CURRICULAR INNOVATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY FACULTY
INTERACTIONS: ESPORTS AND GAME STUDIES MAJOR AT
MIDEAST STATE UNIVERSITY

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation detailed the ways by which stakeholder interactions affected interdisciplinary curriculum development in the novel field of esports at Mideast State University. Due to the prevalence of esports in higher education, the sudden popularity of the esports field, and the role of esports in an already overloaded curriculum space, this study considered curriculum expansion and reform in the 21st century—especially interactions between faculty and administration in new areas of study. The problem is that esports as a new area of study requires curricular innovation in an overloaded curriculum space.

To study the Esports and Game Studies program at Mideast State University, I utilized the following research question: How can an early experiment in designing an esports curriculum assist research in the novel field? The theoretical framework used interview data, Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan model, and Quinn et al.'s (1990) competing values framework to guide this dissertation toward an in-depth knowledge of the proposed program. To protect the anonymity of the university and interviewees, Mideast State University was the pseudonym for the actual university, Mideast was a pseudonym for the state name; Darter was a pseudonym for the city in which the university is located; Sparrows was a pseudonym for the university mascot; and all interviewees were given the title Referee, along with a number.

Due to the unfinished nature of the Mideast State University Esports and Game Studies program, conclusions about the program emphasized doubt regarding the process of interdisciplinary curriculum development at the institution. Due to (a) the polarizing nature of competitive video games, (b) the COVID-19 global pandemic forcing the university to prioritize its current programs over its future programs, (c) a lack of funding, or (d) a combination of these

possibilities, inconsistent notions of programmatic control and responsibility turned a

groundbreaking program into an unused curriculum.

I dedicate the completion of this dissertation to my mother, my wife, and my children, without whom I would have struggled further. I also dedicate this work to my grandmother, who was always supportive in everything I attempted. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, who passed in September 2022. He did not understand why I wanted to go back to school, but he supported me regardless. I cannot thank these people enough.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Electronic sports (esports) curriculum development is an emergent topic in higher education, though many community colleges, liberal arts schools, and Carnegie-classified Research 2 (R2) schools have begun to establish roles for esports all over the United States. The unorthodox nature of the esports role was highlighted in an article from *Inside Higher Education* that introduced Mideast State University's program and broached the possibility that esports studies present students with too narrow of a skillset for employers to consider hiring (Anderson, 2019). Still, Mideast State University was willing to take the first step of offering courses that included esports studies, followed by developing an entire program featuring esports work. The surprising nature of an emergent topic such as esports exemplifies the challenging ways in which the esports field remains viewed in higher education.

Esports are interactive video game competitions governed by a nonplaying body, played online through a local area network (LAN) or on a shared game system, and viewed by an audience. Sometimes spelled eSports, the higher education sector has generally viewed esports as video gaming competitions. This dissertation used the *Associated Press* spelling of *esports* (Darcy, 2017), and the definition was based on a culmination of characterizations from extant literature. To clarify, an oversimplified definition makes the assumption that esports are only video game competitions (Leroux-Parra, 2020; see Appendix A for a glossary of terms). Such a definition is more limited to organized competitions between college students to differentiate them from more casual gameplay. Video game competitions include anything from playing casual games between friends to participating in highly competitive tournaments with prize pools; therefore, video game competitions can be esports, but esports are not simply *video game*

competitions due to the many variables that need to be included, such as viewers and a system of governance (Heidenreich et al., 2022).

Certain articles about college esports in general media have insisted that esports is growing and should be embraced by higher education officials (Burns, 2021; Konopelko, 2022); however, even those articles included statements opining how few administrations have looked into student esports communities at their own institutions to see which ones thrive and which ones do not (Favorito, 2018). I heard one such claim at the 2019 National Conference of Collegiate Esports sponsored by National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE, n.d.). One coach of a potential collegiate esports team expressed an issue they were having with the creation of a Hearthstone team, as one of his students could not afford to buy packs of digital cards from the newest set. Hearthstone is a video game where players digitally open cards, build decks, and play against others (Knell, 2022). The coach and the student apparently met with the president of the university to ask for funding, but instead of going through proper channels— which might have taken too long—the president took $80 out of his wallet and gave it directly to the coach to buy Hearthstone packs for the student. This kind of anecdotal experience presented at NACE did not match up with the online articles that suggested higher education now embraces esports (Burns, 2021; Konopelko, 2022).

Esports Concerns in Higher Education

Administrators and faculty at many institutions have become aware of the growing popularity and potential of esports due to the growing presence of the aforementioned online articles, though the novelty of esports has left many concerned about its reputability. Many higher education administrators and faculty members share a common view that playing video games correlates to poor educational performance (Anand, 2007; Anderson & Dill, 2000; Wack

& Tantleff-Dunn, 2009; Wright, 2011), or they have expressed the belief that video games do not belong in higher education (Flaherty, 2018). Even those personnel in higher education who have an understanding of the positive aspects of esports have rarely considered them in a collegiate context.

In addition, developing a curriculum for esports at Carnegie-classified very high research institutions (also known as Research 1, or R1) schools remains difficult partially due to how new or untested the field of esports remains in the higher education sector. Developing a curriculum for esports, as with any new or untested field, is complicated at R1 institutions because doing so requires innovation and time for departments and administration to interact (Scott et al., 2021). Many large universities possess game studies, game design, or game development bachelor's degree programs, but there remained no bachelor's degree program that included esports as a focus as of study; however, many game studies programs offered courses that either touched on esports or focused on esports, indicating an increasing relevance in academe.

In fact, as of 2021, only 74 higher education institutions around the world offered different esports degree programs, minor programs, or certificate programs, totaling 93 such programs (Jenny et al., 2021). Only a handful of the 146 R1 schools—including University of California, Irvine; University of Utah; University of Texas; University of Kentucky; and Mideast State University—had expressed interest in creating extra roles for esports as of 2021, but focused on institution-led tournaments or courses, which are usually guided by an institution's current student organizations (Konopelko, 2022).

Growing Presence of High School Esports

The growing presence of esports in high schools is also relevant. Though few articles have covered student participation in competitive video game ventures prior to college, associate

professor at the University of Kentucky's College of Communication and Information, Burns (2021), referenced the North American Scholastic Esports Federation (NASEF) as an organization focused on esports at the middle school and high school levels. EsportsMideast is a NASEF-affiliated organization in Mideast that contains 116 member schools, and there are 28 more organizations linked to NASEF with varying numbers of schools (NASEF, n.d.). Similar to NACE, NASEF has member organizations, sponsors, and a focus on education. Burns (2021) suggested high school esports have a connection to collegiate esports, elucidating a potential connection to college or university esports development.

A Brief Discussion of Higher Education Esports Curriculum

Organizations that tie esports competitions to "academics and future careers" (Generation Esports, n.d., para. 1) can potentially answer Burns's (2021) question, "How can institutions of higher education best capitalize on this emerging trend and build and grow successful and competitive esports programs?" (p. 1). The programmatic focus on esports made Mideast State University's program stand out from other R1 schools (Shaw, 2018). Despite the vocational nature of esports, Mideast State University decided to pursue a large innovative role for esports in its curriculum in 2018, distinguishing their focus from universities of similar size and focus (Anderson, 2019; Lee, 2019) and reflecting the timing of Burns (2021), who argued, "The opportunity is ripe for institutions to connect with students in new ways and build new communities of engagement with esports teams and gaming facilities" (p. 1). Higher education institutions increasingly build new connections and communities by working with outside organizations (e.g., NASEF, NACE) to develop programs that fit the ways in which a specific institution wants to proceed. Because each institution can proceed with esports in differing ways,

this dissertation used a curriculum definition that attempted to envelop the many ways of approaching curriculum development.

In this study, I used Lattuca and Stark's (2009) comprehensive definition of curriculum to focus on any one part of the curriculum development process while acknowledging the rest of the process simultaneously; in this dissertation, the focus was on collaboration used to build curricula. Lattuca and Stark (2009) defined *curriculum* within their academic plan model as an operation that "involve[s] decisions about (at least) the following elements" (p. 4): purposes, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment.

Lattuca and Stark's (2009) definition of curriculum also included internal and external influences, educational processes, and educational outcomes, taking into account the definitions solicited from "faculty, administrators, graduate students, and observers of higher education" (p. 1). Additionally, Lattuca and Stark included formal expressions of important elements for students to learn, such as (a) experiences, (b) total content of a particular discipline, and (c) time and credit frames that colleges provide (Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Klein & Newell, 1997; Stark et al., 1986). Most importantly, for this dissertation, the main idea of Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan model was used as the conceptual framework for the research, and their definition complimented the framework (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Academic Plan Model
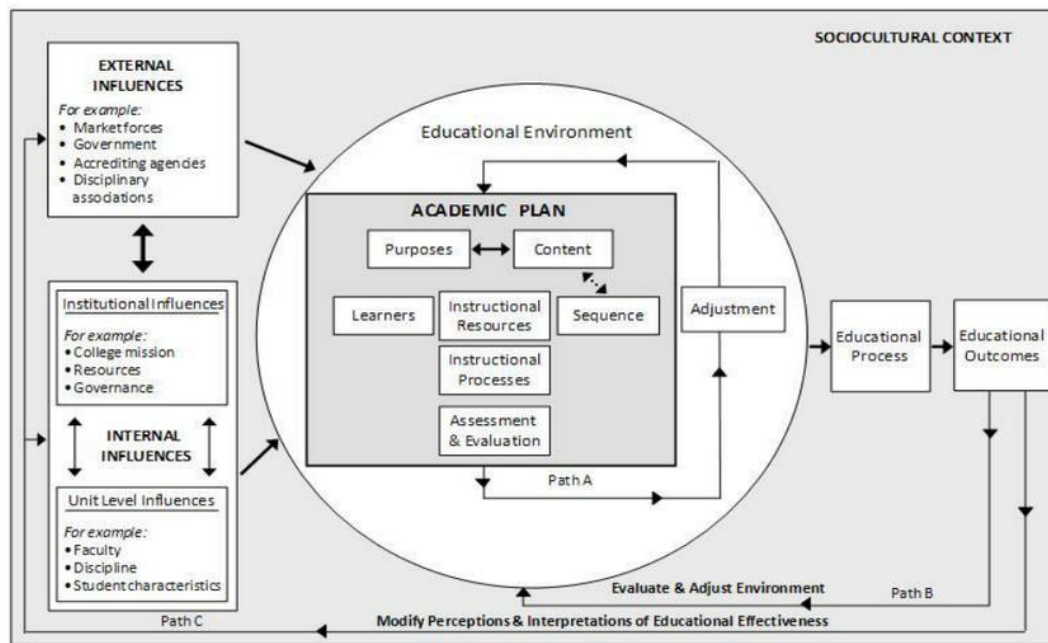
Note. Reprinted from *Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Context* (2nd ed.) by L. R. Lattuca & J. S. Stark, 2009, p. 5. Jossey-Bass.

The academic plan model in Figure 1 served the purpose of giving a visual representation of the important parts of an esports curriculum development process while also allowing those institutions that have begun to develop an esports curriculum to compare and contrast currently developed programs with future development. Moreover, this model included internal and external influences to esports—not only as contributors to a program, but also as individuals, documents, organizations, and information specific to an institution. Esports developers have often struggled to decide which elements of esports development are most important, many times without realizing they have made already made some, or even all, necessary curricular decisions.

The use of the word *development* was one necessary distinction addressed in this study. Though Lattuca and Stark (2009) used *development* as one part of the administration of curriculum development wherein coordination, implementation, support, evaluation, and adjustment were also necessary elements, *develop* and *development* emerged as key terms from the literature review and study framework to describe the curriculum creation process holistically. The goal of this term was not to oversimplify how researchers look at curriculum development; rather, I sought to use *develop* and *development* to reflect a common language when describing the process of creating an esports curriculum.

The following section of this chapter includes the statement of the problem, statement of significance, research question and subquestions, and the purpose of the study. I also provided a statement of timeliness regarding Mideast State University's esports curriculum progress and a statement of timeliness in studying Mideast State University's esports curriculum. Finally, this chapter includes the research question, purpose of the study, and the dissertation outline.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the prevalence of esports in higher education, the sudden popularity of the esports field, and the role of esports in an already overloaded curriculum space, this study considered curriculum expansion and reform in the 21st century—especially interactions between faculty and administration in new areas of study. With the exception of new areas of science, and given that higher education institutions change their curricula infrequently, reform discussions typically exclude innovative new areas of study (Wootton-Greener, 2019). Esports as a field has played an increasingly larger role in many higher education student affairs departments, though these ventures sometimes have different roles at different higher education institutions: some are student-led clubs, some are competitive varsity teams, some have educational curricula, and

some have a combination of these options (Bok, 2020). The problem is that esports as a new area of study requires curricular innovation in an overloaded curriculum space.

One major factor to consider when embarking on this study was the inclusion of collegiate esports in formal academic curriculum, as professional esports information is the focus in existing literature; for example, Mideast State University's preliminary proposal for a major in esports and game studies referenced a report about global esports (Newzoo, 2019a). The rationale section in the Mideast State Esports and Game Studies proposal read:

> According to Newzoo's Global Esports Market Report, the global esports revenues have grown over 30% for the past 3 years and this rate is expected to continue beyond 2021. The revenues in the industry were $250 million in 2015 and were expected to reach $1.65 billion by 2021. (Newzoo, 2019a, para. 1)

A report by Fortune Business Insights (2022) valued the esports industry at $1.22 billion in 2021, suggesting revenues had not grown as much as projected. For context, Fortune Business Insights (2022) originally projected the market to grow from its 2022 value of $1.44 billion to $5.48 billion in 2029. Though the projected growth had not met actual growth as of 2022, esports as a field had grown enough to the point where there was a dearth of properly trained college graduates to fill industry needs. Moreover, market projections can be misleading because viewership and revenue statistics of collegiate esports are not equivalent to professional esports statistics, making most comparisons between collegiate and professional esports inadequate. Mideast State University's proposed undergraduate major was intended fill the void in this industry (The Mideast State University, 2019); as such, I focused on the academic connection between the esports industry and college curricula in this study.

Statement of Significance

College and university personnel may seek to capitalize on the potential academic connection of esports and the college curricula before they understand the risks and rewards of creating programs for professional entertainment topics. As such, academic and nonacademic publications alike have considered (a) the possible revenue generated by esports, (b) forecasts for future earnings, (c) the use of esports as a tool for recruitment and retention, and (d) the possibility of collegiate esports growing exponentially (Gaudiosi, 2016; Lumb, 2018; Newzoo, 2019a; Wijman, 2020). Additional research has emerged to discuss the risks and rewards of esports curricula (Kong & Rubenstein, 2020; Pizzo et al., 2019), but higher education institutions have thus far developed their esports programs without a standardized guide to follow. As a result, institutions may offer anything from a small student club to a fully developed varsity esports program and a curriculum that supports esports education.

Additionally challenging is the continual push to embed esports within higher education, similar to when higher education began to embrace football (Thelin, 2011). Between 1890 and 1910, when athletics turned from extracurricular activities to intercollegiate sports, groups of professors attempted to regulate football but ultimately were not successful (Thelin, 2011). Instead, students and alumni formed an "athletic association" (Thelin, 2011, p. 178) for football. Unlike football, administrators who are aware of the financial benefits of esports have seemed to continually find ways to incorporate esports within universities.

The trend toward higher education's esports role development seems inevitable, as articles on entertainment or technology news websites have declared how big esports will become in the postsecondary sector (AthleticDirectorU, 2022; Ring, 2017). The word "big" in this context refers to potential earnings, popularity, growth, and participation of those affiliated

with esports; however, some faculty members and administrators have expressed concern with esports at their schools. One of these individuals was University of Cincinnati history professor and Mideast's American Association of University Professors (AAUP) president, John McNay (Flaherty, 2018). In August 2018, McNay sent a letter to the University of Cincinnati after it had planned to cut 20% of its academic programs while simultaneously making a statement to invest in collegiate esports (Flaherty, 2018; McCafferty, 2018). McNay (as cited in Flaherty, 2018) wrote, "It is as though you are saying: Well, we are bored with education so let's play games instead" (para. 2). McNay's statements echoed those of many faculty members, especially those who consider playing video games to be a waste of time.

More importantly, curriculum creation for esports requires faculty and administrators to work together—likely between multiple departments at a university, as was the case at Mideast State University. Rhodes (2001) wrote that U.S. universities have departments that are, "island continent[s]," which, "rarely hav[e] any relationship or connection other than geographic proximity to its neighbors" (p. 87). Further, Rhodes (2001) argued there is value in faculty "coordination, combination, and cooperation between related courses" (p. 87). Universities that have "island continents" (Rhodes, 2001, p. 87) and that lack the cooperation to create curricula depend on those who reside in different departments to begin communicating with one another. Curriculum creation is not a new concept, so typical aspects of intra-departmental curriculum development—such as collaboration—can be used for esports program development; however, as with any new area of study, esports as a field presents unique issues that warrant discussion.

Timeliness of Mideast State University's Esports Decisions

In light of esports as a large and rapidly growing industry in higher education, the consideration of esports development at the university level does not seem unusual. University

faculty members sometimes take note of novel areas of study, and esports is a fiscally interesting area for faculty researchers because of the potential suggested by websites such as Newzoo (n.d.-a, n.d.-b), Fortune (Gaudiosi, 2016), and Digital Trends (Lyman, 2022).

Mideast State University's (n.d.) website contains multiple documents that helped piece together what transpired with regard to the potential esports major at Mideast State University. The proposal of the fledgling esports curriculum gave the public a clear indication that particular departments and colleges within the university had worked together to create an interdisciplinary curriculum in a timely fashion. I analyzed other documents from Mideast State University's website to gain a greater understanding of the direction in which some faculty wanted to proceed. These documents formed a timeline summary of events at Mideast State University, which is discussed in Chapter 2.

Timeliness of Studying Esports and Game Studies at Mideast State University

At the time of this study, there was approximately 20 years' worth of research available on esports in higher education, though most of these studies bore no relevance to academics and curriculum development (Reitman et al., 2019). Emergent, albeit infrequent, academic research on esports in higher education has helped guide institutions wanting to establish esports programs. Burns (2021) provided general benefits and guidance on starting a higher education esports program, and explained why each program is specific to each institution. Though Burns used some citations, much of the article was common sense. Subsequently, the production of more academic-based research of esports-based programs for R1 universities can allow new programs to develop with confidence and increase the possibility of appropriate funding.

To clarify, academic research on esports in the last 3 years (i.e., 2021–2023) has steadily increased, but the research trajectory has not followed an overall focus. The esports research

available has spanned a wide variety of topics such as: soft skills (Castillo & Escribano, 2021), gender discrimination (Taylor & Stout, 2020), business management (Hedlund et al., 2020), Title IX (Stoever, 2021), musculoskeletal pain (Lindberg et al., 2020), and an inventory of academic esports programs (Jenny et al., 2021). One dissertation provided some insight into how student esports competitors at the University of California, Irvine believed they needed to choose between a focus on esports or a focus on academics (Kauweloa, 2022). That said, there remain important gaps in the research, including (a) whether an institution should create an esports program (varsity or academic), (b) contingencies for changing circumstances at an institution, and (c) long-term esports curriculum development. As of 2023, discourse on esports in academics has focused on what resources a school will need and how to focus courses and programs toward career development (Scott et al., 2021).

Research Question

Based on the growing interest in esports over the past few years, college and university personnel have begun to accept the role of esports programs on their campuses. Still, esports is not necessarily a well-known or traditional topic in academia, and so these efforts have been fraught with uncertainty as to what role esports plays in higher education. I chose Mideast State University as the site for this study because the institution began to develop esports into a bachelor's degree-granting curriculum in 2019. More specifically, Mideast State University published a proposal to begin an interdepartmental esports program in the Fall 2019 semester; however, the university had not yet established the esports program as of the Fall 2023 semester, eliciting a potential area of inquiry as to the delay. The main research question in this study was: How can an early experiment in designing an esports curriculum assist research in the novel field?

Curriculum developers such as Lattuca and Stark (2009) documented how to develop a curriculum for a well-known topic, but documentation of internal campus interactions between different higher education departments and involved parties are inconsistent. Each department or university website keeps documents recording these interactions on file. Mideast State University posted a number of curriculum documents on their website as searchable items, including minutes from meetings and emails (Fletcher, 2013; Mideast State University, 2019; Mideast State University College of Medicine, 2017; Mideast State University College of Engineering Committee on Academic Affairs, 2017; Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). I used these documents to understand interactions between multiple departments during the esports curriculum development process in efforts to help future practitioners and researchers understand the reasons why institutions have sought to introduce roles for esports into academic curriculum, and the challenges faced in doing so. Such findings can also extend to future research on developing curricula for other novel academic fields.

To answer the research question, other unofficial questions also needed an answer, as guided by Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model; for example, how do faculty and administrators determine who assumes what roles in the curricular development process? Curriculum development over multiple departments and colleges can be complicated due to power dynamics—who has knowledge about the topic and who seems most central to the development process? To gain optimal outcomes, what processes does a developer follow or create? If legitimacy is a concern, how are faculty positioned in discussions of curriculum reform? These areas of topical inquiry helped ground the central research question and aid the study in focusing

on curriculum development of novel programs, rather than focusing on an overarching exploration of collegiate esports.

Purpose of the Study

Though curriculum development for single subjects and single-department programs has been widely covered (Dressel, 1971; Lattuca & Stark, 2009), intra-departmental curriculum development interactions and esports-based curriculum development have had very little coverage. The purpose of the study was to more fully understand interactions between multiple departments during the novel interdisciplinary curriculum development process at R1 higher education institutions and to explore how role creation within their systems. This qualitative dissertation sought to better understand interactions in R1 interdepartmental curriculum development of novel programs.

Dissertation Outline

This section outlines the structure of the dissertation. Chapter 1 discussed the nature of esports as a novel topic used in interdisciplinary curriculum development and the relevance of esports in all sectors to the field's emergence into higher education. Chapter 2 reviews collegiate esports and its multiple inclusions in higher education institutions, Mideast State University's relationship to esports and game studies, and curriculum development. Chapter 3 discusses existing literature on curriculum development and outlines the research framework. Chapter 4 discusses the methods and frameworks used to collect and analyze data. Chapter 5 discusses the findings from interviews conducted with faculty and administration of Mideast State University. Chapter 6 briefly discusses how Mideast State University ultimately shelved the novel esports program, even with an initial plan in place.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF ESPORTS

The previous chapter introduced the topic of esports in higher education, including how esports fits into higher education, statements of the problem, significance, timeliness, the purpose of the study, and an outline of the dissertation. The following chapter provides an introduction to collegiate esports, including a timeline describing how Mideast State University approached the development of an esports curriculum at the end of the chapter. The purpose of this study was to more fully understand interactions between multiple departments during the novel, interdisciplinary curriculum development process at Research 1 (R1) higher education institutions and to explore how role creation within their systems.

This chapter is intended to help faculty and administrators gain key background knowledge of the novel concept of esports beyond entertainment-based articles. In addition, there is discussion of Mideast State University's past and current esports and game studies programs. This chapter contains: pertinent information regarding esports at all levels, Mideast State University's timeline of events, public documents referring to Mideast State University's esports-related programs, and curriculum development.

Introduction to Collegiate Esports

Esports is a term that typically denotes competitive video game contests, though such a classification may oversimplify the concept and breadth of esports as a field. Though the concept of esports is not inherently complicated, oversimplifying the concept can complicate studies on esports. This study considered esports as a novel topic for higher education institutions; as such, esports utilizes a thorough definition, followed by a history of esports and a description of the connection between esports and sportification.

Overview of Esports Competitions

This section contains a summary of esports competitions and one example game that: a) a writer observes over 20 years of experience, and b) the definition of esports uses in this dissertation. No article has this specific information because articles base their overviews on their minimized definitions of esports.

Esports players, either individually or with teammates, choose a character, deck, or mode to begin a game against one or more online players. With the use of a controller (i.e., mouse) and/or keyboard, each player sits in front of a monitor to play a game. Games vary from league to league and tournament to tournament, but certain games or genres overlap between leagues and tournaments; for example, the popular game Super Smash Brothers by Nintendo is a fighting game where players choose a character from a list and then use that character's abilities to knock the other player's character off the stage in a best of three-game series. Coding and in-game mechanics heavily regulate games, and the game itself enforces the rules. If players have any questions about the rules or an issue with potential malfunctions of game mechanics or server connection, a judge typically stands by to make a ruling. This structure is consistent for all esports games unless a game contains alternative goals.

In esports, there is no physical ball, no pads to protect players, no field on which to play, and players only use their hands to control the on-screen game (Van Allen, 2016). There are stadiums, typically called arenas, but these venues are similar to theaters where the competitors are elevated on a stage, and audiences look between the players to large screens above that show what happens in the game. Competitions between players occur in real time, and players make split-second decisions. The winner is the player or team that satisfies the game's win conditions.

Once a player is able to understand the mechanics of the game and how the rules work, they can attempt to win the game.

