



UCI Esports



2017-2018

INCLUSIVITY PLAN

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Introduction

The last two years have witnessed a tremendous rise in esports on college campuses in the US (Wingfield, 2014). Growing out of student led campus clubs and organizations and now evolving into organized intercollegiate programs, competitive video gameplay is rapidly transitioning from popular student pastime to formal competitive spectator sport following trends in the professional sports arena both here in the US and abroad. In esports, players compete individually or on teams on video game titles ranging from multiplayer online battle arenas (MOBAs) such as *League of Legends* to first person shooters like *Overwatch* to classic fighting games like *Super Smash Bros*. Viewership for such competitions has exploded, rising 43% from 204 to 292 million in the last two years alone (Lofgren, 2017). As the popularity of this new pastime skyrockets and club leagues become varsity sports, universities are having to rapidly catch up with student demand in order to attract and keep a technologically adept incoming student body.

University of California Irvine has joined the game, with premier space in the student center now serving as an esports arena for the student body and sponsor-raised scholarship money offered to 11 undergraduate top esports athletes. As the first major research university to legitimize and accommodate the esports movement, the entire nation has its eye on UCI. National press given to our efforts over this past academic year has only increased: *ESPN*, *LA Times*, *New York Post*, and other news and tech outlets that reach a broad audience. As such, UCI is positioned as a national leader in this space. As collegiate esports flourishes, UCI is branded as the “big name” to watch (Chan, 2016).

Yet, a significant challenge faces esports, collegiate, professional, and amateur leagues alike. While participation of women in computer and video gameplay in the US has remained remarkably steady over the last decade, hovering around 40%, the diversity of players and fans of esports remains low: Only 15% of the viewer audience for esports is female and only 35% is non-white (Statista, 2017a, 2017b). Few empirical studies of the lack of diversity have been published yet, but leading esports scholar Taylor (2017) suggests that a primary cause is the toxicity of the esports community culture toward non-male, non-white players. The esports community has a checkered history of racist, sexist discourse and online harassment of female players. To date, there are very few coordinated and institutionalized efforts to impactfully and intentionally address the issue. As such, we see an opportunity and obligation for UCI to lead in this newly emerging collegiate sports scene.

UCI has a long standing commitment to serve as a national leader and global model of inclusive excellence in all aspects of campus life, including and especially collegiate sports programs and

undergraduate student life. Excellence through diversity defines our campus community; our new esports program is no exception. Through UCI Esports' commitment to competition, academics, community, and entertainment, we hope to set an example that is so far missing in the professional, collegiate and amateur arena. Our goal is to demonstrate our leadership in inclusion and esports by tackling the challenge of inclusion in esports head on. Toward these ends, we established the "Diversity and Inclusion in Esports Task Force" on campus in March 2017. Comprised of selected UCI leadership, faculty, students and alum, this task force was charged with developing a strategy for addressing the challenge of diversity and inclusion within the UCI Esports program.

This document, the UCI Esports Inclusivity Plan 2017-2018, details the outcomes of their deliberations. Here, we outline our strategy to increase inclusion and therefore diversity among the UCI Esports Program. UCI is a leader in campus equity, diversity, and inclusion. We are radically committed to inclusive excellence in all our programs and esports is no exception. This commitment is fundamental to advancing our campus mission as a public research university. We believe that esports has the opportunity to create a competitive environment that transcends geography, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, and religion. As esports continues to evolve, it is vital that teams, schools, game developers, industry and other stakeholders commit to making esports accessible to people of all backgrounds and identities. Our goal is to serve as a model for other organizations to help make changes by leading the way.

References

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Task Force

The UCI Esports Task Force for Diversity and Inclusion is charged with authoring and overseeing the implementation of a coherent plan for increasing the diversity and inclusivity within our new esports program on campus. The goal of this committee is to produce appropriate goals and measures for an equitable and inclusive esports program as well as a realistic timeline for implementation. The task force is comprised of UCI leadership, faculty, staff, student, and alumni representatives, each of whom bring expertise and experience to this effort. The committee met every few weeks during the drafting of this document and will continue to meet on an ad hoc basis during the 2017-2018 academic year. This report is a working document; questions, comments, and suggestions are welcome and can be directed to Dr. Constance Steinkuehler, Committee Chair, const@uci.edu.

