

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

University of Washington eSports Community

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OBJECTIVE: ESTABLISH TEAMS THAT WILL GIVE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON THE BEST CHANCE TO WIN.

Current Solution

University of Washington's League of Legends team is currently chosen based off a round-robin tournament system hosted by "The Purple Caster Minions," UW's League of Legends club. Any team that meets the eligibility criteria can join and the victor of this tournament is the team that will represent UW in the League of Legends collegiate scene. Teams for other games are either supported by other UW clubs or are independently organized and largely isolated from each other.

Pros & Cons of Solution

Pros

- Teams organized under respective UW clubs have specialized knowledge regarding the finer details involved within their game and /should/ be able to make educated choices on who will be the best team.
- Teams organized under respective UW clubs have a direct reach to students interested in each game.
- Round-Robin Tournament has an element of fairness to it, everyone feels they had a chance to represent UW that wished to try.
- Teams are already composed and as a result have a natural synergy between players.

Cons

- With each UW club running teams, there is no quality control for teams and the process for choosing teams varies, "anyone" can represent UW even if they aren't a strong representation of it.
- High turnover, the team that played last year has no obligation to play again next year or another team may suddenly replace them.
- Individual talent is hidden due to the team nature of most games. Many teams are successful because of one or two core players that are mechanically and tactically superior. As a result, players who are less skilled than those on other teams may advance in the round-robin tournament resulting in the victorious team not representing "the best of the best" on an individual level.
- Some players are disenfranchised. Many people simply do not have a team to play on despite being of a high skill level, as a result these players are not given an adequate chance to represent UW.

- No plan for games that don't have a club directly associated with it. There are many emerging competitive games that don't have a UW club associated with it but are offering high level competition for Universities. With the current solution, these games will either fall through the cracks or UW will be represented by a team that has had not been tested to be the best team to represent UW.

Analysis of Current Solution

The current system works as a baseline to ensure that University of Washington is represented in eSports but does not provide adequate support to finding the team that will "BEST" represent UW. Additionally, by having different clubs and personnel run team selection, the standards, abilities, and branding throughout different games is not consistent making it difficult to ensure that these teams are a "true" representation of UW's student body. Clubs often have direct networks to potential players due to their direct correlation to the game making it easier to find people who will be great fits for the team and is currently one of the reasons why they are helping facilitate this selection process.

For a solution to see improved results in this objective, it will need to ensure that its tryout process is based on individual performance instead of team performance. While many preconstructed teams see benefits in the form of synergy between players, the technical baseline that these elite players exhibit will be more effective in the long run and, when practicing together, will eventually see those same benefits of synergy but with more skilled players. Additionally, the process of team selection needs to involve existing clubs, these clubs have a direct connection to many of the players that would potentially play or support the team therefore it is imperative that they have a connection to the team.

PROVIDE SUPPORT AND RESOURCES TO ASSIST PLAYERS IN MEETING PERSONAL AND TEAM GOALS.

Current Solution

The resources currently offered to teams is fairly minimal. Any support offered to a team is largely provided by UW video game clubs and the efforts of players and personnel within the team. Most of the time, these teams are also independently run by the players within the team or by personnel that they choose to bring on. The amount of people that they bring on varies by team as well. Additionally, goal setting, team structure and management is set entirely by the team as well, meaning that the format and expectations for each team are not standardized and are sometimes absent entirely.

Pros

- Teams will have reduced conflict as they are the ones deciding the structure and methodology of how they will approach the game.
- Team needs vary by game and there is no one-size fits all approach that will work perfectly for each team. Therefore, letting teams choose their own support and resources lets them get, at minimum, the support and resources they need to function.

