

UTSA leaps into Second Life virtual world to transform undergraduate education.

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(Oct. 9, 2009)--The University of Texas at San Antonio is joining 15 other UT System institutions in a new \$250,000 University of Texas System initiative designed to transform undergraduate education. As a part of the Virtual Learning Community Initiative, the UT System purchased a 50-island archipelago for its components to share in the virtual world of Second Life.

>> *To learn more about the Virtual Learning Community Initiative, the UTSA community is invited to attend a demonstration at 9 a.m., Friday, Oct. 16 in the Main Building Auditorium (0.106) on the UTSA Main Campus.*

"The purpose of this project is to stimulate creative approaches to instruction that increase student access and success while being cost efficient or reducing instructional costs at all 16 campuses," said Leslie Jarmon, UT-Austin senior lecturer in the Division of Innovation and Instructional Assessment and project organizer.

The project is the largest higher education, systemwide project of it's kind in Second Life. Under the initiative, UTSA administrators, faculty staff and students will benefit from the virtual interrelated tracks put in place.

A systemwide virtual collaborative learning community of faculty, researchers, staff and administrators will communicate in the virtual world.

At the course level, the project allows students to improve the learning experiences and opportunities for individual graduate students and other interested learners. In August, participants from all UT System institutions met in Austin to review the grant and assorted initiatives. There will be bi-monthly virtual meetings via Second Life until the grant ends in July 2010.

"This is the most exciting project I've ever been associated with in more than 30 years in the higher education arena," said Joe DeCristoforo, UTSA assistant vice president and registrar. "Dr. Jarmon is an inspiration to me and my project team, and we look forward to working with her and learning about how to exploit this fascinating technology."



Top photo: UT System virtual meeting in Second Life

Bottom photo: UT System virtual island

The UTSA project team members include James Adair, Sara Bordelon, Carmen Fies, Lee Gildon, LaVonne Grandy, James Groff, Linda Lindsey, Pat McGee, Barbara Millis, Malena Salazar, Tara Schmidt, Crystal Sperber, Lloyd Swarz, **Eduardo Valenzuela**, Mimi Yu and Alfredo Zavala.