Comparison of Esports to Chess

Esports competitions apply the same principles that other games or competitions proclaim; for example, if a player knows the mechanics and rules of chess, they can attempt to win the game (Suits, 1967). As a result, players who understand the mechanics and rules of a game can win at chess and games similar to chess. Sports do not simply occur when two players have knowledge of the mechanics and rules of a competition, but some specific characteristics place both esports and chess in the sports category.

According to the director of sport management at the University of North Texas, "Sportification means to view, organize, or regulate a nonsport activity in such a way that it resembles a sport and allows a fair, pleasurable, and safe environment for individuals to compete and cooperate" (Heere, 2018, p. 1). As defined at the start of this section, esports are sportified competitions that resemble sports in specific ways. Looking through a lens of sportification allows researchers to compare esports to other types of games.

When compared to other games, and with the exception of monitors and controllers, a board game similar to chess best compares to esports. Playing chess requires a knowledge of: (a) the rules, (b) how each piece moves, (c) the different strategies an opponent uses, and (d) how to win (Chess.com, 2023). Athletic movements are unnecessary and detract from a player's need to concentrate for the next few moves. Traditional chess uses an 8-by-8 square physical board and 16 pieces per player. Players can play one versus one or make team-based decisions depending on tournament formats. Comparing chess to esports allows researchers to understand esports as more of a cognitive challenge than as video game competitions alone (Leroux-Parra, 2020).

Despite the lack of physical activity, players have to stay in good physical condition to play their best. Stanford University stress researcher, Sapolsky (as cited in Kumar, 2020), explained, "A chess player can burn up to 6,000 calories a day while playing in a tournament, three times what an average person consumes in a day" (para. 9). In addition, Sapolsky (as cited in Kumar, 2020) said, "Grandmasters sustain elevated blood pressure for hours in the range found in competitive marathon runners" (para. 10). The conditioning element is one that many do not consider when thinking about competitive chess (Fornal-Urban et al., 2009). Conditioning is beneficial to those who have to play through an entire season's worth of competitions.

COVID-19 Global Pandemic and Pop Culture Connections to Online Gaming

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, chess had a resurgence of popularity online (United Nations, n.d.), specifically on streaming services (e.g., Twitch and YouTube) and on websites like Chess.com and Lichess (Lahood, 2021). The resurgence of interest in chess came from a combination of three influences: (a) the COVID-19 global pandemic; (b) access to instructional resources; and (c) the television series, "The Queen's Gambit" (Lahood, 2021). "The Queen's Gambit" highlighted the lasting appeal of highly competitive games, including realistic in-game positioning, the mental struggles champions endure, and the journey from underdog to master. In addition, those who regularly watched video game streaming found some of the most popular streamers practicing chess competed in "PogChamps, an invitational amateur tournament series hosted by Chess.com featuring some of the most popular non-chess Twitch streamers" (Lahood, 2021, para. 4). These events made chess more popular generally, but also made online chess tournaments popular for amateurs and professionals alike. In fact, online chess through Chess.com is one of the games supported by the Olympic Esports Series (International Olympic Committee, 2023b).

Amid the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, many professional chess competitions shifted online (Waldstein, 2020), similar to the way that esports is presented—and furthering the connection between these competitions. Each player or team had a visual representation of themselves, whether they used a picture or live video feed. The game filled the majority of the screen where spectators could clearly see all of the players' movements. Players did not move from their chairs, and the only implement they used was a controller or a keyboard-and-mouse combination. As a result of the way that post-COVID-19 chess and esports competitions exist, implications have emerged over whether esports or sportified competitions are sports.

Contention over Definitions of Esports

For this study, esports are interactive video game competitions governed by a nonplaying body, played online through a local area network (LAN) or on a shared game system, and viewed by an audience. Current definitions of sports are tests of whether esports are the same or similar enough to traditional sports (Guttman, 1978; Kane & Spradley, 2017). Still, despite much agreement on definitions of sports, there remain disagreements on the particulars. For example, the International Olympic Committee does not use standardized definitions; rather, the committee looks to an individual sport's international federation as a prerequisite for inclusion in the Olympics (International Olympic Committee, 2022). Each federation defines its own sport, and definitions vary greatly between sports. Attempts to define esports have usually lacked some key details, or the definitions have been overgeneralized to be accessible to all readers.

In fact, many representatives at the 2019 NACE convention and most of the participating players treated esports as a tangible sport. This treatment reflected the fact that esports has competitions, coaches, fitness programs (i.e., players sit and concentrate on the game in a chair for long periods of time), and that esports is sometimes located in collegiate athletic departments.

19

Heere (2018) cited prior researchers who argued for "sport [to] be defined through its usage" (para. 7). Based on available information, researchers have typically considered esports as a sport based on the athletic aspects that can exist alongside the competition aspects.

Finally, researchers have typically used the definition of esports that includes, or only uses the phrase, "competitive video gaming" (Jenny et al., 2016; Kauweloa, 2022; Kelly et al., 2021). Less scholarly works have typically only used competitive video gaming as the definition of esports because they focused on telling stories or describing the creative processes that go into esports; other scholarly works have used the definition to argue a related point of contention. Rodriguez and Dempsey (2016), in their book, *OpTic Gaming*, used this definition because they told the story of how OpTic Gaming (i.e., a professional esports and entertainment organization) came to exist and has continued to exist rather than going into depth about how tournaments work or how esports compare to traditional sports. Researchers such as Karhulahti (2018) and Jenny et al. (2016) also defined esports as either some form of organized video gaming or competitive video gaming. Though easy to understand, these definitions may not fully describe the full range of what esports can be, which has limited the scope of research in this emergent area. Subsequently, a comprehensive definition is necessary for curriculum development; a minimal definition has multiple interpretations, thereby creating confusion for different departments looking for a definitive definition. Such confusion may lead to misinterpretations about pedagogy, long-term financial viability, and even the physical health of esports players.

Physical Parameters of Sports Definitions

If researchers consider esports to be sports, the comparison of esports to competitive chess should extend to physical health. Esports health considerations include "physical health (i.e., physical activity, musculoskeletal injuries, eye health), sleep, nutrition, performance-

enhancing drugs, and mental health (i.e., gaming disorder, emotional regulation)" (Schary et al., 2022, p. 1). Notably, performance-enhancing drugs are illegal in esports competition, though performance-enhancing drugs are difficult to regulate because many companies who own their esports games "prefer to act alone without greater oversight" (Bogle, 2020, para. 6). Formerly known as the Electronic Sports League, ESL Gaming GmbH worked with the World Anti-Doping Agency and the Germany-based Nationale Anti-Doping Agentur in 2015 to form an extensive list of banned substances for esports that was still enforced as of 2023 (Basu, 2015). The most typical infraction relates to drugs that increase reaction times, such as Ritalin or Adderall (Bogle, 2020). Though anabolic steroids are on the list of banned substances, and research has shown that steroids give an unfair advantage in traditional sports competitions (New York State Department of Health, 2008), no researchers have yet determined whether steroids would be of any benefit in esports competitions. The lack of research for esports in the realms of physical and mental health is concerning because the comparison between esports and sports has often focused on the physical and mental aspects of the field, rather than the academic possibilities.

Assumptions of Esports Sportification

Despite fluctuating perceptions of esports and physical parameters, there are widely agreed upon assumptions about esports in regard to sportification. For instance, University of North Texas Director of Sport Entertainment Management, Heere (2018), never claimed that esports are sports. Instead, Heere (2018) cited McBride, who wrote, "Philosophers ought not waste their time attempting to define 'sport'" (p. 21). Further, Wittgenstein (as cited in Heere, 2018) suggested that sports be defined "through its usage" (para. 8), thereby allowing esports to be associated with sports-related activities, whether esports fit ubiquitous definitions or not.

S*portification* is the concept that describes a nonsports concept as sports by association. According to Heere (2018), sport can fit many applications as long as the activity in question fits sportification definition criteria. Researchers have often equated esports to sports in papers and online reports, and have argued that calling esports a sport does not invalidate arguments about esports as a unique entity (Jenny et al., 2016; Kane & Spradley, 2017). By using the potential misnomer "sports" in esports, higher education institutions and the organizations that support them can create and continue to produce collegiate esports tournaments similar to the ways that traditional sports competitions are produced. Though challenging to create curricula for sports in education, sportification can assist the transition for esports in education.

Many researchers have thereby taken a sportified approach to defining esports that included the word sport but never fully claimed that esports are sports. Wagner (2006), a faculty member at Danube University's Department for Interactive Media and Educational Technology, defined *esports* as, "An area of sport activities in which people develop and train mental or physical abilities in the use of information and communication technologies" (p. 3). Wagner's definition allowed for a wider range of video games to be included; however, Jenny et al. (2016) contended Wagner's definition, which allowed for players to use mental or physical abilities to compete, and ignored the wide acceptance that games are sports exclusively when physical activity is included. Jenny et al. (2016) gave particular attention to the following components of sport: "play, organization, competition, skill, physicality, broad following, and institutionalization" (para. 13). There has remained contention over the physicality portion of esports due to the fact that players sit in one place for long periods of time, but other researchers have argued that sitting and concentrating for long periods of time is physically challenging.

Regardless of whether esports is sport or not, the sportification of esports, and references to esports athletes, have become common in most esports articles.

Challenges to the Sportification Emphasis of Esports

Esports has been increasingly sportified "to view, organize, or regulate a nonsport activity in such a way that it resembles a sport and allows a fair, pleasurable, and safe environment for individuals to compete and cooperate" (Heere, 2018, p. 21); however, this definition is not all-inclusive. For instance, Von Der Lippe (1994), faculty in humanities, sports, and educational science at the University of South Eastern Norway, noted some researchers have used the term sportification "to denote the process of turning a physical activity into a sport" (p. 214). Specifically, professor and expert in sports science, Bernett (1984), described this process by using volleyball as an example. Bernett described the origin of volleyball as the activity of hitting a ball into the air so it stays up for as long as possible. Eventually, organization of volleyball into an established sport transpired after proponents added a net and rules. More recently, this view of sportification was used to validate competitions such as skateboarding, handball, and climbing as inclusions in the 2020, 2024, and 2028 Olympic Games (International Olympic Committee, 2023a).

Sportification has been used at various times in history to understand what sports can be, but such a scope of possibility has remained relatively absent from academic curricula. As a result, already existing departments obtain sportified fields in higher education rather than create new departments, as is the case for esports within the Engineering Department and Student Affairs at Mideast State University.

The Rise of Esports Organizations

A growing number of organizations, including higher education institutions themselves, have arranged and sponsored esports tournaments at higher education institutions since the first StarCraft college tournament between Princeton University and Tsinghua University in 2009 (Cohen, 2009). These organizations—which have included Collegiate Starleague, NACE, and TESPA (TESPA, n.d.)—have exhibited a tendency to work exclusively with student organizations in colleges rather than with faculty members or administrators. Working with student organizations allows outside organizations (e.g., TESPA) to arrange tournaments quickly and easily, and organizations can provide scholarships and even financial compensation to the winning students. Some of the aforementioned organizations that first held esports tournaments for popular video games, such as League of Legends, still hold tournaments for these games as of 2023; other organizations that build computers (e.g., Intel) and fast food chains (e.g., McDonald's), have become more involved in sponsoring teams and tournaments due to the lucrative potential of the competitions (Meola, 2023). One organization that has become more involved in holding tournaments is the National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE).

Residual Lack of Esports Governance

Amid an increasing number of NACE campus affiliates, the overarching governance of esports competitions has fallen on tournament organizers. Since 2016, both the NAIA and NJCAA have endorsed NACE as the de facto governing body for esports (NJCAA, n.d.). Both the NAIA and NJCAA are organizations focused on athletics, but because esports has never been explicitly defined or accepted by all stakeholders as a sport, the NAIA and NJCAA have little basis for inclusion in this matter unless the sportification rationale is used. Though over 185 schools have joined NACE since 2016 (Burns, 2021; Next College Student Athlete, n.d.), there

remains no official governing body for all of collegiate esports. Institutions are not required to join NACE nor any governing body, and although tournament organizers are well-equipped to handle rules violations, challenges may still arise from this lack of formal governing entity.

Focus of Esports in Media and Scholarship

Many fields of research have published the more recent research articles on esports, not one specific field. A report by University of California, Irvine graduate students who attempted to compile articles on esports equipped researchers with the understanding that most esports articles have also largely focused on professional esports (Reitman et al., 2019). Using informatics to compile esports articles and results, Reitman et al. provided an opportunity to find articles and estimate how many articles had been published about esports in different fields, including business, cognitive science, informatics, media studies, sociology, sports science, and law. To summarize, Reitman et al. garnered 61,589 total results that were narrowed down to 150 articles on esports; however, the researchers' foci were distributed between player performance, in-game mechanics, communication, self-promotion, interactions between audience and gameplay, relationships between esports, sports and media, and copyright and intellectual property. Reitman et al. found no mention of curriculum development and few mentions of postsecondary esports. The main focus of articles was professional esports, and a collegiate esports focus was rare, but there appeared to be a dearth of available literature on esports in the higher education sector generally. However, there is not as much literature regarding higher education institutions who have created programs.

The First Esports Competition

Competitive esports in college dates back to October 19, 1972, when Stanford University held the first game tournament on their campus. *Rolling Stone* writer Brand (1972) produced a

9,000-word essay on the characteristics and intricacies of the game. Brand (1972) subtitled the essay, "Fanatic Life and Symbolic Death among the Computer Bums" because he told the story of the tournament like an experimental piece, as if science fiction had become reality. The tournament itself only lasted 1 day, and first prize was a 1-year subscription to *Rolling Stone* magazine. The most likely reason that an audience was present might have been the free beer offered to all who attended, as included on the flyer for the event (Brand, 1972).

The game played was Spacewar!, conceived by Harvard University laboratory technicians, Russell and Witanen, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) laboratory technician, Graetz. The Spacewar! game itself emerged as a response to MIT's newest computer bouncing ball demonstration program. The three researchers had been working with the previous generation's high-tech computer, and then utilized their newest computer, the PDP-1. The intended demonstration for the new computer program was so underwhelming to the lab technicians that they decided to create a program that would show its full capability. Their choice to develop a game came quickly, and after hearing about the game, others started to get involved.

Development of Spacewar! started in 1961 and continued in development until the tournament in 1972. Multiple people were involved in the creation of the original game, and the creation of numerous iterations of the game transpired throughout the United States. The game itself is simply some lines and dots put together in an effort to destroy the other player's ship while avoiding the constant gravity pull of the sun in the middle of the screen. The premise was a simple idea with more complex programming than had been used for a game in the past. One of the most prominent developments for video games and, subsequently, esports was the creation and play of this game (Brand, 1972).

Technically, the Stanford Spacewar! Tournament can only be considered a collegiate competition because of the location of the tournament (i.e., Stanford University), but anyone who saw the flyer in *Rolling Stone* magazine could participate (Brand, 1972). Among the approximately 24 competitors, there was a team winner, a singles winner, and a free-for-all winner, though Brand (1972) did not provide a notation specifying if any participants were college students. This open access shifted over time; as of 2023, game tournaments are collegiate esports competitions exclusively when higher education students play them.

A History of Collegiate Esports

The linkage between esports and sports has continued to be relevant to the discussion of each topic respectively. University of Connecticut law professor, Kurlantzick (2018), argued, "The forced linkage between athletics and education necessarily produces undesirable pressures on academic norms" (p. 240). Despite such an assertion, a brief history of esports can help further understanding of the connection between esports and sports. In addition, understanding how esports found its way to college campuses allowed me to consider more specific developments regarding collegiate esports. This section details the beginning of competitive esports, identifies key organizations that became involved in esports, explains the live streaming phenomenon, and makes the connection between esports and higher education.

Structure and Emergence of Higher Education Chess Leagues

The Collegiate Chess League (CCL) has a regular season and playoffs similar to any college basketball, football, or esports league (Lee, 2022). Teams play against other teams in the regular season, during which they earn points toward playoff eligibility. The playoffs allow the best teams in the regular season to face one another until one team remains; the top four teams for each division earns prize money (Lee, 2022). All college chess teams are club teams run by

students or with faculty assistance. Note, all chess in the United States is governed by the U.S. Chess Federation (U.S. Chess Federation, n.d.), though there is no collegiate membership list because membership is exclusively paid for by individuals.

Teams from the Ivy League play in CCL competitions, but no team from the Ivy League has joined the CCL as a member campus. The CCL is an organization created by Chess.com to host a regulated collegiate chess league. Representatives from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Cornell universities all play in the CCL competitions, as do the University of Michigan, the University of Chicago, and multiple schools in the University of California system. Each of these schools has a reputation of high academic status and very-high to high-research status under the Carnegie R1 and Research 2 (R2) research classifications (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). Unlike the CCL, and according to co-commissioner of Ivy Esports Mitchell, schools in the Ivy League created and joined the Ivy Esports Conference to "address the issues relative to the NCAA and amateur athletic standards" (as cited in Heitner, 2018, para. 3). To summarize, chess competitions are esports in the Ivy Esports Conference, and the schools were responding to what they considered to be the NCAA's overly restrictive rules on amateurism.

High School Esports Organizations

High schools have increasingly become involved with esports, specifically through organizations such as High School Esports League (HSEL) and NASEF, the latter of which partners with NACE (Alford, 2021). The two high school-oriented organizations discussed in this study are by no means the only ones that offer esports-related support to high schools and their students; however, these organizations are two of the largest in the United States. Similar state-based organizations include the California Interscholastic Federation, the Michigan High School Esports League, and the Virginia High School League, who all partner with national

organizations (e.g., PlayVS), to compete in "recognized state championships" (PlayVS, n.d., para. 1). HSEL, NASEF, PlayVS, and similar organizations have claimed that students can glean the following benefits from esports: (a) gain a sense of community; (b) experience a sense of inclusivity; and (c) participate in activities that help students gain skills related to science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM; Generation Esports, n.d.; NASEF, n.d.; PlayVS, n.d.).

High school-oriented organizations have also claimed the merits of using esports as a platform to help students gain life skills. Part of NASEF's (n.d.) mission statement claims, "We're on a mission to provide opportunities for all students to use esports as a platform to develop STEAM-based skills and social emotional attributes such as communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities needed to thrive in work and in life" (para. 2). Similarly, HSEL's mission statement claims, "Through organized esports competition students will tie their commitment to gaming to their success in academics and future careers" (Generation Esports, n.d., para. 1). These claims are bolstered by the state-based organizations that partner with these national organizations, such as EsportsOhio.

The Influence of NACE

Because NACE (n.d.) has gained such a large number of memberships from non-R1 higher education institutions and given that NACE is affiliated with the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NCAA, 2022), which claims on their website to be "the experts in the business of small college athletics" (para. 1), their name has become synonymous with small college esports. NACE began in 2016 in Kansas City, Missouri. NACE's executive director, Brooks, was the director of strategic partnerships at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) between 2014 and 2019 (Brooks, n.d.). NAIA's staff directory page lists

NACE's employees, and the NAIA search function produces results for NACE (NAIA, n.d.). An ESPN article also confirmed that NACE partners with the National Junior College Athletics Association (NJCAA) and the NAIA (Morrison, 2018).

The NACE (n.d.) website does mention its partnership with the NAIA, but does not discuss the full affiliation with NAIA. According to NAIA (n.d.), "The NAIA is the ONLY athletic association that serves the interests of small colleges through holding national championships and by driving student-athlete enrollment and financial sustainability" (p. 1). The NACE (n.d.) website does not mention a particular interest in non-R1 universities, yet a majority of their member institutions are non-R1 universities. However, a number of R1 schools have joined NACE over time, thereby bringing greater resources and recognition to their organization. These schools have included Boise State University; University of Missouri; University of California, Irvine; University of Utah; University of Cincinnati; University of Kansas; University of Maryland; West Virginia University; and the University of Mississippi (NACE, n.d.). As of 2023, the University of Utah and University of California, Irvine were not members of NACE (NACE, 2023).

Still, the number of higher education institutions that joined NACE increased from 125 in 2019 to 185 in 2021, indicating a pattern of growth (Burns, 2021; Next College Student Athlete, n.d.). In addition, a wide variety of schools joined NACE in the span of 3 years (Burns, 2021), but this number only represents a handful of very high research (i.e., R1) schools such as Boise State University; University of Utah; and University of California, Irvine. The growth of collegiate esports was greatest for non-R1 schools (Burns, 2021).

More recently, however, the NACE Director of Membership Sales and Services, Jones (2022), stated that certain National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division 1 (D1)

institutions—including Boise State University, University of Kansas, and University of Maryland—created their own varsity esports programs. Jones subsequently posited that more D1 institutions would create varsity esports programs in the next 5 years and, in turn, increase awareness of esports in higher education. Part of this reasoning came from existing student-level offerings. Student esports clubs had already established programs at most D1 institutions, and these clubs routinely participated in esports competitions (Jones, 2022). Additionally, all eight Ivy League schools (i.e., Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania, and Yale University) created their own league, called the Ivy Esports Conference, in 2018 (Carpenter, 2018). Jones also mentioned a wave of school esports teams was likely to come online in the next 3–5 years, though they were referencing already established college programs that were potentially willing to join NACE rather than schools in the beginning stages of creating an esports club.

NACE offers assistance to colleges and universities that create varsity esports programs, and NACE had signed 185 member colleges and universities as of 2022 (Next College Student Athlete, n.d.). These programs are exclusively competitive, and NACE only lists member institutions. NACE also promotes student well-being, though their website does not discuss degree programs, minor programs, or certificate programs, which can help explain why more rigorous institutions do not choose to join NACE. Though my study was concerned with educational esports curricula, it was important to show an understanding of the entire collegiate esports state of affairs preceding Mideast State University's proposed venture into the field.

Upon review, the NACE (n.d.) website only mentioned curriculum once, though it is not clear what kind of curriculum. In 2021, NACE, Collegiate Starleague (CSL) Esports, Nerd Street

Gamers, and Mainline announced the formation of NACE Starleague to assist schools that need help with varsity esports programs or with facility development (Cox, 2021). Based on the focus of this partnership and the companies involved, the NACE Starleague—a North American collegiate esports league that gives out scholarships as prizes and "facilitates competition and broadcasts matches for more than 13,000 students from nearly 700 colleges and universities across 12 titles" (Playfly Esports, 2023, para. 1)—has steered their focus toward a curriculum that deals exclusively with varsity esports programs. Other than Starleague, no higher education institution developed academic curricula with NACE at the time of this study.

In an email exchange between Brooks and myself, Brooks claimed higher education institutions want to join NACE because it is a not-for-profit organization (M. Brooks, personal communication, August 27, 2022). Brooks wrote that NACE offers "a great variety of services for our member institutions and their students," which include, "internship and job training programs for student, competition, broadcasting, industry research, professional development, student-eligibility services, revenue generation opportunities, and many more" (M. Brooks, personal communication, August 27, 2022). Brooks further noted that NACE is partnered with another organization, Esports Development and Growth Enterprise, which can assist higher education institutions with "curriculum building and consultation services" (M. Brooks, personal communication, August 27, 2022). In terms of esports program development, NACE seems to act as a broker between its business partners and interested higher education institutions.

When I asked why schools were interested in joining NACE, Brooks wrote, "NACE is a not-for-profit—501c3 membership association" (M. Brooks, personal communication, August 27, 2022). The trend that many schools are considering, or have considered, joining NACE suggests many schools—larger schools included—have sought to develop a successful esports

program. NAIA's affiliation with both NACE and non-R1 schools has also not deterred these larger schools from joining NACE, especially when schools with the largest athletics budgets have typically associated themselves with the NCAA for major sports (Next College Student Athlete, 2020).

Benefits and Detriments of Collegiate Esports Programs

One of the seminal empirical studies of collegiate esports program development came from Burns (2021), who used the word "program" in terms of establishing a varsity esports program similar to a football or basketball program. Burns discussed the concept of taking courses to prepare for a future career in esports, though they made no reference to a full curriculum. Burns made the correlation between having an official esports program and offering courses to students—in other words, if an institution has a program, they should probably have course offerings.

Burns (2021) argued support for collegiate esports has increased steadily, presenting potential issues as challenges that higher education personnel could seek to address. Burns cited recruitment, national recognition, and donations and sponsorships as sources of support. Alumni who believed in the benefits of esports could make donations in the form of scholarships or directly to the program. For local events, sponsorships are possible, though they depend upon the size of the program. Very few institutions gain sponsorships from large companies that have ties to gaming; as such, local game shops or businesses might be an option for financial support or other support. These types of support can allow programs to recruit more and possibly gain more national recognition.

On a more sobering note, Burns (2021) also discussed diversity and inclusion in college esports environments; inclusion concerns included students who could not afford to play certain

games. Burns briefly mentioned some students cannot afford effective devices to play graphically intensive games before or while they attend college. Moreover, Burns listed multiple types of harassment as addressable issues regarding esports programs such as racism, sexism, and homophobia. Burns gave readers the impression that gaming programs can be negative environments where students feel uncomfortable engaging in video game competitions.

