

A growing interest in esports in Atlantic City and South Jersey

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GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — Recently, Stockton University opened its first esports facility on campus.

The small room, accessible around the clock, is filled with 16 custom-built computers. Each computer has a standard gaming keyboard, mouse and high-refresh-rate monitors specifically designed for gaming.

The new facility is one example of the growth of competitive video gaming, known as esports, a nearly billion-dollar industry, [according to Forbes](#). And the rise of tournaments - featuring games such as "League of Legends," "Overwatch," "Fortnite" and "Apex Legends" - presents an opportunity for Atlantic City.

"Our state and Atlantic City can be well on our way to be the esports capital of the East Coast," said Anthony Gaud, co-founder and president of InGame Esports. "Much like it was with gambling in 1978."

On Thursday, Gaud and Glair Graboyes, CEO of GameCo testified at a hearing on the viability of esports held by the Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee in Atlantic City.

Assemblyman Ralph Caputo, D-Essex, called the discussion encouraging and said esports presents an opportunity for the state. The hearing touched upon what needed to take place in terms of infrastructure, gaming technology and integrity, contest format, sports wagering and reducing regulatory challenges, in order for the state to become a contender in the growing esports arena.

No formal action was taken.

"Young people are increasingly playing video games competitively, and there is a large market for New Jersey to tap into to emerge as a primary hub for the esports community, whether it is for technology, wagering or hosting events," Caputo said. "As this new industry continues to grow, New Jersey will strive to grow with it to become a national leader in the esports industry."

Stockton has more than 100 students interested in joining its esports teams and about 50 members who play competitively. The school's teams participate in the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference, Collegiate Star League, LAN events and Rocket League tournaments.

"The average GPA of our members are over a 3.0. So it shows that studies aren't being affected (by playing)," said Scott Huston, chief information officer of Stockton.

Huston said the program represents a chance for students to develop skills - all 16 computers were built by Stockton students - while also offering an opportunity to help revitalize Atlantic City.

Demetrios Roubos, associate director of cybersecurity at Stockton said esports can help students "develop and improve on strategy, competitive aspects and feel part of the team.

"It's a chance for students to be a part of something, especially for those who may be handicapped in some way."

Roubos received his undergraduate degree in computer science and his graduate degree in computational science at Stockton.