Constance Steinkuehler	Faculty of Informatics (Chair)
Kirsten Quanbeck	Associate Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Doug Haynes	Vice Provost for Academic Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Judy Stepan-Norris	Vice Provost for Academic Planning
Edgar Dormitorio	Assistant Vice Chancellor & Chief of Staff, Student Affairs
Bonnie Ruberg	Faculty of Informatics
Aaron Trammell	Faculty of Informatics
Amanda Cullen	Graduate Student, Informatics
Jessica Kernan	Researcher, Institute for Virtual Environments & Computer Games
Mark Deppe	Acting Director, UCI Esports
Kathy Chiang	UCI Esports Arena Coordinator
Khaila Amazan-Hall	Undergraduate, UCI Esports Board Member
Jenny Song	Undergraduate, President of UCI The Association of Gamers
Jen Jen Chen, MD	Faculty of Medicine, UCI Esports Board Chair
Morgan Romine	UCI Doctoral Alumni, UCI Esports Board Member

Diversity and Inclusion Plan

Code of Conduct

UCI Esports has a code of conduct that was developed in collaboration with Anykey.org, a national leader in diversity and inclusivity in gaming. The code is posted in the esports arena and in the scholarship agreements with players. All players, streamers, organizers and attendees are required to abide by this code. Participants who do not abide by these rules are asked to leave and may be subject to campus discipline. Resources for participants who have seen harassment or who have been harassed will be made readily available on the esports website, including quick links for reporting such misconduct.

UCI Esports: Champions of Positive Gaming

We welcome and respect gamers of all types, from all places and backgrounds.

1. Harassment based on any aspect of a person's identity will not be tolerated.
2. No "toxicity" allowed. Behaviors that create an intolerable environment such as bullying, threats of violence, stalking, or other forms of intimidation will not be tolerated.
3. No cheating or illegal activity allowed.
4. If you see something, say something.

GLHF!

**GLHF! is "Good Luck, Have Fun!"*

Staff Recruitment & Training

As part of their ongoing hiring of students to staff the arena and events, UCI Esports will continue efforts to attract a diverse student applicant pool. Campus resources such as the

Cross-Cultural Center, Veterans Center, International Center, LGBT Resource Center, The W-Hub, CARE, and Student Housing provide opportunities for outreach and recruitment of workers from all backgrounds. Interviews for all student staff and staff positions will incorporate questions to assess the understanding of issues in diversity and inclusion among candidates. Once hired, all staff will be offered training opportunities to further their professional skills in related domains including:

- Language - ASUCI Language is Powerful
- Diversity - REACH workshops through the Cross Cultural Center
- Understanding Media - From Student Affairs and Strategic Communications
- Bystander Intervention - Green Dot through CARE

Player Scholarship Program

UCI Esports recruits top gamers to represent the university in competitions and to serve as ambassadors for the campus and collegiate gaming.

Outreach & Selection

The UCI Esports program invites a diverse set of campus groups and communities to tryout for the scholarship team. Scholarship candidates are assessed not only on performance-based criteria (their demonstrated skill within esports as represented by rank) but also their teamwork, ability to follow instructions, coachability, interpersonal skills, and understanding of our commitments to diversity and inclusive excellence.

Curriculum & Expectations

Scholarship players are expected to participate in practices, team-building, and community service. All scholarship players participate on professional developed related to diversity and inclusion. The program's code of conduct (see above) is written into all scholarship agreements and all players are asked to overtly acknowledge the campus Principles of Community and Principles Against Intolerance (see Appendix).

