

2021 ASCEND HBCU Esports Conference & Career Expo Agenda

Madden Tournament Kick Off

9:00 - 9:45 a.m.

Welcome

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 am

Marcus "Esports" Howard

ASCEND Esports & Gaming Pathways Speaker Series

Speaker #. 1 Introduction

CIAA Esports & Gaming Student Ambassador –
Greg Fong-Wilson (Johnson C. Smith University)

10:20 a.m. – 10:35 am

Riot Games - Alex Francois

Head of Competitive Operations

Speaker #.2 Introduction

MEAC Esports & Gaming Student Ambassador –

Louis Dandridge (Bethune Cookman University)

10:40 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

Nacon Gaming & RIG Brand - Corey Rosemond

Vice President

Speaker #. 3 Introduction

SIAC Esports & Gaming Student Ambassador -
Kaleb Howard (Morehouse College)

11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Intel - Marcus Kennedy

Senior Director in the Client Computing Group/
Gaming and Esports Segment, General Manager

ASCEND Esports & Gaming Pathways Speaker Series, cont'd

Speaker #. 4 Introduction

CIAA Esports & Gaming Student Ambassador –
Kouri Evans (Johnson C. Smith University)

11:20 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.

Sugar Gamers - Keisha Howard,
Founder & CEO

Speaker #. 5 Introduction

CIAA Esports & Gaming Student Ambassador –
Deben Peterson (Johnson C. Smith University)

11:40 a.m. – 11:55 a.m.

Polycade – Tyler Bushnell
CEO & Co-Founder

Speaker #. 6 Introduction

SWAC HBCU Esports & Gaming Student Ambassador –
LeAsya Johnson (Southern University)

12:00 p.m. – 12:15 p.m.

Creative Artists Agency - Erin Ashley Simon
Show Host, Anchor, Producer

ASCEND Esports & Gaming Career Pathways

Panel/Breakout Sessions

12:15 p.m. – 1:55 p.m.

HBCU Student Panel Moderators: Greg Fong-Wilson, Caleb Alexander, Eric Flowe, Kouri Evans, Deben Peterson (**Johnson C. Smith University**), Louis Dandridge (**Bethune Cookman University**), Kaleb Howard (**Morehouse College**), LeAsya Johnson (**Southern University**)

Session #. 1 - 12:15 -12:35 p.m.

Room 1:

Esports & Gaming Communities Panel

Student Moderator: Greg Fong-Wilson – Johnson C. Smith University (CIAA)

Panelists: Ryan Johnson, Chris Davis, Lori Bajorek, Shawn Smith

Room 2:

Creativity and Innovation in Esports & Gaming Panel

Student Moderator: Kaleb Howard – Morehouse College (SIAC)

Panelists: Junae Benne, Courtney Benjamin, William Simmons, Bobby Torres

Session #. 2 - 12:35 p.m – 12:55 p.m

Room 1:

Esports & Gaming in Academia/Higher Education Panel

Student Moderator: Eric Flowe – Johnson C. Smith University (CIAA)

Panelists: Professor John Cash, Christopher Turner, Dr. Robbie Melton, Dr. Paula Shelby

Room 2:

Professional Gaming as a Career Panel

Student Moderator: Caleb Alexander – Johnson C. Smith University (CIAA)

Panelists: Brandon Saddler, Dela GBbordzoe, Derek Watford, Sebastian Burton

ASCEND Esports & Gaming Career Pathways Panels, cont'd

Session #. 3 - 12:55 p.m – 1:15 p.m

Room 1:

Sponsorships & Monetization in Esports and Gaming Panel

Moderator: Anthony Johnson

Panelists: Isiah Reese, Bubba Gaeddert, Leslie Fitzsimmons, Marc Rowley

Room 2:

Esports & Gaming Entrepreneurs Panel

Student Moderator: Louis Dandridge – Bethune Cookman University (MEAC)

Panelists: Joseph Banze, Dwayne Meekins, Cody Daniels, Hugh Holmes

Session #. 4 - 1:15 p.m – 1:35 p.m

Room 1:

Career Pathways in Esports & Gaming Panel

Student Moderator: Kouri Evans – Johnson C. Smith University (CIAA)

**Panelists: Melissa Wafful, Richard Huggan, James O'Hagan,
Ryan Johnson (361 Commission), Kyle Morrand**

Room 2:

Health and Wellness in Esports and Gaming Panel

Student Moderator: Kaleb Howard Morehouse College- (SIAC)

Panelists: Dr. Jordan Tsai, Landon Gorbenko, Bryan Reedy, Josh Otero

Esports & Gaming Career Pathways Panels, cont'd

Session #. 5 - 1:35 - 1:55 p.m.

Room 1:

Cryptocurrency & Blockchain Technologies Panel

Student Moderator: LeAsya Johnson - Southern University (SWAC)

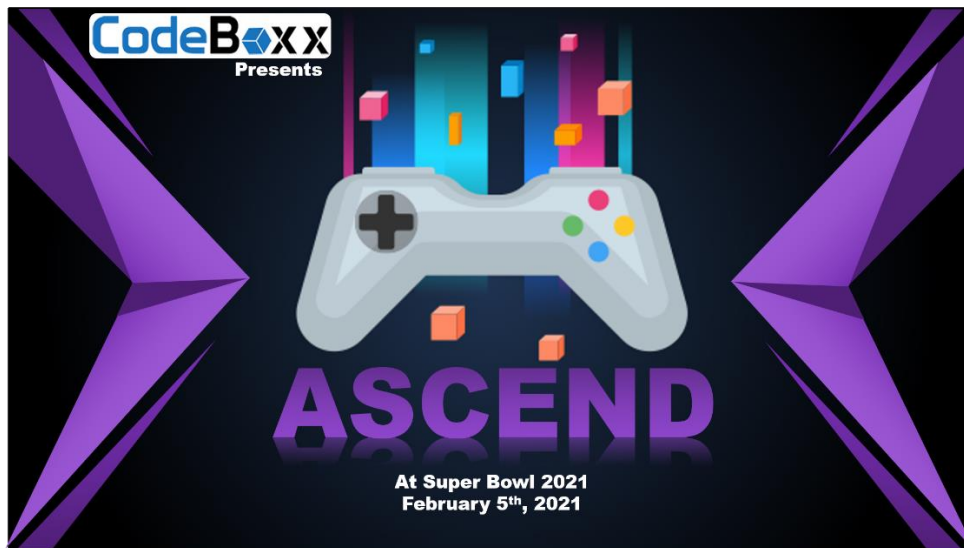
Panelists: Chris Lovell, Ricardo Velez, Marcus Howard, Bradley Miles

