

Introducing the “Pac-U” - Esports Rises to the Challenge of COVID-19 as Western US Universities Collaborate and Compete

Collegiate Esports organizations coordinate pre-scheduled scrims and non-tournament gaming events this fall



Los Angeles, Oct 11, 2020 (Issuewire.com) - Esports organizations from public and private universities that represent the NCAATM Pac-12TM are working together to schedule a series of standalone exhibition matches across multiple video games this Fall under the umbrella of the “Pac-U.” The Pac-U, unaffiliated with the official Conference of ChampionsTM, is made up of students, staff and faculty coordinating to fill the gap left by the shortened or postponed pandemic-affected “traditional” Fall

2020 sports seasons.

“Working together is something that all of our schools’ students and staff have been talking about doing for a while: pooling our resources to hold regular matches more aligned with what our athletic departments do,” said Gabriel del Rosario, a Junior at Washington State University and a Pac-U Broadcast Director. “When we realized that most of us would either be completely online or have hybrid classes with shortened sports schedules, we knew that we had to step up and give our respective student bodies and alumni something to safely rally around.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in individual universities developing standalone plans for their campuses that balance providing quality education with student safety during the resulting quarantine. There have been myriad challenges, but one of the most jarring to many schools’ stakeholders has been the shortening or loss of “analog” sports. Football, basketball and other live, physical matches between the schools traditionally foster student community, alumni engagement and showcase the talent of the athletes and the athletic departments of their institutions.

Enter Collegiate Esports: an ecosystem where a majority of modern videogames are playable with a PC and an online connection. This allows esports athletes to compete from the safety of their homes while providing live entertainment to spectators via streaming on platforms like Twitch or recording games that can be viewed by fans at any time.

“We all want things to go back to normal as fast as possible, but we feel it’s our duty to help out where we can and give our schools’ something to root for/rally around,” said Joseph Agor, Assistant Professor and Faculty Esports Advisor at Oregon State University. “Our players can suit up and compete, play safely from home and the students between our schools can teach each other the ins and outs of multiple skills such as streaming production, casting, and graphic design.”

The Pac-U’s inaugural season this Fall will last for approximately six weeks as a series of invitational matches with games beginning the week of October 12th, 2020 and ending with a series of “Spotlight Matches” the week before Thanksgiving. This year’s series is not a “tournament” and won’t result in a “championship,” but schools will have a chance to build fandom by scheduling games further out and allow them to bring their analog sports rivalries into the digital arena.

Teams will primarily compete playing Riot Games’ [League of Legends](#), Blizzard Entertainment’s [Overwatch](#) and Psyonix’s [Rocket League](#). The group is discussing adding limited exhibition matches later in the Fall for Nintendo Entertainment’s [Super Smash Bros.](#) and Blizzard’s [Hearthstone](#). There are no shared sponsors or prizes this year, but the group is hoping that will change over time as they discuss formalizing the organization with individual game publishers over the coming months.

Keep up with the activities and scheduled events of the Pac-U at pacugaming.com and follow them on social media on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Pac-U matches will be streaming this Fall at twitch.tv/pacugaming/.

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About the Pac-U

The Pac-U is a student/school-run conglomerate of Esports organizations representing Universities in the Western United States and is modeled after traditional sports conferences. Matches are standalone, exhibition only and feature a mix of teams and sports that regularly compete with set schedules planned well in advance of the day of play. The mission of the group is to cement Esports as a key component of student life by sharing knowledge and best practices as well as creating community, fostering healthy competition and enthusiastic fandom.

Current members of the Pac-U are:

- Arizona State University
- Oregon State University
- Stanford University
- University of Arizona
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Oregon
- University of Southern California
- University of Utah
- [University of Washington](#)
- [Washington State University](#)

Any school's esports organizations that are a part of the traditional sports "Pac-12" Conference are welcome to join.

Media Contact

Pac-U

contact@pacugaming.com

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