Arena Events

Newbie Nights

The Arena hosted their first [Newbie Night](#) on February 22, 2016 and allowed students to learn about *League of Legends*, the world's most popular computer game. Newbie Nights take place monthly and allow people to try out games such as *Heroes of the Storm*, a popular Blizzard game. Starting Fall 2017, "Newbie Nights" will target various student organizations with free pizza and free computer time to encourage diverse communities to try out the arena, to learn about esports, and to involve them in the community.

Panels and Programs

As an example of the Esports Program's commitment to exploring issues related to gender and gaming, they hosted the "Women in Gaming" panel on February 2, 2016. The effort was cosponsored by the UCI Esports program, Donald Bren School of Information and Computer Science, and the Women's Empowerment Initiative. Panelists included female professional gamers, a broadcaster, game developer, and industry representatives.

For future academic years, the UCI Esports Program will host annual panels on diversity and inclusion; example topics include gender, LGBTQ, race & ethnicity, and veterans in gaming. Through this content panel series, participants can gain a deeper understanding of the issues related to these underrepresented communities and their link to gaming. The Esports Program will actively seek out partners on campus to collaboratively host relevant events.

Tours & Open Gameplay

UCI Esports will provide customized tours to students from underserved communities who come to campus for other programs (e.g. iRise, Raza Day) and will actively seek out relationships with organizations who serve such communities (e.g. the Boys and Girls Club). Tours normally last 15-20 minutes and are followed by Q&A with staff and can be extended significantly if people want to play games on the computer. Provided that tours end before the arena opens at noon, students will also be allowed to play free-to-play games that do not require a game account.

Girls and Gaming Summer Camps

The UCI Esports Girls in Gaming Summer Camp is an outreach program that strives to educate young gamers about the world of esports with a focus on inclusivity. Our goal is to develop interest for the multi-faceted esports industry and to create a welcoming community for individuals who are passionate about gaming. Topics will range from streaming to game creation to the competitive scene. This one-week camp will be held annually and will take place at the UCI Esports Arena and feature our state of the art PCs, broadcast station, and VR technology.

Themed Housing

UCI Esports has partnered with Mesa Court Housing to create games-themed housing for first-year students in the Fall of 2017. This hall will include male and female residents to create a casual and fun environment for people who enjoy games. Here's the description of the hall:

This hall is open to residents with an interest in the video gaming community. Students who live in this hall will be provided with an environment to expand their knowledge and interest in different fields related to gaming. This hall will provide

programs that support the development of team-building, interpersonal, leadership, and conflict resolution skills. Residents will be encouraged to expand their social boundaries and give back to the local community. Residents will also learn to successfully integrate gaming into their lives while maintaining overall balance.

Residents will also be encouraged to participate in the UCI Esports events and programs that explore issues of diversity, gender, and inclusion in gaming.

Equipment Donations

Through the generous support of their sponsors, the UCI Esports Arena is outfitted with some of the best gaming equipment available with UCI-branded PCs, peripherals and comfortable chairs. Sponsorship agreements allow the Arena to refresh their computers every two years and donate their current computer inventory to partners of their choosing. The program will seek out underserved schools and communities that can most benefit from the donated equipment to help enable youth in underserved areas access to the hardware necessary for esports.

Future Aspirations

The 2017-2018 Esports Inclusivity Plan details our current strategy to increase inclusion and diversity in the esports program, but we also acknowledge that there are longer term goals that cannot be accomplished within the time frame of this report, a single academic year. Rather than omit such grander plans, we instead sketch out below a few more aspirational ideas which we debated during our task force convenings. UCI is a fiercely multicultural and diverse community and it is vitally important that all our campus programs reflect this. We invite you, the reader, to submit commentary and ideas that will help us insure that esports is no exception.

Broadening Scholarships

The Esports Program is actively seeking support for annual scholarships for students interested in making gaming more inclusive. Students who are interested in competition, streaming, or any other aspects of gaming would be considered for the scholarship. Similar to the [Prime-LC](#) program at the UCI Medical School, this program would support student efforts to design and implement programs aimed at exposing underrepresented communities to gaming with a pathway to academic and career interest in STEM.