Room 2:

Esports and Gaming Centers Panel

Student Moderator: Deben Peterson – Johnson C. Smith University (CIAA)

Panelists: Danny Martin, Shaon Berry, David Gugliotti, Allie Young



2021 ASCEND HBCU Esports Conference & Career Expo Agenda, cont'd

Gaming/Esports Pitch Competition

1:55 p.m. - 2:25 p.m.

Judges: Angel Rich, Brian Esposito, Dave Martin, Meg Charles

Q & A Sessions

1:55 pm – 2:25 pm

Madden Tournament Final Championship

2:30 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.

Coding Esports Tournament

2:30 p.m. - 2:50 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Marcus "Esports" Howard – CEO, MetArena

2021 ASCEND HBCU Esports Conference & Career Expo

Executive Producer

2:50 p.m - 2:55 p.m.

Virtual Career Fair in Decentraland

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

“After” Party with DJ in Decentraland

4:00p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

2021 ASCEND HBCU Esports Conference & Career Expo

Speaker & Panelist Bios



Alex Francois

As the Head of Competitive Operations for VALORANT Esports, Alex Francois oversees the crafting of global standards, competitive ecosystem architecture, best practices, and match operations across more than a dozen regions around the world. Prior to joining Riot Games, Alex worked for the National Football League within the Football Operations department where he advised on issues relating to competitive equity, integrity of the game, appeals process, player health and safety, and ensured game day compliance for pre-season, regular season, and postseason games; including tentpole moments like Superbowl, Pro Bowl, and the NFL Draft. Alex holds a Juris Doctorate from St. John's University of Law and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida.



Corey Rosemond

Corey Rosemond serves as Vice President of NACON Gaming, Inc., the wholly owned Americas subsidiary of NACON S.A., a French global publisher of AA video games as well as gaming accessories featuring the RIG brand. Corey has cross-functional responsibilities across operations, strategy, finance and business development for the Americas as well as global strategic partnerships. Prior to joining Nacon, Corey co-founded the RIG gaming brand at Plantronics in 2013 and led its growth to become a global leader in the gaming accessories space. Strategic partners for the brand include Xbox, PlayStation, Valve Software, Epic Games, Riot Games, ESL, MLG, Dolby Labs, Ubisoft, EA and Oculus, among others. In addition, Corey held the role of Global Head of Esports for RIG, where he led the development and deployment of the RIG Commander Pro – the first live event esports headset used worldwide by a number of leading esports leagues.

With over 25 years of direct gaming industry experience, Corey has worked in a variety of roles within the video game industry. He has held roles in business development, product management and product marketing in video gaming at a variety of consumer electronics companies, including Microsoft, where he worked on both Xbox and Games for Windows programs; HP, where he launched its lucrative casual games business; and Dell, where he launched the XPS line of gaming PCs and accessories. Corey also served for two years as an Adjunct Professor of Video Game Production and Publishing at the SMU Guildhall Graduate School of Game Studies and performed consulting work based in Reykjavik, Iceland and Amsterdam, Netherlands, where he gained valuable experience in the gaming industry from a truly global perspective.

Corey holds a BS in Business Administration from Washington University in St. Louis and an MBA in Marketing from the University of Texas at Austin. Corey and his wife, Elizabeth, reside in Redmond, Washington and are proud parents of 4 children. Corey is an active gamer and considers Reykjavik, Iceland to have been his most interesting place to have visited and worked.



Marcus Kennedy

Marcus Kennedy is a Senior Director in the Client Computing Group and General Manager for the Gaming and Esports Segment where he is responsible for driving and executing Intel's strategy to delight a billion gamers worldwide on Intel platforms.

He has been at Intel for 13 years, with a prior career spent at Kraft Foods. Marcus has held various roles throughout his Intel career which include manufacturing, engineering, operations management, and finance. In prior roles, Marcus managed the team responsible for the global Fab Sort Manufacturing budget, before leading business, strategy, and product teams in the Data Center Group and Internet of Things Group.

Marcus received a BS in Industrial Engineering from Florida State and an MBA from Babson College. He loves sports, reading, teaching, video games, playing pool, and spending time with his wife and kids.



Keisha Howard

Keisha Howard is the founder of Sugar Gamers. Infectiously passionate about the worlds of video games and geek culture, Keisha Howard is a leader who has created a compelling and engaging vision and inspires others around it.

A two time TEDx Speaker, Keisha is able to foresee what lies beyond the horizon for the video game and e-sports industries. She regards gaming as more than entertainment, but a system of ideas and processes that can move and inspire people to action. Video games and the tools to make them are changing the future, and Keisha wants to make sure we can all be a part of that conversation.

