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Winthrop University to Launch Varsity Esports This Fall

Winthrop University

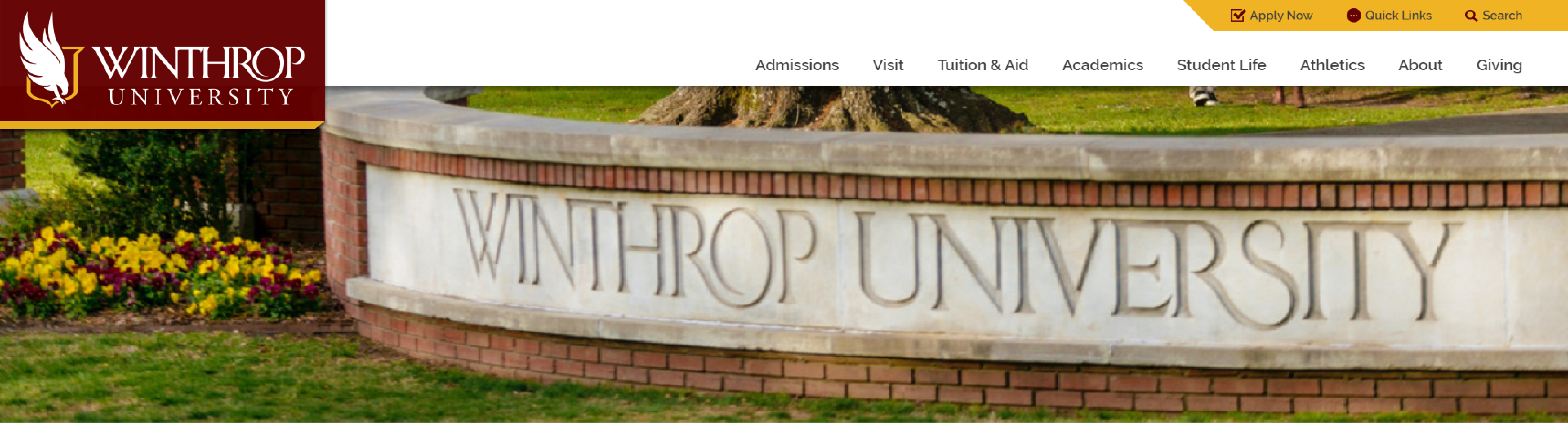
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Winthrop University to Launch Varsity Esports This Fall

February 07, 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

- Winthrop's program will be only one of three so far at NCAA Division I institutions.
- Winthrop is currently searching for a full-time eSports coach who will recruit prospective players and oversee the program.

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA -- Winthrop University will become only the third NCAA Division I school – joining Marquette University and Wagner College – to have an eSports program housed within its athletics department when a varsity eSports program launches in fall 2019.

ESports, a booming industry, describes the world of competitive video gaming.

According to Ken Halpin, vice president for intercollegiate athletics and athletics director, esports is diving into mainstream sports in a big way. “The popularity of eSports is becoming more apparent, most recently with the world’s most recognizable eSports gamer appearing in a Super Bowl 53 commercial alongside 100 of the N.F.L.’s best players of all time. Including esports in that commercial was evidence of its booming popularity.”

Halpin co-teaches a History and Current Issues of College Athletics class with Winthrop President Dan Mahony. Preparing for the course, Halpin said, helped him understand and appreciate the immeasurable impact that eSports is having on athletics and the economy.

“There are many benefits for adding an eSports program. There are no necessary travel costs since competition is online; there are no restrictions from competing for prize money, at least yet; our players will have access to some of the biggest technology companies in the world; and it will be the first truly inclusive varsity program on campus allowing men, women and people with disabilities to compete side by side.” Halpin added.

Winthrop is currently searching for a full-time eSports coach who will recruit prospective players and oversee the program. Halpin also said that space has been identified on campus for the program that will be upfitted during the spring and summer.

The university currently has a competitive gaming club that is part of Winthrop’s more than 160 clubs and organizations.

For more information, please contact **Matt Martin**, associate athletic director for external operations, at martinma@winthrop.edu or 803/323-6331.

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