



#### INTERVIEWED

- ▶ **Nathan Meeker,**  
UA Director of Esports

#### INDUSTRY

- ▶ Education

#### CHALLENGE

- ▶ Create a robust esports/gaming program with broad engagement
- ▶ Equip new program spaces with top-of-the-line gaming monitors
- ▶ Update program and equipment to support evolving needs

## University Expands Esports Program with ViewSonic Gaming Monitors

#### SCHOOL

Founded in 1870 as Buchtel College, the University of Akron is located 40 miles south of Cleveland in metropolitan Akron, Ohio. Offering 200+ in-demand associate, bachelor's, master's, doctorate and law degree programs, the university serves around 19,000 students from Ohio, around the U.S., and 70 foreign countries in more than 80 buildings on 218 acres. Programs are targeted to diverse groups of learners, including full-time, part-time, and on-line students, veterans, and adults returning to the classroom.

#### CHALLENGE

In 2017 the University of Akron set its sights on creating a robust esports program. It quickly became a pioneering force in the development of D1 varsity-level esports.

“We had a team of professionals with complementary backgrounds and together, we created the program that many other schools model theirs after” said UA Director of Esports Nathan Meeker. “By design it was a three-tiered program that included a formal student club and low-key recreational gaming opportunities in addition to the competitive varsity team.”

To accommodate this broad vision, the university transformed 6,500 square feet in three underutilized campus spaces into esports venues: an arena with spectator viewing to facilitate varsity practices and competitions, plus two club and rec facilities that operate like gaming cafes for the esports club and casual gamers.

---

*“In addition to providing us with high-end equipment, ViewSonic demonstrated dedication to the educational aspects of our program. They are outstanding partners in every way - great support, great products, and great people to work with. This collaboration will help us keep up with the changes in technology, along with the interests of students as the esports and gaming space evolves.”*

— Nathan Meeker, UA Director of Esports

---



## SOLUTION

### Initial Deployment



► ViewSonic Gaming XG2402 24-inch monitor

### Upgrade



► ViewSonic Gaming XG250 25-inch monitor

Outfitting these spaces with gaming stations that wouldn't break the budget was one of the initial challenges for the growing program. An ongoing challenge would be keeping the program, as well as the gaming hardware, up-to-date and well-positioned to meet evolving student needs.

## SOLUTION

With the space build-out underway, Meeker and the team set out to find their ideal gaming monitors (among other equipment).

"We wanted some pretty specific specs – a 24-inch monitor with 1ms or lower response rate and 144 Hz or better," said Meeker. "There were a few decent options but ViewSonic offered the best price-to-performance ratio by a long shot. Not only was the price great, the ViewSonic performance was top notch."

The team purchased 92 ViewSonic XG2402 24-inch gaming monitors, which were deployed across the three venues: the Zips Gaming Lounge at the Williams Honors College; the Zips Esports Center at the Student Union; and the Akron Esports Arena at Infocision Stadium.

The UA Zips esports program started off strong, with around seven hundred participants.

"By all indicators that was considered a good number at the time," said Meeker. "What we didn't realize was that by primarily marketing the program to students interested in competitive esports titles, we were missing quite a few others, and we want as many students as possible to reap the benefits of participating in campus organizations."



When students are invested in activities outside of academics, Meeker elaborated, there are proven benefits, such as higher rates of graduation, higher levels of satisfaction, and even higher post-college job placement rates.

"I always tell those that are skeptical that we're not just playing video games," he said. "Our program provides an outlet for students who might not otherwise join a UA organization."

To broaden the benefits of their activities, the Zips program staff began spreading the word to "generalist gamers" – students with a broad interest in video games that goes beyond the well-known competitive titles like *Rocket League* and *Overwatch*.



## RESULTS

- ▶ ViewSonic gaming monitors supported the program's success and expansion
- ▶ Participation has grown from an initial 700 members to over 2400 students
- ▶ In its first year, the Varsity team became Collegiate Rocket League Champions
- ▶ After school hours the display is used for school activities and community presentations

## RESULTS

By 2019 the UA Zips varsity team had captured the Rocket League championship title for the second consecutive year, and the university was well on its way to becoming a powerhouse in the world of competitive collegiate esports.

While the varsity team was busy doing great things, Meeker realized that the program wasn't reaching its full potential.

"Initially we thought that marketing the program primarily toward students interested in competitive esports titles would result in the best activation," said Meeker. "Over time we learned we were missing a lot of other students. Now we connect with those students and offer a more robust program."

The expanded marketing efforts have more than paid off. These days, around 15% of the UA student population is involved in the program in one way or another, for a total participation of around 2,400 students.

By year five of the program, another shift occurred.

"Monitor technology had progressed, and to provide our players with the best competitive advantage, we needed to upgrade to 280Hz," said Meeker. "We were already living in a ViewSonic ecosystem and loving it, so the ViewSonic XG250 gaming monitors were perfect for us."

With the new monitors deployed to about half of the Zips' gaming stations so far, students report faster gameplay and better reactivity to on-screen action. "They tell me that overall, their gaming experience has been more enjoyable," said Meeker. "Watching them, it's easy to see the benefits of the faster refresh rate."

Now an official ViewSonic partner, Meeker looks forward to many years of keeping up with the fast-paced world of esports and gaming with ViewSonic gaming monitors.

"In addition to providing us with high-end equipment, ViewSonic demonstrated dedication to the educational aspects of our program," said Meeker. "They are outstanding partners in every way - great support, great products, and great people to work with. This collaboration will help us keep up with the changes in technology, along with the interests of students as the esports and gaming spaces evolve."

Building on the program's strong and carefully laid foundation, the ViewSonic sponsorship is one more way that esports and gaming at UA will continue to grow and thrive, said Meeker, as the university provides ongoing support for activities such as summer camps; monthly events for area high school clubs; and hosting the OHSAA-supported Ohio Esports State Tournament, among other LAN events.

"The tournament represents some 300 high schools across Ohio, and we expect around 3,000 students to participate this spring," said Meeker. "We know we'll give them an outstanding experience with the new ViewSonic monitors."