A native of Chicago's South Side, Keisha has been a video game enthusiast since childhood. Her communications background and passion for business innovation led her to the Information Technology Industry, specifically social media, the video game industry and geek culture. After discovering that a considerable part of the industry's consumer and professional demographics were not being represented, Keisha created Sugar Gamers. It began as a women's advocacy and networking group for consumers and professionals, but eventually blossomed into an organization that advocated for all demographics who were underserved or not being represented (such as minorities, and people from the LGBTQ+ community.)

Keisha's work with Sugar Gamers has made her a minor celebrity in pop culture, affording her national television appearances on show's like SyFy Channel's ROBOT COMBAT LEAGUE and allowing her to meet pop culture icons like George Lucas, the creator of Star Wars, and Stan Lee, the chief architect of Marvel Comics. She has also given two Tedx Talks. She discusses her successes, losses, and the obstacles she's overcome in countless panels, workshops, podcasts and speaking engagements, as well as interviewing other impactful individuals to help share their stories.



Tyler Bushnell

Tyler is the CEO and co-founder of Polycade, a modern arcade platform designed for in-person social gaming. Polycade launched with a successful crowdfunding campaign in 2015, participated in the LIFT Labs Techstars accelerator in partnership with Comcast NBC Universal, and has been featured in publications such as the Wall Street Journal. Tyler previously wrote games for uWink Inc, has built front to back end online advertising systems, and created several large scale in-person entertainment attractions.



Erin Ashley Simon

Erin Ashley Simon is a multi-media personality, host, producer and consultant. Her love and passion for video games, sports, music and content has helped to shape who she is today, pushing the culture forward and breaking barriers as a female in the industry. Her vast knowledge and creative mindset has led her to be tapped by well known brands and organizations such as AT&T, Nike, Columbia Records, eMLS, Forbes, Gen.G, Evil Geniuses, The Wall Street Journal, University of Kentucky, REVOLT TV, and more. Leveraging her deep rooted connections in the music, entertainment, and gaming industry, Erin looks to continue to build an intersection between gaming and culture.

Esports/Gaming Career Expo Panelists Bios



William Simmons

Mr. Simmons hails from Charleston, SC and graduated from the illustrious Claflin University with a major in Graphic Design. He went on to the University of Pennsylvania: Wharton School of business where he studied Entrepreneurship. While studying at UPenn he started and founded his first Esports company called the Will Gamez. He later would be the founder of Will Power a esports clothing brand. Then he ran business development for Raise Your Game Esports. Now he is over Business Development for MVPtv and the CEO of a startup animation company called The Way Studios.



Ryan Johnson

In 2019 Ryan founded Cxmmunity. Cxmmunity is committed to delivering and supporting esports consulting and curriculum services to prepare grade school and college students for esports opportunities and future business-related majors and careers. Cxmmunity works with school systems, colleges and universities, community organizations, government, and corporate partners to realize its goals. The focus is on the underrepresented youth who may not have traditional access to this amazing and rapidly growing industry.

Ryan Johnson is a graduate of Oakwood University. Currently, he is completing his masters degree in Sports Administration at Georgia State University. Since completing his bachelors degree Ryan has worked in various roles in the technology, sports, and entertainment industries. With expertise in sponsorships, business development, brand partnerships, consumer insight, and trends. Now he is combining his passions and talents to build and expand Cxmmunity. Ryan began his professional career as an Account Executive with Vonage Business. He was responsible for maintaining a client base that met monthly and quarterly metric goals. Shortly after he accepted a role as an IT Consultant with Adapture. Adapture is an award-winning IT firm located in Sandy Springs, GA. Winning CRN Tech Elite and Atlanta Business Chronicle Pacesetter Awards, Ryan was able to quickly develop skills around business development, project management, and customer experience with corporate organizations.

In 2018, he joined RIISE Ventures and assisted in business development and event initiatives. RIISE Ventures had a focus on the esports, technology, and entertainment industries. Ryan was able to curate events and create business partnerships at events including CES, NBA-All Star Weekend, Dreamhack Dallas/Atlanta, NCAA Final Four, and E3. Most recently, Ryan helped form a partnership between his nonprofit Cxmmunity and Twitch to create the HBCU Esports League.



Junae Benne

Junae Benne is an esports journalist, video game enthusiast, and natural hair connoisseur. She has been in the gaming industry for over eight years. With a degree in Broadcast Journalism from Northern Illinois University, she is a published journalist in the gaming, esports, and world news fields. She is also a content creator, variety streamer, writer workshop creator, and community enthusiasts.



Dwayne Meekins

Dwayne Meekins is a proud alum of NC A&T State Univ. He retired from the U. S. Coast Guard as a Lieutenant Commander after 20 years of honorable service. Dwayne is a lifelong gamer and chose to pursue his passion upon retirement. He started GameTruck Charlotte, a mobile video game theater, in 2011 and has delivered excitement to over 7,000 gaming events since then.



Shaon Berry

Widely regarded as one of the nation's leading sport content creators, Shaon Berry is the Founder and creator of the Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl, watched on the NFL, CBS, FOX, & ESPN television networks from (2011 – 2016). He possesses over 20 years of executive management experiences. Twice awarded nationally, as a Small/Minority-Owned Business and Community leader, Shaon's brand partnerships over the years have included: The United States Marine Corps, Gatorade, Under Armour, Russell Athletic, Advocare, USA Today, Max Preps, Scout.com, Comcast, Logitech, Motown, SAP, and Microsoft, & Yahoo Sports.

Shaon has been credited with creating and producing more than (50) custom athletic events across nearly every major US market, showcasing young talent and indirectly facilitating scholarships for more than (300) student-athletes. After studying the annual decline of youth sports participation in the U.S., along-side the rapid ascension of Esports, a multi-billion dollar industry, Shaon made the decision to pivot from traditional sports to digital sports and technology by launching Metro Esports.