Additionally, Burns (2021) tempered the reported benefits of esports by citing skepticism from higher education leaders due to a lack of funding and space. Burns discussed how club funds would not typically be enough to pay for technologies and a space for an esports arena. To help bolster esports programs, some student clubs have been passionate enough to try and convince others to participate in different club events as proof that more funding would reinforce future interest; alternatively, clubs proposed to remodel classrooms into video game-playing arenas. Some schools reported that they purchased the necessary equipment at a reduced price. Costs for esports programs are not difficult to overcome once proof of concept succeeds and once programs receive a reduction in the price of equipment. Burns's cautious optimism matched that of other researchers (Gaudiosi, 2016; Lumb, 2018; Lyman, 2022).

Concerns about student welfare in collegiate esports programs have also emerged. Esports competitors who consider college as a gateway to professional esports may enroll at the institution, but some competitors have admitted their lifestyle choices may not match up with what they believe is healthy or would help with performance (Baumann et al., 2022). Health concerns can include, but are not limited to, skipped breakfasts, consumption of energy drinks, mental fatigue, vision issues, and burnout (Baumann et al., 2022; Newbury, 2021). Research articles, media, and higher education institutions suggest they will monitor and research college

esports players for the foreseeable future, and that research is important to consider when integrating esports into academic curricula.

Big Ten Schools' Esports Development

Increasingly, institutions in the Big Ten conference have created what they describe as *programs* for video games and esports (see Table 1). Programs, in this instance, have consisted of varsity teams or student organizations. I mention the Big Ten conference in particular because the conference is a product of the NCAA that represents a consortium of 14 R1 higher education institutions with large sports programs and long-term contracts in a nonacademic capacity. To many esports competitors, coaches, and university administrators, esports may serve as an extension of intercollegiate athletics. As of 2023, every Big Ten school had an established esports student club, and administrators had created varsity teams; for instance, a large office equipment producer sponsored Mideast State University's esports program (Mideast State University Esports, n.d.).

Table 1

Big Ten Esports, 2023

Big Ten school	Student organization	Esports major or minor	Game studies or game design program major	Dedicated esports space
Illinois	Yes	No	No, but a project to support an interdisciplinary game studies major not on main campus is in development.	Yes (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, n.d.; University of Illinois, n.d.)
Indiana	Yes	No	Yes, a Bachelor of Science in Game Design, GameDev@IU	No (Indiana University, n.d.)
Iowa	Yes	No	No	Yes (University of Iowa, n.d.)
Maryland	Yes	No	Yes, not on main campus	Yes (University of Maryland, n.d.-a; University of Maryland, n.d.-b)

Table 1 (cont'd)

Big Ten school	Student organization	Esports major or minor	Game studies or game design program major	Dedicated esports space
Michigan	Yes	Not currently	Yes, not on main campus	Yes (The Regents of the University of Michigan, 2023)
Michigan State	Yes	No	Yes, a Bachelor of Science in Game Design, Communication Arts, and Sciences	Yes, called Hubbard Hall (Michigan State University, 2023)
Minnesota	Yes	Not currently	No, one game design course	Yes, a practice space (Regents of the University of Minnesota, 2023)
Nebraska	Yes	Not currently, but planned	Yes, not on main campus	Not currently, but planned (University of Nebraska—Lincoln, 2023)
Northwestern	Yes	Yes, Certificate Program	No, but they have a Game Studies Module within the Radio, Television and Film major	Yes, called the Game Room (Northwestern University, 2022)
Ohio State	Yes	Not currently	No, but they have a Game Studies focus in the Computer Science and Engineering major, and a Game Studies minor in the College of Arts and Sciences	Yes (Ohio State University, 2023)
Penn State	Yes	No	Yes, a minor not on main campus, and a Bachelor of Design that can help graduates gain employment in the game industry	No (Pennsylvania State University, 2023)
Purdue	Yes	No	Yes, a Bachelor of Science in Game Development	Yes, not on main campus (Purdue University, 2023)
Rutgers	Yes	No	Yes, an esports management certificate as of January, 2023	Yes (Rutgers, 2023)
Wisconsin	Yes	No	Yes, a Game Design Certificate, and BFA in Game Design and Development not on main campus	Yes, not on main campus (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2023)

Notably, despite such a trend, administration and faculty in Big Ten schools had not yet established esports-based academic programs as of this study; rather, 13 of the 14 Big Ten schools had at least one course in game design or game studies planned or implemented. Nine of the schools had a game design or game studies major or minor, though only four of them existed on the main campus of the university (see Table 1). According to curriculum goals at multiple universities, a sufficient tactic for students to gain postgraduate employment at game development and game production companies was enrollment in game design and game studies courses and programs; however, game studies-based programs outpaced esports-based program development.

In this study, Mideast State University sought to develop an entire interdisciplinary curriculum for esports that was not intended to overlap with existing programs (e.g., game studies and game design), and that involved five different departments and six areas of study (Lee, 2019). On its website, Mideast State University (n.d., as cited by Shaw, 2018), claimed, "This curriculum will be one of the first of its kind in higher education, and will include undergraduate and graduate degrees; an elective course in esports content production; online certification programs for specialized credentials and a gaming speaker series" (para. 3). Such an interdisciplinary degree program is more difficult to design than a program in one discipline (Burton, 2001); however, there was widespread agreement among those who represented the disciplines at Mideast State University, as supported by the letters of concurrence (see Appendix B).

Mideast State University contrasts with Big Ten institutions because no other Big Ten school has shown public interest in a program as extensive as the one presented in the Esports and Game Studies proposal (Mideast State University, 2019). For example, Michigan State

University created roles for esports, but no department or administrative body had publicly acknowledged interest in esports as of this study. Michigan State University has had a Game Design and Development program within the Media and Information Department since 2005, their esports teams are housed in the video game club on campus, and their Video Game program was ranked 7th in a *Princeton Review* survey of 150 schools in 2019 (The Princeton Review, n.d.). The Games for Entertainment and Learning lab at Michigan State University is located in the College of Communications and Sciences, although the game creation curriculum at Michigan State University is not interdisciplinary, contrasting against the novel program curriculum proposed at Mideast State University.

Events Prior to the Mideast State University Esports and Game Studies Minor

The Mideast Smash Initiative seemed to be the first official video game-related organization created for Mideast State University esports. According to Mideast State University's (2019) proposal, "The Office of Student Life has been supporting the esports community since 2011" (p. 1). A request for players in a Facebook post on the eSports Initiative club page was the first time that esports officially advertised at Mideast State University. At that time, the popular game Super Smash Brothers Melee was the platform the eSports Initiative club used to earn funds for charity. The eSports Initiative club earned $666 in that tournament, and subsequently participated in a second tournament, where they earned $435. Other tournaments and watch parties took place in the 2 years that followed these first two events. Between the first organized event in 2011 and the formalization of the esports club team in 2015, Interviewee Referee 1 became the faculty advisor for the student esports club at Mideast State University, and the two student esports clubs became more organized as a result. The Esports Initiative and SparrowLAN converged to become the Sparrow Gaming Collective, which still listed

Interviewee Referee 1 as the advisor at the time of this study. According to the eSports Initiative blog, these students participated in many related events through 2014 (Facebook, n.d.).

At some point between 2014 and 2017, two important events took place. One event was more intangible because, in an interview with the *Darter Dispatch* newspaper (Smith, 2018), Interviewee Referee 1 referenced someone in the athletics department who saw esports in Las Vegas and suggested that Mideast State University somehow incorporate esports into the curriculum. This person was apparently very influential, but only Interviewee Referee 1 mentioned them. Nevertheless, this influence seemed to be initiate the curriculum development process, whereby Mideast State University looked into forming their Game Studies minor. The second important event was that students at Mideast State University were able to formalize their club team in 2015 (Lagatta, 2017). Formalization meant the students could better organize competitive teams that would represent Mideast State University at multi-university competitions. Student esports club activity gave Mideast State University a base of interested students in the esports field.

Understanding the Game Studies Minor and Esports and Game Studies Major

As a result of student interest in playing esports, Mideast State University established a minor and proposed a major. The established minor and proposed major, which both have game studies in their titles, were developed to offer game studies courses, but only the major was to specifically include esports. Descriptions of each program differ vastly because the major remained unimplemented at the time of this study, nor did the major have a succinct program description in Mideast State University's (2019) proposal document. According to the program description for the Game Studies minor, "The 15 credit hour Game Studies Minor introduces students to an interdisciplinary approach to understanding what games are, how they are made,

how to interpret games as critical narratives, and how to understand the roles they play in society" (Mideast State University College of Arts and Sciences, 2021, para. 1). This description gave a very specific understanding of what students would learn and tied the learning to society.

Unlike the Game Studies minor, the proposed Esports and Game Studies major discussed six student goals over three tracks (Mideast State University, 2019). The goals were: "systems (critical) thinking in games and esports;" "professionalism, decision making, and teamwork;" "communication;" "diversity, inclusion, and equity;" "ethics and responsibility;" and "influence and responsibility" (Mideast State University, 2019, pp. 55–60). These goals were explained in further detail in Mideast State University's (2019) proposal document, though they did not connect directly to the tracks listed as follows: "1.) Esports and Game Creation, 2.) Esports Management, and 3.) Application of Games in Medicine and Health" (p. 2). It was unclear whether the major program listing for Esports and Game Studies would be one large listing, or three smaller ones.

Departmental Involvement in the Curriculum Creation

This section discusses the Mideast State University departments involved in curriculum creation and the involvement of those departments. The Mideast State University departments involved in the Esports and Game Studies major proposal were: College of Engineering, College of Arts and Sciences, Fisher College of Business, College of Education and Human Ecology, and College of Medicine. Proposal developers identified these five departments to best help students complete the esports major, though there were no justifications for the departments listed in the proposal. Instead, Mideast State University's (2019) proposal discussed how different departments supported the program. Each department had varying levels of involvement with video game studies, including the Department of Design's "three professional majors in

Industrial Design, Interior Design, and Visual Communication Design" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 33). The Mideast State University (2019) proposal made few mentions regarding utilization of specific departments beyond the courses they offered. The following section details the utilization of departments in the Esports and Game Studies preliminary proposal.

For example, the College of Engineering Education needed to host a number of courses, and they would contribute to physical resources. According to other documents on Mideast State University's (2019) website, faculty recommendations in meetings that took place in the proposal development process generated the courses that needed to be developed. Courses included: Computational Thinking in Context: Game Development, which was already developed and offered in the respective college; a Social, Ethical, Professional Issues course, which was also already developed and offered in the college; and Digital Game Development courses, which had not been developed at that time (Mideast State University, 2019). In addition to the courses offered, "Engineering and computer science students have volunteered to build the machines for UA's [University of Akron's] esports arena" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 4). The personal computers used in the program would need to meet certain industry standard specifications, and giving students a role in the development process would allow them to become integral to the program. Courses and physical resources were necessities, and the College of Engineering seemed ready to contribute.

At the time of Mideast State University's (2019) proposal, the Computer Science and Engineering department offered a Bachelor of Science in computer science and engineering, and some of the courses in that program overlapped with required courses in the proposal. One of the overlapping courses was CSE 2501: Social, Ethical, and Professional Issues in Computing,

previously taught by multiple faculty members. None of the faculty members who previously taught the CSE 2501 course were personnel listed in the proposal (Mideast State University, 2019). CSE 2501 is a 1-credit course that has two prerequisites: Gen Ed Writing Level 2, and CSE 2122, 2123, or 2231 (these three CSE courses are Data Structures using C++, Data Structures using Java, and Software II: Software Development and Design (Mideast State University Department of Computer Science and Engineering, n.d.). Students in the new Esports and Game Studies program would likely take these courses as well.

In the Design Department at Mideast State University, one of the overlapping courses offered was DSN 3104: Introduction to Game Design, exclusively taught by Faculty Member Referee 3. Faculty Member Referee 3 was one of the key faculty members listed in Mideast State University's (2019) proposal. In the course listings, Mideast State University offered DSN 3104 since fall 2017 in both the fall and spring semesters. There was no prerequisite for this course, as DSN 3104 was an introduction course for the design degree, and would have also served in that capacity for the Esports and Game Studies degree.

Beyond course offerings, there was a nod to the Design department working with the Computer Science and Engineering department as a "computationally-strong game design and development track of study" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 34). Mideast State University's (2019) proposal described "intracollege cooperation" as if cooperation in Mideast State's Esports and Game Studies program was uncommon, but noted such cooperation "should be encouraged and rewarded" (p. 34) due to its benefits to both students and faculty. It was unclear whether this cooperation was akin to collaboration as defined by Corrigan (2000). The section of the Mideast State University (2019) proposal entitled, "Program Assessment: Curriculum Design and Student Learning Outcomes" included a program objective that required students to "Understand the

scope and interconnections between Games and eSports professions and activities from the perspectives of design, development, deployment, management, and use" (p. 8). According to Mideast State University's (2019) proposal, working between multiple departments was a core concern for the curriculum developers.

Finally, the proposal (Mideast State University, 2019) noted that Mideast State University's School of Health and Rehabilitation Services was planning to "study the convergence of brain, body, and behaviors of elite esports athletes" (p. 2). The department had six professional programs and one health science program that would relate to the Esports and Game Studies program's proposed medicine and health tract. This limited information allowed for curriculum development to appropriately coordinate with other coursework and other faculty at Mideast State University.

Timeline for the Game Studies Minor and Esports and Game Studies Major

To preface this section, Mideast State University's website has many public documents, and this dissertation contains a collection of nine minutes documents, one document that contained a series of emails, and an email detailing the collected feedback from faculty members regarding a new Esports and Game Studies major. These documents fill in some of the details about how and why the Esports and Game Studies major was developed. The nine minutes documents reference the Esports and Game Studies program dated from September 20, 2017 to June 13, 2019. The documents are as follows: (a) College of Engineering's September 20, 2017 Committee on Academic Affairs meeting minutes, (b) Council on Academic Affairs' November 15, 2017 meeting minutes, (c) a series of emails and justifications regarding the Game Studies minor sent between faculty and administrators between September 20, 2017 and January 16, 2018, (d) Council on Academic Affairs' March 7, 2018 meeting minutes, (e) Council on

Academic Affairs' September 6, 2017 to July 12, 2018 activities report, (f) Building Assessment in from the Beginning: New Curricular Programs in eSports February 1, 2019 PowerPoint presentation, (g) Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee's May 9, 2019 meeting minutes, (h) an email from May 15, 2019 detailing the collected feedback from faculty members regarding a new Esports and Game Studies major, and (i) Council on Academic Affairs' June 13, 2019 meeting minutes.

Game studies coursework at Mideast State University was first referenced in 2016 (Hooper, 2016), and the first Mideast State University document that made a reference to an esports program was published on September 20, 2017. Specifically, the College of Engineering's Committee on Academic Affairs met to discuss topics relevant to the department and to begin to understand the esports initiatives. Tomasko, a professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering and associate dean in the College of Engineering, broached the topic of esports at the September 2017 Committee on Academic Affairs meeting. In Section 13 of the meeting's minutes, "Tomasko informed the committee about the Esports initiatives" (Mideast State University College of Engineering Committee on Academic Affairs, 2017, Section 13). Tomasko and Referee 1 were the main speakers mentioned in the minutes. Interviewee Referee 1 mentioned that Mideast State University athletics personnel later became involved in esports, and noted "these initiatives were sports" (Mideast State University College of Engineering Committee on Academic Affairs, 2017, Section 13.2). The minutes document (Mideast State University College of Engineering Committee on Academic Affairs, 2017) brought the engineering department up to date on esports curriculum, though engineering faculty member, Interviewee Referee 1, had been the advisor for the student-run Esports Initiative since 2011 (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

The next document in this timeline included three sets of information: a compilation of concurrence emails, a proposal for a minor in esports, and course descriptions for each course in the minor. This document, dated January 18, 2018, came from the Mideast State University Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee (ASCC). The document referred to multiple meetings about an interdisciplinary esports minor that the group had organized in the past 2 years. In addition, within the series of email communications, the final email came from Fletcher et al. (2018), of the Arts and Humanities Panel 2, who reviewed the proposal. Fletcher et al. (2018) wrote, "The panel supported the proposed revisions, only noting a few minor contingencies, all of which have been satisfactorily addressed and which were approved on December 18th" (p. 1). An earlier email from Interviewee Referee 4, within the series of emails document, said the College of Arts and Sciences had the goal of starting the Esports minor in spring 2018. On March 7, 2018, the College of Arts and Sciences obtained approval of the minor, and two updates of the course description occurred in 2019. The minor was available, but there was a waitlist for students to get in at the time of this study (Smola, 2019).

The next document was an activities report from the Council on Academic Affairs for the period between September 6, 2017, and July 12, 2018. This report discussed requested curricular proposals or proposals that needed modification or revision. An interdisciplinary undergraduate minor in game studies was proposed as of March 7, 2018 (Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2018a), as confirmed by the previously mentioned compilation of documents. Notably, no other activities report published by the Council on Academic Affairs referred to a major in game studies.

After the Council on Academic Affairs report, Interviewee Referee 1 gave a PowerPoint presentation called, "Building Assessment in from the Beginning: New Curricular Programs in

eSports" (Referee 1, 2019). On February 1, 2019, Referee 1 published the presentation for use at Mideast State University's 2019 Assessment Conference. This document gave details on who would be involved in an Esports and Game Studies curriculum, showed pictures of a meeting between people in a room (the assumption was these people were from different departments), provided pictures of sticky notes attached to a whiteboard under different headings, and compiled the information posted to the whiteboard on multiple pages (Referee 1, 2019). This presentation was a primer on how Mideast State University would move forward with the Esports and Game Studies major; the document itself would have been incomplete without the presentation by Interviewee Referee 1, though the context allowed me to make assumptions regarding the people and notes in the pictures.

After the PowerPoint presentation came Mideast State University's (2019) proposal for the Esports and Game Studies major, which compiled much of the information contained in Interviewee Referee 1's PowerPoint document. Listed as a Bachelor of Science degree program, the proposal included program goals, outcomes, budget estimates, participating faculty curriculum vitaes, and letters of concurrence. In Section 7 of the document, entitled Implementation Date, Mideast State University's (2019) proposal stated:

> New courses for the first year of the major are currently being formally proposed to the appropriate units. Students will be admitted into the first year of the EGS curriculum beginning in Autumn 2019. Annually thereafter new courses will be developed and proposed to the various units until all courses have been approved. (pp. 46–47)

The Mideast State University (2019) proposal attempted to answer any question about the program, but future documents suggested faculty members were not clear on different aspects of the program.

Next came the approved minutes from the ASCC on May 9, 2019. The first item on the agenda was Mideast State University's (2019) proposal for an undergraduate major in Esports and Game Studies, with Interviewee Referee 1 listed as a guest. In this document, Associate Executive Dean for Curriculum and Instruction and Associate Professor of English, Fink, described what had driven the development of the program. Interviewee Referee 1 then told attendees that the committee brought in industry experts to address industry needs (Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2019). This document contained questions and comments from committee members, though only people who answered the questions or people used as reference points in the program's development warranted attribution. For example, a committee member asked, "What happened with the ASCC co-lead?" The answer was:

> Referee 11 was the original co-lead, but he went on leave. Referee 3 took over as co-lead, but he is new to the university and unfamiliar with the curriculum process. He also went on leave. [Interviewee] Referee 4 has helped with the development of the program in an unofficial capacity. (Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2019a, para. 17)

This meeting seemed to have been the final meeting that mentioned esports before the official publishing of the proposal for the Esports and Game Studies major on April 16, 2019.

After the Mideast State University's (2019) proposal document came an email from the chair of the ASCC addressed to Interviewee Referee 1 on May 15, 2019 (eSports and gaming, 2019). In this email, Chair Referee 13 (eSports and gaming, 2019) compiled many of the concerns they received about the Esports major proposal. At the end of the email, Referee 13 (eSports and gaming, 2019) assured Interviewee Referee 1 the feedback was positive, saying:

One aspect that may not be clear from this voluminous and detailed feedback is that the

ASCC members were generally enthusiastic about the idea for such a program! I know

that the group appreciated the way you took in the discussion and identified ways that

you could refine the program and its membership to incorporate the perspectives you

were hearing at ASCC. We want to help you make this program stronger and want to find

ways for it to take advantage of the strengths we have in Arts and Sciences so that we can

best serve our students and support this initiative. Please let me know if/how I can help as

you revise the proposal. (para. 9)

The sentiment in this email was the curriculum committee members understood the difficulties in

implementing a new program and wanted to give it the best chance to succeed.

One further source confirmed the potential date of implementation regarding the major

curriculum, among other relevant information. Mideast State University established an esports

webpage with frequently asked questions (FAQs), which mentioned, "We hope to have the

curriculum available for students in Autumn 2020" (Mideast State University Esports, 2020,

para. 14). In addition, the FAQs included a general statement that read:

[They] have designed eight curricular goals, each with multiple student learning

outcomes. We envision a very comprehensive program with several tracks allowing

students to major in multiple aspects of the gaming industry including design, business,

competitor training, rehabilitation and event production. (Mideast State University

Esports, 2020, para. 13)

Notably, this information is no longer on the FAQs webpage without the use of archive search

tools.

Timeline of Mideast State University's Esports Program Development

The proposal for Esports and Game Studies major at Mideast State University was the culmination of progress gained through meetings and communications between faculty and administration. The following is a timeline that details how esports at Mideast State University progressed until the program no longer publicly displayed on their webpages.

- 2011: Mideast Smash Initiative began. Mideast Smash was student organization that raised funds for charity by playing the game Super Smash Brothers Melee, with faculty advisor, Referee 1.

- February 17, 2011: eSports Initiative creates Facebook page for student-led esports.

- March 27, 2012: SparrowLAN creates Facebook page for the student-led, in-person gaming club.

- 2015: The Sparrow Gaming Collective combined the eSports Initiative and SparrowLAN into one student organization with the assistance of faculty advisor, Referee 1.

- 2014–2017: An anonymous but influential member of the Mideast State University athletics department saw esports in Las Vegas and suggested that Mideast State University somehow incorporate esports into something more than a student-led club.

- September 20, 2017: The College of Engineering Committee on Academic Affairs met to begin to understand esports initiatives.

- February 2019: The Esports and Game Studies proposal was published (Mideast State University, 2019).

- 2019: Media coverage begins to ramp up.

- 2020: The final public mention of the new Esports and Game Studies program.

- Between January 2020 and January 2021: News about the program on the MSU esports page ends.

Introduction to Lattuca and Stark and the Competing Values Framework

With consideration of a novel program such as esports in higher education, I situated the novel topic within a curriculum development framework. One solution was to use a framework that included the internal and external aspects of curriculum creation, but did not focus solely on the full student experience. Though student clubs feature in Mideast State University's (2019) proposal, no other consideration for funding or connection to student clubs are given. In addition, because I sought to consider curriculum creation in this study, I situated focus on attempting to understand the people involved with creating the curriculum. As a result, this study used Lattuca and Stark's (2009) *Shaping the College Curriculum* for curriculum development portions of this study and Quinn's (1988) competing values framework to study those who created the Mideast State University Esports and Game Studies curriculum.

Brief History of Higher Education Curricular Development

Major and general education distribution requirements established between 1885 and 1920 originally defined traditional areas of study (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Amid a lack of consensus for a standard requirement, there has remained a debate between a prescribed set of courses and the emerging elective system. According to Harvard University's website, Harvard president Charles Eliot created the elective system. The Harvard University website notes, "One of Eliot's most influential reforms was the development of a system of 'spontaneous diversity of choice' in which undergraduates selected most of their own courses. Choice, in turn, stimulated an open-ended curriculum" (Harvard University, 2015, para. 23). In contrast, leadership at

College of the Holy Cross (1933) defended the prescriptive curriculum within their course catalogue, writing:

> Assuming that there is a hierarchy in the branches of knowledge, this system insists on the advantages of a prescribed training in the humanities, mathematics, general science, logic, psychology, ethics and religion as the best basis for any profession or for further intellectual training in any direction. (p. 27)

Despite an insistence on the prescribed system, the elective system persisted. Students chose an area of specialization, and they completed general education requirements, reflecting the distribution approach.

The distribution approach has been challenged every decade; for example, in the 1960s and 1970s, students challenged the distribution approach because of the circumstances of the Vietnam War era, some labeling the curriculum requirements of the time "establishment" and therefore "detrimental to individual development and freedom" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 49). Though there was some experimentation with pass–fail grading options, independent studies, and student-designed majors, higher education institutions have kept the distribution approach intact, though students still have choices regarding what other topics they want to study. As of 2023, the curriculum combines distribution requirements with choices. The distribution approach is still currently intact, and students at many higher education institutions now have the ability to create their own programs with the agreement of a faculty member. As of 2016, a survey of Association of American Colleges and Universities member institutions found 8% exclusively used the distribution model, whereas another 68% used the distribution model in conjunction with another feature (Hart Research Associates, 2016). The other 24% of member institutions used another feature or model that did not include the distribution model (Hart Research Associates, 2016).

Faculty in Higher Education Curriculum Development

Interactions between multiple departments also can be challenging concerning faculty members, as many consider curriculum development "time-consuming and lacking in extrinsic rewards" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 277). Roles that faculty members take on in an interdisciplinary setting can be similar to administrative roles. Though faculty typically do not deal with budgetary concerns, they must be aware of the costs of development when they communicate their needs to those who do deal with budgetary concerns.

