LAN Gaming for ISU Students in the Memorial Union Recreation Center

CAC 4th priority tier - upgrading existing open access facilities

Iowa State Memorial Union 3rd priority request
Vice President for Student Affairs

Signatures of Participants:

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Iowa State Memorial Union

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Richard Reynolds, Director
Iowa State Memorial Union

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Project Overview

The Iowa State Memorial Union Recreation Center provides relaxation and entertainment for students and the local community alike. Currently, the Recreation Center offers a wide variety of games including: 9 pool tables, 8 bowling lanes with automatic scoring, CD jukebox, darts, air hockey, foosball, pinball, and coin operated arcade machines.

As the future of gaming has slowly been moving away from the novelty of coin operated machines and towards “LAN (Local Area Network) Gaming Centers,” there is a need to find new ways to entertain students within recreation centers on college campuses. At a “LAN Gaming Center” students could play against each other within the same physical location, they will be able to play against international opponents. Recently an article gave information about the impact of video games.

“At colleges and universities, video games have become a central part of student life. According to the Pew study, two thirds of college students said they play video games regularly or occasionally out of boredom: Video games have become “almost an automatic part of what...college students do for fun and leisure,” said Steve Jones, the principal author of the report. Most students claimed that gaming didn’t adversely affect their studies or their social lives. Many students said going online to join a networked game is a good way to meet people or socialize with friends” (Life is just a game, 2004).

Developing another opportunity to enrich students’ lives through social interaction in a gaming environment is one more way for the Iowa State Memorial Union to support the Iowa State University goal, “To provide a rich array of extracurricular opportunities to learn, lead, and enjoy life” (Strategic plan, 2005).

The social interaction of a permanent LAN Gaming Center within the Iowa State Memorial Union Recreation Center would provide students with an opportunity to utilize skills learned within academic and co-curricular experiences at Iowa State University, as well as relax within a high-tech engaging atmosphere. Jesse Huset, PC Palace Manager in Minneapolis, Minnesota, stated,

“It’s different when you are actually socially entangled with people, like playing right next to them and you know you have that interaction. And it’s healthier too. It’s human nature to come together and do things. So a place like this (gaming centers) is for the type of gamers who want to get away from that sitting-at-home-by themselves-type-thing. This is a whole new atmosphere and like a social environment for them to come and play in” (Techtalk, 2003).

The trends of gaming have changed, thus the Recreation Center could still provide old favorites such as bowling and billiards, and the next generation of social engagement, LAN Gaming.

As societal trends move towards a gaming culture, the Iowa State Memorial Union Recreation Center could offer a hub for students and community members to engage in LAN and internet gaming activities. Dr. Steve Jones noted,

“In some ways the line between playing an online game and socializing is likely to become blurred - the game may well be a form of socializing, and we may find ourselves virtually inhabiting a SIMS-like world. Indeed, we may even find ourselves hanging out with SIMS!”

The Recreation Center could serve as host to independent gaming and gaming tournaments online and offline. This partnership of technology and entertainment will be a great way for students to interact with each other in a new permanent venue. Creating an atmosphere for gamers and non-gamers to intermingle and communicate through the LAN system, bowling and billiards. The LAN Gaming Center within the Memorial Union Recreation Center will literally be “blurring” the lines of traditional and current trends of student entertainment demographics.
An additional benefit for Iowa State University will be the opportunity to recruit students who are on the cutting edge of gaming technology. A recent Pew Internet & American Life Project study stated, “81% of teen internet users play games online. That represents about 17 million people and signifies growth of 52% in the number of online gamers since 2000” (2005, July). To have a state-of-the-art LAN Gaming Center would serve the needs of our current students; as well as, recruiting new students. The Iowa State Memorial Union renovation project (http://www.mu.iastate.edu/doc/renovation.ppt), beginning in 2006, will provide additional traffic to the Recreation Center with an addition Union’s south entrance.

Based on these reasons we propose adding to the Memorial Union’s Recreation Center 12 new DELL XPS 600 computers, in conjunction with an iGames LAN gaming online software and support membership. XPS series computers from DELL provide the necessary processing speed and power to handle both the digital gaming data and video graphics requirements for the most popular LAN games on the market today.

If the Iowa State Memorial Union is given the opportunity to enhance the Recreation Center with 12 high speed gaming stations, Iowa State University of Science and Technology would have the next generation of entertainment venue interactive gaming.

Support and Maintenance

Currently, the Iowa State Memorial Union is willing to support this new facility providing $500 for supplies, telecommunication equipment, iGames' monthly online software subscription fees, and computing services support costs per year. The Iowa State Memorial Union intends to continue this support, and is prepared to absorb whatever additional costs may be associated with the new equipment and the growth in usage of this new facility.

Proposed Budget

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<th>Unit Cost</th>
<th>Total Cost by Funding Source</th>
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* Price includes 3 year business comprehensive warranty and complete care plan

Minimum Feasible Budget

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References


