

College transitions to university with help from esports program growth

Fiber connectivity powers path to expansion and success for D'Youville University

A private liberal arts institution in Buffalo, New York founded in 1908, D'Youville University offers more than 50 majors and is nationally recognized for the excellence of its health sciences, nursing and pharmacy programs. Just as impressive, and much more recent, has been the takeoff of its esports program.

In less than three years, D'Youville has gone from hosting a few eager gamers to developing one of the most dynamic esports programs in the country. The esports wave has been transforming college athletics; with Spectrum Enterprise providing its connectivity, D'Youville is committed to not missing out.

"It just showcases where we want to go, being an innovative university," says Joseph Gunnells, Chief Information Officer at D'Youville University.

Over recent years, the growth of esports at colleges and universities has become a national trend, as well as a means for driving student enrollment. When, in early 2020, D'Youville started its push to become a university (after over a century of being D'Youville College), esports helped make that a reality. By making esports a varsity activity, they expanded their sports curriculum and thus raised the

school's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) standing from Division III to Division II.

A fiber network built on speed

Eager to get its esports program going quickly, D'Youville pursued an aggressive connectivity strategy. The request made to Spectrum Enterprise Sales Manager Justin Niebel in 2020 was daunting. Instead of completing a connectivity install in 120 days, D'Youville needed it done in just 60 days so the program could hit the ground running. Niebel made it happen.

"I truly believe we're the best in terms of service delivery and from a construction perspective," he notes. "It's not like an a la carte service for us. At D'Youville, our advanced technicians went out and made sure that they had a strong signal throughout the campus in that 60-day window. Delivering on our client's needs is something we regard as the cost of doing business."

Connectivity is everything in esports. Players up against top national competitors can't be slowed down by low bandwidth or slow, intermittent signal quality. They need high-speed fiber built to facilitate constant gaming activity. What they need is [Dedicated Fiber Internet](#) (DFI).



Founded in 1908, D'Youville University's innovative approach to education has made it one of the top private universities in New York. The Koessler Administration Building is the oldest building on campus.

Client profile

D'YOUVILLE
UNIVERSITY

Company

D'Youville University

Industry

Higher Education

Services

Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI)
SpectrumU

Overview

- D'Youville University, a private institution of higher education in Buffalo, New York, has built out its extracurricular programming around esports.
- Today D'Youville University fields a Division II esports program and competes with top esports programs from around the country. In doing so, they utilize the high-capacity, low-latency connectivity of Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI).
- To provide their students with campus-wide video viewing options at an affordable price, D'Youville University also makes ample use of the Spectrum Enterprise college television platform, SpectrumU.

Outcomes

- D'Youville credits esports as a contributing factor in their transition from college to university in 2021. Students frequently gather at the esports arena to play games, socialize and prepare for varsity matches.
- By increasing the number of channels available to students, faculty and staff, SpectrumU has become a critical element of D'Youville campus life. Today, SpectrumU is available in every dormitory.

Why it matters

- D'Youville University has built on its esports success by hosting competitive events in the greater Buffalo community and with other colleges and universities nationwide.
- As the university continues to expand and increase enrollment, D'Youville University administrators see more opportunities for maintaining innovation and thought leadership through esports outreach and engagement.



In the last few years, esports at D'Youville University has taken off, powered by high speed Spectrum Enterprise fiber connectivity. Pictured here, the esports arena on the D'Youville campus provides a gathering place for players and fans.

Currently, nine buildings on the D'Youville campus have Dedicated Fiber Internet (DFI) installed. More are expected to follow soon.

“Spectrum Enterprise is our sole ISP (internet service provider) for esports,” says Mark Alicea, Head Coach for esports at D'Youville University. “We have a dedicated circuit that comes into our esports arena on campus. It’s a gathering area, and actually a recruitment tool and a community outreach program as well.”

D'Youville University students are now able to compete against top programs at several major universities by leveraging the speed and capacity of their Spectrum Enterprise connectivity. Connectivity is also critical to the remote learning program at D'Youville, which has contributed not only to the school’s achievement of university status but its continued rise in student enrollment year-over-year.

It all began with television

As both a college and a university, D'Youville has used Spectrum Enterprise to supply television service

across its campus for many years. Connecting their students to a reliable service was always important; so was affordability.

Today’s students want more. More channels, more control and more ways in which to view video content. Students today expect TV to keep up with their busy lifestyles. To meet this challenge, D'Youville University counts on [SpectrumU TV](#).