In R1 universities, departments have faculty experts in many fields and subfields. The faculty experts take the lead on issues in which they specialize; however, when multiple departments develop a program together, faculty experts sometimes make compromises with other departments' faculty members due to power relationships or "based on deeply held beliefs about what students should learn" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 128). Experts in a field or subfield need assistance when they create degree programs for new fields with transferable overlap in multiple departments. Connecting with faculty in multiple departments can lend credibility to a curriculum in development.

However, interactions between departments can be complicated, whether faculty are trying to get in touch with the representative of a department or with a faculty member who represents a committee within a department. Understanding who is leading efforts to change a curriculum allows for more rapid and meaningful interactions. Faculty must also be motivated to become involved in the curriculum development process. According to Lattuca and Stark (2009), "Research has shown that college leaders who establish a positive educational environment can provide coordination while fostering strong motivation for program leaders and instructors to take curriculum planning seriously" (p. 270). Motivation that comes from program leaders can

take the form of role assignment or asking one's expert opinion on a matter. Gaining extra knowledge or new knowledge about the curricular topic can allow faculty members to become more motivated about the process.

Another way to promote interactions between departments is for faculty members to help create the positive environment suggested by Lattuca and Stark (2009). Though interdisciplinary programs have become increasingly more common, creating and nurturing a permanent link between departments can be difficult (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Faculty members' security and talents may feel challenged by the requirement to create and maintain relationships with other departments (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Moving past insecurities may be required to interact with faculty in other departments and advance an environment most conducive to change. Direct interactions is one solution, but other solutions may work better in different situations. Interactions between faculty and administrators can create conducive environments to change, whether they are forming a novel program for their own department or for multiple departments.

Typical Higher Education Funding

Higher education funding comes from multiple sources, including but not limited to: tuition, financial aid, alumni gifts, and government grants. Since the Great Recession of 2009, funding support from federal sources has grown, whereas state support has declined (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019). These funding changes have been "largely driven by increases in the need-based Pell Grant financial aid program" (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019, para. 1). One effect of the funding changes was that, "state funding per student in 2015 was only 12% above federal levels" (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019, para. 1). Support for higher education between state and federal sources made up about 34% of the total budget for public institutions' revenue as of 2017 (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019, para. 2).

Internal funding at public institutions is common, and there are typically foundations or networks set up at public universities to assist researchers with various projects. Internal funding can vary from institution to institution. Exact details of internal funding can include details that may include: the potential amount given, stipulations regarding where funding goes, how many times a year funding will be considered, and whether more will be given over multiple research projects (President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2023). The attainment of funding for a novel program can show administrators at an institution how seriously faculty are treating the program and potentially gain more favor or funding.

Interdisciplinary Major Definition

This section includes a definition of the interdisciplinary major because a one-subject major has remained the standard in higher education. In their paper, "Understanding Interdisciplinarity: Curricular and Organizational Features of Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Programs," Klein and Newell (1997) offered the following definition:

> A process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too
>
> broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession . . . [by]
>
> draw[ing] upon disciplinary perspectives and integrat[ing] their insights through
>
> construction of a more comprehensive perspective. (pp. 393–394)

The creation of programs that involve multiple departments has increased rapidly (Knight et al., 2012; Lattuca & Stark, 2009), and this definition provides a general idea of how interdisciplinary programs are characterized and used. Because the literature defines interdisciplinary programs as a process, researchers should include potential negative aspects and positive aspects of curriculum development.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I positioned esports as a new field in curriculum development at higher education institutions, though higher education faculty tend to consider esports as historically non-academic in nature. Creating an esports curriculum at higher education institutions can be complicated due to a lack of a comprehensive definition, concerns about whether esports belong in higher education, and unfamiliarity with the field. Interactions between faculty and administration are important at all stages of the curriculum development process, and a novel curriculum in esports requires new solutions to complete its development. One solution involves role assignment, where faculty and administrators take on leadership roles and other roles in esports curriculum development as needed. The following chapter expands on existing curriculum development literature to connect the literature to the conceptual framework of this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Over the past century, curriculum change literature demonstrates progress, more so amid nationwide debates about what should and should not be part of the curriculum. Bastedo (2005) contended the battle over curricula has been contentious "over the past three centuries," and exists in extremes, "from prescribed study of the classics to curricular pluralism, and from tradition and conservatism to experimentation and growth" (p. 462). Bastedo's (2005) argument continued, "The need for curriculum reform can be understood as emanating from changes in the broader society, such as scientific advancement, evolving conceptions of knowledge, changing student demographics, and more recently, labor market demands" (p. 462). These debates are wide-ranging, time-sensitive, and ongoing. Due to the ever-changing nature of higher education, discontinuing these debates is highly unlikely.

Because it served as a proposal, Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies curriculum document in itself does not provide a significant amount of assistance to those researching an esports-based program in higher education institutions. However, Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies program documents, along with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) theory on curriculum development and Quinn's (1988) competing values framework, can be used as resources for institutions considering the future addition of novel programs similar to esports, either in student activities or as part of a formal curricular program.

In addition to their curriculum, this study focuses on Mideast State University due to: their Research 1 (R1) status, the national attention their athletics programs possess, and their commitment to "educating students through a comprehensive array of distinguished academic programs" (Mideast State University, 2021, para. 2). Because so few R1 institutions provide academic programs for esports (Jenny et al., 2021), academic research can help those at R1

institutions gain a better understanding of what esports can provide. The combination of Lattuca and Stark's understanding of curriculum development and documents from Mideast State University's (2019) program proposal yielded theoretical and practical value to the study. Lattuca and Stark's definition of curriculum specifically referred to the concept of *intended curriculum* (Schubert, 2004), which is understood as a university's explicit plan for students. Because changes in curriculum move in "slow, evolutionary ways," any new focus that universities choose to undertake "can be plotted as accumulating trends toward tipping points in practice" (Gilman, 2013, p. 150). Universities conceptualize new foci for their curricula through faculty, administration, and governing boards, yet articles regarding interactions between faculty members and administrators during a period of curriculum change rarely emerge.

Still, interactions regarding curricula between faculty and administration occur in studies of interdisciplinary collaboration literature. This literature exists in many independent disciplines, likely because various fields initiate that research. One characteristic that seems to be prevalent in interdisciplinary literature is that "there appears to be little mutual recognition of research across disciplines and paradigms, so there tends to be little overlap in the articles that are cited in reference lists" (Huxham, 2003, p. 402). Collaborations between departments and colleges within an institution and within organizations regularly happens, but public documentation about the collaboration process rarely happens.

The following chapter includes relevant literature for discussing interactions between faculty and administration in the context of career and technical programs at R1 institutions. Interdisciplinary interactions at R1 institutions are common, but researchers have not typically focused on career and technical programs. In the following sections, I discuss career and

technical program statistics in R1 institutions, interdisciplinary interactions, university collaborations, and challenges with collaboration.

Career and Technical Program Statistics at R1 Institutions

Student classification into degree programs allows for a look at higher education degree statistics. These statistics show how much interest there is in certain types of degrees. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, academic students earned 1.6 million bachelor's degrees in 2010, but there were no statistics about bachelor's degrees for vocational students (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Instead, the U.S. Department of Education quantified the number of vocational students using the term "credentials." In that same report, 242,925 of the 1,410,146 vocational education credentials awarded in 2010 came from baccalaureate institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). These numbers serve as a reminder that the majority of students who pursue vocational studies attend subbaccalaureate institutions and earn certificates or associate's degrees.

As a result, personnel at baccalaureate institutions have expressed concerns about the small but growing number of vocational studies programs that change institutional curricula. Rhodes (2001), president of Cornell University for 18 years, contended:

> If university faculties are to recapture the undergraduate curriculum, it will mean facing again the difficult and divisive questions about goals, priorities, and requirements. Trustees, presidents, provosts, deans, and all the rest neither can nor should prescribe the curriculum. That is the role of the faculty, but the university's leaders must encourage and facilitate the debate. (p. 94)

Rhodes essentially argued that, if there is interest, university leaders should add new programs to the curriculum; however, faculty should not be the only ones involved in creating or denying a

new program. Rhodes's commentary can apply to vocational programs and academic programs, and literature regarding interdisciplinary interactions can elucidate the ways that vocational programs can be successful at large institutions.

Interdisciplinary Interactions in Higher Education Curriculum Development

Communication is required when attempting to achieve shared goals between colleges and departments (Tarricone & Luca, 2002). As a result, higher education institutions require unity to gain the best outcomes, and "unity depends upon consensus on the goals of the organization" (Henderson, 1967, p. 306). Henderson was the president of Antioch College and associated with the beginning of shared governance at Antioch; Henderson (1967) claimed the flow of communication between faculty and administrators is largely unsuccessful. One reason why communication between groups breaks down is because administration does not consult the faculty (Tiede et al, 2014; Woodhouse, 2015). Interactions between the groups deteriorate when administrative functions compound and faculty are consulted less over time (Henderson, 1967). The conclusions reached by Henderson in 1967 are still relevant to the achievement of shared goals in 2023.

In addition, technologies (e.g., email and video conferences) have modified how faculty and administrators interact with one another. Research regarding interdisciplinary interactions can include collaboration between faculty members and students in terms of learning and values (Romsa et al., 2017) and between faculty members working on research projects (Baldwin & Chang, 2007). Interactions regarding both research collaboration and new program development sometimes requires the use of newer technologies between: faculty members and other faculty members, faculty members and administrators, and administrators and other administrators.

University Collaboration in Curriculum Development

Faculty at R1 universities are typically encouraged to produce new research, and collaborations between departments and with individual faculty have become commonplace; as a result, individuals are often faced with the recognition of publishing with others (Macfarlane, 2017). Research collaborations can result in "faculty learning and professional development" (Baldwin & Chang, 2007, p. 26) that maximizes resource sharing between researchers over multiple institutions. Collaborations between faculty members are common, and sharing the work with other faculty and other institutions fosters trust and support for more collaborative research. This section discusses some ways in which faculty members can work in teams to complete a research project or other tasks.

Purpose, not procedure, usually defines higher education collaboration. Baldwin and Chang (2007) examined "collaborative activities supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through its Faculty Career Enhancement (FCE) grant program" (p. 26), and the definitions they cited reflected motivations to collaborate and the perceived benefits. Baldwin and Chang (2007) used Bronstein's (2003) definition of collaboration of "an effective interpersonal process that facilitates the achievement of goals that cannot be reached when individual professionals act on their own" (p. 29). However, goal achievement is just the end of the collaboration process, supported by smaller goals: enhancing prestige or clout, maximizing resources while sticking to a limited budget, and sharing the newest or most effective practices (Baldwin & Chang, 2007). Baldwin and Chang (2007) described procedure as "collaborative faculty development strategies" (p. 28) that are wide-ranging in scope and participation. In this dissertation, I considered collaborative faculty and administration development strategies as the ideal situation for a novel program to succeed.

Collaboration Between Team Members in Higher Education

In their book, *Redesigning Collegiate Leadership*, Bensimon et al. (1993) contended that achieving success occurs when teams use processes by which they complete a product. The authors argued that "doing" is equivalent to "achievement" in that teams finish their work, and to "think internally" is equivalent to "performance" (Bensimon et al., 1993, p. 54) in that teams use strategic processes for finishing work. Performance is the work that faculty teams put into a project even though achievement is the final product of a project that administrators will see.

Faculty teamwork is conceptually straightforward, but different types of teamwork yield varying results. Corrigan (2000) argued there are different terms to describe some different levels of teamwork. Cooperation and coordination do not require individuals to change their behaviors, so Corrigan (2000) considered them lower level functions of working with others. The term collaboration suggests that reaching optimal performance occurs through shared decision making (Corrigan, 2000). The highest level of team participation is collaboration because it suggests individuals change what they are doing.

In other words, collaboration guides higher level teamwork, whereas cooperation or coordination guide low to mid-level teamwork. Bensimon et al. (1993, p. 44) defines "real" teams as collaborative or effective teams, whereas the less effective teams are considered "illusory." Real teams share a common goal, though individual members may come from different departments. Real teams also may have critics and conflict, but arguments can be resolved swiftly when members "listen to each other's arguments and . . . give in gracefully (or try to) when they fail to make their points—or when someone else on the team makes a better point" (Bensimon et al., 1993, p. 82). For instance, new program development requires teams of faculty members to consider facets of a new program that may not fall within the parameters of

61

those faculty members' disciplines. Teaching and learning contributions of faculty "can no longer focus only on their own teaching and discipline" (Newell & Bain, 2020, p. 748). In a new program, interdisciplinary collaboration allows faculty members to use teachings from other fields. Interdisciplinary collaboration is vital to the overall quality and coherence of course design (Kezar, 2005; Newell & Bain, 2020).

Challenges With Collaboration Between Departments

Though the main focus of this dissertation was on interdisciplinary collaboration, reviewing lessons from interorganizational collaboration was relatable to interdisciplinary collaboration. Huxham (2003) retired as the head of the Department of Management at Strathclyde University in Scotland and published multiple influential articles and books on interorganizational collaboration. Huxham's findings served as a basis for studying organizational collaboration with regard to best possible outcomes. In their seminal work, *Theorizing Collaboration Practice*, Huxham (2003) described "collaborative advantage" using five example themes: "common aims; power; trust; membership structures; and, leadership" (p. 401). Collaborative advantage equates to the terms "performance" and "real teams," as described previously, and also "relates to the desired synergistic outcome of collaborative activity suggesting that advantage is gained through collaboration when something is achieved that could not have been achieved by any organization acting alone" (Vangen & Huxham, 2003, p. S62). New research and other projects could benefit from more collaboration, which could in turn benefit future research in that field. The five themes Huxham listed can be achieved through time spent interacting with others in the organization, or by advancing personal relationships.

Collaborative advantage relates to the desired synergistic outcome of collaborative activity. Advantage is gained though collaboration when something is achieved that could not

have been achieved by any organization acting alone (Kanter, 2014). Collaborative inertia relates to the oft-pertaining actual outcome, in which the collaboration makes only hard fought or negligible progress (Huxham, 2003). Both collaborative advantage and inertia can occur within the development of one program.

These themes also relate to collaborative challenges that force committee members to work through differences in philosophy and perpetuate a culture where independent research takes priority over collaborative research at R1 institutions. According to Baldwin and Chang (2007), common challenges include "cultural differences, finding common interests and goals, time, geographic constraints, and power differences" (para. 9). Because collaboration requires a need to both protect and integrate committee members' "resources, experiences, and expertise in complex, dynamic organizing contexts" (Vangen, 2016, p. 263), achieving full collaborative advantage is highly difficult. Once teams confront and solve their challenges, at least to some degree, real teams can attain collaborative advantage. This collaborative advantage works well in interdisciplinary curriculum development, as is discussed in the next section.

Competing Values Framework of Curriculum Development

Literature on curriculum formation is vast, but literature on interdisciplinary program formation of novel academic fields remains lacking. Mideast State University's (2019) Esports and Game Studies program proposal can help researchers gain an organizational view of collegiate esports, which may lead to greater understanding of higher education institutions' decision-making processes regarding novel fields. Lattuca and Stark's (2009) *Shaping the College Curriculum* focused on the roles involved in developing a new curriculum. To understand the ways roles are created for curriculum development, the following sections include: the authority of *Shaping the College Curriculum*, the curriculum definition and

conceptual framework with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan model, curriculum expansion and reform over recent decades regarding technologies, roles in the competing values framework, a definition of the interdisciplinary major, salient influences on planning, and the notion of legitimacy in higher education.

Authority of *Shaping the College Curriculum*: Academic Plans in Context

Lattuca and Stark's (2009) textbook was chosen for its unique ability to cover most aspects of the curriculum development process. Rather than presenting a short definition, Lattuca and Stark (2009) presented a definitional framework that encompasses the decision making— both internally and externally—considered within institutions during curriculum development. As referenced prior, the academic plan model gives researchers an overall look at the sociocultural context of higher education institutions. Lattuca and Stark's academic plan model also allows curriculum change model utilization internally, externally, or institutionally in higher education. Notably, the academic plan model excludes activities that embody the total student learning experience or any activity considered informal learning (Krause, 2020); however, as noted previously, the model covers all other parts of the formal curriculum.

Researchers can use Lattuca and Stark (2009) academic plan model as a groundwork for curricular discussion because it provides a wide-ranging, common language. According to Google Scholar, Lattuca and Stark (2009) citations surpassed 500 times in the past decade because their framework encompasses formal curriculum development. In these citations, researchers have typically used the academic plan model as a groundwork for curriculum discussions (Krause, 2020; Matthews & Mercer-Mapstone, 2018) or in research design (Gonzales, 2018). Citations such as these have contributed to the increased authority of the academic plan model in curricular development.

Shaping the College Curriculum is also applicable to multiple areas of study (Lattuca & Stark, 2009), such as when Lattuca and Stark (2009) explained the managerial-focused competing values framework using higher education terminology. Quinn (1988) had previously developed the competing values framework as a standard for managerial research, and Lattuca and Stark found the foci in Quinn's competing values framework corresponded to the academic plan model. Quinn's framework has an internal–external focus that mirrors the internal–external aspects of the academic plan model, and has a flexibility–control aspect that helps researchers consider the dichotomy between self-sufficiency and culpability in curriculum design. Self-sufficiency allows faculty to be creative and effective, whereas administrators must be culpable to supporters and to society—similar to the academic plan model (Lattuca & Stark, 2009).

The contents of *Shaping the College Curriculum* provided in-depth explanations of the multiple elements of the academic plan model (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). According to Lattuca and Stark (2009), external influences are discussed using sociocultural context, and discussions regarding internal influences include academic fields and college and university contexts. The authors also considered design models and argued most models are typically too rigid to work exactly as intended. Other elements of Lattuca and Stark's work included learner influences, instructional processes, and evaluation and adjustment. Most importantly for this dissertation, Lattuca and Stark (2009) discussed the administration of curriculum development by presenting the academic plan model as the groundwork, and the competing values framework as a way "to examine curriculum leadership and administration" (p. 275). Because Lattuca and Stark focused on using the academic plan model, each section in their text presented researchers with different approaches to curriculum creation using the academic plan model.

Dissertation Curriculum Definition Combined With Conceptual Framework

Curriculum creation and reform carries multiple and varied definitions. Those who need to speak about the concept of curriculum express themselves without considering whether everyone is using curriculum development language (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). One faculty member could speak to the actual experiences students take away from courses, whereas an administrator could discuss the set of courses offered (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Definitions can allow people to start on equal ground, but they can also create divisions between curriculum developers as the development process begins.

Lattuca and Stark (2009) defined *curriculum* based on definitions solicited from "administrators, graduate students, faculty, and observers of higher education" (p. 1). Because most individuals involved in higher education have differing perspectives on what curriculum means, Lattuca and Stark chose a definition that attempted to relate to all perspectives. To reiterate the definition in the introduction, Lattuca and Stark (2009) defined curriculum as an academic plan that involves decisions "about (at least) the following elements" (p. 4): purposes, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment.

These aforementioned elements cover all levels of the formal academic curriculum: (a) a college's or program's mission, purpose, or collective expression of what is important for students to learn; (b) a set of experiences some authorities believe all students should have; (c) the set of courses offered to students; (d) the set of courses students actually elect from those available; (e) the content of a specific discipline; and (f) the time and credit frame in which the college provides education (Stark et al., 1986). Moreover, Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model offers some advantages that were consistent with current understandings of student learning, and

the model focuses on decision making. With this notion in mind, the influences in Lattuca and Stark's model contributed to my research design, specifically looking at the external and internal influences of programmatic curricular planning. External influences included, but were not limited to:

> The influence of disciplinary associations . . . media . . . funding agencies that support curricular and instructional reform . . . and regional and specialized accrediting agencies that have increasingly focused on the specification and assessment of student learning outcomes. (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 13)

Internal influences can occur at the institutional level or at the unit level. Institutional-level influences can include, but are not limited to: "college mission, financial resources, and government arrangements" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 13). Unit-level influences can include, but are not limited to: "Instructors' backgrounds, educational beliefs, and disciplinary training" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 14); sometimes, student characteristics are influential. These different influences combine as many variables as possible from a complicated method of information gathering.

According to Lattuca and Stark (2009), the academic plan should involve decisions about (at least) the following elements: purposes, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment:

- The purposes involve learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- The content is the subject matter selected to convey specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- The sequence is an arrangement of the subject matter and experiences intended to lead to specific outcomes for learners.

- The learners section discusses how the plan will address a specific group of learners. Instructional processes are the instructional activities by which learning occurs.

- Instructional resources are the potential materials and settings utilized in the learning process.

- Evaluation includes the strategies used to determine whether decisions about the elements of the academic plan are optimal. Adjustment considers enhancements to the plan based on experience and evaluation. (Lattuca & Stark, 2009)

Lattuca and Stark's (2009) framework allowed me to focus on curricular decision making and explore why and how to implement programs with novel areas of study. By viewing the interactions between departments at Mideast State University through the lens of the competing values framework, researchers can consider new conclusions about novel areas of study in R1 university curricula, including the addition of technologies to a curriculum.

Curriculum Expansion and Reform Regarding Technologies

In the past 20 years, a rise in technological advances and eagerness to include technology into the curriculum has been at the forefront of curriculum development. An essay by education professor at the University of Western Ontario, Hansen (1997), argued that faculty largely see technology curricula as being a "less than legitimate curriculum area" as compared to "traditional" disciplines. Hansen (1997) wrote:

The exclusion of technological education from the "curriculum mainstream," while recognized as a social and subject status issue within the schools, is not discussed critically among educators, much less investigated for its implications in systems terms. Such exclusion, and the 'silence' surrounding it, compounds the "knowledge hierarchy" problem in the schools. (p. 111)

Legitimacy was viewed by Hansen as being part of the "curriculum mainstream" (p. 111) or, at the least, being included. Over the 22 years since Hansen's paper, technologies continue to supplement educational curricula and become legitimate through program development.

According to technology and education scholars, Collins and Halverson (2009), multiple technological dynamics have driven curriculum issues, though the literature does not fully address many of these dynamics. These dynamics include: using technologies for customized education, an "exponential growth of knowledge," and the technological revolution that demands "people to be thinkers and lifelong learners [by learning] a variety of technologies to accomplish sophisticated tasks" (Collins & Halverson, 2009, p. 64). Because technologies continue to develop and become implemented in work and educational settings, the curricula that guide what students learn will also need to be fluid.

One of those technologies was stable and usable internet, developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s; higher education has adapted to how students and faculty utilize the internet on and off campus. Online courses, distance learning, and e-learning were developed and espoused to give access to students who did not have access previously, to provide an alternative to students who struggled with traditional learning styles, and to offer more choices to a wider range of students. With the internet came a "new communicative order" (Street, 1998, p. 3). This communicative order involved understanding how to navigate "written, oral and audiovisual modalities of communication" in a "multimodal hypertext systems made accessible via the Internet and the World Wide Web" (Snyder, 2002, p. 3). The multiple modalities have had multiple effects on curriculum expansion.

Specifically, higher education institutions have offered distance learning and other online courses since the 1980s, though many have faced a challenge that the delivery method can

overshadow the content of a course. Distance learning researchers, Chaney et al. (2016), claimed the following in their paper about enabling assumptions of distance learning:

> Because distance learning programs and courses rely heavily on technological applications for the delivery of course content and interactions among students and faculty, program developers often allow the technology to drive how to design courses and deliver these courses to students. Moreover, distance learning developers will charge the University's Information Technology Services unit to select the course management system and other technology applications that will be used in courses. (p. 3)

Many researchers (e.g., Chaney et al., 2016; Lattuca & Stark, 2009; Robinson & Hullinger, 2008) have agreed the technologies used for instruction and communications have quickly changed how faculty and students interact. Learning management systems such as BlackBoard typically allow for easier communications between students and faculty members.

Similar to how technologies have continued to change the way in which faculty and students interact and exchange information, additions to degree programs also have been extensive. Lattuca and Stark (2009) argued, "The scope of subjects taught in 2-year and 4-year institutions can be grasped by reviewing the U.S. Office of Education coding system that colleges use to report their majors, courses taught, and degrees granted" (p. 30). In other words, higher education in the United States has "become both more diversified and more specialized, fragmenting into subfields such as biomedical engineering, supply chain economics, public relations, and advertising, to name a few" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 35). A novel topic can use these already established fields for the purpose of creating a new program.

Competing Values Framework Roles in the Higher Education Context

To begin developing a novel program, leadership must be chosen and delegated. Lattuca and Stark (2009) used the earlier competing values framework of management model (Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1990) to explain the roles leaders take in this process. These roles are: mentor and facilitator in the human relations model; innovator and broker in the open systems model; monitor and coordinator in the internal process model; and producer and director in the rational goal model (Quinn, 1988, p. 86). The roles are interchangeable to fit the needs of specific institutional situations. The four models within the larger framework each contain two roles. The roles for each competing model fulfill the characteristics for either an internal or external focus, and they are typically either more flexible or more controlling. Basic characteristics of each role appear in the larger model in Figure 2 (Quinn, 1988).

