

Hello! Thank you for listening in today. My name is April Welch and I am the Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and the Executive Director of the Esports and Digital Arts Center at the Illinois Institute of Technology. I am looking for additional resources and ways to bring our center to the next level.

According to New Zoo

- The number of gamers worldwide is still on the rise and will exceed three billion by 2023.
- The global games market will generate revenues of \$159.3 billion in 2020, a +9.3% year-on-year increase.
- Markets in the Asia-Pacific region will generate \$78.4 billion in 2020, up +9.3% year on year

So, what is esports you may ask. In the Winter 2020 edition of the American Journal of Play, an article called The Rise of Massive Multiplayer Online Games, Esports, and Game Live Streaming An Interview with T. L. Taylor - When asked what is esports? She replies **“Simply put they are a form of competitive digital gaming. My definition isn’t tied to a specific genre or abstract formalization but focuses on the social organization around a title and competition and whether or not a community frames it as an esport.”**



At Illinois Tech we have an amazing esports program. There are over 670 people active on our Discord Server today. Our motto is Competition, Community, Creation. Our approach strives to create a welcoming inclusive gaming community. This semester we have teams for League of Legends, Valorant, Hearthstone, DOTA 2, WoW, Apex Legends, Overwatch, CS:GO, Super Smash Brothers, Rocket League, Rainbow Six: Siege, and As recently as last semester we had Fortnite, and PUBG. We still have players for those titles and a community on Discord for those and more including Starcraft Brood Wars, Minecraft, Halo, Splatoon, Destiny 2 and WoW (World of Warcraft) We are a student driven organization so our teams that compete represent what the students are interested in. For the major games we have multiple teams playing at different levels. We have community built around the whole esports ecosystem. We have students who are more focused on our twitch channel and streaming, we have students who do the artwork for banners and promotional materials, we have student who like to play on their own mostly but they join us for events. We have over 100 students active on competitive teams playing against other colleges and traveling for tournaments. Statistics: Hearthstone - top 20 in regional bracket, League - 75% win rate in national bracket, Fortnite - currently in top 200 in the world for solos, Competitive members are top 10% of each game’s playerbase. So why should you care? Esports is a great spectator sport and casual gaming is great for stress relief. I would argue that most everything the students in our gaming communities are developing will help the grow as a person while developing more confidence, better communication skills, the ability to focus, the ability to recover from a loss, and the ability to practice. Our gamers are developing all the abilities needed to excel at school and land their first job. The digital arts side of our center is designed to give students a place for art, creative expression and the technical mastery of skills that allow them to express themselves. We have held summer camps teaching Unity, we will be doing a series on the visualization of data and teaching R, Google Data Studios, Flutter, AWS, Microsoft Azure, WordPress and other platforms that give students practical experience and completed projects to talk about in their first job interviews. We plan to work closely with the student orgs and identify what the students want to learn and then do the work to offer the co-curricular experiences that lead to demonstrable competencies. Competence leads to confidence. We also want to continue to stay connected to the corporations in the space like Twitch. In the summer of 2019 Twitch representatives and a pro streamer came to campus to talk about all the different opportunities streaming on Twitch affords. My 14 yr. old god-nephew has over 14K followers and a steady stream of income from his Twitch channel. We have students who have paid off their student loans using Twitch, YouTube and other social media outlets. We would like to have people who are actually doing that teach more of our students how to do it. We also want to use the framework of gaming to help people make a tangible plan for what they want to accomplish in life. We want to help our students be deliberate about identifying what they want from life, finding mentors and acquiring the skills that will get them where they want to be. For our faculty we want to be a resource that offers lectures about AR, VR and XR. We did a game dev for the Oculus workshop. There are faculty members in all different colleges with all different backgrounds doing work that connects with the digital arts. We would like to host events and have resources that bring people together. At the end of the day my intention is to provide events, projects and learning opportunities for our students and the Bronzeville community. We want to encourage students to create, explore, read and develop the competencies they need for a happy prosperous life. ~April Welch 11/2020