

U. T. Dallas Launches Virtual Islands in Second Life

Virtual Campus developing new areas of research in emerging communications, technology, and health.



Richardson, TX. April 3, 2007. In a continuing effort to remain ahead of the curve in emerging media, arts, and technology trends, the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) is launching a series of “islands” in the virtual online world of Second Life. The effort involves contributors from across the university and includes outside research partners.

UTD’s Arts & Technology program has been holding classes in Second Life for over a year, and was one of the first universities to develop a virtual island. The main island features research areas, offices, a “mixed reality” conference and learning center, student studio spaces, and the first major university gallery in Second Life.

Dean Terry, the Director of the Virtual Worlds Lab, which is leading the effort, says, “the coming generation of students will spend more and more of their lives in virtual worlds - and not just games. Many of them will have jobs there, and some already do. Virtual worlds are the next big extension of the Internet, and we’re looking to prepare our students for the changes in communication and culture that are coming upon us very quickly.”

UTD is also researching therapeutic and medical uses for virtual places. Virtual Worlds Lab has developed an island for the Center for Brain Health. Russell L. Smith, a Ph.D student in Arts & Technology program, says “the Center for Brain Health project shows that serious research is already being done in virtual worlds. Online gaming will become a smaller and smaller part of the picture, and non-game virtual worlds will grow faster than anyone expects”.

Other groups at UT Dallas are also developing islands in virtual worlds. UTD’s School of Management has recreated their own building in virtual space. Also in production is Accessibility Island, sponsored by the Arts & Technology program, which will conduct research accessibility issues in online gaming.

The Arts & Technology Island opens Tuesday April 10th at 7PM CST. There will also be hands on introductory sessions in Second Life Wednesday afternoon from 3:30 to 5 in the Mac Lab in the ATEC Building at UT Dallas. The Virtual Worlds Lab Team will be present to give tours and answer questions. To participate and for more information on UTD’s Virtual Worlds projects visit utd.edu/worlds.

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About UT Dallas

The University of Texas at Dallas, located at the convergence of Richardson, Plano and Dallas in the heart of the complex of major multinational technology corporations known as the Telecom Corridor, enrolls more than 14,500 students. The school’s freshman class traditionally stands at the forefront of Texas state universities in terms of average SAT scores. The university offers a broad assortment of bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree programs. For additional information about UT Dallas, please visit the university’s website at www.utdallas.edu.