Figure 2

The Competing Values Model: Eight Managerial Roles
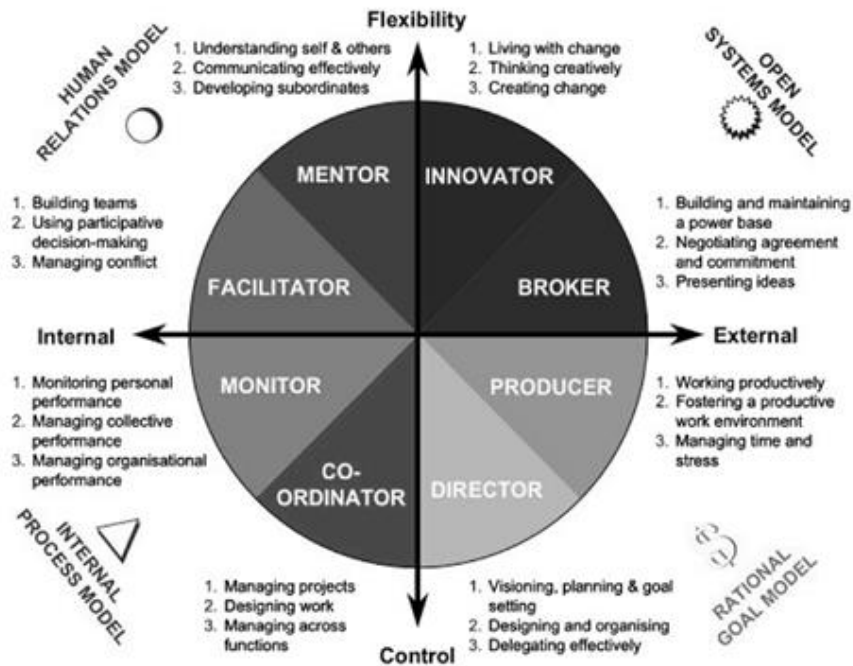
Note. Reprinted from *Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Context* (2nd ed.) by L. R. Lattuca & J. S. Stark, 2009, p. 276. Jossey-Bass.

Quinn's (1988) intent in his book, *Beyond Rational Management*, was to show how novice managers become master managers. Quinn (1988) attempted to explain that master managers understand there is no one perfect way to manage a business, and that they "develop the capacity to use several contradictory logics simultaneously" (p. xiv). Ultimately, Quinn (1988) chose to explore this concept by positioning managerial attributes into eight roles and then show how master managers are able to solve company problems by using any attributes from the eight roles. Though roles do not determine how individuals and groups interact within a university, roles can help researchers understand why individuals might want to take on more

work or do work that occurs in different roles (Quinn, 1988). A curriculum development process requires administration and faculty to take on singular, multiple, or changing roles. To summarize each of the roles as shown in the competing values model (see Figure 2), this section describes how curriculum developers take on multiple and changing roles throughout the development process. In addition, I give a small description of each potential role based on the definitions given in the competing values framework.

As an example, students make it clear that they would like a new program. Faculty members inform appropriate administrators who decide whether or not the program fulfills the goals of a career path. Then, the academic vice president informs a department that approval of a new program satisfies these students' needs. Many factors must be reconciled before a new program is developed, but for the sake of describing the roles, we assume complete factor reconciliation. The academic vice president then needs to (a) decide which department or departments are best equipped to handle the program and (b) inform a department of a need for a new program. These actions fall under the director role of planning, organizing, and delegating responsibilities (Quinn, 1988). Though this role could be the most important for getting a program started, an academic vice president may take on other roles once the development process begins.

Another task the academic vice president might conduct is that of building teams, which falls under the role of facilitator. This role is necessary in interdepartmental settings when experts in one department are unaware of who the experts are in other departments. Faculty members or other administrators may be more equipped to take on the role of "foster[ing] collective effort to build cohesion" (Quinn, 1988, pp. 41–42). In any case, faculty and

administrators can assume similar roles depending on the direction that curriculum planning takes.

One role that tends to be administrative is the role of broker. The broker communicates with external sources to present ideas and negotiate agreement and commitment (Quinn, 1988). In some cases, the broker role requires gaining commitments to financial or material goods from third-party members who want to work with universities. Faculty members typically do not take on this role because they focus on the curricular content, and they do not have the ability to make financial promises.

The producer role is typically reserved for the person who is meant to "be task oriented and work focused and to have high interest, motivation, energy, and personal drive" (Quinn, 1988, p. 40). The vice president of academic affairs may take on this role at the beginning of the process and when deadlines approach; however, faculty members may need to take on this role in situations when the administrator is not able to intervene. The producer is very productive and motivates others to be more productive (Quinn, 1988).

The mentor role sometimes goes to experts, sometimes to good communicators, and sometimes both (Quinn, 1988). A mentor "must be helpful, considerate, sensitive, approachable, open, and fair" (Quinn, 1988, p. 41). Administrators and faculty alike can be mentors. Mentors try to understand those who engage in the curricular process and to help developers understand what they are doing and how to do it. At times, mentors must convince developers of the reasons why they seek to create a curriculum, because some vocational or novel fields may not make sense to faculty in a higher education context.

The coordinator sustains "the flow and structure of the system" (Quinn, 1988, p. 39). A coordinator is an apt scheduler and is able to handle minor technological and logistical problems

or full-blown crises. Especially in an interdepartmental setting, the coordinator is required to get everyone to agree on a starting point and to agree that a new curriculum is worthwhile.

The innovator initiates change and thinks about options creatively (Quinn, 1988). Innovators identify "important trends and conceptualiz[e] and project needed changes" (Quinn, 1988, p. 40). In higher education, the innovator is a trusted source of information who is able to convince others that a nontraditional solution may be more useful to an institution than traditional solutions. New curricula conceptualization potentially begins with multiple departments, with current minor programs, or with degree programs from other institutions as a reference.

Finally, the monitor considers performance of the people involved in a project and how the project is being developed (Quinn, 1988). Monitors know the "facts and figures" and they are "good at quantitative analysis" (Quinn, 1988, p. 39). From an administrative standpoint, tradition dictates that faculty members seen as the overseers of curriculum development and administration stays away from curriculum development. Faculty members monitor curriculum development as they develop curriculum. A monitor can make sure that everyone is performing up to the university's standards, but monitors might have difficulties getting involved in the development process unless they are faculty members.

Higher Education Faculty Roles

Rather than demonstrating how novice managers become master managers, Lattuca and Stark (2009) employed Quinn's (1988; Quinn et. al, 1990) texts by creating context for understanding how new curriculum is created by using the roles faculty members take on to interact with one another and with administrators. Frameworks for curriculum planning featured in Lattuca and Stark's (2009) plan, but the authors conceded that frameworks are typically more

75

rigid than the actual methods used by faculty and administrators. Faculty members and administrators take on different roles in curriculum development, and many times, faculty members take on multiple roles to develop curricula. *Shaping the College Curriculum* provided a basis for examining the curriculum development process, specifically focusing on internal interactions (Lattuca & Stark, 2009).

Leadership in Curriculum Development

Lattuca and Stark (2009) argued, "Leadership is likely the second-most-important internal influence in program planning" (p. 129). Lattuca and Stark discussed the competing values typology of management model, hitherto referred to as the competing values framework, which allows researchers to understand the multiple dilemmas administrators face. According to Lattuca and Stark, an academic vice president takes on multiple roles to interact with both internal and external sources during the curriculum development process. The researchers noted, "The academic vice president should also comment on the importance of the curriculum at frequent intervals to promote its importance internally. Interactions with external audiences like students, sponsors, alumni, and local and state officials is also necessary" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 281). Between planning to add a program (from the director role in the rational goal section of the model), building teams (from the facilitator role in the human relations section of the model), and presenting ideas to board members and external audiences (from the broker role in the open systems section of the model), an academic vice president's roles change between groups who have interest in curriculum development (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Due to the multiple roles an academic vice president has to take on for curriculum development in addition to their usual duties, their ability to interact with multiple audiences internally and externally can be challenging.

Other leaders in curriculum development can also take on multiple roles. Leaders in the process include administrators and faculty members who can either guide or contribute to the program in a significant manner. Successful curriculum planning in an interdepartmental situation involves a continuous process by which leaders create a positive environment where everyone is encouraged to be proactive and interactive (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Lattuca and Stark (2009) stressed the importance of: (a) "the joint responsibility of faculty and administrators to plan and maintain a new curriculum," (b) "the responsibility of administrators for the planning environment," and (c) "the leadership required for substantial change" (p. 269). These responsibilities are especially important at institutions where there is a belief that instructors "should be given carte blanche to develop courses and programs consistent with disciplinary tenets and individual interests" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 269). However, without proper coordination, programs become pet projects that do not serve any group's goals. Being proactive and interactive allows program developers to understand the needs of other departments, along with student needs.

A proactive and collaborative approach helps those involved to see that the leaders care about the process, and role assignment throughout departments is common within the process of curriculum development; however, role assignment can be a source of contention because varying faculty members may have different ideas of who works best in particular roles. As Lattuca and Stark (2009) pointed out:

Even where strongly collegial models operate, the division of responsibility for curriculum can be a source of conflict. Faculty members who chair committees within programs, departments, and colleges become quasi-administrators, leading their colleagues in the details of planning academic programs, but they often lack both

77

authority for budget and accountability to ensure program success. Thus, some carefully

formulated committee plans can fail because the necessary resources and staff do not

accompany the assignment. While it is philosophically and pedagogically sound for

instructors and administrators to share administrative responsibility for curriculum, in

most institutions final accountability ultimately rests with the academic administrator. (p.

279)

Though administrators want to see curriculum development succeed, they also must consider

utilization of faculty members in the process. There is clearly a balance between the

responsibilities that administration and faculty are willing to take on and the responsibilities

administration and faculty feel they must take on.

Lattuca and Stark (2009) detailed some obligations that a department chair must take on,

as the chair necessarily takes a dual role of faculty member and administrator. Lattuca and Stark

(2009) wrote:

In reviewing research concerning duties of department chairpersons, Stark and Briggs

(1998) noted that curriculum issues received little attention compared to personnel,

budget, and scheduling issues. On those occasions when academic administrators and

faculty discuss curricula, the conversation often focuses on budgets and bureaucratic

topics rather than on educational efforts. But it is precisely those missing conversations

about educational goals, teaching conditions, student learning, and faculty rewards for

teaching and related activities that could lead to effective curriculum development. (p.

281)

These missing conversations between administrators and faculty could also allow similar

institutions to gain insight into effective curriculum development from a chairperson's

perspective. Though faculty members take on more responsibilities once they become chairs of their departments, curriculum development may be more successful when chairpersons are proactive in more areas of development than budgets and bureaucratic topics.

Salient Influences on Higher Education Curriculum Planning

Though internal interactions are strong, Lattuca and Stark (2009) described external influences as having the greatest influence on an academic plan. They argued each curriculum goes hand in hand with "its sociocultural context," and that external forces strongly and eventually "produce substantial curriculum change" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 303). For example, "government policies always influence the educational environments of colleges and universities, but federal and state governments are more active at some times than others" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 303). Within this conceptual framework, an external influence can include the federal or state government, but it can also include market forces, accrediting agencies, and disciplinary associations. More important to this discussion, an external influence could include a move from the industrial age to the age of technology, which I discuss further in the next section.

Internal influences typically take on institutional characteristics of universities and academic fields. Typically, a basis for institutional characteristics include factors such as location, history, mission, culture, and resources (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). How a university governs its system is one of many internal influences that combine to give a greater understanding of how an institution might respond to new areas of study. Though faculty members within departments can begin initial work on a program, gaining approval and/or support from other areas of campus may not be straightforward or achievable. Academic fields in which faculty teach are internal influences that can also factor into curriculum development, and

79

these fields sometimes become more important than institutional characteristics (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). Internal influences vary greatly depending on multiple factors, and curriculum development requires reconciliation of these factors.

Notion of Legitimacy in Higher Education

Achieving legitimacy can be easy for one department or for administration when they collectively agree to begin a program; however, university-wide legitimacy typically requires agreement between other departments and administration. Legitimacy often considers financial support through accreditation (Lattuca & Stark, 2009). There are other ways in which higher education institutions try to achieve legitimacy (e.g., using assessment), but assessment typically comes after the initial academic plan development process. This section discusses some ways by which institutions consider legitimacy.

Factors that define institutional legitimacy include financial support. According to the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (n.d.), gaining accreditation is required for institutions to receive operating funds, to dispense funds to students via grants or loans, to make state funds available, and to gain the trust of employers who consider providing tuition assistance. Harper (2008) wrote, "Regional accreditation is widely recognized as the primary indicator of a legitimate institution of higher education in the United States" (p. 7). Many students depend on funding to be able to matriculate or earn a certificate. Due to the amount of potential funding involved, combined with an institution's ability to provide funding to its students, institutions strive to fulfill accreditation requirements.

For example, to fulfill accreditation requirements in Mideast, the Higher Learning Commission (n.d.) makes the determination of whether an institution meets accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation by looking at the following standards of quality: mission, integrity,

teaching and learning, and resources, planning, and institutional effectiveness. When curricular structures fulfill institutional mission statements and match up with faculty views and discipline requirements, higher education institutions are either accredited or reaffirmed.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed career and technical programs in R1 institutions. The chapter also discussed curriculum development using Lattuca and Stark's (2009) conceptual framework, their understanding of curriculum planning decisions, the roles that faculty and administration take based on the competing values framework of management model, interdisciplinary curricula, and the notion of legitimacy. Research on curriculum design is readily available, but Lattuca and Stark's framework helped better explain interactions between faculty and administration. Further, this literature helps researchers understand interdisciplinary curriculum development on a larger scale. The collected material formed the basis of understanding about how curricula develops despite a lack of knowledge about esports. The material in this chapter gives this study the ability to form frameworks and guide data collection in the research design chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

In the previous chapter, I discussed career and technical programs in Research 1 (R1) institutions, followed by the curriculum development, planning, and roles leaders take to produce a curriculum. In this chapter, I outline the research methods and the theoretical and epistemological frameworks used to guide data collection and analysis in this study. Along with the descriptions of participants, I outline the summary of data collection and analysis techniques, and the methods used to ensure research quality, including my positionality statement. In order, I discuss: the research paradigm, case study methodology, case selection and sampling, participant selection and unit of analysis, use of Mideast State University's (2019) Esports major proposal, justifications for studying an esports major at Mideast State University, data collection and analysis, interview processes, research quality assurance, positionality, and delimitations of the study. For clarification, Mideast State University currently offers a Game Studies minor and was going to offer an Esports and Game Studies major.

Research Paradigm

This study employed a qualitative approach with a focus on collecting, coding, and categorizing concepts that combined participants' answers with current literature Because this study was exploratory, the intent was to "develop an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 67). Collegiate esports program coordinators may deliberate over how to initiate their respective programs based on the current esports landscape, but such a landscape differs from person to person. This study of collegiate esports employs a collection of raw data based on individual perspectives. These perspectives, combined with relevant literature, intend to respond to the problem of higher education

institutions initiating novel programs and curricula amid a lack of scholarly research on the subject.

Case Study Methodology

Because I focused on individuals' perspectives, this study used a qualitative instrumental case study approach. Yin (2018) explained the instrumental case study "should be related to your theory or theoretical propositions of interest" (p. 49). In this study, Lattuca and Stark's (2009) understanding of faculty interactions guided collection and analysis of curriculum development interactions at an R1 institution. Stake (1995) argued an instrumental case study focuses more on the contexts than an intrinsic case study, and instrumental studies look at one case. Because I sought to secure interviews with esports curriculum developers (i.e., faculty and/or administrators) at one higher education institution, the instrumental case study was the appropriate methodological choice.

One of the goals of this case study was to gather and analyze specific elements of one esports program by using a constructivist approach. In this manner, I managed to "capture the perspectives of different participants, and [answer] how and why you believe their different meanings will illuminate your topic of study" (Yin, 2018, p. 16). A single-case study allowed me to understand in depth how and why curriculum developers at Mideast State University made decisions about progressing with the esports proposal. Although non-R1 higher education institutions have developed esports curricula in the past few years, few R1s had established curricula in place at the time of this study, making Mideast State University a salient site from which to study this emergent topic.

Case Selection and Sampling

Although many institutions within all Carnegie Classifications (i.e., R1, R2, R3) have

added novel programs to their curricula, programs with a focus on esports, like at Mideast State

University, have only emerged in the last 5 years (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.). For many smaller

institutions, an esports program represents potential growth in student recruitment and retention

(Burns, 2021; Suggs et al., 2020), but the potential benefits for R1 universities with already large

student enrollments remains unclear. Up until 2019, only two R1 universities had formalized

esports curricula. The University of California, Irvine developed its curriculum in 2016, and the

University of Utah developed its curriculum in 2017 (University of California, Irvine, n.d.;

University of Utah, n.d.).

Two factors lent credence to the selection of Mideast State University for this study over

other universities: (a) a public proposal document existed detailing the development of their new

curriculum (Mideast State University, 2019), and (b) the Mideast State University had time to

analyze how other R1 esports programs and programs at smaller institutions operated. Though

not a "definitive finding," the Mideast State University's proposal document provided "clues to

further investigation" (Yin, 2018, p. 115).

Participant Selection and Unit of Analysis

As mentioned previously, only two R1 universities had existing esports curricula at the

time of this study; yet, I selected Mideast State University for this study due to its initiation of an

interdisciplinary esports curriculum in 2019 (BTN Communications, 2018; Lee, 2019; Mideast

State University, 2019; Wootton-Greener, 2019). Mideast State University did have a varsity

esports team at the time of writing, and, as with most other R1 institutions, Mideast State

University had a student-run video game club as well. To understand novel esports programs

creation for an academic curriculum, this case study on an R1 institution that had begun to develop a formal esports academic program yielded data that reflected the purpose of the study.

The unit of analysis was Mideast State University's esports program development team, which included the faculty and administration members listed in Mideast State University's proposal document (Mideast State University, 2019). Participants also included faculty and administrators who participated in course and program development. Participants were selected initially based on who was listed in Mideast State University's (2019) proposal and in the meetings minutes documents I reviewed (Mideast State University College of Medicine, 2017; Mideast State University College of Engineering Committee on Academic Affairs, 2017; Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d). Because the faculty advisor for the student esports club was Interviewee Referee 1, and because they were the face of the esports program in press interviews (Roth, 2019; Shaw, 2018; Smith, 2018), I first asked Interviewee Referee 1 who would be the most relevant people to interview. Mideast State University's (2019) proposal, meeting minutes documents, and Interviewee Referee 1's suggestions allowed me to form a pool of relevant faculty and administrators for this study. Participants who had a minimal role in esports curriculum development at Mideast State University were not included. In this case, many participants had minimal roles; for instance, a few department heads signed an agreement to proceed with the Esports and Game Studies major, but they did not participate in program development. Others were present during meetings and may or may not have asked a question about the program, but they, too, did not participate in program development.

Table 2 contains details regarding interviewees for this project. Numbers signify different participants in Table 2 to keep identities anonymous, and this study utilizes they/them pronouns

as signifiers. As noted in the Mideast State University (2019) proposal and minutes documents, I assigned participants with a role, or roles, within the competing values framework mentioned in Chapter 3 (Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1990). In addition, the participants' job descriptions (i.e., employment) and department are included within the employment and department columns. These columns refer to the department association regarding the participants' employment according to Mideast State University's (2019) proposal. Participants whom I interviewed on Zoom calls have a "Yes" in the interview column, and those not interviewed have a "No." Participant status at the time of curriculum development guided all variables in Table 2.

Table 2

Participant List and Roles

Participants	Role/s	Employment	Department	Interview
Referee 1	Coordinator, Broker	Associate professor	Engineering	Yes, informal
Referee 2	Facilitator	Curriculum expert	Academic Affairs	Yes
Referee 4	Facilitator	Professor, chair of design	Design	Yes
Referee 8	Innovator, Mentor	Associate professor	Computer Science and Engineering	Yes
Referee 14	Unknown	Director of strategic initiatives and business advancement development	Business Advancement	No
Referee 6	None	Program manager, affinity	College of Business	Yes
Referee 5	Monitor	Vice provost of academic affairs	Academic Affairs and College of Education and Human Ecology	No
Referee 9	None	Associate vice provost of academic affairs	Academic Affairs	Yes
Referee 3	Facilitator	Assistant professor	Design	No

Use of Mideast State University's Esports Major Proposal

Mideast State University's (2019) esports major proposal contained information that can help researchers understand the ways in which one institution navigated different aspects of

curriculum development. Though rudimentary due to its preliminary nature, information

contained in Mideast State University's (2019) proposal included justifications for creating an

esports program, the departments involved in curriculum creation, the curriculum vitaes of

participating faculty, letters of concurrence (see Appendix B), and information on how the

program could sustain itself financially (see Appendix C). I considered the proposal document

rudimentary because it was not a full document, and because there were sections with unclear

wording and phrasing that detracted from the overall clarity of the document. The proposal

document included the names and positions of participating faculty who represented different

departments and specialties at Mideast State University. Information about the esports program

included meeting minutes, emails between faculty and administration, and the preliminary

esports major proposal (Mideast State University, 2019). Because the proposal provided such a

rich source of information, including specific names of participants that I could potentially

interview, it led me toward using a qualitative study with an instrumental approach.

Justifications for an Esports Program at Mideast State University

Referee 1 and Referee 2 are two of the aforementioned interviewees who have written

and justified the Esports and Game Studies major proposal at Mideast State University.

According to Mideast State University's (2019) proposal, the Esports and Game Studies major

developed as a Bachelor of Science degree program through the College of Arts and Sciences.

The major was to be called Esports and Game Studies, with a "focus on three tracks: 1.) Esports

and Game Creation, 2.) Esports Management, and 3.) Application of Games in Medicine and

Health" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 1). Though based in the College of Arts and

Sciences, the program became a collaboration between five colleges at Mideast State University.

The rationale section of Mideast State University's (2019) proposal argued, "This new UG

(undergraduate) major has been created to fill the void in industry" (p. 1). This statement was based on the aforementioned esports market report from Newzoo (n.d.-a) and expectations for future growth in the esports industry.

There were many career paths available to potential graduates of the proposed Esports and Game Studies Bachelor of Science degree program. The Mideast State University (2019) proposal argued these paths included:

> Game programmer, video game engineers, game programmer, game designer, game writer, and software developer. Careers and Industries available and/or of interest to students in the eSports Management and Application of Game in Medicine and Health include Event manager, eSports coach, eSports manager, marketing, sales (e.g., VR and simulation in sports, simulation, and VR in medicine and health), health coaching, health support for eSports teams, simulation with government applications and in the educational setting. In addition, this major may appeal to students interested in graduate degrees, especially in health and medicine, including occupational therapy, physical therapy, and medicine. This is an evolving field, and therefore, many positions are being created in such fields as PT, OT, medicine, education, professional training, etc. (p. 5)

These aforementioned employment opportunities provided a list of potential options for students once they graduated. Though there may already have been other degree programs in place to help students earn employment in these fields, the Esports and Game Studies program creates a more direct path to employment in esports-related fields.

Mideast State University's (2019) proposal also described how a student esports organization at Mideast State University had existed since 2011, and noted an esports arena in development at the time of the proposal to support the student esports community. In 2018,

Mideast State University finalized the creation and approval of a Game Studies minor. Beyond the student esports organization and the minor, the proposal did not mention any other esports programs at Mideast State University.

To justify the major program with more concrete evidence, Mideast State University's (2019) proposal minimally described two disparate factors: (a) financial details about the video game industry and (b) information on how games can treat medical conditions. For example, the video game industry made $13 billion in 2018, and salaries for those in the field ranged from $44,000 to $185,000, with an average of $111,000 ($108,000 in Darter, Mideast); over 2,500 companies produced video games during this time frame, along with many other independent studios and hobbyists (Mideast State University, 2019). Additional details included the following point:

> Video games are being used for therapeutics of all types for neural brain and autism
> disorders and other type interventions including stress management . . . Games That
> Move You is an MSU spin-off focusing on neuro-rehab. (Mideast State University, 2019,
> p. 3)

This claim suggests Mideast State University's (2019) proposal provided some video game industry financial details and medical potential.

Within the Esports and Game Studies proposal, the final justification for the esports major involved similar majors offered at other institutions in Mideast and the United States (Mideast State University, 2019). These institutions included: (a) Miami University of Mideast's undergraduate degree in interactive media studies; (b) Mideast University's Bachelor of Science in communication degree with an emphasis in games and animation; (c) University of California, Irvine's Bachelor of Science in computer game science; and (d) University of Utah's three

degree programs, including a Bachelor of Science in games, a Bachelor of Science in computer science, entertainment arts and engineering emphasis, and a Bachelor of Science in computer science and engineering, with a specialization in computer graphics and game design. Enrollment data for the University of Utah claim they enrolled about 40 students in the 1st year, around 60 in the 2nd year, and 80 or more students enrolled in each year thereafter (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 5). Mideast State University's (2019) proposal also listed 10 other higher education institutions that offered advanced degrees in game design. The R1 institutions listed were: University of Pennsylvania; Michigan State University; New York University; University of Central Florida; University of California, Los Angeles; and University of California, Santa Cruz. Similar degree offerings at comparable institutions seemed to make the development of a new program more justifiable at Mideast State University, especially considering that they already had student organizations for esports.