Recognizing an impactful and completely disruptive industry opportunity, Shaon entered this largely non-diverse industry with an intentional focus on being the first to effectively attract, engage, and retain the largely untapped market of multi-cultural, Gen Z & Millennial technology & gaming enthusiasts.

Metro Esports, along with brand partners Microsoft, Warner Bros. Music, Trade Duel, & Shadow League Digital Media, launched the Metro-Fest, a first-of-its-kind, Live-Stream Digital Sports & Live Music college entertainment tour, featuring the Nation's Hottest Urban Music Artists, Dance Performers, and Professional Gamers. Shaon recently helped to launch Game-Time, an Esports themed daring reality TV show and Digital Bridges - Esports & Tech. Certification program for at-risk teens.

Shaon Berry attended and played college football at The University of Pittsburgh, and completed the Executive Management program at Cornell University in 2001.



Christopher Turner

Christopher Turner, a nationally recognized visual and graphic artist, decided that with his years of expertise in teaching and design that it was time to make a paradigm shift in educational advancements. Turner had more in mind for K-12 and collegiate students than the traditional arts curriculum. In seeking a way to harness that energy into a productive school activity, he discovered the High School Esports League, a national group which has transformed high school gaming into an organized event in which student participants can win scholarship money.

He founded an Esports club at a K-12 school to give participants the training and experience that would allow them to excel in the emerging and highly lucrative field of professional competitive gaming. Equally, he wanted to provide an outlet to relieve stress through gaming and form teams that could potentially earn money for college through their skills.

The original esports team Turner developed consists of around 45 students, thirteen of whom compete with some 2,100 teams nationwide, as well as other local high school teams. With the solid support of principal Herman Brister, Esports enjoys full recognition on the SU Lab campus as an official sports team in an educational setting, competing in the High School Esports League (HSEL), where it has enjoyed impressive recent success. Now Christopher prides himself in being a prominent esports consultant and professional development facilitator.

Turner says that the impact of the success of his students in esports allows them to be more competitive academically and athletically and insists that this is just the beginning. For those who question the connection with art instruction, Turner cites experts who have predicted that “video games will prove to be one of the most important mediums of art that humanity has ever had at its disposal. Technology has expanded the canvas upon which artists are able to paint and tell their stories. Video games are a natural evolution of what we’ve always done, play – to discover our world, discover each other, and discover ourselves.”



Brandon Saddler

Brandon Saddler is the Founder and CEO of ROM eSports League which helps up and coming amateur gamers go professional. Before starting ROM eSports League, Brandon worked 15 years as an IT Manager and a Senior Technical Lead within the Sports industry. After a successful career helping a handful of schools in NJ jump start their eSports programs and assist content creators jumpstart their streaming careers, Brandon now assists high schools and colleges throughout the tristate start, manage and build upon their eSports programs. Brandon enjoys watching basketball and loves streaming on Twitch in his free time."



Richard Huggan

Richard Huggan is the Managing Director of Hitmarker, a platform dedicated to esports and video game jobs that has been used over three million times by more than one-and-a-half million people. The Hitmarker platform has almost 100,000 registered users, including more than 5,000 hiring companies, and has now advertised in excess of 60,000 esports and video game job opportunities based in 75+ countries around the globe.



Danny Martin – Esposure

Danny is a visionary and thought-leader in the esports industry. As the Co-founder of Esposure Inc, he has aided in the professional development of students, interns, and post-graduates. These students have received esports scholarships and employment from acclaimed Universities and esports Organizations like Central Methodist University, Complexity Gaming, Pacers Gaming, and Mavs Gaming. Furthermore, he has provided opportunities for many esports players to play with professional franchises. Danny's passion for helping others has allowed him to speak at several high schools and universities, on panels in front of thousands of individuals. In his pursuit of connecting everyone to esports, he maintains relationships with the NBA, NFL, & music industry. Danny is always ready to talk about esports and is on a mission of helping 20,000 esports enthusiasts by 2025.



Ryan Johnson

Ryan Johnson is a founding partner of 361 Commission, a family based management company for competitive gamers, content creators, and game developers. 361 Commission's focus is to find clients in underserved communities and guide them on how to turn their hobby into a hustle as a true profession, while nurturing them to develop skills that'll make them better individuals way beyond gaming. Since its inception in 2019, 361 Commission has produced over 500 hours of content, signed 7 clients, hosted 2 in-person events and participated in over 25 tournaments with 3 Top 3 placings. 361's client's earnings have ranged from cash prizes to free equipment, as well as getting an opportunity to game with professional athletes.



James O'Hagan

James O'Hagan is a leader in connecting and promoting esports in education. He has had a role in starting and growing esports teams in two large urban school districts. He actively promotes esports as being a medium to something more for students beyond the games. His podcast, The Academy of Esports delves into topics surrounding esports and education and connecting into powerful ideas to increase student agency, motivation, and college and career pathways. James is a doctoral candidate at Northern Illinois University in the field of instructional technology and a mostly retired rugby player.



Dela Gbordzoe

A CPA turned tech strategist, Dela is formerly the General Manager of College at PlayVS, an esports company aiming to provide equal access to scholastic esports and grow the Collegiate esports community. He has 8+ years of strategy, operations, finance and accounting experience. He enjoys Texas A&M sports, collecting sports memorabilia and being an early adopter of all things related to tech, fashion, media and entertainment. Dela currently resides in Los Angeles.



Kyle Morrand

Kyle's experience is in development with interactive technologies and platforms such as AR, VR, motion cameras, and more. He started his work in military simulation and grew his company, 302 Interactive, to branch out and develop experiences in attractions, marketing, gaming, healthcare, and education. As a technologist, Kyle believes that interactive technologies enable us to create experiences that are not only entertaining, but also purpose-driven in the building of a better digital lifestyle.



