E-Sports Team

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A relatively new competitive sport is sweeping through college campuses and WKU is helping lead the charge.

The players are not your typical athletes as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

Scholarships, tournaments, college rivalries. Sounds like a traditional college sport but there’s nothing traditional about it. Gaming has become more than just a hobby. In fact, WKU sees it’s Esports team as a retention initiative that’s already paying off.

“It’s a whole population of students that up until now were not represented.”

WKU’s eSports team has more than doubled in size since last semester.

“We have grown the program from twelve players to 31 players.”

“We have three different teams, we have Overwatch, League of Legends and Rocket league.”

Starting as a club more than five years ago, it’s now an eSports program which is more like a traditional athletic sport.

“You do scrimmages, you have a coach and everyone is there for the effort of playing the game competitively.”

They even have a larger space. This room located in the bottom of McCormack Hall was donated by Housing and Residence Life.

“This room is a definite improvement than the room they had before and so it really shows that they are starting to invest back into this.”

“Obviously we play online but it’s very nice to be able to still be here in person. Sometimes after a match we can stop playing for a second and talk about how we can improve.”

Scholarship money is provided to all 28 players and the three coaches.

“We want everyone to know that WKU has other engaging opportunities for students who don’t quite fit the traditional routes to scholarships.”

“It’s a different kind of athlete and now they have a place where they can have a community of their own.”

And engage their competitive spirit.

“I played lacrosse in high school and there was competition in that of course and now I have eSports. I think it’s really cool to be able to compete and play against these colleges.”

A different kind of athlete but the same WKU pride.

“We are making good Hilltoppers, these Hilltoppers just also know how to beat you in a video game (laughs).”

Unseld says the team already has a 95 to 100 % retention rate from last years scholarship players. The eSports team will be actively recruiting high school students who may not have otherwise considered WKU.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.