



INTERVIEWED

▶ **Charles Palmer,**
Program Lead and Associate
Professor of Interactive Media

INDUSTRY

▶ Education

CHALLENGE

- ▶ Outfit multipurpose esports LAN center with leading-edge technology
- ▶ Equipment must be suitable for users ranging from casual to professional

University Adds Esports Impact with ViewSonic ELITE™ Gaming Monitors and LAN Center Partnership

SCHOOL

Harrisburg University of Science and Technology (HU) is a private non-profit university accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Located in Harrisburg, PA, the university serves a student body of nearly 7,000 students from over 100 countries, offering bachelor and graduate degree programs in science, technology, and math fields. Every undergraduate major requires an internship, giving students real-world experiences that are valued by employers.

CHALLENGE

With a STEM curriculum that prepares students for in-demand careers, it's no surprise that HU has become an esports powerhouse. A growing billion-dollar industry, esports relies on employees with a range of creative and technical skills, and HU is distinguished as a trailblazer in developing programs that connect students to these careers. The university's esports focus began by blazing trails in esports participation.

In 2017, the university launched its first (and only) varsity sports team, the HU Storm, which went on to win the Collegiate Overwatch National Championship in its first two seasons. The university invested in state-of-the-art arena space, full scholarships for team members, and hosting an annual competition, the HUE invitational, the largest esports invitational competition in North America. Continuing its pioneering ways, the HU Storm was the first collegiate team to employ former professional esports players as coaches. For those interested in more casual competition, HU offers an esports club open to all students.

"In a rapidly evolving digital world, it's essential for academic institutions to embrace emerging technologies and provide students with opportunities to learn and explore their passions through experiential learning. This state-of-the-art equipment will bring a wide range of possibilities for growth and learning to our students."

— Charles Palmer, Program Lead and Associate Professor of Interactive Media



SOLUTION



▶ 20 ViewSonic ELITE™ 27-inch 1080p 240Hz IPS gaming monitors



▶ Nine 65-inch ViewSonic CDE6520-W premium 4K digital displays



▶ One ViewSonic CDE8620-W 86-inch premium 4K digital

Shortly thereafter, the university introduced a Bachelor of Science degree designed to prepare students for careers in the burgeoning esports industry. One of only a handful of schools offering a degree in this area, HU Esports Management, Production and Performance courses develop the skills needed to become a media content creator, event manager, specialized coach, organizational/team manager, marketing manager, analyst, and more. According to HU materials, this program combines three of the university's strengths – business administration, interactive media, and technology integration – to build an industry pipeline for the next generation of esports decision-makers in management, production entrepreneurship and innovation.

Finally, in 2019, HU President Dr. Eric Darr and Professor Charles Palmer provided strategic direction and support for the launch of the Harrisburg, PA-based Soniqs professional esports team. From this winning partnership came a shared vision for the development of a LAN Center that would be the official competitive home of the Soniqs, while also providing space to support students, the HU Storm, and the surrounding community.

“We wanted to build on our successes in a way that would support the need for a growing number of esports professionals,” said Palmer, whose roles at the university include Program Lead & Associate Professor of Interactive Media, and Executive Director of the Center for Advanced Entertainment & Learning Technologies. “Our vision was to expand the ways in which we could position our students to become those professionals, and we wanted to do it in a way that supported our community.”



SOLUTION

That initial conversation in January 2021 triggered the formation of a development team, which Palmer worked with to develop the concept into a workable plan. Participants included HU CEO and President Dr. Eric Darr and HU CFO Duane Maun; Soniqs CEO Darren Moore and Soniqs Director of Operations and HU Adjunct Professor Luke Goodling; and Dr. Jennifer Metz, Associate Professor and Program Lead of Esports Management.

“The facilities we envisioned would not only be the home of the Soniqs, it would be like the labs in our life science departments,” said Palmer. “A place where our students can get hands-on learning about the products, services, and management of esports.”

During this phase, the working group sought partners to help bring the plan to

display

RESULTS

- ▶ LAN Center is equipped to meet the needs of the university, community, and professional esports team with 20 state-of-the-art gaming stations
- ▶ Large, 24/7 rated commercial-grade displays throughout the facility enable easy competition viewing, branding and dynamic multimedia background content

life. A known advocate in the esports ecosystem, ViewSonic was thrilled to join the team through its community outreach division.