Cody Daniels

Cody Daniels is Founder and CEO of NGame Esports, an Esports media company dedicated to providing content and data to companies focused on esports and gaming. Mr. Daniels is a 2013 graduate of Texas A&M University.



Courtney Benjamin

Courtney is the Founder & CEO of LSM Talent & Consulting. He is also an experienced music professional who has performed at a high level as: Music Director, Consultant, Coordinator & Curator throughout his 20+ year career. He has provided music direction, consulting and DJ services for global sports and entertainment brands. Courtney has developed an innovative music consulting and talent sourcing model for domestic and international event presentation approaches for live sports and esports events via his company LSM Talent & Consulting. Courtney currently serves as Music Coordinator for the Brooklyn Nets, where he is responsible for in game music elements at all Brooklyn Nets games at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, NY.

Before coming to Brooklyn, Courtney served as an Associate Music Director at Madison Square Garden for 10 seasons, where he provided in game music for the NY Knicks, NY Rangers & NY Liberty at MSG. Courtney also serves as Music Coordinator and DJ at the National Basketball Association (NBA,) where he travels the world performing in countries such as: China, Germany, Spain, Turkey, Italy and the United Kingdom; playing music at international contests for NBA Global Games. Domestically, Courtney performs at NBA All-Star, NBA 2K League, Basketball Hall of Fame and NBA Draft events. He played an essential role during the 2019-2020 NBA Restart in Orlando, Florida; as Music Coordinator at The Advent Health Arena, playing music for nationally televised scrimmages, regular season games, playoffs, conference finals and the NBA Finals. Fun fact, Courtney was the Director of Music for men's & women's basketball at the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



Bobby Torres

Bobby Torres is CSO of 302 Interactive where he heads Business Development and Marketing. 302 Interactive is a boutique Interactive Experience Development Studio, creating next generation experiences across platforms and verticals.



Hugh Holmes

Hugh Holmes, Jr. was born in Washington D.C. and raised in Mitchellville, MD. He is a 2017 graduate of one of the top 5 schools in the world in Video Game Design; Becker College where he received his B.A. in Interactive Media Design with a focus in Game Design. Hugh has always had a passion for video games and a desire to own his own Triple A video game company. In 2020 he started his very own development studio called “Game Shift” where they are currently developing their first game called “Check Up Top” set to be released at a later date.



John Cash

In January 2020, John Cash developed, launched, and taught the first Historically Black College and University (HBCU) esports/gaming business curriculum and certificate program. Within the year the university also established an student esports and gamification club as well as completed an esports lab thus realizing a collegiate esports “Trifecta”. This was accomplished through the leadership at Johnson C. Smith University, Charlotte, N.C. He continues to support the build out of the program and teach at the institution. Subsequently John was approached and has since partnered with Cxmmunity. Founded and led by HBCU graduates, like himself, this 501c3 launched the first and leading esports/gaming pipeline program for underserved k-12 and HBCU students in early 2020. In addition to league play Cxmmunity has quickly catapulted and gained equity and partnerships in the esports ecosystem driven by its organic advocacy of STEM, STEAM, business education, student mentorships, scholarships, internships, league, and tournament play. Cxmmunity has recently added consulting and developing sport/entertainment business initiatives to its portfolio of services.

In addition to being an Adjunct Professor John is an accomplished United States Air Force Veteran Officer, an MBA-educated Fortune 50 brand marketer, sports/entertainment agency executive, and business owner of The Narmer Group, LLC. As a USAF Officer John served during two global campaigns.

His proudest military service moment was qualifying for and completing Combat Controller evaluation training after sustaining a service-disabling injury. John has served at the management and executive level for industry-leading companies such as Learfield/IMG Collegiate Sports, Bank of America, Coca-Cola, and IMAGES USA and has managed budgets and EBITA up to \$125 million dollars. He also launched the first two HBCU Conference collegiate sports multi-media business initiatives; Learfield/IMG Collegiate (MEAC) and Van Wagner Sports and Entertainment (CIAA) as well institution partnerships at Florida A&M University and North Carolina A&T University. John has now focused his military and multi-industry experience to Managing Director of The Narmer Group, LLC, a strategic marketing services, business development, social impact, and government contract agency.

A proud native of metro Washington, D.C., John is husband to Robin and father to Alaina. He enjoys learning, cooking, reading, socializing, traveling, golf and wellness.



Allie Young

Entrepreneur Allie Young is the CEO and Founder of Axis Replay, the first-of-its kind entertainment and event facility for video games and esports. Axis Replay exists to provide gamers and their friends with a fun and social in-person gaming and entertainment experience that enables them to build stronger connections. Her current affiliations include:

- Serves on the Executive Board of the Atlanta Esports Alliance, a division of the Atlanta Sports Council dedicated to gaming
- Serves on the advisory board for game developer, Fly Top Pilot
- Serves on the Board of Directors for non-profit Cxmmunity, dedicated to providing opportunities for esports and gaming to underserved communities through education
- Member of EO of Atlanta
- Serves as Co-chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for EO Atlanta

Prior, Young was the CEO and Founder of Alcovy Media where she was responsible for building the sales team, operations, strategic growth, and development. During Young's tenure at Alcovy Media, she built the company serving clients like Capitol Records, the US Army, and the Essence Festival along with successful political campaigns for SPLOST, eSPLOST, workforce initiatives, with strong results in event marketing.

An avid video gamer since her 20s, she used her knowledge of the sales and marketing industry along with her passion for gaming to create Axis Replay with the goal to bring gamers together. Allie brings the understanding, leadership, and organization to her role as CEO to ensure the success of Axis Replay. With a knack for building strong relationships and collaboration, she is a visionary with a unique perspective on impactful experiences and thinking outside the box.



