



Education

Nurturing a thriving esports community on campus

University of South Florida®

Supported by Lenovo, the University of South Florida is building a space for gamers of all skill levels to play, compete, and make connections.

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Who is the University of South Florida?

The University of South Florida (USF) is a preeminent research university with campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota-Manatee. Together, its campuses serve approximately 50,000 students pursuing undergraduate, graduate, specialist, and professional degrees. Across 13 colleges, students choose from more than 200 majors, minors, and concentrations—from business and engineering to the arts and USF Health.

USF's commitment to excellence in teaching, advocacy, and research has empowered students, faculty, and staff for over 60 years, and its alumni family now stands at 384,000 strong.



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The Challenge

At USF, esports is about more than just video games. It's about community, it's about the excitement, it's about the adrenaline of winning, and it's about enjoying time with those that share the same passion.

The history of esports at USF is a testament to the power of community. Grassroots, student-run gaming clubs had long existed on campus and, with the popularity of esports soaring, USF wanted to bring these groups together.

Andrew Ross, Esports Coordinator at USF, takes up the story: "Our goal was to establish a university-backed esports program to give students positive, meaningful experiences in a safe space. We identified esports as a great way to enhance the student experience and attract more people to USF. But we had a long to-do list to bring the program to life—we had to secure funding, build a space for the gaming community on campus, create a curriculum, and host events and tournaments. It was somewhat daunting, and we knew we needed guidance from the experts."

Taking the first step

USF engaged Lenovo's esports consultant for advice on setting up the program.

Andrew Ross recalls: "As an organization without any prior experience of esports, we really relied on Lenovo for guidance. Lenovo's advice and support was always authentic; we never felt as though they were trying to sell us hardware. The consultant genuinely cared about our vision for esports at USF, reassured us with his expert knowledge, and steered us in the right direction at every crossroad in the journey."

Services

Lenovo Esports Consultation

Hardware

Lenovo Legion gaming towers
Lenovo Legion laptops
Lenovo Legion gaming accessories, including keyboard, mouse, mousepad, and headset

Full steam ahead

With support from Lenovo, USF laid the foundations for an esports program that operates on three pillars: community, competition, and career competencies.

Today, USF Esports hosts 11 collegiate clubs that all compete at the local, state, national, and international level, alongside its program boasting over 3,500 members in an official USF-sponsored Discord server.

On the academic side, USF also offers a Business of Esports class that explores the revenue streams impacting esports and the logistics behind hosting esports events. These learning experiences are supplemented with experiential learning opportunities and talks from individuals working within the industry.

The university is currently putting the finishing touches on its Esports Living Lab. The 2,500-square-foot space will have three rooms: an open area with 42 Lenovo Legion gaming PCs for recreational use by all students, a private gaming suite with six PCs exclusively for esports championships, and a broadcasting and design room equipped with Lenovo workstations for students covering live esports events.



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“The ELL gives students a space to socialize, congregate to play video games, have fun, and make new friends. Having a centralized space on campus where students can feel welcome and come play their favorite game is really important for the student body.”

Andrew Ross

Esports Coordinator, University of South Florida

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Results

Esports at USF is going from strength to strength, with two more clubs set to launch in the 2024-25 academic year—bringing the total to 13—and the university fielding teams at both the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE) and East Coast Athletic Conference (ECAC).

USF also runs the Battle for Florida, a two-day event that brings together more than 30 teams from across the state to compete in Rocket League and League of Legends—the largest collegiate esports tournament in Florida.



11 esports clubs on campus



3,500 Discord server members



2,500 sq ft Esports Living Lab

Going further

Student participation in the esports program is growing day by day. Clubs host weekly drop-in sessions that are open to all USF students, community game nights, watch parties, and other events.

Abigail Vorhies, Assistant Director, Sport Programs at USF, comments: “We want esports at USF to be too big to ignore. We want to continue building the esports community—engage more students, support more clubs, put on bigger events, bigger tournaments. Ultimately, we would love to secure more funding so that we can increase staffing and dedicate even more resources to esports. We want to help clubs out with stipends for equipment and travel, for example.”

Andrew Ross confirms: “We want to break down the financial and social barriers that exist within gaming and esports. That’s why our esports lab will be free to use for all students; we have to let students who can’t afford gaming equipment get the same experience as those who can. Everything we do is with the students and the community in mind.”

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“Our goal for our esports lab is to serve the community. You don't have to be good at gaming to come play here. You don't have to be on a competitive team to come play here. If you like to queue up with your friends, you can come do that here. It's a space that serves everybody, not just competitive gamers.”

Andrew Ross

Esports Coordinator, University of South Florida



Why **Lenovo**?

Lenovo's esports consultant served as a mentor to the USF team, helping them to build the esports program from the ground up.

Andrew Ross recalls: "Lenovo has been with us since the very beginning of our esports journey, guiding us every step of the way. Lenovo's consultant saw the potential and believed in us. Lenovo even provided six Legion laptops for a temporary gaming space on campus during the construction of our Esports Living Lab, ensuring that students had a place to come together to play and for in-person events."

Abigail Vorhies concludes: "We have big plans for esports at USF, and we're excited to continue our partnership with Lenovo to make the program even bigger and better."



How can colleges build community around esports?

The University of South Florida built a community-focused esports program with expert advice and support from Lenovo.

[Explore Lenovo Esports Solutions](#)