

## **A Tour of the Virtual World:**

How to engage students and create a sense of belonging online

[www.innovativeeducators.org](http://www.innovativeeducators.org)

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# ABSTRACT & BIO

**Abstract:** Educators can be COVID-challenged to keep students and funds flowing, while promoting healthy and enriching academic options. Virtual World learning may provide immersive hands-on experience for engaging students and offering a sense of place and belonging, so important to student success and retention in online education. This easy virtual VW visit through Zoom covers: evolution of virtual world learning, academic necessities for learning alternatives, socioeconomic drivers and gains, fulfilling student desires for immersive experience, benefits of experiential learning, providing dimensional sense of space, sample in-world learning centers, forming partnerships between academia and emerging technology, effective gamification of learning, bridging the digital divide, and a self-guided field trip to a Virtual World campus.

**Bio:** Dr. Steven R. Van Hook has developed and taught mixed-format courses in cross-cultural communications and global affairs for the University of California and other universities in the United States and abroad. He was a spotlight speaker for the 2022 Conference of Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education and has designed VW learning builds for over a decade, with a doctorate specializing in international transcultural educational tactics and technologies. He's been a newspaper columnist, radio talk show host, TV news anchor, and television bureau chief in Moscow covering the fall of the Soviet Union; and has directed international public education campaigns through the United States Agency for International Development. He has a PhD specializing in transcultural learning, and is published in scholarly journals, including SAGE and UNESCO's Prospects.



Research website: <http://wwmr.us>

## PRESENTATION TAKE-AWAYS

- Virtual World learning environments may provide an immersive sense of place and belonging, essential to student success and retention
- Demonstrated best practices in Virtual World Education
- Virtual field trip to working Virtual World campus



# KEY REFERENCES

- **Skepticism, Confusion, Frustration: The Metaverse Struggles**  
*[The New York Times](#)*
- **Mark Zuckerberg's Metaverse is a Joke Not Shared by Investors**  
*[The Guardian](#)*
- **Maybe the Metaverse, NFTs Aren't the Next Big Things**  
*[The Street](#)*
- **This is Life in the Metaverse**  
*[The New York Times](#)*
- **What Metaverse Learning Will Look Like** *[Forbes](#)*
- **College in the metaverse is here. Is Higher Ed Ready?**  
*[Inside Higher Education](#)*
- **The Metaverse Is Going to College. But Will It Suck?**  
*[The Daily Beast](#)*
- **'Second Life' Creator Shares Lessons Learned from One of the World's First Metaverses** *[Geekwire](#)*



**Futurism**

**TheStreet**

**The New York Times**

**Forbes**

**INSIDE  
HIGHER ED**

**DAILY BEAST**

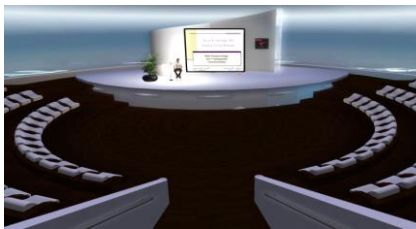
**GeekWire**

# EDUCARE VIRTUAL WORLD ISLAND

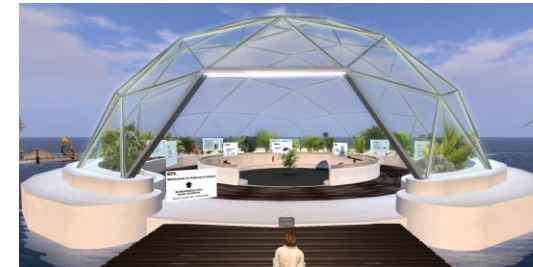
- Nonprofit educational NGO
- Simplified experience
- Orientation for educators
- Introduction to VW teaching