Data Collection and Analysis

To collect and analyze the information on Mideast State University's website and from interviews, I chose a case study method of qualitative analysis. Yin's (2018) work on case studies granted this study a wide range of applications focused on case studies. Yin (2018) wrote much evidence can come from six sources: "documentation," "archival records," "interviews," "direct observation," "participant observation," and "physical artifacts" (p. 111). For this study, the primary sources of data collection came from documents and interviews. Document analysis is a commonly used strategy in case study research (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006), and the documents themselves can be formal or informal. Formal documents include studies or evaluations related to the case, administrative documents, or agendas, announcements, and minutes of meetings. Informal documents include:

90

- emails, memoranda, letters, and other personal documents, such as diaries, calendars, and notes;

- agendas, announcements and minutes of meetings, and other reports of events;

- administrative documents, such as proposals, progress reports, and other internal records;

- formal studies or evaluations related to the case that you are studying; and

- news clippings and other articles appearing in mass media or in community newspapers. (Yin, 2018, p. 115)

One document I analyzed due to its importance in esports program creation was the proposal for an undergraduate major in Esports and Game Studies from Mideast State University (Mideast State University, 2019).

Shorter case study interviews with participants, as described by Yin (2018), utilize recordings and transcriptions using a video recorder, an audio recorder, or both. Interviews last for approximately 1 hour, and follow up interview requests proceed if needed. In addition, interview analyses took place during and after the interviews. I found emergent themes and coded the sources of evidence into appropriate groupings.

Conducting Interviews

The interview setting allowed participants to feel comfortable giving honest answers and potentially better overall data (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Hay-Gibson, 2009; Malta, 2009; Minichiello et al., 2008; Opdenakker, 2006). Due to COVID-19 global pandemic restrictions, I exclusively held Zoom meetings (i.e., video conferences). Yin (2018) argued interviews can give explanations "(e.g., the 'hows' and 'whys') of key events, as well as the insights reflecting participants' relativist perspectives" (p. 118). These perspectives were the types of answers the

study required. Yin (2018) argued this line of interviewing requires two specific considerations during each interview: "following your own line of inquiry, as reflected by your case study protocol, and . . . verbalizing your actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that serves the needs of your line of inquiry" (p. 118). The line of inquiry in this study was comprised of a series of three general questions, followed by more specific questions as seen in the interview protocol (see Appendix D).

Time constraints of this study required me to interview all participants involved in curriculum development over the course of 1 week, as the participants all requested a time during the same week. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic, travelling to the institution was not a valid option, and another interview procedure was required. Follow-up emails further supplemented interviews.

Research Quality Assurance

All procedures used in this study serve as a basis for future researchers in a similar setting (Yin, 2018). To achieve this goal, I developed a case study protocol and case study database for this study guided heavily by Yin (2018). Because the protocol and database served as the study's reliability check, the findings and conclusions "could in principle repeat the procedures and hopefully arrive at the same results" (Yin, 2018, p. 47). Though studies are rarely repeated (Yin, 2018), this study was meant to pass multiple validity tests in addition to a reliability check. The reliability check involves asking this dissertation's interview questions to faculty and administrators involved in interdisciplinary curriculum development and creating a database for the collected data.

Positionality

I had served previously as the adjunct voice on a curriculum reform committee at a U.S. community college. Decisions made in that committee should have narrowed the scope of the curriculum to simplify program and course selection for students; however, the committee struggled to justify the same general curriculum requirements for students learning a trade or in nursing as students who earn a liberal arts degree. My time with the committee ended before the curriculum issues were resolved, partially due to pursuing a doctoral degree and partially due to the community college's change in leadership.

Personally, the experience of serving on a curriculum committee at a community college allowed me to understand how faculty and administration can work together to reform a curriculum. I have also been involved with esports games; however, I have never played in a tournament, I do not gamble on games, and I have only minor personal interest in esports. As such, my perspective did not interfere with participants' answers and data.

Delimitations of the Study

There were certain delimitations in this study. The delimitations included: (a) institutional choice of the case study, (b) participant selection and institutional choice, and (c) the cross-referencing nature of the study design. Institutional choice was exclusively limited to Mideast State University because of the unique circumstances of their situation. Specifically, the Esports and Game Studies program at Mideast State University had been mostly developed, but not yet implemented. The COVID-19 global pandemic created an extra variable to consider in terms of timeline. Participant selection came directly from those involved in Mideast State University's (2019) esports curriculum proposal, and cross-referencing assured validation of data collection.

Because the idea of collegiate esports is so novel, there were multiple challenges to consider beyond the scope of this dissertation. These challenges included, but were not limited to: (a) publisher control of video games in collegiate esports tournaments, (b) student protections, (c) gambling law considerations, (d) collegiate esports governance for R1 schools, (e) Title IX considerations, (f) video game studies in opposition to esports studies, (g) studies on how private universities decide to implement roles for esports, and (h) understanding why universities have chosen esports over other vocational studies. Because existing esports research has been mostly concerned with player performance metrics, esports literature tends to overlook other collegiate esports issues.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research methods used in this study, along with the conceptual framework used to guide data collection and analysis. The use of instrumental case study and the methods used for data collection and analysis were justified. This chapter also acknowledged and responded to critiques of case study research though existing research, theory, and methods combined to ensure the quality of research.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

The previous chapter outlined the research methods used in this study, along with the conceptual framework that guided data collection and analysis. This chapter reviews the data collection and provides an analysis of how the program was developed. The development of Mideast State University's (2019) Esports and Game Studies major proposal combined the efforts of many faculty members, staff, and administrators, although the implementation of the program had not come to fruition as of this writing in fall 2023; the formal development process came to an end in 2019. According to Interviewee Referee 1, some members of the development committee took issue with the program proposal, but proponents of the program made an attempt to implement the major despite faculty objections. Still, the issues regarding implementation of the Esports and Game Studies major were far more obstructive than issues with curriculum development. To better understand the issues with implementation of the Esports and Game Studies program at Mideast State University, I used Quinn's (1988) competing values framework to focus on interviewees' answers regarding interactions between faculty and administration.

The participants answered interview questions as fully as they believed to be necessary. The multiple perspectives allowed for responses to be wide ranging. Some responses contained key terms that were not necessary to fully answer the interview questions, and some respondents seemed to focus their perspectives on concepts that prior researchers have not considered. To gain a greater understanding of novel interdepartmental curriculum development, this chapter discusses: a basis for the Mideast State University Esports and Game Studies curriculum, the way in which the academic plan model was used at Mideast State University to propose a novel program, perceptions of esports at Mideast State University, competing values framework roles, respondent involvement in Esports and Game Studies, leadership role variations between

respondents, leadership discrepancies, perceived flow of communication, emergent interview themes, and theoretical framework.

Mideast State University's Basis for the Esports and Game Studies Curriculum

Considering a basis for a novel curriculum, Lattuca and Stark (2009) posed the question, "What premises or purposes undergird the plan?" (p. 15). For Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies major program proposal, understanding who contributed to program development and why they contributed seemed to be the underpinning aspects of development. An unnamed member of the athletic department, mentioned earlier, suggested Mideast State University esports should be something more akin in operations to what that person observed in Las Vegas. The athletics department official likely reasoned, as have many other programs in the United States that esports did not immediately fit into their department, though they did argue there was a lot of money with regards to esports. Vice Provost Referee 5 later said the minor in Game Studies would be "good groundwork for an undergraduate major" (Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2018a, p. 7). Vice Provost Referee 5 did not mention whether esports would be involved in the game studies program. Understanding that esports and game studies are differing, but similar, topics supports Vice Provost Referee 5's reasoning that a Game Studies minor could support an Esports and Game Studies major (Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2018a).

As mentioned earlier, an anonymous member of the athletics department had suggested that esports have a larger role at Mideast State University, fulfilled with the implementation of the Esports and Game Studies major. Interviewee Referee 1 did not state who the member of the athletics department was, though they mentioned Mideast State University's Athletic Director (AD) Referee 10 three times in our informal interview. Interviewee Referee 1 also said

96

Interviewees Referee 6 and Referee 14 reported to AD Referee 10 during the period that the

Esports and Game Studies major curriculum was developed and proposed. Interviewee Referee

14was the director of strategic initiatives and business advancement development at Mideast

State University at that time, and Interviewee Referee 6 was the program manager for affinity

and trademark management. Note, Mideast State University published a document (Mideast

State University Department of Athletics & Business Advancement, 2019) outlining the strategic

plan between the department of athletics and business advancement without any allusion to

esports. I contacted AD Referee 10 for an interview, but they did not respond. There was no

direct connection between AD Referee 10 and Mideast State University's esports program

proposal.

In this study, Interviewee Referee 4 was quick to suggest that the Game Studies minor

and proposed Esports and Game Studies major were completely different programs with

different subject matter and goals, and the only similarity was that game studies would be

included in both. Though Interviewee Referee 4 said the two programs had nothing to do with

one another, a comment by Vice Provost Referee 5 in the meeting's minutes from March 7, 2018

contradicted Referee 4's statement. According to Mideast State University Office of Academic

Affairs (2018a), "[Vice Provost] Referee 5 noted that the minor will be good groundwork for an

undergraduate major" (p. 7). This comment may have reflected an instance of institutional

memory that Interviewee Referee 4 mentioned in their interview, where they argued that other

people on my potential participant list, "have moved on to worry about other things and focus on

other things," because the program had died. Interviewee Referee 4 noted it was not worth it for

them to remember that detail because they likely had plenty of work to do beyond the scope of

that singular program.

Enthusiasm for the new Esports and Game Studies program at Mideast State University was high at the beginning of the process. Individuals tasked with program development understood the potential to be the first to develop a program of that scope and to earn resources. Interviewee Referee 2 stated:

> It felt very much like to me, like we are, we're going to be out there. There's somebody going to do this before us. We want to be at the forefront because we think there's a lot of money in this. We think there's a lot of, we could really attract a lot of students that people would pay a lot of money to learn to do this, if we can do it well.

As confirmed by the proposal for Mideast State University's (2019) Esports and Game Studies major, being the first to create a departmentally wide-ranging curriculum and the potential gains to the R1 University directly connect to the curriculum developers' enthusiasm.

Utilization of the Academic Plan Framework at Mideast State University

Using Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan framework to explore the interactions between Mideast State University's faculty and administration amid the development of the Esports and Game Studies proposal can provide researchers with a better understanding of implementing novel areas of study into a formal curriculum. Based on interview answers and related literature, a broad understanding of the Esports and Game Studies curriculum development process became accessible.

Interviewee Referee 2 gave insight into Mideast State University's assessment plan aspect of proposal creation. Specifically, I asked Interviewee Referee 2 about the proposal document so they could better describe the assessment plan they had helped to develop. Interviewee Referee 2 then read and commented on the assessment plan section, stating:

With substantial help and guidance from UITL [University Institute for Teaching and Learning]. . . . Full analysis of the proposed programs, learning goals, outcomes, and proficiencies. So those are my things. That's my process, "Has been completed and mapped to proposed courses using UCAT [University Center for the Advancement of Teaching] curriculum design process." That's me. I was the only one that did it, at UCAT.

The University Center for the Advancement of Teaching (UCAT) merged with the University Institute for Teaching and Learning (UITL) in 2019. According to Interviewee Referee 2's account of the assessment plan, Interviewee Referee 2 alone worked on the assessment aspect of the new program, and other individuals or groups took no part in either developing or double checking that aspect. Interviewee Referee 2 led assessment of the proposal from a UCAT perspective, and there was no other public record of proposal assessment.

The "learning goals," "outcomes," and "proficiencies" of the proposal were "mapped to proposed courses using UCAT's curriculum design process" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 6). This process reflected Interviewee Referee 2's contribution to the proposal for an undergraduate major in esports and game studies as curriculum designer and educational developer, and described their work on preliminary goals for the proposal. The terms Interviewee Referee 2 used in the proposal related to terms in Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan framework. For instance, the proposed programs, learning goals, outcomes, and proficiencies fit into Lattuca and Stark's (2009) discussion on purposes that include the "knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be learned" (p. 4). Interviewee Referee 2's work on the preliminary goals allowed development of proposed courses with a critical foundation that covered Mideast State University's mission and values.

Specifically, Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs' (n.d.) mission stated, "The university is dedicated to: creating and discovering knowledge to improve the well-being of our local, state, regional, national and global communities" (p. 1). In addition, the diversity and innovation section of Mideast State University's Office of Academic Affairs (n.d.) on their "Vision, Mission, Values" webpage discussed behaviors to learn, "Together, we: Are curious and open to different experiences, Recognize everyone's potential to contribute new ideas, Actively engage others' perspectives as opportunities for individual and institutional growth, Work toward creative, collaborative solutions" (p. 1). Mideast State University's (2019) proposal for Esports and Game Studies specifically discussed national and local communities, and the curriculum itself constituted a different experience that presented a creative, collaborative solution to the potentially expanding esports market. Interviewee Referee 2 combined the needs of the program, as suggested by Interviewee Referee 1, with suggestions from the external community.

Interviewee Referee 2's recounting of the process suggested they usually worked with Interviewee Referee 1 and spoke with others at meetings and through emails. Interviewee Referee 2 also mentioned, "[Referee 11] and [Referee 1] would communicate with . . . Referee 5 and with that contingent, and that was not something that I, I stayed out of that flow of communication." Interviewee Referee 2's statement insinuated they would only speak with Interviewee Referee 1 or faculty, though it was not clear how much communication Interviewee Referee 2 had with Interviewee Referee 1 and faculty after the initial meetings. For Interviewee Referee 2, communications were likely sparse due to the nature of their assessment work.

Interviewee Referee 8 discussed the fact that most information went through Interviewee Referee 1, but they then switched to talking about a conversation with the provost. Interviewee Referee 8 answered my question about the flow of communication between administration and

100

faculty by mentioning Interviewee Referee 1, the provost, and how Referee 1 said something to the effect of, "Yeah, we'll get you the money." Interviewee Referee 8's understanding of the new program was that the provost had to be convinced the program was worth investing resources. Interviewee Referee 8 said they also tried "to beat that into the provost's head or vice provost, whoever was kind of pushing this. It was kind of a strange request; it wasn't built bottom up, it was top/down, 'we want this.'"

The most prevalent inference from the interviews occurred when Interviewee Referee 4 or Interviewee Referee 8 discussed developer communication, and both interviews took a sudden turn toward funding. Rather than finishing the discussion about communication, Interviewee Referee 4 and Interviewee Referee 8 began to discuss financial issues regarding the Esports and Game Studies curriculum. The implication was there was no reason to discuss communication, because there was no program.

Notably, though tone of voice was not measurable in this study, the tone of voice by certain respondents suggested there were frustrations about: (a) how administration treated the program proposal, (b) how the developers understood the potential program, and (c) decisions regarding leadership of development. In this study, I did not consider intangibles (e.g., body language, tone of voice), but there were a few instances where a participant answered my interview question and changed the topic instantly. It is possible that the participant changed the subject for another reason, though the context of the conversation gave the impression that something related to the topic made them frustrated.

A preliminary conversation with Interviewee Referee 1 reflected their opinions about the people with whom I should speak. We agreed to have a short conversation about the program, and Interviewee Referee 1 agreed to 1 hour. Apparently, this duration was a mistake because I

did not ask any approved interview questions, and we only discussed the program generally. Despite multiple attempts to contact Interviewee Referee 1 for a subsequent meeting, there was no communication after that first meeting. Based on a comment by Interviewee Referee 2 about administration telling faculty to keep the program a secret, it is possible Interviewee Referee 1 simply did not want to speak about specific details regarding the program.

Beyond the minimal contact with the lead curriculum designer, Interviewee Referee 1, I observed an issue regarding conceptualization of the program. The main purpose of Mideast State University's game studies curriculum proposal was: "This new UG major has been created to fill the void in industry" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 1). However, questions remained among participants regarding the legitimacy of the esports industry. When asked about the perception of esports at Mideast State University, many participants noted they had been working on Game Studies curricula, but said many at the university needed an explanation regarding the useful aspects of an esports program. The concern here regarded the distinct purpose for the new program and a lack of knowledge regarding the topic of the new program. Between the lack of knowledge discussed and the incongruent purpose beset by the program's proposal, the Esports and Game Studies curriculum as presented would likely not have fulfilled the purpose of the program. Moreover, when asked about leadership in curriculum development, Interviewee Referee 8 said:

> We would meet weekly or you know every so often and try to flesh out the curriculum and we'd all kind of take our own uh, tasks of what we needed to do. So I think we kind of had a layout for the overall curriculum; we just had to develop the courses a little more.

As noted by Interviewee Referee 8, the process of developing the curriculum went smoothly, but too quickly. Content was the focus for Interviewee Referee 8, though they spoke at length about the lack of financial resources the administration was willing to put into the program.

Developing the Mideast State University Novel Program

Faculty members like Interviewee Referee 8 are the ones who typically develop novel programs, and the procedure wherein administrators issue new interdisciplinary curriculum work to the faculty is not necessarily unusual. Participants in this study gave mostly neutral opinions regarding the process of working on a new interdisciplinary curriculum. Interviewee Referee 4 stated, "Most of our opinions had to do with the fact that this was really being driven by advancement." In addition, both Interviewees Referee 4 and Referee 6 confirmed that staff in business advancement at Mideast State University (including Interviewee Referee 6 and Director of Affinity and Strategic Relationships Referee 14) were persistent in their attempts to keep the Esports and Game Studies program on schedule. Interviewee Referee 2 answered, "The administration mostly left the particular design things up to the faculty and the people that were on the team."

Interviewee Referee 2's comment was a reminder that they were neutral in the process because they were administration who helped faculty directly, and did not give assignments or deadlines. Interviewee Referee 8 exhibited the highest level of frustration, even though they argued that it is usual for administration to assign "a whole bunch of work and then [get] nothing for it." Though faculty curriculum development is normal, Interviewee Referee 8 suggested another normal procedure is for administration to assign a job as busy work rather than working toward an achievable goal. In this case, there was an achievable goal, but Interviewee Referee 8

understood the Esports and Game Studies program as a consequence of a pattern of negative activity coming from the university's administration.

Participants' Perceptions of Esports at Mideast State University

Achievable or not, some participants stated they had no interest in esports or game studies until the program began to develop, and their subsequent perceptions of esports varied. Interviewee Referee 6 had what they called a "stereotypical, 'these kids are just gamers'" reaction, suggesting they initially had a negative perception of the topic. Interviewee Referee 9 said they had a minimal perception of esports, though they were aware of its growing popularity. Interviewee Referee 2 stated, "I was a bit flabbergasted that it was going to actually be a thing."

Interviewee Referee 2's reaction mirrored that of Interviewee Referee 6 and Interviewee Referee 9, because there was a general lack of awareness about the potential for esports and game studies in higher education. Interviewee Referee 8 said their impression was that collegiate esports "was big" and they knew Twitch had sold for 2 billion dollars. Interviewee Referee 8 seemed to be more aware than the others of esports' potential to earn revenue. Interviewee Referee 4 stated two other faculty members had the position prior to them, and their statement about Esports and Game Studies program leadership coming out of necessity suggested they had no perception of the novel program. I noted participants' overall perceptions of the new program were minimal, with few exceptions. However, perceptions of the novel program had little to do with program development.

Competing Values Framework Roles Within Esports Curriculum Development

The leaders of the Esports and Game Studies curriculum development team included Interviewee Referee 4 from the design department, Interviewee Referee 1 from the engineering department, and Vice Provost Referee 5 from student affairs. All respondents confirmed

Interviewee Referee 1 and Vice Provost Referee 5 were the leaders of the development team, with Interviewee Referee 4 being responsible for the final product and reporting back to Vice Provost Referee 5. Interviewee Referee 1 was in charge of the development segment, whereas Vice Provost Referee 5 was in charge of the administrative segment. Interviewee Referee 8 described Vice Provost Referee 5's relationship to Interviewee Referee 1 the way a manager would give instructions to a subordinate. All were leaders in a hierarchical system, where the power dynamic allowed Vice Provost Referee 5 to set deadlines. Because Vice Provost Referee 5 knew very little about esports, they often took on the role of monitor (Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1990). Rather than get more involved in the process, a monitor can allow others to experiment with curriculum so they can fulfill the needs of each department and of the university.

At the time of this study, Interviewee Referee 1 was the advisor for the existing student esports club at Mideast State University, and therefore, was one of the main contact people for the curriculum proposal, though not officially listed as the leader of curriculum development; however, Interviewee Referee 1's position in the development process was clearly important. Interviewee Referee 1 created the PowerPoint that allowed faculty and administration at Mideast State University's 2019 Assessment Conference to understand the scope of the new program, and they were the spokesperson for the Esports and Game Studies program at Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee (ASCC) meetings. Interviewee Referee 1 was integral to the development of this program, though according to them, they had no experience with esports prior to becoming advisor.

Before speaking with Interviewee Referee 1, my review of Mideast State University's (2019) proposal documents suggested they fit the roles of coordinator and broker, wherein they created a structure for themself and others to follow and they also gained commitments and

resources from outside sources. Though faculty members typically do not take on the broker role (Quinn, 1988), Interviewee Referee 1 was given the task based on their experience with the student esports club. Based on the academic plan model, internal and external foci divided Interviewee Referee 1's attention. As such, the coordinator role typically focuses on internal matters such as "linkages among programs collaborating to prepare majors" and "interdisciplinary specializations" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 286). As coordinator, Interviewee Referee 1 made sure all parties were willing to take on the new challenge and manage curriculum content creation. The interview data suggested Interviewee Referee 1 took on both aforementioned matters.

Interviewee Referee 9 was the director of academic affairs at the time of this study, though Vice Provost Referee 5 was the director when the Esports and Game Studies proposal was originally developed. Due to their new role, Interviewee Referee 9 could not answer most of the questions and only gave information found on Mideast State University's website. This study mainly recognized Interviewee Referee 9's contribution from an outside perspective, as they did not fit into any of the categories listed in the competing values framework. Vice Provost Referee 5 fit well in the monitor role as considered by the competing values framework, as they did not work on the curriculum directly, met with curriculum developers as needed, and set deadlines for Interviewee Referee 1 and the development team (Quinn, 1988). Vice Provost Referee 5's role in the Esports and Game Studies program was strictly administrative, and no participants elaborated on Vice Provost Referee 5's contributions to the program.

Interviewee Referee 4's position as professor and chairperson of the department of design allowed them to get involved in the new program. Prior to the interview, Interviewee Referee 4 was a facilitator under competing values framework roles (Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1990).

Interviewee Referee 4 had no knowledge of esports, and was replacing Faculty Member Referee 11, whose curriculum vitae listed experience with interactive art and real-time animation, in the arts and sciences department. It was not clear whether Interviewee Referee 4 took charge or if administration placed them in charge. Interviewee Referee 4 claimed they took charge and there was no participant who refuted that claim. Faculty Member Referee 11's experience with interactive art made them a mentor for Esports and Game Studies curriculum development, though they did not have esports-specific experience (Quinn, 1988). Changing leadership in the Arts and Sciences from a mentor under Faculty Member Referee 11 and then Faculty Member Referee 3 to a facilitator under Interviewee Referee 4 meant such expertise would have to come from the other curriculum developers.

Interviewee Referee 8 had been in the computer graphics field for over 30 years. They had been involved in Referee 8 Software, Games that Move You, and i71 Software. Interviewee Referee 8 was a faculty advisor for the other student esports club, and focused on game development curriculum, having worked on that topic for the past 12 years. Due to their experience in the field and the lack of a leadership title in the department, Interviewee Referee 8 fit into an innovator role and mentor role (Quinn, 1988). Not only could Interviewee Referee 8 simplify change in the innovator role—as a mentor, they could use their knowledge to understand what directions faculty and administration were trying to take with the new curriculum.

Interviewee Referee 2 originally worked in the faculty and teaching assistant development group as an instructional consultant, working with faculty and staff on teaching skills. That group merged with the Institute, and then with the UCAT; eventually, this institute became known as the (University President's) Institute for Teaching and Learning (Mideast State

107

University Teaching and Learning Resource Center, n.d.). Interviewee Referee 2 became an assistant director of that institute for 2 years. For the Esports and Game Studies program, Interviewee Referee 2 worked directly with Interviewee Referee 1 as a consultant. Interviewee Referee 2 reflected the characteristics of the facilitator managerial role from the competing values framework, yet Interviewee Referee 2's role was never as a leader (Quinn, 1988). Interviewee Referee 2 was strictly an assistant with whom Interviewee Referee 1 chose to assist in the process.

Interviewee Referee 2 took on the characteristics of the facilitator role because, as they noted, they tried to help faculty developers "understand what they are doing and how to do it." Interviewee Referee 2 described speaking with Vice Provost Referee 5 and Interviewee Referee 1 regularly, and also spoke to others who developed the curriculum. Interviewee Referee 2's role mostly relied on communication with Interviewee Referee 1, making sure curriculum development transpired in a way that would most likely get the program started. Interviewee Referee 2 said they also spoke with Vice Provost Referee 5, stating:

> For other purposes, and [I] would occasionally hear [Referee 5] say, "Well this isn't moving fast enough. It needs to go faster." [I] would say, "Well, I really think they're doing a great job and they're working really hard and they're doing what I've asked them to do."

