

Second Life Virtual Groundbreaking

April 3, 2008

Welcome and Introduction

Steve Mittelstet:

Good afternoon, and welcome to the Dallas County Community College District's Second Life Island! My name is Sustainable Guy. I am the president of Richland College and superintendent of the Richland Collegiate High School of Mathematics, Science and Engineering.

More than 40 years ago, the founding members of Dallas County Community College District Board of Trustees broke ground on the first of seven colleges that today comprise the DCCCD. Back in 1965, virtually all teaching and learning took place in physical classrooms, as distance learning and the Internet had not yet been invented. In fact, there was no such thing as a personal computer. How the world has changed! Now we can't imagine conducting our personal, educational and professional, lives without computers and related technology!

Today we gather for a modern kind of groundbreaking – a virtual groundbreaking, that is, in a simulated 3-D environment – an environment we believe in the near future will become as commonplace to teaching and learning as computers and technology are today.

Joining in this cyberspace groundbreaking ceremony are five DCCCD locations:

- Please welcome our host at Brookhaven College-- Ramiro Villarreal
- At El Centro College, our host is Hal Spiegel.
- Susan Hall is our host at the LeCroy Center.
- Hosting from North Lake College are Sharon Huston and Gemmy Allen.
- And here at Richland College is our host Dwayne Carter.

At Richland College, our vision is to be the best place we can be to teach, learn and build sustainable local and world community. We are excited about Second Life because we feel it offers the promise of all three.

What is Second Life?

Second Life promises to provide an exciting learning venue for our students and faculty to learn and demonstrate their progress in focusing all their learning on how to build sustainable local and world community.

For those of you who have never visited Second Life before, you may be wondering exactly what it is....

- It is a Multi-user Virtual Environment (MUVE).

- It is not a game, but you can play games in it.
- It is a free Internet service that allows you to create and manipulate an avatar, which is a virtual character that represents you.
- You can also create the environment in which your avatar operates, if you choose to purchase Second Life real estate with real money.
- You walk or fly around a 3-D virtual world that you or someone else has created, communicating with others via either text or audio.

Anything you can find in the real world, you'll also find in Second Life. It is designed for people 18 years old and older. Second Life is not the only virtual world in operation. There are others, including the popular Webkinz and Club Penguin for children, among others.

Now, I am pleased to turn the program over to my esteemed colleague Dr. Andu Jonesford (Dr. Andrew Jones).

Purposes of Second Life

Dr. Andrew Jones:

Good afternoon! What a lovely day for a groundbreaking ceremony! ☺ Of course, if you don't like the weather or the background, you can always change it! Creative control is one of the many benefits of working and playing in Second Life. What are some of the others?

Purpose 1: Entertainment

The first purpose that usually comes to mind is entertainment. Today, there are millions of avatars registered in Second Life. More than 75% of those live outside of the USA.

Unlike many other game-based virtual worlds, however, there is no defined purpose to Second Life. Instead it provides opportunities for the residents to express their creativity in building a virtual community – with lots of opportunities to experience an un-ending source of sounds and sights, with a community from the world. You can even be part of the entertainment – however our interest is in what I will describe as edutainment. That is bringing instruction and learning to untold numbers of people in non traditional formats which for some might initially look like entertainment. However, we are very clear that the military, IT and architectural/construction firms, to name just a few are conducting highly refined simulation and gaming exercises to help them meet performance outcomes.

Purpose 2: Communication

A second purpose of Second Life is communication. People visit Second Life to meet other people, make friends, and keep in touch with friends, project collaborators and colleagues who live in distant places. There are numerous examples of for-profit, real life businesses that conduct meetings in Second Life. Most recently you might have seen a commercial for one of the major IT companies that emphasizes that the goal for them is maximizing the profit potential for virtual modeling. "Have you figured out how to make more money in it yet?"

Purpose 3: Education/Entertainment

As you might imagine the purpose that is of the most interest to DCCCD is education/edutainment.

Virtual worlds like Second Life:

- Stimulate the mind to consider other ways of doing and knowing
- Help create “no boundaries mindsets;” provides a practical way of doing things outside the comfort and or traditional box
- Depict visible models of possibilities (If you can see it, you can achieve it)
- Place user in totally immersive learning environments – encouraging participants to take on different perspectives
- Allow for high levels experimentation and risk-taking within a controlled atmosphere.

DCCCD is embracing the concept of 3-D simulations because they are excellent learning tools. And many of our current students and clients will come with experience in virtual modeling and have expectations that DCCCD will be able to grant them access to this medium. Second Life may or may not be the platform of the future. But regardless of which platform becomes the standard, 3-D simulations are the way of the future in higher education. Thanks you for your interest and involvement in our efforts to stay abreast of developing and future educational applications.

And now, we'll proceed with the groundbreaking.

Groundbreaking

Conclusion

Steve Mittelstet:

My DCCCD colleagues and I thank you for entering into Second Life with us today. Please stay and play for as long as you like and visit our virtual campus again in the future!