“ViewSonic is committed to both community outreach as part of our Empowering Future Generations initiative and to growing within esports,” said Danny Ordway, Vertical Marketing Manager at ViewSonic. “Supporting Harrisburg University and the Soniqs was a natural partnership for us. We’re thrilled to back an organization that is so focused on investing in the success of its students.”



The LAN Center team connected with Ordway who recommended ViewSonic products to meet their needs.

“We were excited to partner with HU, which shares our holistic vision for esports in education. By providing the latest ViewSonic ELITE™ gaming monitors, as well as the latest commercial displays and other display solutions, we’re helping the Soniqs’ coaches and staff develop strategies and prepare players,” said Ordway. “We’re also supporting HU in providing learning opportunities that create a pathway to careers within the esports industry.”

Ultimately, the team selected 20 ViewSonic ELITE™ XG270 27-inch 240Hz G-Sync gaming monitors to provide smooth, ultra-responsive gameplay. Nine 65-inch ViewSonic CDE6520-W premium 4K digital displays would be mounted throughout the space to showcase competitions, support the LAN Center brand, and deliver dynamic background videos, with one ViewSonic CDE8620-W 86-inch premium 4K digital display serving as a dramatic focal point.

RESULTS

Along with additional sponsors, Intel and Zipchair, the team created a world-class esports LAN center, with power-packed stations that feature Intel NUC PCs with 12th Gen Intel® Core™ i9-12900 CPUs, 16GB of RAM, and RTX 3060 Ti; ViewSonic ELITE™ 27-inch 1080p 240Hz IPS gaming monitors; and Zipchair Glide Gaming Chairs with numerous ergonomic settings. With gratitude to their partners, Palmer notes that leading tech is about so much more than feeds, speeds, and specs.



“In a rapidly evolving digital world, it’s essential for academic institutions to embrace emerging technologies and provide students with opportunities to learn and explore their passions through experiential learning,” said Palmer. “This state-of-the-art equipment will bring a wide range of possibilities for growth and learning to our students.”

The 2,000-square-foot LAN Center opened its doors on March 27, 2023, with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by everyone in the local esports community. Moore delivered a brief speech and, with HU President Eric Darr beside him, cut the ribbon that symbolized the center’s official opening for private events. Press and other visitors got a taste of the action ahead, as HU esports club members tested out the top-of-the-line gaming stations.

The main gaming room features a central row of tables with 10 gaming stations on each side. It is both dim and dynamic, with enough ambient light to help reduce eye strain, plus LED accent lights in Soniq-blue and purple for added aesthetic impact. Standing room behind the players, along with adjacent seating facing a large 86-inch ViewSonic digital display, will allow spectators an up-close and in-person view of esports events. Additional 65-inch ViewSonic digital displays throughout the space allow for extended viewing along with the display of stakeholder brands and mood-enhancing multimedia content.

Centrally located in downtown Harrisburg, the LAN Center is a leisurely two-minute walk from Harrisburg’s Whittaker Center for Science and the Arts, the official home stadium for HU’s esports arena, practice space and digital locker room, as well as the hub for esports scrimmages, competitions, tournaments, conferences and meet-and-greets.

“The location meets all of our initial objectives,” said Palmer. “We can engage the community, opening the Center for people to enjoy esports as entertainment, while we provide convenient and state-of-the art facilities for our esports management students to grow their professional skills.” An additional advantage of the location, added Palmer, is its proximity to two Harrisburg high schools.

“We envision our esports management students developing and running events for the high school students,” he said. “This will be a great experiential learning opportunity for them, while adding another link in the pipeline, engaging younger students and introducing them to the broader opportunities offered by esports.”

Community members of all ages will be able to participate in educational workshops taught by esports pros, use the Center’s gaming stations during public hours, and watch games as spectators, both in person and online. The space will also be available to rent for community and private events.

“We are deeply grateful to our sponsors for helping bring our vision to life. The LAN Center not only enhances the educational experience of HU students, it also creates opportunities for networking, mentorship, and career development in the competitive esports industry,” said Palmer. “Students will be able to conceive, design, plan, produce and reflect on their own events, and they’ll do so while increasing the understanding of esports in our community. It’s a win for everyone involved.”

