

Project Name

SUNY Healthcare Island: Exploring a Virtual SUNY Community of Healthcare Learners

Principal Investigator Hope Windle

Campus Ulster County Community College

Year of Project 2012

Tier Tier Two

Project Team

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Overview Summary

Use of Second Life for collaborative case studies in a virtual hospital, learning critical thinking skills with intent to design and implement additional case studies and assessment to address progress, successes and challenges.

Outcomes Summary

Journal articles, project details and a detailed presentation of the student experience with a Second Life healthcare island is [available](#).

Project Abstract

This proposal aligns existing Second Life Healthcare facilities and resources previously designed by SUNY Ulster with other SUNY schools eager to explore the next generation of learning in a virtual world. The SUNY Ulster Healthcare facility, located on the SUNY Learning Network Island, will serve as a hub for introducing interested SUNY campuses to the opportunities for enhancing curriculum in a virtual world.

Second Life, a virtual environment, provides an internet-based collaborative platform where faculty can build dynamic, interactive scenarios to support teaching and learning. Second Life offers endless opportunities for incorporating emerging technologies into the classroom and clinical experiences for both in-class and distance learning. It gives learners a sense of "being there" even when attending class in person is not possible or practical. Second Life provides immersive opportunities for education, bringing together distance education and self-directed learning.

The goal of incorporating Second Life learning experiences into the nursing curriculum is to provide another avenue for educators to engage students in the practice and development of critical thinking skills beyond the traditional clinical setting. With the ever dwindling number of available clinical sites, it is neither possible, nor feasible for all learning to take place with a real patient. Simulation that mimics the essential features of real-life experiences is a significant feature of Second Life that permits learning in a safe, controlled environment.

The increasing complexity of the healthcare environment has greatly increased the importance of teaching technology in the classroom. Using Second Life as an innovative teaching strategy has already helped infuse technology into the SUNY Ulster nursing program, a goal supported by state and national nursing organizations as well as the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) 2011 report on the Future of Nursing Education (IOM, 2011). There is an opportunity for Ulster to work with other SUNY nursing programs to use the unique technology of Second Life to train novices in preparation for real life clinical experiences. This will serve to further enhance student success and improve overall retention rates.

Simulating patient care scenarios in a realistic environment is an increasingly popular method for preparing health professionals to care for patients. Virtual learning is an important part of the learning experience that allows for the extension of nursing skills through simulated experiences. Incorporating virtual learning technology into our curriculum provides additional educational opportunities for students to practice critical thinking skills beyond the clinical setting.

Games and simulation have been identified as emerging technological tools affecting teaching and learning. "Virtually all college students have had experience with games. Games represent active, immersive learning environments where users integrate information to solve a problem. Learning in this manner incorporates discovery, analysis, interpretation, and performance as well as physical and mental activity. An increasing number of colleges and universities are exploring the use of games to enhance learning.

<http://www.educause.edu/Games/1008>

The collaborative use of Second Life among SUNY institutions will allow faculty, working with technical assistants, to create situational learning environments in a virtual world, allowing students the opportunity to be exposed to and assess hazardous living conditions, unsafe environmental elements, potential patient health or safety risks – without leaving the campus or their homes to do so. An added benefit will be to increase the technical skill level of faculty and students participating in the project. The scenarios and environments created will be shared with other SUNY schools.

Phase 1

Based upon the successes we have realized with SUNY Ulster's Nursing Curriculum, we propose to work collaboratively between interested SUNY nursing programs to share our model and assist programs in developing virtual scenarios specific to their unique student learning needs. SUNY Ulster would share innovative pedagogic expertise, equipment (laptops) training material, and virtual environments using the healthcare scenarios developed on the SUNY Learning Network Healthcare Island.

After we have worked with an initial pilot of a few campuses, in Phase 1, we will have a better understanding of how to empower the participating campuses to design and implement additional case studies as well as create an asynchronous assessment in an embedded Google doc in Second Life to address progress, successes and challenges. We will have a yearly summit to celebrate the growth of our opportunities for

faculty, staff and students working in Healthcare within Second Life.

So far, this island is equipped with the basic starter equipment for the nurse student avatars. We provide the students with scrubs, a stethoscope, and a name tag. We have created three initial case study scenarios (Disaster Relief, Cardio and Maternity) to practice their critical thinking skills. Phase 1 would include working with SUNY schools interested in learning how to create additional scenarios, and utilize the island for teaching, learning and practicing critical thinking skills as a community of learners.

Phase 2 and Beyond

We plan to systematize the process of creating scenarios and case studies to allow medically oriented faculty and students from all SUNY schools the opportunity to participate at the SUNY virtual healthcare island and facility, to utilize the case studies and eventually create their own learning opportunities. The ultimate intent is to replicate the Second Life tools and resource environment offered for use by other disciplines within the SUNY system.

Reports and Resources

- [Project website](#)

Instructional Design

- Gamification (Design)
- Online Education

Instructional Technologies

- Immersive Environment (Virtual Reality)