



## *For Immediate Release*

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### **BridgeValley Community and Technical College to launch ESports club**

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BridgeValley Community and Technical College (BVCTC) is set to be the first community college in West Virginia to launch an ESports program for its students.

ESports, or competitive video gaming, at BVCTC will officially launch in October. Sara Price, BVCTC's coordinator of Student Engagement, said the college recognized that a segment of its students were not participating in student activities. By bringing ESports, Price said, the college is hoping to include those students who may not be interested in the current extracurricular offerings on campus.

"This is our chance to get students who maybe haven't seen anything happening they're interested in and this is an opportunity for them to get involved," Price said. "A lot of times gamers are really passionate about their hobby, and by making this a college-supported program, it gets their foot in the door and gets them involved."

ESports is growing across the country, particularly in the collegiate-competitive area. But it is still fairly new, emerging in the higher education space in 2014. Price said the college is hoping to get in early, train up a team, and someday get players into the National Association of Collegiate ESports (NACE) Varsity league.

"We want BVCTC to continue to be known for its innovation and keeping up with the trends and what's attracting college students," Price said. "ESports is fairly new. It really hasn't been around that long. And so this gives us the opportunity to be a front runner in that, especially in West Virginia."

The league now has more than 175 teams with over 5,000 student-athletes. Since its inception in 2016, more than \$16 million has been offered in scholarships and financial aid for students in ESports programs and clubs. In recent years, ESports has led to increased transfer possibilities to four-year universities that have ESports programs, like University of Miami, Winthrop University, Harrisburg University, and Michigan State University. An estimated 250 million people worldwide watch ESports tournaments, and in 2018, 25.7 million watched in the U.S. alone, a number expected to almost double by 2023.

For now, the ESports team at BVCTC will be a club, but Price said the college plans to reach for that varsity membership and all of the associated benefits in the future.

"For now, we want members to play against each other and develop that teamwork aspect, but the hope is for our students to actually compete nationally in the varsity

ESports program and have a championship team from BridgeValley,” she said. “Right now it’s more about forming the club, understanding our students and getting their input into what this is going to look like for them.”

James McDougle, associate vice president for Student Engagement, said the college may consider tying ESports to for-credit classes, although no plan is currently in place to do so.

The college is welcoming any and all students interested in participating in its next interest meeting on Wednesday, September 29 from 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. in B2000, Room 321 on the South Charleston campus. All levels of experience in gaming are encouraged to join the club.

For those interested in participating in the BridgeValley ESports Program email [esports@bridgevalley.edu](mailto:esports@bridgevalley.edu).

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#### About BridgeValley Community and Technical College

BridgeValley Community and Technical College promotes student success, prepares a skilled workforce, and builds tomorrow's leaders by providing access to quality higher education. BridgeValley Community and Technical College will be the college of opportunity for a diverse learner population, offering leading-edge technology, innovative ideas, and dynamic service to our students and our communities. BridgeValley Community and Technical College serves a six-county region including Fayette, Raleigh, Nicholas, Clay, Putnam and Kanawha counties. The college operates two campuses in Montgomery and South Charleston, along with the addition of the new Advanced Technology Center. BridgeValley Community and Technical College is a public institution of higher education independently accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges and a member of the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia.