest, competitive gaming has exploded in popularity in recent years. Today, esports is a billion-dollar entertainment phenomenon, with high-profile games attracting hundreds of millions of viewers from around the world.

With interest in esports booming, colleges and universities are eager to build competitive esports into their athletic and academic programs to attract students. This includes Ohio University, which recently launched an esports program and opened a state-of-the-art esports facility on campus.

“We knew that demand from students was there. As a matter of fact, there was already a thriving gaming community at Ohio University; our Bobcat Esports Club has been an active, welcoming presence on campus for many years. What we lacked was a place for students interested in gaming to come together.”

Dr. Jeff Kuhn

Director of Esports, Ohio University



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“If you like music, books, movies, theater, there are places on campus to go and gather with that community. Although video games are the dominant media industry, we didn’t have that communal space for people. That’s what we wanted our esports program to provide.”

Dr. Jeff Kuhn

Director of Esports, Ohio University

Making esports mainstream

First, Kuhn pitched the idea of an esports team and facility to the university's Academic Innovation Accelerator—a program that empowers faculty to pursue pilot projects that enhance both the quality and reach of an Ohio University education.

“My goal was to formalize what students were already doing on campus and in their free time,” says Kuhn. “Once we got the trustees on board, I was tasked with developing the program and engaging vendors to build a state-of-the-art esports arena. We wanted a vendor that not only had great hardware, but also a thorough understanding and experience of the esports industry. That’s exactly what we found in Lenovo.”



“On campus, our Office of Information Technology and specifically Papa Owusu-Kwarteng, who leads Learning Spaces Technology, were instrumental in forming our partnership with Lenovo and others.”

Dr. Jeff Kuhn

Director of Esports, Ohio University

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“At Lenovo, our primary objective for esports is the success of the school’s esports program and its students. Since every school has different goals and needs, we leverage our experienced esports professionals to help a school build or expand their program to whatever extent they need. From installation and design, to operating, managing, and automating an arena, or just picking out the correct gaming PCs and peripherals, our consultative methodology lays out a framework for a school to succeed.”

Jeff Palumbo

Senior Global Esports and CTE Manager, Lenovo



Building a best-in-class arena

Ohio University engaged Lenovo's esports consultant for advice on setting up the esports program and designing the infrastructure. The university worked with long-time technology partner CDW to build the esports arena, and to equip it with high-end Lenovo Legion gaming towers and monitors.

Today, the esports arena is split into two main sections: a community space and a varsity area. The community space, furnished with 30 Lenovo Legion T7i PCs as well as popular games consoles, is open for all students to enjoy and hosts regular community events.

Hardware

Lenovo Legion T7i Tower
Lenovo Legion Y25-25 24.5"
Widescreen Gaming Monitor
Lenovo Legion Gaming Control
Mouse Pad
Lenovo ThinkStation P620 Tower
Lenovo ThinkSystem SR570 Server

Software

ggLeap
ggRock

Services

Lenovo Consulting Services
Lenovo Warranty Support

The varsity area features 12 Lenovo Legion T7i PCs reserved for members of the university's four esports teams, as well as a spectator area where students can sit and watch matches. The teams are members of the Mid-American Conference's (MAC) Esports Collegiate Conference and compete in weekly matchups with other universities.

The varsity area also includes two Lenovo ThinkStation P620 workstations, equipped with AMD Ryzen Threadripper Pro processors, used to live stream tournaments and competitions on platforms such as Twitch.

“The Lenovo systems come with a three-year support warranty, but we’ve never had to use it. The hardware is rock-solid. Because the Lenovo Legion systems run so reliably, we’re free to focus on the student experience.”

Dr. Jeff Kuhn

Director of Esports, Ohio University

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Results

The esports initiative has proven a huge success, with more than 500 students using the facility in the first semester alone.

“The arena is at capacity every single day,” confirms Kuhn. “On any given evening, the space is full of people gaming and socializing. We know that esports events were already happening in dorms and classrooms, but now we have a dedicated space on campus that serves as the focal point of gaming culture. The response from students has been fantastic.”



500+ unique esports arena users



1,500% increase in social media impressions, including 51,000 Twitter impressions



Doubled Twitch viewership with >40,000 watched minutes in first semester

Ohio University expects its thriving esports program to help with enrollment. “It’s already helping us to attract new students to the university,” says Kuhn. “When applicants need to narrow it down between two or three different schools, student societies and campus facilities can be the deciding factor. Our esports program is a great differentiator.”

The university also ties esports into academic offerings such as its VR and game development major and esports certificate, which includes event organizing, marketing, broadcasting, game development, and business-related esports topics. Students get hands-on experience of the technology used in the industry, helping them to foster valuable skills and lay the foundations for a career in esports—and many other industries besides.





Photo credit: Ethan Seifert

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“Even if they’re not playing on the team, students can get involved behind the scenes in broadcasting or social media, for example. There’s space for everyone and students can learn skills that will be valuable in whatever sector their future career takes them, not just esports.”

Dr. Jeff Kuhn

Director of Esports, Ohio University

Leveling up

Looking ahead, Ohio University plans to make esports even more inclusive, as Kuhn explains: “I want to tackle one of the biggest challenges with esports. The AP reports that 80% of esports scholarships go to men, and we can and should do better. So, I’m working with campus partners to reach out to students across the university to further bolster engagement with the space.

“We’re going to make sure that everybody knows they can come into esports. Everyone is welcome. We get a lot of people who say they’re not very good at games. Our message is: it doesn’t matter, just come on in and play.”



Why **Lenovo**?

As the university's trusted PC provider, Lenovo was a natural choice of vendor for this project.

Kuhn recalls: "We were very impressed with the Lenovo Legion T7i tower, particularly its performance and easy upgradability. But it was Lenovo's esports expertise and consulting that really sealed the deal. They provided valuable insight into what other colleges are doing, which helped me to win over key internal stakeholders and bring the esports initiative to life."

In addition to gaming PCs and peripherals and consulting services, Lenovo also provided the university with ggLeap and ggRock software for management and security of the environment, running on a Lenovo ThinkSystem SR570 server—a complete end-to-end solution for esports.

Lenovo provides ongoing support and even sponsors the university's esports team jerseys. "The players love the new jerseys, which arrived just in time for our semi-final Valorant match in the Esports Collegiate (ESC) Conference. It gave the team a real morale boost."



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“Our esports arena, powered by Lenovo Legion, gives students a place to come and make friends through a shared love of gaming.”

Dr. Jeff Kuhn

Director of Esports, Ohio University



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How do you build gaming into your athletic and academic programs?

Bringing people together with
a Lenovo eSports program.

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