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**Contact:**  
Keith Pierce, APR  
Director of Public Affairs and Media Relations  
Old Dominion University  
Office: 757-683-5005  
k1pierce@odu.edu

## **ODU to Launch Esports Program**

*The University will be the first 4-year public institution in Virginia with a varsity esports program*

**Norfolk, VA** – (November 1, 2019) – Old Dominion University will become the first four-year public institution in Virginia to join the world of esports with a new varsity program beginning in the fall of 2020.

Managed by the Department Recreation & Wellness, ODU's Esports Program will be a member of the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE), which has more than 160 institutional members across the country.

"Formal and informal varsity esports teams have grown significantly across the country over the past several years," said Grant Deppen, assistant director of intramural sports. "Seventy-five percent of young people between the ages of 13 and 17 play games on a regular basis."

The rapid growth of esports leagues across North America, Europe and Asia have made millions in prize money and live-streaming deals. In July, 16 year old Kyle Giersdorf of Pennsylvania won \$3 million as the champion of the Fortnite World Cup. Through varsity esports, ODU students can win prizes or scholarship funds from event organizers based on their performance in worldwide tournaments.

The Webb University Center will be the home of the esports program. Roughly 2,400 square feet will be retrofitted with high-end gaming computer systems and consoles available for recreational use by all students and varsity teams. The space will also include a section that allows the varsity competitions to be broadcast and streamed online.

"There are two large gaming student organizations on campus currently; the ODU Esports Club and the Super Smash Association. The ODU Esports Club plays competitively in Rocket League, League of Legends, Overwatch, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and others," Deppen said.

In addition to a section of the space for live streaming competitions of the varsity teams, computers equipped with game design software will support student academic and entrepreneurial game development opportunities.

"We see the esports and gamification phenomenon happening at all levels of education and professional development," Deppen said. "This program and facility will provide significant opportunities for students to hone their skills for majors such as game design studies, graphic design, sport management, cybersecurity, modeling & simulation, computer engineering and computer science and many of the other academic disciplines that the University offers."

For more information, contact Grant Deppen, assistant director, Recreation & Wellness [gdeppen@odu.edu](mailto:gdeppen@odu.edu) or visit [odu.edu/esports](http://odu.edu/esports).

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**About Old Dominion University:**

Old Dominion University is Virginia's entrepreneurial-minded doctoral research university with more than 24,000 students, rigorous academics, an energetic residential community and initiatives that contribute \$2.6 billion annually to the Commonwealth's economy.