Bystander Training

Green Dot bystander training is made available to all hired staff at the Esports Arena. We would like to make such training available to all Arena participants. While UCI already offers professional development training modules on sexual harassment (for all students) and conflict of interest training (for all managers on campus), we feel that additional bystander training for esports players and fans in particular would be highly useful in enabling the community to recognize and address harassment within its own borders. We actively seek out materials that would focus specifically on issues of harassment online, both related to games and more broadly.

Women's Tournament Series (transgender and genderqueer inclusive)

We have considered hosting a collegiate tournament series with other UC's or local campuses for players whose gender identities are currently underrepresented in esports. This includes women (both cisgender and transgender), as well as transgender and genderqueer players more generally. Such a tournament series would offer competitive play, networking, and community-building opportunities for these players. One potential concern is that these competitions could be seen as creating gender-exclusive spaces within the UCI esports community, which is itself already co-ed. Though we do not currently have concrete plans to create such a league, we are in active conversation with women players and others with underrepresented gender identities who are part of UCI's esports community in order to better understand the values and potential limitations of such an effort.

Streaming Scholarships

The UCI Esports arena features a broadcasting booth for students to create their own video content related to gaming. Students are encouraged to produce, film, and create their own shows for streaming. Given the great potential of streaming to influence the hearts and minds of the community, the Arena would like to cultivate a community of streamers who can speak to issues of diversity and inclusion in their commentary. Students who are interested in joining our community of streamers will be mentored by a faculty specialist in representation and media (for instance Aaron Trammell or Bonnie Ruberg, amongst many others). We are considering the possibilities of offering interested students either scholarship funds or internship credits.

Central to an effective initiative in streaming is forging effective partnerships with web media companies like YouTube and Twitch. We will actively seek opportunities to partner with these companies in order to offer our students the tools and training necessary to succeed in tomorrow's media environment. The development of effective faculty and corporate ties will help to guarantee success in this area.

Different Games

Esports have been defined, largely, by a grassroots group of young men working in tandem with games companies to develop a space of competitive play around a small set of games that both parties have an acute interest in. Although this document spells out many strategies which aim to make this space of play more accommodating, inclusive, and equitable, there has been relatively no consideration by the esports community of games which a more diverse body of players might find challenging, balanced, fun, and competitive.

Looking toward the future, we aim to pilot a series of tournaments around different games which may attract a more diverse player base. At this point we have done little research into the potential of different games to expand the scope of the esports audience. We will return to this point of discussion over the course of the year and consult with students on the topic as well. By expanding the scope of esports, we may be able to expand the horizon of inclusivity as well.

Appendix

Principles of Community

UCI Office of Academic Integrity & Student Conduct

UCI is a multicultural community of people from diverse backgrounds. Our activities, programs, classes, workshops, lectures, and everyday interactions are enriched by our acceptance of one another, and we strive to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect.

Our legacy for an increasingly multicultural academic community and for a learning climate free from expressions of bigotry is drawn from the United States and California Constitutions and from the charter of the University of California, which protects diversity and reaffirms our commitment to the protection of lawful free speech. Affirmation of that freedom is an effective way of ensuring that acts of bigotry and abusive behavior will not go unchallenged within the University. Tolerance, civility and mutual respect for diversity of background, gender, ethnicity, race, and religion is as crucial within our campus community as is tolerance, civility and mutual respect for diversity of political beliefs, sexual orientation, and physical abilities. Education, and a clear, rational, and vigorous challenge are positive responses to prejudice and acts of bigotry.

The University's nondiscrimination policy, in compliance with applicable federal and state law, covers treatment in University programs and activities as well as admission and employment.

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UCI expects all those affiliated with it to adhere to the letter and the spirit of University nondiscrimination policies and related federal and state laws.