Leslie Fitzsimmons

Executive Director of Sales and Marketing Beasley Esports, Leslie oversees the CheckpointXP and CheckpointXP On Campus brands for Beasley Esports, a division of Beasley Media Group, and owner of the Houston Outlaws. CheckpointXP creates high quality content for consumers and brands on YouTube, Twitch, CheckpointXP.com , and [radio.com](https://www.radio.com) with esports and videogame lifestyle driven podcasts, shows, articles and a nationally syndicated radio show. CheckpointXP On Campus is the only national show covering college esports for students and by students Before joining Beasley, Leslie spent three years at the University of Nevada Las Vegas where she taught Integrated marketing communications, developed business for the University's public radio station and launched a digital media agency that was staffed by students to provide real-world experiences in business and marketing. Prior to that, Leslie spent her career in broadcasting as Sales Manager, Director of Sales and VP Of Revenue Management, overseeing \$400M in total revenue.



Jordan Tsai

Jordan Tsai is a doctor of physical therapy and board certified orthopedic clinical specialist working in Santa Monica, CA. He has been the team physical therapist for organizations including Cloud9 and Evil Geniuses with over 3 years of treating professional esports athletes across a variety of games. He founded his company Respawn Therapy in 2015 to improve health and wellness in gamers of all levels. In his free time, he enjoys playing League of Legends, the Total War series, and various RPGs.



Landon Gorbenko

Landon has two major passions in life: gaming and human potential. Because of those passions, Landon has been a lifelong gamer with a particular fascination of esports. However, during his early years, he became obese, depressed, and struggled with social skills. These issues were directly related to his approach to gaming and he knew that a change needed to be made. As a result, he pursued a degree in psychology and a master's in performance psychology so that he could merge his love for gaming with his passion for helping potential. Now, he works as a performance coach specialized in esports to help the next generation learn how to approach gaming in a healthy way, develop skills such as leadership and emotion regulation, and, ultimately, improve expertise and performance.



Bryan Reedy

Bryan Reedy is a family man and passionate gaming wellness advocate. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 2008 with a degree in Marketing and Broadcasting. After a short stint in terrestrial radio, Bryan found success and grew his skills working in various marketing and sales positions. Bryan's inventive and untraditional passions are the driving force behind his companies. In 2018, he stepped away from his corporate career and joined his in-law's optical distribution business. Shortly after, Bryan recognized the need to bring a product with proven impact that would significantly improve mental and physical well-being. Bryan is often heard saying "Our glasses are to gaming, what a helmet is to football. Let us not wait until someone is seriously injured before we start taking safety seriously."



Dr. Robbie Melton

Dr. Robbie Melton, Associate Vice President for the SMART Global Technology Innovation Center and Graduate Dean and tenured professor at Tennessee State University, serves as a global researcher and international consultant for Emerging IOE ("The Internet of Everything") Smart Mobile Technology of mobile devices, eSports, wearables, smart gadgets and tools, and mixed reality of VR and AR. She formerly served as the Associate Vice Chancellor for Emerging Technologies for the Tennessee Board of Regents and the primary developer and chief administrator for the system wide Regents Online Degree Programs. Her tributes include: 2019 United State Distance Learning Association (USDLA) Hall of Fame, 2018, Distinguished Women of Legend, 2017 OLC Leadership, 2016, WCET Lifetime Achievement, 2014 Top 30 Technologists, 2013 Apple Distinguished Educator, 2012 Top Fifty Technology Innovator; and 2012 WOW EdTechnology Awards. She was a featured speaker at the UNESCO Mobile Learning Symposium. She known as an 'Appologist, for her extensive research of best practices with mobile devices (smart phone, tablets, wearable, and the creation of a Mobile App Resource Center. Currently serving as the UNICEF Teacher Education Technology Trainers for the Country of Malawi (Africa) in the use of mobile devices with limited internet and power.



Isiah Reese

Isiah Reese, Aperion Global Institute Isiah serves as the CEO and Co-Founder of Blaze Fire Games and Aperion Global Institute and a global 21st century creative and innovative digital brand games and micro-credentialing esports company. Isiah and his companies through a specialized technique called “Infusion Marketing” has built comprehensive influential partner programs for fortune 500 companies, Small Business Organizations (SBA), in both the public and the private sector. Isiah’s companies have been responsible for creating a successful outcome in areas such as: - Blaze Fire Games Esports Global Community Celebrity Branding Influencer Product(s) Connector - CEO, Co-Founder Blaze Fire Games career pathway micro-credentialing certificate virtual campus, www.blazefiregames.com - CEO, Co-Founder, of the Blaze Fire Games “My HBCU Got Esports Game” national HBCU college and university Gaming and esports career pathway and innovation campus Tour - CEO, Co-Founder of the Blaze Fire Games Innovation Centers Franchise, in seven states in the US - Co-Founder of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference Men and Women MEAC Esports Community, www.meacesports.com - We Care Total Health Esports Telemedicine company. Isiah was honored by his alma mater South Carolina State University and was inducted into the school of business Alumnus Hall of Fame. The HBCU Times Magazine 2020 Winter Cover and featured story recognized as “Gaming Titan” in the gaming and esports industry.



Dr. Paula Shelby

Dr. Paula Shelby attained a B.S. degree in Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and a Master's Degree in Adapted Physical Education from North Carolina A. & T. State University. She attained a doctoral degree in Sport Administration from The Florida State University. She is currently the Chair of the Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Department at Benedict College and is over the Recreation, Sport Management, and Public Health academic programs. She is a tenured Associate Professor and serves as Benedict College's Esports Academic Commissioner and Esports Team Director.