SpectrumU gives colleges and universities the ability to stream video content from over 200 channels on personal devices anywhere on campus and access up to 80 TV channel apps.

“Spectrum Enterprise is our sole internet service provider for esports, which in turn has been pivotal in our school’s transition from a college to a university.”

– Mark Alicea, Head Coach for esports, D'Youville University



SpectrumU TV is another popular campus feature at D'Youville University. In addition to offering wider programming and device applicability for students, the service represents a significant cost savings to the university.

All campus dormitories have been migrated completely over to SpectrumU service. So have other campus locations, like Dobson Field, which the school uses for soccer, lacrosse and softball. Gunnells notes that for the first time, students at D'Youville University can watch the area's local professional hockey team.

"SpectrumU has been huge for us," Gunnells notes. "We went from traditional cable and 'bring your own TV' to being able to let each student watch from a laptop, a mobile device or another platform. It offers way better programming, and it was also a huge cost-saving move for us."

What esports is doing for D'Youville University

The advantages of Spectrum Enterprise technology are immediately apparent when one walks into the bustling esports arena at D'Youville University.

Specially designed seats. A three-piece reclining leather sofa equipped with LEDs and subwoofers. A projection screen outfitted with SpectrumU. The esports arena at D'Youville University is designed to be used and it is.

"At lunchtimes and after hours, it's pretty busy," Alicea notes. "There are times when I have too many students and I have to kick them out. Our live streams average 16-20 people. Whenever we have competitions or practices, or a pro sports playoff game, it's pretty full."

Whether or not a varsity competition is underway, students often gather at the arena to discuss strategy or gaming techniques, play or watch casual contests and learn more about

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- Joseph Gunnells, Chief Information Officer, D'Youville University

computer technology. Alicea often consults with students about ways to acquire and install gaming hardware. The more they learn, he says, the more they want to be part of the program.

"We have turned the esports arena into an area where they can watch sporting events on SpectrumU," Gunnells notes.

The growth in esports at D'Youville University in three years has been astounding. Alicea notes his program began with four students, and now counts 30 players active in three different varsity conferences, as well as many other students who enjoy playing and cheering on their fellow students.

"I went to a conference in San Diego a couple of weeks ago, and a bunch of CIOs started questioning me about esports," Gunnells remembers. "They heard through the grapevine that we had this awesome esports program. We are now getting requests from other CIOs if we can help them build their own esports arenas."

Gunnells and Alicea are also consulting with elementary and secondary schools in the Buffalo area. These schools are considering developing esports programs of their own, to encourage paths to college. Gunnells and Alicea see esports as a potential recruitment vehicle, as well as a way of incorporating more remote learners. Alicea notes three members of his esports team, including one team captain, live off-campus.

"Just in the two years we've had this program, we've really outgrown our current space," Gunnells notes. "We've been in tournaments at a high level for such a short time. At the moment we are preparing to take our team to compete at a national competition being held in New York City."



D'Youville University leaders see their technology partnership with Spectrum Enterprise as vital to future innovation and growth. Above, the Health Professions Hub hosts some of the school's most advanced programming.

Managed services help facilitate expansion

In an era when many colleges and universities struggle with shrinking enrollment, D'Youville University is seeing its student population grow. So much so, it is moving forward with the construction of new buildings, both academic structures like a new medical school as well as dormitories.

“Our relationship with Spectrum Enterprise has been nothing but good. If Spectrum Enterprise comes and says they have this great new technology that’s right for you, I would say ‘Let’s look at it,’ because they are a great partner.”

– Joseph Gunnells, Chief Information Officer, D'Youville University

“They are growing leaps and bounds on the online side, and they are putting in new programs on the nursing side, in addition to other sciences,” Niebel reports. “They are talking about opening their doors to the world. They are looking to be a focal point for higher education coming from Buffalo, New York.”

Gunnells has been examining ways to improve his school’s internal network with security features. Recently, Spectrum Enterprise installed a Meraki camera on campus, with an eye to adding more.

“Spectrum Enterprise supports our students, our faculty and our staff,” he says. “And the uptime alone in our connectivity has been nothing but spectacular. We incorporate our technology in the outreach we do, with high school students in the community, with the remote students that are so important to our university, and across our entire campus. We are continuously expanding, and esports is a big part of that.”

About Spectrum Enterprise

Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving many of America’s largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes [networking and managed services solutions](#); [Internet access](#), [Ethernet access and networks](#), [Voice](#) and [TV solutions](#). The Spectrum Enterprise team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. For more information, visit enterprise.spectrum.com.

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