Though Interviewee Referee 2 spoke with Vice Provost Referee 5 at times and many of the developers at other times, Interviewee Referee 2's main communication was with Interviewee Referee 1. Interviewee Referee 2's neutral position allowed them to give advice without getting involved in development. Interviewee Referee 2 argued that faculty did not want Interviewee Referee 2 getting overly involved in development because it was their job to find and implement

108

the details of the program, and it was Interviewee Referee 2's job to help out when needed. Ultimately, though Interviewee Referee 2 had characteristics of the facilitator role, they were a subordinate to Vice Provost Referee 5 and Interviewee Referee 1 and did not take on a leadership role.

Interviewee Referee 6 was program manager in the Athletics and Business Advancement unit at Mideast State University during program proposal development. According to Interviewee Referee 6, their role was more of a "background" role because Director of Affinity and Strategic Relationships Referee 14was their "boss at the time." Interviewee Referee 6's role in this research was minimal, and their communications in regard to curriculum development were also minimal. Consequently, Interviewee Referee 6 did not have a managerial role under the competing values framework, and Director of Affinity and Strategic Relationships Referee 14may have had a producer or director role (Quinn, 1988). Because Director of Affinity and Strategic Relationships Referee 14was not available for an interview, their role was unclear.

Faculty Member Referee 11 and Faculty Member Referee 3 were faculty members in charge of the curriculum for the arts and sciences, but neither of them stayed on the project long. Neither Faculty Member Referee 11 nor Faculty Member Referee 3 responded to a request for an interview. Though these faculty members did not respond, other faculty members went into detail about how or why they became involved in the novel program.

How Respondents Became Involved in the Program

When asked how participants became interested in the Esports and Game Studies program proposal at Mideast State University, each answer provided a view of the their mentality regarding the program. For example, Interviewee Referee 4 said, "It came out of necessity," suggesting they were never interested in the topic before it was brought to their

109

attention. Interviewee Referee 4's answer implied an understanding that their role as facilitator required leadership characteristics (Quinn, 1988). When Faculty Member Referee 11 left their position, the Arts and Sciences department needed a department head, and one part of that responsibility included the Esports and Game Studies curriculum development project.

On the contrary, Interviewee Referee 8 said they had "been doing computer graphics for 30-some years, the last 12 or so in game development, game research," signaling they were prepared to develop the curriculum. Interviewee Referee 8 said they wanted, "to make sure any program that was developed had good game development curriculum since it wasn't just esports." Interviewee Referee 8' answer supported their roles as innovator and mentor because they understood the new program was different from a normal program, and they knew their experience could benefit program creation (Quinn, 1988).

Notably, the faculty and administrators who had no management role in developing the curriculum gave answers that represented some internal challenges Lattuca and Stark (2009) presented. Interviewee Referee 2 stated they had worked with Interviewee Referee 1 in the past and said, "I was brought in as a consultant to help them build that PhD program from the ground up." Interviewee Referee 2, as with Interviewee Referee 4, seemed to have had no interest in the topic before it was brought to their attention. Interviewee Referee 9 said, "When there's an interdisciplinary program being done, there to has to be a central place where coordination can happen" because they were not involved in the development of the program. Speaking about internal challenges in the context of online learning, Lattuca and Stark (2009) contended that the "mission, culture, and staffing of a particular academic unit, such as a department or program, might influence curricular decisions" (p. 66). Approaching a consultant, having a general lack of

subject knowledge, and finding a central location for a program were some of the internal challenges that nonmanagerial faculty and administrators presented.

Finally, Interviewee Referee 6 explained their boss, Director of Affinity and Strategic Relationships Referee 14, said they were "looking into esports as an opportunity for the university." Interviewee Referee 6 also stated they was not aware of esports until the program development began. Aforementioned reasons for looking into esports as an opportunity for the university included the influence of an unnamed person from the athletic department; a lack of funding; and a lack of clarity on where the program would be housed, all of which acted as internal forces, as suggested by Lattuca and Stark's (2009) model. With the exception of faculty members who had already taught game studies material, no participant had much interest or knowledge of the esports segment of the novel program.

How Leadership Roles Varied Between Respondents

Beyond interest in the novel program, faculty support regarding completion of the curriculum was present, though a full understanding of faculty support would have required more inquiry. According to Interviewee Referee 8, faculty was required to develop an Esports and Game Studies curriculum regardless of other priorities. Though there was support from university faculty and administration, the unusual nature of program initiation raised concerns about the validity of the program. Views regarding curriculum development communication in Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies program indicated inconsistencies between departments and leadership roles.

Leadership Discrepancies in Game Studies and Esports Program Development

The Mideast State University (2019) proposal document did not mention any singular leader, allowing for interpretation of who made the decisions. According to Interviewee Referee

111

2, "That's the problem, is that there is no central person to go to get those questions answered and they would go to [Referee 5], but [Referee 5] didn't have the power apparently to make all of those things happen." The three participants who only served in administrative positions considered Vice Provost Referee 5 to be in charge, whereas those who held faculty positions saw Interviewee Referee 1 and Interviewee Referee 4 as the leaders. These discrepancies signify that each respondent had different responsibilities and positions, and they reported to different supervisors. As a result, they had multiple understandings of leadership rather than misunderstanding who was in charge.

Questions about the content of the curriculum would go to Interviewee Referee 1, and questions about the logistics of the curriculum would go to Interviewee Referee 4 or Faculty Member Referee 11. Vice Provost Referee 5 only assigned deadlines and seemed to give autonomy to the curriculum developers. Lattuca and Stark's (2009) understanding of power dynamics aligned similarly to what those at Mideast State University decided upon; they noted, "Curriculum administration especially includes establishing and maintaining an educational environment in which academic plans can be implemented effectively and improved continuously" (p. 269). Segmenting curriculum development into parts allows for administration and faculty to work on their specialties. Faculty members are the keepers of the curriculum, whereas administrators are the behind the scenes people who implement the curriculum. As a result, faculty at Mideast State University developed the Esports and Game Studies program, but administration unsuccessfully implemented the program.

Relatedly, either the faculty heads of their departments or a faculty expert led different parts of the curriculum development process. For example, Interviewee Referee 8 claimed they took the lead on computer science with Assistant Professor Boggus's help, and Faculty Member

112

Referee 3 took the lead on art. Each portion of the curriculum had a leader who would then report to Interviewee Referee 1, who would in turn report to Vice Provost Referee 5. The power hierarchy posed in Interviewee Referee 1's (2019) PowerPoint matched the interpretations from all interviews, though based on their position in the university each had their own idea of who the leader was.

Perceived Flow of Communication during Program Development

Regardless of position, respondents discussed communications between people and departments. When asked about the flow of communication between faculty and administration, Interviewee Referee 4 mentioned the concept of "three areas of focus," and their area was "Making," though they did not clarify the definition of making. Referee 4 also said, "We never really met together." Interviewee Referee 4 believed, "They may have had a larger group that met prior to my becoming involved with the process." Interviewee Referee 4 stated they met with Interviewee Referee 8 and one other person "to talk through the curriculum." Interviewee Referee 4's statements coincided with Lattuca and Stark's (2009) idea of interdisciplinary studies by working with faculty in other professional fields and reflected that of a facilitator who had not helped much with the new esports program. In this case, the novel program combined academic fields and professional fields, thereby bringing Lattuca & Stark's (2009) concepts of content and learners into an academic community rather than existing outside academe.

Interviewee Referee 8 gave an answer based personal experience rather than general understanding. They responded, "You know, we kind of went through [Referee 1] for the most part but I did have a conversation with the provost kind of 'yeah, we'll get you the money, blah blah blah.'" Interviewee Referee 8 talked about not being able to accommodate students in the department, and said administration demanded the program but had no way to fund the

curriculum. Interviewee Referee 8's answer combined knowledge about those to whom they spoke and the funding aspect of the program. Interviewee Referee 8's personalized answer gave a minimal view of communication in the program that does not reflect their role as innovator or mentor, and Referee 8 was unwilling to expand upon this answer.

Interviewee Referee 2 discussed key personnel when asked about communication. Interviewee Referee 2 stated, "We had regular meetings and [Referee 1] usually was the one that was sending the emails, to our group, getting us back together." Interviewee Referee 2 went on to say:

> [Referee 11] and [Referee 1] would communicate with Referee 5 and with that
> contingent, and that was not something that I, I stayed out of that flow of communication,
> but then I would get, I would say, okay, so what is [Referee 5] saying? And [Referee 5]
> would give [Referee 1] a deadline for something.

Interviewee Referee 2 discussed how they did not think Vice Provost Referee 5 wanted the curriculum completed in the way that Interviewee Referee 1 wanted, though Interviewee Referee 2 also talked about how Vice Provost Referee 5 "was giving [them] deadlines that [they] couldn't possibly meet using that system." Because Interviewee Referee 2 had worked with Interviewee Referee 1 before the Esports and Game Studies program, they were convinced Interviewee Referee 1 would produce a high-quality product. Interviewee Referee 2's perspective gave the impression that they were defending Interviewee Referee 1's creative process. Interviewee Referee 2's answer was consistent with their lack of a managerial role.

Interviewee Referee 9 described the flow of communication as having "as many open channels as possible" and development "didn't involve a large number of faculty." Interviewee Referee 9 believed the small amount of faculty made communication between them "a little bit

114

easier." Interviewee Referee 9 concluded by stating the COVID-19 global pandemic "derailed the momentum, which we're trying back now to get back up." Interviewee Referee 9's answers represented what they believed to be an ideal version of curriculum development with the exception of the pandemic, which they claimed put a stop to the program. The small number of faculty was consistent with other answers that stated the few names of people involved with the curriculum, and Interviewee Referee 6 confirmed the COVID-19 global pandemic was the reason for discontinued program development. As with Interviewee Referee 2, Interviewee Referee 9's answer was consistent with not having a managerial role.

Interviewee Referee 6 pulled up a visual structure of a steering committee, depicting who would develop the entire Esports and Game Studies program, not just the curriculum. Interviewee Referee 6 discussed how the communication was "between administration and departments, not necessarily faculty." For Interviewee Referee 6, administration led program development. They said, "We had senior leaders including, like from Office of Advancement, our CFO, [and] athletics director." After redirecting back to the question, Interviewee Referee 6 stated the most common communications involved emails and steering committee meetings. Interviewee Referee 6 understood curriculum development as a smaller part of program development, and they gave an answer that described communication for their segment of the program instead of communication for curriculum development. Because Interviewee Referee 6 was involved in program development rather than curriculum development, their answer was consistent with their lack of a managerial role.

Respondents interpreted the flow of communication differently, and answers varied greatly. Curriculum development for the Esports and Game Studies program was an interdisciplinary endeavor, but very few took part in the actual development. In other words,

115

many at Mideast State University made suggestions for what could be in the curriculum, but very few developed the program. Though answers to this question did not feature a depth of understanding, future researchers can construct a representation of communication in the Esports and Game Studies program.

The faculty members, as well as Interviewee Referee 2, consistently replied that Interviewee Referee 1 was in charge of the curriculum, though administrators Interviewee Referee 6 and Interviewee Referee 9 believed Vice Provost Referee 5 was the leader. Finding a singular leader for this program was exceptionally difficult. Vice Provost Referee 5 would give deadlines to Interviewee Referee 1, which suggested Vice Provost Referee 5 was in charge; yet, because Interviewee Referee 1 created the documents for the program, Interviewee Referee 1 may have been in charge of collecting and interpreting curricular information. In addition, a primary contact may have represented program leadership, but there was no consensus regarding the primary contact person. Rather, there were multiple "primary contacts" set up for development of the program (Mideast State University, 2019). The impact of opposing opinions regarding leadership was not well-documented in the literature reviewed for this study.

Emergent Interview Themes

In the data analysis of the interviews, several key themes emerged. During the process of interviewing faculty and administrators from Mideast State University, examination of certain keywords helped to distinguish whether or not the answer was important within the context of the questions. From the interview transcripts, these keywords guided the research to insights that respondents knew or perceived but were not clear in existing literature, and the context around these keywords yielded insight into knowledge exclusive to those who worked for Mideast State University at the time of Mideast State University's (2019) proposal. This section discusses some

important terms brought up naturally in the course of interviews. The main themes that emerged were academic affairs, money, and leadership.

Academic Affairs

Academic affairs was a theme that emerged from the interview data. Respondents mentioned some version of Mideast State University's Office of Academic Affairs seven times over three interviews. Each response that included Office of Academic Affairs came from employees who only identified as administrators. These responses were typically references to the Office of Academic Affairs that only contained who was involved in program development. Office of Academic Affairs was not involved in curriculum development, though two respondents stated the deadlines coming from the Office of Academic Affairs were restrictive during proposal development.

The term academic affairs was important because respondents used it as a catch-all. Vice Provost Referee 5 and Interviewee Referee 9 were the two nearest the top of the hierarchy, who gave deadlines to curriculum developers, and who generally directed the program. These two, but Vice Provost Referee 5 in particular, guided curriculum developers regarding budget and target dates over the five departments.

Typically, interviewees' references to Office of Academic Affairs mentioned Vice Provost Referee 5, though one interviewee suggested Vice Provost Referee 5 would be retiring in the coming year (i.e., 2023). As a result, I deviated away from Vice Provost Referee 5 and toward Interviewee Referee 9. Interviewee Referee 9 was to take over for Vice Provost Referee 5 after Referee 5's retirement. Though Interviewee Referee 9 answered the interview questions, they had no involvement in the curriculum development portion of the new program; therefore,

their answers were mostly irrelevant to the study. I contacted Vice Provost Referee 5 for an interview, but they did not respond.

Money

Another term that respondents used regularly was money. Specifically, Interviewee Referee 8 guided the understanding that there was a lack of control over how much program developers could progress with the proposed major due to a lack of funds. Though few in higher education use the word money as a way to describe insufficient resources, (Interviewee Referee 9, for example, said there was a requirement to divide the budget between multiple departments) money seemed to be an accurate term in this study based on the context of novel interdisciplinary program development. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the contexts by which the term money arose in the interviews.

Respondents who discussed the term money were certain there was no funding to support the new program. Statements such as when Interviewee Referee 4 and I spoke about leadership of the program highlighted that certainty; they noted:

> There was no mechanism for having a leader. . . . There were several new hires that were viewed as essential in order for this to happen. From the upper administration's point of view, that's probably the excuse for why it died is that there wasn't money to hire the leaders.

Leadership was the topic in question, and Interviewee Referee 4 believed the lack of leadership directly linked to a lack of funding. Interviewee Referee 4 understood money to be the impetus for finding a proper leader and the reason as to why a leader for the major proposal never emerged.

Another respondent understood money to be the uncertainty that could prevent program implementation. When asked about the perception of esports among faculty and administration, Computer Science and Engineering Associate Professor, Interviewee Referee 8, answered:

> How is the money going to work so that. . . . Am I going to have students? What does this mean, or what are we going to be expected to give to this thing? And is faculty time spent on this going to come back in some budgetary way? So I think there's just, that's the immediate reaction of any interdisciplinary, when you try to break down the silos at Mideast State, that's always the question: who's going to pay for this?—because there isn't a good system to support things like that.

According to Interviewee Referee 8, there was no certainty whether distribution of the money went to the necessary locations. Multiple respondents argued that administration required Esports and Game Studies program development regardless of funding or perception of the topic. Instead, administration's perception was to compare the new program to a Data Analytics program at Mideast State University that required no new funding and began without delay. Statements from Interviewee Referee 8 presented an understanding of Mideast State University's curriculum development process as one that moves forward with programs that need little-to-no new funding, though the justification in the proposal contended the new degree program is a "multidisciplinary collaboration that is driven by industry needs" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 1). A multidisciplinary collaboration driven by industry needs suggests that there will be additional funding needs for additional resources.

Interviewee Referee 8 gave a similar answer to the concept of enthusiasm, with the understanding that enthusiasm was not a key factor in the development of the program. Interviewee Referee 8 answered, "Not talked about. I have no idea really. They couldn't come up

with the money, so it petered out." Interviewee Referee 8 was not very positive about the program throughout the interview, particularly due to the belief that they thought the program was "dead." Interviewee Referee 8 wanted me to understand that money was the biggest factor as to why the program failed to begin.

I then asked interviewee Referee 8 about the flow of communication, and they noted, "You know, we kind of went through [Referee 1] for the most part but I did have a conversation with the provost kind of 'yeah, we'll get you the money, blah blah blah." The response gave a glimpse of how they perceived the program considering the answer to four separate questions included the word money. Interviewee Referee 8 was convinced that money was the only factor that ultimately mattered, and that the aforementioned interactions between stakeholders played a minor role. The next section discusses funding in more detail.

Leadership

Interactions were a catalyst for this dissertation, and leadership-based interactions are prevalent in meetings' minutes as well as interview responses. Though all respondents acknowledged Interviewee Referee 1 as the person who gathered relevant information for the curriculum and main contact person for the program, few agreed about who was leading curriculum development. Interviewee Referee 2 said they thought Interviewee Referee 1 and Faculty Member Referee 11 were the leaders, and Interviewee Referee 8 said Interviewee Referee 1 was the person with whom other members of the committee would contact with problems or suggestions. Administrators Interviewee Referee 6 and Interviewee Referee 9 elucidated that Vice Provost Referee 5 was the leader from the curriculum perspective. Each answer represented opposing perspectives within higher education, from the strictly faculty perspective to the strictly administrative perspective. However, only those who did not work on

the curriculum understood Vice Provost Referee 5 to be the leader. Those who did work on the curriculum had differing opinions about who led the development team.

Understanding that Interviewee Referee 1 was the contact person for the curriculum was one constant, but this position was also a potential issue. When Mideast State University considered adding Esports and Game Studies to the curriculum, Interviewee Referee 1 was an assistant professor in the Engineering department at Mideast State University. Interviewee Referee 1 was a clinical professor in Engineering Education and assistant dean of undergraduate studies on Mideast State University's website, but Interviewee Referee 8 pointed out Interviewee Referee 1's original position as assistant professor allowed Referee 1 to take on a facilitator role for curriculum development.

Interviewee Referee 8 stated, "Yeah, I think we appointed [Referee 1] cause [their], [they were] a lecturer at the time? Or, I can't remember what [Referee 1]'s role is but we can reassign [them]. It's harder to reassign a professor." This response was the only suggestion that Interviewee Referee 1's position was the reason why they became the contact person. In addition, Interviewee Referee 8 stated Interviewee Referee 1 "was more actively involved in" their esports club than Referee 8 was for the other esports club. The potential issue concerns a central leadership position. Though the main contact person was Interviewee Referee 1, they were not the leader. This distinction seemed to reflect an issue that most who were involved in Esports and Game Studies curriculum development either misunderstood or never understood whether Referee 1 had a leadership position.

Of the faculty and administrators involved in curriculum development, only Interviewee Referee 1 could claim status as leader of the curriculum development process because Referee 1 was the one credited with "curriculum design" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 49). However,

Interviewee Referee 4's role as facilitator and Vice Provost Referee 5's role as monitor created an issue because both took leadership responsibilities. The issue in the competing values framework is that a facilitator "foster[s] collective effort" (Quinn, 1988, p. 41) as part of a team, whereas a monitor "is expected to know what is going on in the unit" (Quinn, 1988, p. 39) as part of a hierarchy. The interdisciplinary nature of the proposed program (which requires a collaborative team), combined with the multiple managerial roles (which works in a hierarchical system), worked in opposition to one another.

Leadership was distinctively elusive in the proposed Esports and Game Studies major program for plenty of potential reasons. There were three leaders cited in interviews, and each of them held positions that did not overlap with one another. Other interviewees saw Interviewee Referee 4, Vice Provost Referee 5, and Interviewee Referee 1 as leaders, though no one spoke about who fits where in the university's hierarchy. Interviewee Referee 1's (2019) PowerPoint included a hierarchy, and though respondents agreed Vice Provost Referee 5 was in charge of the program as a whole, Vice Provost Referee 5 was not in charge of curriculum development.

For example, Vice Provost Referee 5 gave deadlines to the curriculum developers. According to Interviewee Referee 2, those deadlines were unusually short, but Interviewee Referee 2 had no part in making or meeting deadlines. Interviewee Referee 2 believed Vice Provost Referee 5 was unhappy with the speed of development and that Interviewee Referee 1 was developing the curriculum the way they thought best, which took longer than Vice Provost Referee 5 expected. Though Interviewee Referee 1 had deadlines, Interviewee Referee 1 worked under Faculty Member Referee 11 to finish development. Interviewee Referee 4 understood that Faculty Member Referee 11 was not getting the curriculum developed quickly enough, and took

over for Faculty Member Referee 11. Deadlines only served to further the understanding that Vice Provost Referee 5 intervened when the program needed to be completed.

Interviewee Referee 4 talked about how "advancement" was pushing for the Esports and Game Studies program to be completed. Advancement refers to the Office of Business Advancement at Mideast State University. Interviewee Referee 4 discussed how Interviewee Referee 6 and Director of Affinity and Strategic Relationships Referee 14from Advancement would come to meetings to encourage development of the program. Interviewee Referee 4 suggested, though Vice Provost Referee 5 may have been in charge of deadlines, the Office of Business Advancement was influential in some way.

Speaking about potential leaders in the Esports and Game Studies curriculum, Interviewee Referee 4 stated, "I wanted to hire someone to administrate that program. That was built into the plan." Though Interviewee Referee 4 was not able to hire someone to take the position due to a lack of communication and/or funding between hiring administrators and curriculum developers, Interviewee Referee 4 communicated to "[Interviewee Referee 8] and one other person to talk through the curriculum." Interviewee Referee 4 did not believe their role as facilitator was going to last very long because of their plan to hire someone as a replacement.

Leadership was such a prevalent theme because Mideast State University's hierarchy assumes leadership at all levels. Vice Provost Referee 5 assigned deadlines; Interviewee Referee 4 emailed and gained perspectives from other department heads; and Interviewee Referee 1 collected perspectives from other faculty members and created the initial proposal. Each of the three referees held a leadership-type position within the context of the hierarchy. However, Vice Provost Referee 5's apparently unattainable deadlines forced Interviewee Referee 4 and Interviewee Referee 1 to create and submit a proposal for an unsuccessful major program.

123

These themes, academic affairs, money, and leadership were the top themes because of the emphasis that respondents put on them. Respondents mentioned academic affairs multiple times because that office participated in program development – an internal influence outside of Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan. However, this influence allowed for the Esports and Game Studies program to continue through development until program finances required a decision. At that point, the theme of money became relevant, and became the most important part of the discussion. As a result, those who were higher on the leadership hierarchy at Mideast State University made the decision not to fund the new major program.

Explanation of Funding for the Esports and Game Studies Program

The proposed Esports and Game Studies program required a considerable amount of resources, and according to participants, the Office of Academic Affairs presumably thought there was no need for new resources. The comparison between this novel major and the aforementioned Data Analytics program was intensified by a faculty understanding that new funding was not needed for the Data Analytics program, but that considerable funding was needed for the Esports and Game Studies program.

Office of Academic Affairs was the governing body that requested the program, and Mideast State University's (2019) proposal claimed the Office of Academic Affairs was responsible for startup costs for the first 2 years until tuition could amortize the program. The only other document that mentioned funding was the minutes document from June 13, 2019, stating, "University leadership is working on the long-term funding needs for this program" (Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2019d, p. 2). Beyond the proposal and minutes documents, an understanding of funding only came from respondents. Interviewee Referee 8 claimed there was no money, and Interviewee Referee 4 claimed no one earned

compensation for this work. These claims appear justified, as no public document confirmed a funding plan or dispersal of funding. Funding and resources were a concern once faculty realized allocation of funding for program development did not exist.

Mideast State University's (2019) proposal provided a rundown of needed resources to begin and sustain the program for the first 6 years, starting in the 2019–2020 academic year, and curriculum development did not receive funding. Though funding may have an influence on how curriculum developers interact, there was no implication that funding influenced the curriculum. Because administration assigned faculty to the task, the implication from interviewees suggested that administration would provide funding. Funding was not a topic for interview questions because the focus was on interactions.

Theoretical Framework

The use of interview data, Lattuca and Stark's (2009) academic plan model, and Quinn et al.'s (1990) competing values framework allowed me to make conclusions regarding interview themes and the research question from this study. To reiterate, the research question was: How can an early experiment in designing an esports curriculum assist research in the novel field?

Using competing values framework in this study allowed me to understand that there were many leaders in the curriculum development space at Mideast State University, but some interviewees recognized curriculum development as program development. Because five departments needed to be included in the process, development of the program included many who had experience developing programs, but few personnel had any knowledge of the topic of esports. As such, leadership distribution occurred between people who wanted to take responsibility and those who had positions that required their participation.

Considering the scale of the proposed Esports and Game Studies major program at Mideast State University, researchers can consider Tierney's (2012) description of creativity and organizational culture in organization theory. Specifically, Tierney (2012) argued that environmental scanning can help understand change in higher education. In other words, a way to consider change in higher education is to consider the "internal structure of the organization and an assessment of how well it is configured to deal with change" (Tierney, 2012, p. 162). Having this sort of understanding can help program developers create successful new programs. Tierney also described large higher education organizations (e.g., Mideast State University) as loosely coupled systems that are decentralized. Such decentralization at Mideast State University allows faculty to develop novel curricula without direct oversight from administration. Administration can give suggestions, but faculty ultimately determine what a new program needs with the support of department chairs.

