

Learning to Teach in Second Life: A Novice Adventure in Virtual Reality

Abstract for Proposal

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Higher education faculty members face many challenges as they design instruction and create meaningful opportunities for teaching and learning, while searching for innovative methods to meet the needs of both traditional and non-traditional learners. Capturing the “best of both worlds” of technology opportunities for teaching and learning, higher education faculty are considering the options of using an innovative approach to instruction by teaching through Second Life via an In-World environment. Coupled with a clear understanding of this emerging technology, faculty face a steep learning curve in order to maximize the use of the technology to deliver the content, goals, and objectives of the courses they direct. While it is important to note that teaching a course in Second Life does not guarantee improved learning outcomes (Wang & Hsu, 2009), it does open new possibilities and opportunities for increased learning and teaching experiences.

Second Life offers prospects for new types of collaborative and participative learning. According to Antonacci and Modaress (2005), Second Life is the ideal setting for collaboration, social construction of understanding, making meaning, and reflection on processes required for learning. The very nature of Second Life is collaborative (Dalgarno & Lee, 2010); the virtual world can promote many types of supportive peer collaboration and collaborative assignments (De Frietas, Rebolledo-Mendez, Liarokapis,

Magoulas, & Poulouvassilis, 2010). There is an increased opportunity for communication and expressions in ways that students may have been incapable of previously in different settings (Falloon, 2010). The use of Second Life opens doors to attract the 21st Century, digital natives who bring new and different learning styles to the post-secondary classroom. Second Life resembles the real world and allows authentic tasks where learners can explore, solve problems, construct new meaning, and collaborate (Wang & Hsu, 2009).

This paper “tracks” the process of moving into a Second Life environment of teaching; focusing on the work of two faculty members teaching different courses but blending their skills and knowledge to promote interactive and innovative teaching in-world.

References

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