Allegations of physical abuse, threats of violence, or conduct that threatens the health or safety of any person on University property or in connection with official University functions will be investigated promptly, and where found to exist, appropriate actions will be taken in accordance with University policy.

All who work, live, study, and teach at UCI are here by choice and, as part of that choice, should be committed to these Principles of Community which are an integral part of the guidelines by which the University community can successfully conduct its affairs.

Principles Against Intolerance

Regents Policy: Principles Against Intolerance
UCI Office of Academic Integrity & Student Conduct

a. The mission of the University is to promote discovery and create and disseminate knowledge, to expand opportunities for all, and to educate a civil populace and the next generation of leaders. The University therefore strives to foster an environment in which all are included, all are given an equal opportunity to learn and explore, in which differences as well as commonalities are celebrated, and in which dissenting viewpoints are not only tolerated but encouraged. Acts of hatred and other intolerant conduct, as well as acts of discrimination that demean our differences, are antithetical to the values of the University and serve to undermine its purpose.

b. University policy prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, pregnancy, physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), genetic information (including family medical history), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, service in the uniformed services, or the intersection of any of these factors. Prohibited discrimination arising from historical biases, stereotypes and prejudices jeopardizes the research, teaching and service mission of the University. This mission is best served when members of the University community collaborate to foster an equal learning environment for all, in which all members of the community are welcomed and confident of their physical safety.

c. Human history encompasses many periods in which biased, stereotypical or prejudiced discourse, left unchallenged and uncontested, has led to enormous tragedy. In a community of learners, teachers, and knowledge-seekers, the University is best served when its leaders challenge speech and action reflecting bias, stereotypes, and/or intolerance. Anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination have no place in the University. The Regents call on University leaders actively to challenge anti-Semitism and other forms of discrimination when and wherever they emerge within the University community.

d. Freedom of expression and freedom of inquiry are paramount in a public research university and form the bedrock on which our mission of discovery is founded. The University will vigorously defend the principles of the First Amendment and academic freedom against any efforts to subvert or abridge them.

e. Each member of the University community is entitled to speak, to be heard, and to be engaged based on the merits of their views, and unburdened by historical biases, stereotypes and prejudices. Discourse that reflects such biases, stereotypes or prejudice can undermine the equal and welcoming learning environment that the University of California strives to foster. The

University seeks to educate members of the community to recognize, understand and avoid biases, stereotypes and prejudices.

f. Regardless of whether one has a legal right to speak in a manner that reflects bias, stereotypes, prejudice and intolerance, each member of the University community is expected to consider his or her responsibilities as well as his or her rights. Intellectual and creative expression that is intended to shock has a place in our community. Nevertheless, mutual respect and civility within debate and dialogue advance the mission of the University, advance each of us as learners and teachers, and advance a democratic society.

g. Candidates for University leadership positions are entitled to consideration based on their stated views and actions, and in a manner consistent with the University's nondiscrimination policy. Efforts to discredit such candidates based on bias or stereotyping should not go unchallenged.

h. Actions that physically or otherwise interfere with the ability of an individual or group to assemble, speak, and share or hear the opinions of others (within time place and manner restrictions adopted by the University) impair the mission and intellectual life of the University and will not be tolerated.

i. Harassment, threats, assaults, vandalism, and destruction of property, as defined by University policy, will not be tolerated within the University community. Where investigation establishes that such unlawful conduct was targeted at an individual or individuals based on discrimination prohibited by University policy, University administrators should consider discipline that includes enhanced sanctions. In addition to discipline and consistent with the University's mission to educate members of our community, University administrators should use all available tools, including restorative justice techniques, to address such unlawful conduct, in order to foster learning and mutual respect.

j. The Regents call on University leaders to apply these Principles Against Intolerance and all other University policies directed to discrimination and intolerance to the full extent permissible under law. University leaders should assure that they have processes in place to respond promptly, and at the highest levels of the University, when appropriate, when intolerant and/or discriminatory acts occur. Such response should include consideration of support for members of the community directly affected by such acts.



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