David Gugliotti

David Gugliotti is originally from Connecticut and was an avid gamer growing up who enjoyed titles such as Madden, Star Wars Battlefront 2, Mega Man X, Call of Duty, and Diablo 2 to enjoy after homework, football, basketball, and lacrosse practices were finished. After helping to manage a friend's professional Call of Duty career in college David continued working in various fields of business such as operations, finance, marketing, and management, while coaching football, which led to him working in traditional sports.

David then attended the University of Oregon where he completed his MBA in Sports Marketing while also creating and being President of the UO League of Legends Club. During his time in graduate school David worked with school staff, faculty, and administrators to develop and sanction esports officially. After graduation in 2019, David was hired by UO to be their first ever Director of Esports for the newly sanctioned Esports Program. This is where David developed the entirety of the program including creating for-credit classes, winning multiple championships among the 6 varsity level teams, held over 15 community based tournaments and LAN events, established UO Esports branding and IP, Twitch broadcasts, and managed UO Esports social media accounts, fostered an open and inclusive community over over 1000 members, co-created UO's Business of Esports conference featuring employees from pro organizations, brands, and companies in the esports/gaming industries globally, established student experiential learning opportunities to travel to companies in gaming, pro team facilities, and other colleges, and built out and managed the 1200sqft Esports Lounge located in UO's student center, among other things.



Richardo Velez

Ricardo Velez is the CEO of Dun Rite Games, a tech-startup building mobile games and an ecosystem of cooperation to benefit gamers, esports organizations, game artists and game developers. He holds a M.Sc. from Finland with 20 years of experience working with VW and Airbus in manufacturing and the NFL and NBA in digital health.



Chris Lovell

"Chris initially began a career in IT while still in high school working his first enterprise admin job before graduation. In early 2013 he began learning about blockchain technology and was immediately captivated by its potential, spending many nights reading about the subject until dawn.

Over the years he's worked with various blockchain projects in different capacities. A gamer since childhood, he found the perfect mixture of his passions with GAME Credits. His mission is to spread the word about the incredible potential of blockchain technology in gaming and bring some of his own favorite titles to the blockchain world. He firmly believes education is the first step to empowering players and that gaming and NFTs will bring about mass adoption of blockchain tech across the world."



Lori Bajorek

Lori Bajorek is president of the National Esports Association (NEA), through which she champions support for the wellness and academic success of esports athletes. She has pioneered a governance structure for esports in education — with a proven concept aligning gaming and education that dates back more than a decade.

Bajorek hosts esports programs across the country, often collaborating with Microsoft to educate academic leaders as to the benefits of esports in education and to provide key content for Mixer, Microsoft's streaming platform. She has been interviewed for her expertise in esports by NPR, CBS, Verizon Media, and Cheddar Esports.

As an early adopter, she has had a front-row seat to the phenomenon of esports and advocates for esports athletes to play with purpose. She has harnessed the benefits of a proper esports training program and with her team has developed an esports-centered curriculum.

Bajorek also serves as president of ArtsROC, a not-for-profit enrichment program that focuses on alternative learning for K-12 students, under which the NEA is a division. She has developed what is considered the first educational programs for esports.

Bajorek's pioneer status, advocacy, and expertise have resulted in her being a sought-after speaker at national conferences as well as with the media, including NPR. Her entrepreneurial background includes work with Fortune 500 companies, including Progressive Insurance and Metropolitan. She earned a degree in child psychology from the University of Buffalo. She was the keynote speaker at the AV/IT Summit in August 2020. The NEA team has organized and hosted several esports events, including:

- The Esports Exhibition for the Light and Sound Interactive Conference in Rochester, N.Y. and the "Esports in Education" panel, featuring Microsoft, Twitch, Niantic/The Pokemon Go Company, and the Rochester Institute of Technology.
- The first East Coast Esports Summit at the Flagship Microsoft Store in New York City, titled "Get Your School in the Game."
- The "Women in Gaming: The Game Changers" panel talk at the Flagship Microsoft Store in New York City.



Derek Watford

Derek Watford is the Co-Founder of High Point Gamer, an Esports consulting group that specializes in helping gamers, brands and organizations navigate the rapidly-evolving gaming industry. Derek is a military veteran and avid gamer who believes Esports promotes economic empowerment, social inclusion, diversity and tech interests.

He has worked with several high-profile organizations and celebrities throughout his career, producing numerous Esports and gaming events. His expertise was put to use during the inaugural season of the NBA's 2k league, where he provided career advice to newly drafted pro gamers. He was the first in Pinellas County to produce a scholarship gaming tournament series entitled, STIX-to-GLORY. This tournament was the first of its kind to give high school students the opportunity to use their gaming skills to earn college funding.



Sebastian Burton

Sebastian Burton or "Chosen 1" as he has been known for many years in the gaming community is the epitome of the entrepreneurial millennial. Starting out as a professional player at the age of 16, he was able to break into the professional ranks of the competitive scene of esports. By 2012, he was a sponsored player, traveling the globe and competing against the world's best in games like Dead Or Alive. After 5 years as an independent consultant working on various esports & gaming projects with companies like Turner, Activision, Capcom & Namco Bandai. He founded Gold Standard Gaming, an esports marketing agency. He is also the Esports Director of Metarena.



Shawn Smith

Shawn has been in the gaming industry for over 15 years, starting in PR and journalism before being captivated by esports in 2015. Since then, he has helped build esports facilities, produce large scale esports events, and now serves as one of the founders and Chief Product Officer for Harena Data and its flagship product, GYO Score. On GYO, over 300 players have been offered over \$500,000 in total scholarship offers and his platform now focuses on improving scholastic esports at all levels from youth through collegiate.