Ultimately, organization theory states organizations "are not static; they continuously adapt to shifts in the external environment" (Daft, 2010, p. 7). Specifically, respondents reiterated who was in charge of the proposed major program, yet the ultimate decision on whether or not the program moved forward went to administrators, not the faculty who developed the curriculum. Answers from respondents provided keen understanding of the whole organization as evidenced by the organizational chart from Mideast State University's Office of Academic Affairs (2019a).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I assigned managerial roles to most participating faculty and administrator interviewees based on the competing values framework (Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1990), though unassigned referees still held important roles in the development of the Esports and Game

Studies program. These roles allowed me to better understand the ways in which faculty and administrators communicated with one another while also understanding how the proposal process moved forward. In turn, this new understanding will allow future researchers to make conclusions about the process that were not previously possible.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Because this study focused on the curriculum development of a novel program—a proposed Esports and Game Studies major at Mideast State University—resources targeted toward curriculum development and leadership provided me the ability to consider the ways by which faculty and administrators at one institution work together during novel program development. Lattuca and Stark's (2009) curriculum design model, and the roles within the competing values framework (Quinn, 1988; Quinn et al., 1990) allowed the study to focus specifically on curriculum development and leadership at a Research 1 (R1) institution of higher education.

The interview process allowed me to elicit answers to fill gaps in knowledge regarding curriculum development and leadership of novel programs such as esports. From their unique perspectives, participants explained how the curriculum proposal process proceeded from their starting points. Because the participants started working on the curriculum at different points in the project, each of them was able to express how others handled the process, and how they handled their own work during their duration of work on the curriculum proposal. This dissertation analyzed explanations, events, and documents that affected how the Esports and Game Studies curriculum was developed, and ultimately shelved, at Mideast State University.

This project utilized the iterative process of data collection and data analysis. I also found some unforeseen conclusions while conducting this research. This chapter highlights the prominent takeaways from the study of the esports and game studies curriculum proposal at Mideast State University. I review some potentially unclear parts of the curriculum proposal and development process between faculty and administration, and explain what ultimately happened with the Esports and Game Studies program at Mideast State University.

First, I found there were multiple leaders for the Esports and Game Studies program proposal development. Granted, the curriculum designer, in this case Interviewee Referee 1, was required to be the leader of curriculum development because they were the one who took in all information from other faculty and administrators to create the preliminary proposal document; however, participants noted confusion that had emerged between faculty and administrators after drafting Mideast State University's (2019) proposal. The existence of the preliminary proposal meant the program could formally move forward, but integration of the Esports and Game Studies program into the College of Arts and Sciences did not happen. Because the curriculum designer worked in the College of Engineering, that person could not lead the program any further. Instead, the head of the College of Arts and Sciences assumed the task. This explanation did not take into account Vice Provost Referee 5's position as both administrator and member of the committee that discussed the Esports and Game Studies program. As a result of having multiple leaders involved in the Esports and Game Studies program, there was confusion between interviewees as to whether there were one or more leaders, which muddied the next steps to take to implement the major.

Second, Interviewee Referee 8 argued that funding was nonexistent. The novel program procured no grants. Though Mideast State University's (2019) proposal contained a table of estimated costs per year, only two sentences considered funding of the esports major program. Mideast State University's (2019) proposal stated, "The above costs will be met for the first 2 years by the Office of Academic Affairs. After that, the program is expected to fund itself primarily through tuition revenue" (p. 53). No representatives from the Office of Academic Affairs at Mideast State University could speak to whether funding was available for the new

129

program, and no funding was ever mentioned by interviewees or other sources as being allocated to the Esports and Game Studies program.

Third, although a goal of this study was to better understand the ways by which an esports program develops at an R1 university, the findings suggested a select few stakeholders were involved in the actual development of the program proposal, and these stakeholders never procured necessary funding. Press releases in 2019 (Anderson, 2019; Roth, 2019) mentioned the game studies aspect of the novel program, but they focused on the esports component. Interviewees insisted the program was equal parts esports and game studies. As a result of how the press releases, research findings, and interviewee discoveries guided the study, my focus on esports as a novel major in higher education soon became a focus on curriculum development of novel programs more broadly. By focusing on curriculum development, I considered esports within the scope of institutional attempts and processes to add a novel program. The novel topic of collegiate esports without the game studies component may still benefit from more academic studies.

Potentially Unclear Sections of Mideast State University Proposal

Because the proposal document of Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies major was a preliminary proposal, there were some unrefined and unclear sections (Mideast State University, 2019). In this preliminary proposal, the unrefined or incomplete sections dealt with the novel topic of esports, which has not often been included in higher education curricula (Mideast State University, 2019). This section describes some unclear sections of the preliminary proposal for the Esports and Game Studies program at Mideast State University.

The section "Relationship to Other Programs" used multiple pronouns for differing departments, but possessive pronouns were only used in regard to one department, suggesting

that one department wrote the proposal; however, the Esports and Game Studies proposal only referenced one name as the writer of the preliminary proposal in the table that listed key faculty (Mideast State University, 2019)—Interviewee Referee 1 from the College of Engineering. No pronouns were used for the Department of Engineering; the pronouns for the Department of Design were we and our; and the pronoun for the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences was their (Mideast State University, 2019, pp. 33–34). The use of we and our suggested someone from the Department of Design wrote the "Relationship to Other Programs" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 33) section of the proposal, but Interviewee Referee 1 from the College of Engineering was the only one listed as having "curriculum design" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 49) as their area of expertise, making unclear who wrote the section.

Another unclear part of the Mideast State University (2019) proposal referred to potential student enrollment. In this section, the Mideast State University (2019) proposal stated, "786 students have applied to the Health Sciences program [in the previous 3 years] and 576 have been admitted" (p. 37). Based on these figures, Mideast State University's (2019) proposal further argued:

> This means a potential applicant pool of about 70 students per year who were not admitted to health sciences, plus a proportion of those admitted who might be interested in this major. We would anticipate approximately 100–150 applicants from the Health Sciences applicant pool would be interested in applying to the BS in EGS. (p. 37)

The total number of students who were not admitted to Health Sciences was 210 between the Fall 2016 semester o and the Fall 2018 semester, and there was no clear reason given for the Mideast State University (2019) proposal's suggestion that some of the 70 students per year who were not admitted would then apply to the Esports and Game Studies program. There was also

no justification that the approximately 100–150 applicants from the Health Sciences applicant pool might be interested in the Esports and Game Studies major. Though an algorithm may have been involved in determining these figures, that algorithm was not included in the proposal. The same process used for Health Sciences applies for students applying for admission to the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, the athletic training program, and psychology and business majors.

Mideast State University's (2019) proposal also presented the argument that new 1st-year students would enroll in Esports and Game Studies, "because they have heard about this new major" (p. 38). Their expected enrollment was 36 students for each of the three tracks of the major in Fall 2019 and Fall 2020, and 72 students per track in Fall 2021 and Fall 2022. The argument continued, "Based on the foregoing data, estimated enrollments will be sufficient to achieve the self-sustaining levels detailed below" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 39). The aforementioned estimated enrollments are self-sustaining levels according to the budgetary chart (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 39). The proposal posited that students who hear about the esports major would be more likely to enroll than students who had not heard about it, but these enrollment estimates depended on word of mouth predictions.

According to the proposal's projections, revenue can be predicted accurately based on a combination of tuition rates and number of students enrolled (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 39), and 36 seemed to be a reasonable number based on Mideast State University's (2019) proposal information. However, the proposal also stated the program would be self-sustaining when Year 3 began, and only took tuition revenue into account because the state share of instruction would cover facilities and administrative costs. Though the projection was reasonable, it did not consider attrition rates, nor did it account for waning student interest.

Implications of the Research

The research into Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies program yields implications for future research, future interdisciplinary curriculum development, and future esports programs. In looking at the implications of this research on future curriculum development of a novel topic in higher education, a collaborative environment may yield better results than a hierarchical environment. Specifically, if an interdisciplinary group of higher education faculty and administrators is considering development of a novel topic for a R1 school, a collaborative environment allows all parties to contribute equally. In the collaborative environment, those who are working on the curriculum, the budget, press releases, and other relevant program development activities agree on how to progress so all segments of program development move forward together. Having no budget for a novel program will stall the potential program indefinitely, and disagreement about who leads program development can cause confusion between faculty and administrators.

Another implication of the research relates to esports programs in higher education. Table 1 noted all Big Ten universities who had any game studies, game design, or esports programs. There have been minor and major programs created in game studies and game design, as well as Northwestern University's esports certificate program and Nebraska University's esports certificate program in development. There have also been multiple courses created around the phenomenon of esports and video games. Though this study focused on Mideast State University's Game Studies and Esports program, incorporation of game studies or esports courses and programs take many approaches. One approach was suggested by Jenny et al. (2021), who claimed, "Several programs… appear to take an existing program (e.g., sport management, business, management), add a very small number of esports courses to this

program, and then term the program an "esports" degree, minor, or certificate" (p. 24). The existing programs can be modified to include updated esports material or it can be left alone. Big Ten schools have already taken steps toward creating courses and programs such as the one created for Mideast State University, though schools usually start smaller than the attempt by Mideast State University. In other words, based on funding concerns and other concerns such as a lack of collaboration or uncertain leadership, schools are more likely to create certificate programs in esports before creating minor or major programs.

Hypotheses to Direct Future Research

Conclusions and implications found in this study guide any future research. In this section, I discuss esports in higher education, interdisciplinary curriculum development for novel programs, and understanding who leads curriculum development.

Esports in higher education can be seen as vocational studies that allow students to earn jobs within the esports industry immediately after graduation. Students earn general education requirements while simultaneously learning real-world skills that directly apply to employment in the field of esports. On the surface, esports is a vocational program similar to a paralegal or web developer program. Students can earn a certificate or a bachelor's degree that gives students more tools to navigate the esports field.

Collegiate esports have the potential to benefit higher education institutions in multiple ways, but the majority of esports research has focused either on professional esports competitors and professional competitions. Novel topics like esports can be tempting for higher education institutions to include at their schools due to the potential positive financial impact it can bring; however, the potential for esports to have a positive impact at higher education institutions is uncertain. Each higher education institution that has an influential person or group of

134

administrators, faculty, or students who insist that esports should become a part of the educational curriculum must consider the best course of action for their specific institution. What works at Harrisburg University in Pennsylvania and their enrollment of 6,469 students (Harrisburg University, 2023) may not work for larger higher education institutions such as Mideast State University, which has a total enrollment of 67,772 (Mideast State University, 2023). Esports is still a very new topic to consider in higher education institutions, and any novel topic considered for higher education institutions must have specific research.

Interdisciplinary curriculum development should be considered as a future research topic due to the depth of knowledge that can be gained from the publicly published documents associated with an interdisciplinary topic at one higher education institution. Accumulating more literature on interdisciplinary curriculum development would allow institutional departments, colleges, and schools to find common ground within novel topics where it may seem like there is no common ground. As stated in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, "there appears to be little mutual recognition of research across disciplines and paradigms, so there tends to be little overlap in the articles that are cited in reference lists" (Huxham, 2003, p. 402). Recognition of how little overlap exists between disciplines and paradigms can push researchers toward a better understanding of novel curriculum development and the collaboration process. Publicly published documents that refer to novel curriculum development are useful starting points for researchers looking for a better understanding of novel curriculum development.

Finally, due to the differences in opinion on who was leading Esports and Game Studies curriculum development at Mideast State University, research on how to approach interdisciplinary program leadership may be needed—specifically with regard to new curriculum development. Finding a leader who can delegate program development activities between

135

departments and colleges can be difficult. Someone who has expertise in the field may be the right leadership choice for a novel program, but qualified leadership can come from any department or college, whether or not they are one of the departments or colleges involved with the novel program. University leadership can be chosen with the use of methods other than the competing values framework (Quinn, 1988), and more evaluation of university leadership can clarify how to choose leaders, who exactly is leading the new program, and how to proceed with novel program development.

Conclusion

To conclude, curriculum developers in Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies program and their communications inextricably exist within a hierarchical system. With the exception of the 2019 Assessment Conference from which the Esports and Game Studies PowerPoint (Referee 1, 2019) was created, individuals spoke or emailed each other. According to interviewees, in-person communication was rare, and email was the most common form of collaboration. Interviewee Referee 1 received suggestions from those who attended the 2019 Assessment Conference because Interviewee Referee 1 collected data for the preliminary proposal and created the preliminary proposal for Esports and Game Studies. In other words, Interviewee Referee 1 acquired information only for the purpose of creating the Esports and Game Studies proposal. Because Interviewee Referee 1 acquired that information, I initially inferred that the hierarchy of leadership for the Esports and Game Studies proposal had Interviewee Referee 1 at the top. However, the inference that Interviewee Referee 1 was at the top of the proposal hierarchy failed because Interviewee Referee 1 was not in the Department of Design under which the program existed. In addition, Vice Provost Referee 5 was near the top of

the hierarchy in Interviewee Referee 1's PowerPoint, and Interviewee Referee 1 was unlisted in that hierarchy.

The proposed Esports and Game Studies major curriculum at Mideast State University was not simply a program that needed to be developed; rather, it was an emotionally charged program about which some were skeptical and some embraced. Though Interviewee Referee 6 and Interviewee Referee 9 claimed the COVID-19 global pandemic was the reason the program halted, there was evidence that the pandemic was only partially involved or not involved whatsoever. In this instance, faculty interviewees claimed that program funding never existed, and that lack of funding was the major challenge. Whether a lack of funding occurred because of the polarizing nature of competitive video games or because the COVID-19 global pandemic forced the university to prioritize its current programs over its future programs, the inconsistent notions of programmatic control and responsibility turned a groundbreaking program into an unused curriculum.

As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, the use of collaborative faculty and administration development strategies presented the ideal situation for a novel program to succeed, but these strategies were likely under-utilized or unused altogether. Such a lack of collaboration leads researchers back to Huxham's (2003) theory of collaborative inertia, in which the collaboration makes only hard fought or negligible progress. With Mideast State University, curriculum developers lacked even minimal communication. Whether the collaborative inertia in Mideast State University's case was created by a combination of a lack of funding, a lack of understanding, the COVID-19 global pandemic, or other reasons, the possibility of implementing Mideast State University's Esports and Game Studies program remains low. Despite this outcome, this dissertation has provided a structural basis for future novel programs and curricula.

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APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Academic plan refers to a definition of curriculum that "involve[s] decisions about (at least) the following elements" (Lattuca & Stark, 2009, p. 4): purposes, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment.

Carnegie Classification refers to a recognized "framework for recognizing and describing institutional diversity in U.S. higher education" (Carnegie Foundation, n.d.), and this dissertation only includes classifications for doctoral universities.

R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity

R2: Doctoral Universities – High research activity

D/PU: Doctoral/Professional Universities

Competing values framework refers to a management model that explains the roles leaders take. This model has eight specific roles leaders can assume (Quinn, 1988). These roles are: mentor and facilitator in the human relations model; innovator and broker in the open systems model; monitor and coordinator in the internal process model; and producer and director in the rational goal model (Quinn, 1988, p. . Each role imparts unique characteristics onto a project or within a department.

COVID-19 global pandemic is, according to the World Health Organization (2023):

A global outbreak of coronavirus, an infectious disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) virus. . . . The first cases of novel coronavirus (nCoV) were first detected in China in December 2019, with the virus spreading rapidly to other countries across the world. This led WHO to declare a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020, and to characterize the outbreak as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. (para. 1)

Curriculum refers to the academic plan as defined by Lattuca and Stark (2009).

Esports refers to interactive video game competitions governed by a nonplaying body, played online through a local area network (LAN) or on a shared game system, and viewed by an audience.

Hearthstone is a video game where players digitally open cards, build decks, and play against others (Knell, 2022).

Interdisciplinary major "is an undergraduate or graduate degree that is made up of two or more areas of study. is an undergraduate or graduate degree that is made up of two or more areas of study" (ODUGlobal, 2023, para. 2).

Live streaming refers to real-time video and/or audio transmission of media. Esports live-streaming is transmission of a video game player playing a video game on one feed (Oxford, 2023).

National Association of Collegiate Esports (NACE) is a public member organization whose purpose is to "promote the education and development of students through intercollegiate esports participation" (NACE, 2023, para. 1).

Sportification refers to a combination of the following definitions; "to view, organize, or regulate a nonsport activity in such a way that it resembles a sport and allows a fair, pleasurable, and safe environment for individuals to compete and cooperate" (Heere, 2018, p. 21) and "to denote the process of turning a physical activity into a sport" (von der Lippe, 1994, p. 214).

Video Gaming or Video Game Play refers to people who are actively playing video games or the ability to play video games.

APPENDIX B: LETTERS OF CONCURRENCE

Many departments and colleges were involved in developing the Mideast State University Esports and Game Studies major and signed letters of concurrence, agreeing to full completion of the program. Specifically, a letter of concurrence was signed for the Department of Design, one for the College of Education and Human Ecology, one for the Fisher College of Business, one for the College of Medicine, and one for the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. The Rationale for the Mideast State University (2019) proposal says the five colleges are: "1) The College of Arts & Sciences, 2) The Fisher College of Business, 3) The College of Education and Human Ecology, 4) The College of Engineering, and 5) The College of Medicine" (p. 1). There was no letter of concurrence for the College of Arts & Design, nor was there one for the College of Engineering.

Letters were addressed to Referee 5; Referee 5, PhD; The Office of Academic Affairs; Referee 5's first name only; and To Whom It May Concern, so there seemed to be some variation in what the deans knew about the role of academic affairs in the process or in how they address the academic vice provost; however, these variations seem to have no bearing on commitment to the program, and the five letters represented equal support for the proposed esports program.

For example, the letter from Associate Dean of the College of Medicine was written to "To Whom It May Concern" and had the "enthusiastic support" of the undergraduate degree (Mideast State University, 2019). According to the letter, three new courses need to be developed, associated faculty need to be hired, and the department was excited about attracting new and existing students to the major. This letter also ended with intent to support the program or answer questions if there were any. As of 2020, the Associate Dean of Health and

156

Rehabilitation Services' letter was consistent with the other letters in that it supported the new program and accepted the new curriculum.

A similar letter was written by Interviewee Referee 4, Chairperson of the Department of Design, detailing support for the minor in addition to support for the new major program. Interviewee Referee 4 noted the interdisciplinary nature of the programs and how students in the major and minor can benefit from one another by taking overlapping courses. Interviewee Referee 4 also wrote that the department does not "see this new major as a redundancy with any of our current design majors or a new design major in Interactive Media Design that we are proposing to start in 2020" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 64). These inclusions were likely seen as concerns to administration looking to avoid redundancies and faculty who teach courses for similar majors.

The final three letters of concurrence agreed to the proposal in principle and referred to the expanding esports and gaming industries. These letters came from the College of Education and Human Ecology, the Fisher College of Business, and the Department of Biomedical Education and Anatomy. As Referee 12 from the Fisher College of Business wrote, the proposed program would prepare "students for the challenges that these industries are faced with today and into the future" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 66). All of these letters linked the departments with one another while simultaneously agreeing to move forward with the program as proposed.

The aforementioned letters confirmed a note in the Council of Academic Affairs minutes from June 13, 2019. The minutes document stated, "The proposed eSports and Gaming major is being reviewed by the College of Arts and Sciences (ASC). If approved by ASC, it will come to this Council. (University leadership is working on the long-term funding needs for this program"

(Mideast State University Office of Academic Affairs, 2019d, p. 2). Approval of the ASC would have allowed the program to continue through the process, and funding for the program was to be considered; however, this is where mentions of the Esports and Game Studies program in meetings minutes ended, and no other public document after June 13, 2019 described the next steps for the program.

This appendix item gives readers projected enrollments for the year the Esports and

Game Studies program began, and how the program could sustain itself for the years following

the 1st year. These enrollments and dollar figures were based on calculations made by the

proposal writer at Mideast State University (Mideast State University, 2019), and were not cited

by the proposal author.

Figure 3

Self-Sustaining Esports and Gaming Studies Enrollments (Projected)

Self-Sustaining EGS Enrollments (Projected)

Year of Program	No. of Students	Tuition Revenue*
1	36*3 = 108	$1,158,408
2	36*6 = 216	$2,316,816
3	3*72+6*36 = 432	$4,633,632
4	6*72+6*36 = 648	$6,950,448
5	9*72+3*36 = 756	$8,108,856
6	12*72 = 864	$9,267,264

Note: This figure was included to help others understand how esports at Mideast State would

sustain itself over the course of 6 years. From "Proposal for an Undergraduate Major in Esports

and Game Studies: B.S. Arts and Sciences," 2019, The Mideast State University.

https://ascnet.MSU.edu/storage/request_documents/4184/EGS_Preliminary%20

Proposal%202019-4-25v1.pdf

In addition to potential issues with enrollment rates, there were also issues with different

degree tracks/tracts for which students could apply. Under the section entitled, "The Computer

Science and Engineering Department," the proposal stated, "It is critical to note that the 'Making It' track will require the hiring of several new faculty members and the provision of an expanded range of computer labs/maker spaces for instruction and prototyping" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 34). The "Making It" track was only referenced twice, though it was not a tract for students to follow nor was it mentioned within the three tracts listed in the proposal. Based on the wording, it is possible that the "Making It" track was one pathway for students to progress through the Computer Science and Engineering tract. From the proposal, the Making It track between the Department of Design and the Computer Science and Engineering Department created a "computationally-strong game design and development track of study" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 34). The link between the departments was not fully explained in any section of the proposal.

There was also a mention of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering as being an "important source" for the new program. It stated:

One important source for the BS-EGS program is the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE). With an undergraduate program CSE offers a B.S. degree in both the College of Engineering (home college) and College of Arts and Sciences. Students within this major seek positions all across the country in various technical positions and tech companies. (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 38)

Being an "important source" in this way suggested that CSE alumni could gain employment at well-known companies in different movie studios and video game companies. The department was also touted as "a world leader in AI, machine learning; data mining and analytics and network security" (Mideast State University, 2019, p. 38). The argument in this section became: a percentage of students who did not get accepted to the CSE program would be interested in the

Esports and Game Studies program. Because this section mentioned how around 55% of students gain admittance to the CSE program due to the high GPA requirement, the statement suggested students who have a lower GPA might be interested in the Esports and Game Studies program instead. The Department of Computer Science and Engineering was a potentially important source for the new major because standards for getting into the EGS program did not seem to be as high as the standards for the CSE program.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

This section details the protocol used in the interview process with The Mideast State University administrators and faculty. These statements and questions composed the basis by which interviews proceeded, unless otherwise noted.

BEGIN: Faculty/Administration Interview Protocol for Curricular Innovation and Faculty Interactions

Institutions: _____

Interviewee (Title and Name): _____

Interviewer: _____

Other Topics Discussed: _____

Documents Obtained: _____

Post-Interview Comments or Leads: _____

To facilitate our note-taking, we would like to video record our conversations today. Please sign the release form. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the recordings, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (a) all information will be held confidential, (b) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (c) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

We have planned this interview to last no longer than 1 hour. During this time, we have several questions that we would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have been identified as a key faculty member/administrator in the development of the new Esports and Game Studies curriculum. This research project focuses on interdisciplinary interactions in curriculum development of a novel topic. Our study does not aim to evaluate your position or standing at the university. Rather, we are trying to learn more about your role/s involving interdepartmental interactions in novel curriculum development.

How long have you been:

_____ in your present position?

_____ at this institution?

Interview Questions

A. Background and history questions

    1. What is your field of study?

    2. Were you selected for this committee or did you volunteer?

        Probes: Can you give reasons why you joined the committee? Did you know anyone who would be developing the program with you? How did the answer to this influence your decision?

    3. Describe the initial level of enthusiasm for the program.

    Probe: Does that level of enthusiasm continue today?

    4. Was the role you took on the committee consistent with your everyday work?

B. Progression of development – planning process

    1. Can you describe the flow of communication between administration and faculty?

2. Were there common interests between committee members beyond getting the program developed?

       Probe: Did faculty experts take the lead on particular issues? How so?

3. Did the group use a curriculum development model?

       Probes: Please elaborate. What was the most common interaction?

4. Did you consider the development space to be a positive environment? How so or not?

5. How did external influences act upon curriculum development?

C. How leadership affects this sort of development

    1. Was there a persistent leader or core of leaders?

    2. What was his/her leadership style?

       Probes: How did that person (or they) give instructions? Did they ask questions such as, "Who is willing to do task A?" or did they use another method?

    3. How did leadership guide in-person or online discussions? This includes meetings, emails, or other communications.

D. Place in the curriculum for esports and similar novel topics

    1. Meetings' minutes give the public a glimpse of how the esports program was conceived.

       Probes: What other types of interactions played a role in the process? Emails? Conference calls?

    2. How was accreditation considered in the development process?

    3. Is there any concern over the lack of governance in collegiate esports?

    4. What is the perception of esports among faculty and administrators at MSU?

    E. Post Interview Comments and/or Observations