

# College becomes 3rd in nation to launch competitive gaming

By Bailey VenJohn  
Staff reporter

eSports. It's in the game. That saying will probably bring memories of the guy's voice before a sports video game saying, "EA Sports... it's in the game." So why the change to eSports rather than EA?

eSports is short for electronic sports, a new program that Southwestern College is introducing.

"It's basically computer sports," said Zenas Lopez, eSports coach.

Computer sports is a new thing to colleges, but not to the world.

Lopez said, "eSports really took off in Korea a few years ago. On the other side of the world it is huge. People that are professional players are considered rock stars. We're talking about million dollar contracts. They're getting paid equivalent to our major league athletes. In the United States it just picked up about three years ago."

Southwestern will be just the third college in the nation to offer scholarships to students for participation in eSports. The scholarships will offer \$5,000 each year.

Promotion for this new opportunity for students has officially begun but scholarships will start next year. There is one person who is an exception to this rule. Nick Carlson, computer science sophomore, received the scholarship for this semester because he was a new student.

Marla Sexson, vice president for enrollment management, has been working on spreading the

word about Southwestern College and the new eSports program.

Sexson said, "We are promoting the program through a way that the student's interested in eSports will see it. We have put it as ads on online gaming sites and on social media. We also just put out a press release about it."

She said they also make sure to inform new students about the opportunity when they come for visits and if they are interested in it they are given the opportunity to talk with the people involved about it.

Tom Jacobs, division chair of computer science, sees this as a good opportunity for the college because of the strong computer science program we have and the amount of interest that students have shown in competitive gaming. Lopez also sees it as a great opportunity for SC.

"I think the connections that we have with the Chinese students is an amazing opportunity to recruit more from there. Also, I feel like most colleges don't do enough for the undecided person. There's so many who are in sports or theatre. This is kind of a way of being able to get more students to come to college because they actually enjoy something," said Lopez.

Jacobs said the goals for the first year are for it to be successful and for the program to expand.

Competitive video gaming is done with a variety of games. The one SC will be competing in for now is "League of Legends."

Lopez said for now they are keeping it small and focused on



Anthony Barraza, business graduate, plays "League of Legends" with his fellow teammates. (Jonahs Joudrey/Collegian Photographer)

one game, but they hope to expand our teams to compete in more games.

"League of Legends," or as it is known for short, "LOL," is a quite popular game around campus. There is an "LOL" club that meets once a month and is where the idea to compete came about.

"We started the club last year and eventually we got people who started to play at a higher performance level and I was starting to see that we might be able to have a competitive team. But it's obviously not for just anybody who plays the game, it's the top players. When we started talking about the possibility of having a team some of the students came to me and mentioned they were interested so we said, 'OK, let's do it,'" said Lopez.

Lopez guessed there are probably about 60 to 70 students who "LOL" on their own time and that they usually have about 40 people come to their monthly meetings.

So how does this competitive gaming work?

For "LOL" specifically it is teams of five players playing against each other. Lopez described it as kind of like a capture the base kind of strategy. You push through towers and get to the main base to destroy it and you win.

"It's kind of the equivalent to playing chess, team chess."

As far as traveling goes for

games like the athletics teams do, eSports is handled differently.

Lopez said there is a mix, sometimes you travel for tournaments and others you can just play from where you are.



Last semester a group of five students competed in a tournament in the College Star League. They made it to the finals, but had to forfeit because all of the team members were traveling over break and wouldn't make it back for the game.

Typically, a tournament will start out online and teams play from what would be considered their home court. In major collegiate tournaments, when you get to the top tier, or the champion-

ship, they fly you out to California to play at the actual gaming company's studio.

For the Southwestern team, they are currently working on creating a room in the back of the TV station for the students to compete in. Until the room is finished they will play in the Christy computer lab. The room in the TV Station will be set up on its Wi-Fi connection so they will not have to deal with lag.

Tryouts for the team will be held at the end of this month, January 30. Sign-ups will start at 6:30 p.m. and close at 7 p.m. They will play through the night.

The tryouts will consist of a one versus one tournament. Lopez said they will be looking at the basics of how people play. Anyone who is interested is invited to compete in the tryouts.

Bailey VenJohn is a junior majoring in communication. You may email her at bailey.venjohn@sckans.edu.



Steven Stogner, computer science junior, practices his gaming skills during a friendly scrimmage. (Jonahs Joudrey/Collegian Photographer)

**Flu Shots Available**  
Most insurance accepted,  
including out-of-state

Van Coble, DPh  
Angela Norton, RPh  
Kayla Dutton, RPh

**Health Center**  
PHARMACY  
"Service You Deserve from the Pharmacy You Trust"

722 Wheat Road  
(620) 221-7850  
healthcenterpharmacy.com