Cons

- High chance for favoritism to occur due to team's choosing their players and personnel resulting in a team that may not be the strongest UW is capable of.
- There are no set standards for practicing, team goals, or "how" they practice. Collegiate eSports is becoming increasingly competitive and these standards need to be established in order to ensure UW teams keep up with other universities.
- There is little support or resources for conflict resolution currently available. If a team ends up having an interpersonal conflict, finding a solution becomes very difficult due to there not being an outside authority that has the final say on verdicts.
- There is little room for emerging player development as teams currently can't afford to spend time working with people who will not create an immediate value increase to their team.
- There is little to no oversight to ensure that teams are fulfilling their duty to be the best possible team at UW and if these duties are not being met there is little that can be done to change that.

Analysis of Current Solution

The current solution currently being used to give teams resources and support is largely one that doesn't physically exist. There is no current process actively being used to give teams the resources and support they need but rather unorganized efforts when those things are needed. None the less, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of doing "nothing" as much as it is to change something. Based on this it seems there is large room for improvement when it comes to this objective and I believe that a for a solution to be considered effective it needs to completely overhaul the current approach to how we support and manage teams at UW.

DEVELOP PLAYERS AND PERSONNEL TO ENSURE THE LONG-TERM SUCCESS OF UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON IN ESPORTS

Current Solution

Purple Caster Minions has a vested interest in promoting eSports within the UW community however their only active development program currently in place is a League of Legends player mentorship program and participating as an officer within their organization. Neither of these provide the type of development required for competitive players, managers, or coaches.

Analysis of Current Solution

In order for UW to remain a dominate force within collegiate eSports, we must develop the next generation of players and coaches to fill the shoes of those who graduate. By doing this we gain an advantage as our players, coaches, and managers will be able to hone and improve their skills at a rate that is faster than what they would be capable of on their own. Currently, there are no adequate programs or process that fulfill this objective. This objective can primarily be met by ensuring that there is at least some kind of transition from year to year for our eSports teams. By changing team cores every year, UW essentially starts over again in chemistry and progress.

REPRESENT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON AND ITS STUDENTS IN A MANNER THAT REFLECTS THE VALUES OF OUR SCHOOL AND DEMONSTRATES PROFESSIONALISM.

Current Solution

Teams currently will take on their own brand or the brand of the club that supports them and have control over all aspects of their brand. Additionally, opportunities to promote their teams is often the burden of those on the team or are found by coincidence and outside forces.

Pros:

Cons

- Since many of the clubs have different brands and teams are not allowed to specifically take on the "University of Washington" name, there is not a consistent brand that people recognize for our eSports teams.
- The responsibility for branding and promoting lies on the team itself, it is more important for people on the team to primarily be focus on playing the game and improving.
- Current brands are either nonexistent or unprofessional, they don't inspire a feeling of professionalism or UW's values.

Current Solution Analysis

By not having a consistent brand or message to associate with our eSports teams, UW become more difficult to find and remember within eSports. Additionally, by having multiple inconsistent brands we are dividing the focus between teams rather than having a united front for all of our teams. Lastly, the minimal amount of branding and promotion that is being done for teams is primarily done by people on the team, who have other matters that they should be more concerned with. A solution to this objective will ideally take the branding responsibility out of the hands of players and redistribute it to a role more adequately suited to deal with the responsibility.

LOBBY RELEVANT PARTIES FOR RECOGNITION AND INCREASED SUPPORT FROM WITHIN UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATION.

Current Solution

The lobbying for recognition and support from UW administration has largely been an undertaking by the Purple Caster Minions and their officers. Other clubs and individuals have also been engaged in this type of lobbying however there does not appear to be a united front at this moment in time.

Pros

- Having clubs strive for their individual needs allows them to receive the type of support they need immediately.

Cons

- The interest of these clubs doesn't always directly with eSports teams and as a result teams are not always directly represented by these clubs.
- Clubs are generally more social and may not even think to lobby for certain needs of eSports teams.
- By not having a united front, the eSports and Video Game community looks unorganized and unprofessional.

Current Solution Analysis

While there are attempts to reach this objective, the potential benefits of an organized effort to achieve this objective are absolutely massive, the current processes to achieve this objective are currently in early development and as a result there has not been much progress in this area.