Bubba Gaeddert

Bubba Gaeddert currently is the Executive Director of the Varsity Esports Foundation (VEF), as well as an adjunct professor in higher-ed since 2013. The VEF is a non-profit that strives to increase literacy around esports and how to be proactive with such initiatives as healthy lifestyles, curriculum, mental health, diversity and inclusion, toxicity, addictions, suicide prevention, internet safety, and belonging through STEM education and digital citizenship. Bubba has worked in the non-profit and traditional sports industry for 20 years with the YMCA, NCAA, NAIA, Parks and Recs, Sports Commissions, and the Chamber of Commerce. He has been a gamer and self-proclaimed NERD ever since he was a kid when his dad managed Radio Shacks in Oklahoma. Back in 2017, he dove deep into the esports industry through streaming and marketing, then realizing that students in disenfranchised low-income areas did not have the same access as students in the suburbs, so he partnered with many esports organizations to create this foundation. He now works to educate businesses, organizations, and schools about being proactive around the foundation's initiatives and providing a pathway to provide STEM education through gaming and esports clubs in schools.



Marc Rowley

Marc Rowley is an inventor, creator, and entrepreneur in the field of content production and delivery for television (TV), Mobile, streaming, Over The Top (OTT), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR). Quinstream™ technology is the next advancement in interactive and addressable content delivery for consumers.

As a 5-time Emmy award-winning producer, and the inventor of the Pylon cam, SportsCenter Rundown, and many of ESPN's internal broadcast enhancements, Marc Rowley has been an industry-leading innovator for over 20 years. He is an accomplished author and speaker having presented to groups from 1 to 10,000+. Marc can help you Innovate from inside the corporate bubble.



Chris Davis

Chris Davis is the founder of the Black Gamer League, an online community created to connect black gamers, content creators and those who are interested in networking and navigating the gaming industry. He was born in Salisbury, N.C and raised in Charleston, S.C. In 2009 he returned to Salisbury to attend Livingstone College where he earned a Bachelors of Arts Degree in English and became a 4th generation alumnus of the historic black college. Chris then went on to obtain his Masters Degree in Sport Management at The Citadel Graduate College and upon graduation, returned back to Livingstone as a professor of Sport Management in 2016. In 2018, Chris founded Phorce Management Group, a management company for gaming related talent and The Black Gamer League in hopes of bridging the gap and increasing representation of black gaming professionals throughout the world. He hopes to continue building his communities to have a lasting impact for black people in the industry.



Melissa Wafful

After spending 12 years in specialty retail management (and a short stint in competitive Halo), Melissa returned to school in 2010 to complete her Bachelor's in Psychology at New Mexico State University. Prior to joining EA's Next Gen Talent team, Melissa worked at Walt Disney World, Blizzard Entertainment, and Indeed in various recruiting support functions (programs, coordination, and immigration). Currently, Melissa supports EA's Next Gen hiring for our Studios, World Wide Customer Experience, and Finance organizations across the US. As the Next-Gen team's appointed Director of Fun, Melissa is known for delivering a best in class intern experience by providing personable, impactful, and entertaining intern programming such as trivia, gratitude in the workplace, resume deep dives, and occasionally playing dress up at her events. Melissa is passionate about helping students, sharing what national day it is, and, debating over the best food options in Austin. Outside of work, Melissa plays lots of Halo, Hearthstone, and Plants vs Zombies, hangs out with her cat, Franklin, and bakes cookies with her husband.



Bradley Miles

Bradley is the founder and CEO of Roll, a social money platform redefining how we interact online. Roll enables anyone to create, send and use their own social money (branded digital currency) seamlessly across the web. There are currently over 300 communities on Roll including \$WHALE, \$KARMA, \$CHERRY, \$ALEX and many other notable people in and outside of the Web3 ecosystem.



Josh Otero

Josh has been a sports technology entrepreneur since 2013 and is focused on the esports and gaming nutrition and performance market. He founded NutriGMR in 2019, which provides a product portfolio that boosts it's customers' global health, wellness and performance in the esports / gaming space.

Josh has founded four companies. Power in Motion CrossFit (2013), Recover Faster (2016), NutriGMR (2019) and PowerUp Academy (2019). He has dedicated himself to finding the best and newest ways to use technology to improve health, wellness and fitness. He is aspiring to build a community of healthy more effective esport athletes and gamers.



Marcus Howard

Marcus Howard is CEO of the esports startup MetArena, and the President of Tampa Association of Gaming, a non-profit dedicated to growing the gaming industry and STEAM youth programs in the Tampa Bay region. Marcus got Super Mario Bros. 3 on the Nintendo Entertainment System for Christmas when he was six, and he's been playing video games ever since. Video games inspired Marcus' interest in technology, and in the 9th grade, he started coding his own video game on the TI-83+ graphing calculator. In 2013 he launched ProjectMQ with his identical twin brother Malcolm, to solve the largest problem in the global video game industry: game discovery. Five years later, PayPal selected ProjectMQ out of 20,000+ applicants nationwide, as the top digital service of their 2018 business contest.

Today, Marcus consults with universities and businesses around the world, helping them use video games to digitally engage their entire communities. In 2019, he co-authored "The Business of Esports" book that was published by the University of South Florida. Marcus was a featured speaker on the "Tampa Bay and the eSports Industry" panel at the University of South Florida's 2019 Esports Summit, and on the "Level Two & Beyond: The Future of Esports" panel of Skillshot Media's 2019 Esports Summit at the Georgia World Congress Center. He's currently building a "Gaming and Esports" digital course, to help students understand why the \$174B gaming industry is how blockchain/crypto adoption will go mainstream. In his spare time, he scouts indie games (games made by independent game developers) for funding/distribution deals with the world's largest gaming companies.

Marcus is excited about how video games inspire the next generation of innovators to pursue STEAM careers. Marcus is always eager to chat about video games, and you can find him on LinkedIn: Marcus "Esports" Howard.