**Educare Research inc**  
**Non-profit 501(c)(3)**  
**Free Access Primer**



Landmark



In-World Presentations



# FACEBOOK / META & VR/VW ROOMS

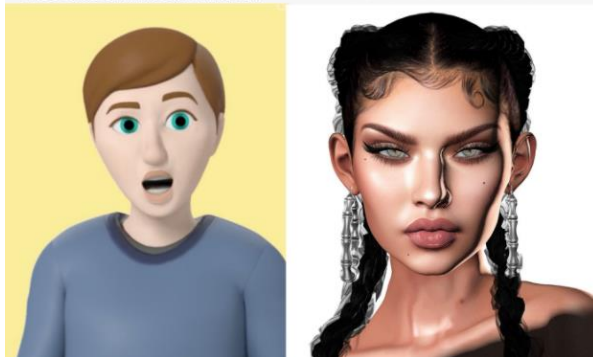
- **Facebook's New Bet on Virtual Reality: Conference Rooms**

New York Times

*"Technology that gives you this sense of presence is like the holy grail of social experiences, and what I think a company like ours was designed to do over time."*  
Mark Zuckerberg



Facebook Meta Avatar vs. Second Life Avatar



*'For old Second Life residents, the announcement of Meta wasn't all that innovative or awe-inducing. We've been there, done that ... two decades ago.'*

<https://ryanschultz.com/tag/second-life/>



# ZOOM IMMERSIVE VIEW

## Immerse Yourself

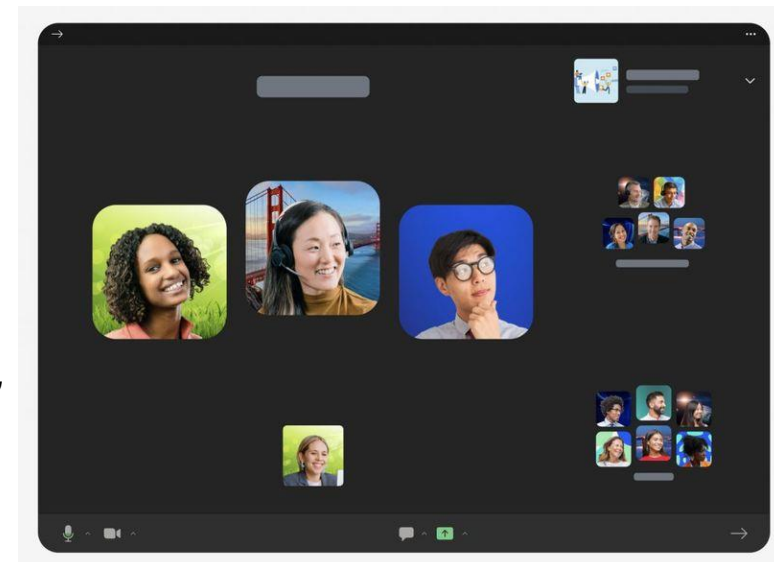
Meeting and webinar hosts can select Zoom's Immersive View the same way they would select the Speaker or Gallery View.

When enabling Immersive View, hosts will have the option to automatically or manually place participants into a virtual scene of their choosing.

[Zoom Blog](#)

[Zoom Spots](#)

*'Virtual Office Watercooler'*  
Coming in 2023



# COMMERCIAL VIRTUAL SPACE INNOVATORS

VICTORYXR™



Students in VXRLabs Biology

VictoryXR's goal is to bring a more immersive way for students to learn through virtual and augmented reality. Since VictoryXR's founding in 2016, online education has rapidly grown in the United States and across the globe. Unfortunately, the traditional classroom has not adapted to online education. In the current form, online students find learning difficult, passive, and unenjoyable via video conferencing.

That is where VictoryXR comes in. We offer immersive classrooms and campuses through virtual reality. This platform allows for students to interact in a synchronous yet virtual environment. Educators are given training and 3D objects (over 6,000 and growing!) to teach a variety of subjects to their students. The best part? Students' grades go up. Student focus goes up. Student enjoyment goes up.



Kosy Virtual Remote Teams



Roam Virtual Space



# COURSES DESIGNED / DEVELOPED / TAUGHT

## BA & MA ON-GROUND, ONLINE, & MIXED

### UCLA / UCSB Extension

- EmpowerEd Course Designer
- Writing for Marketing & Advertising
- Working with the Media
- Marketing Principles & Practice
- Writing for Public Relations
- Integrated Marketing Communications
- Global Communication Management
- Fundamentals of Global Management & Marketing
- Principles of Business Administration & Management
- Global Economies & Issues
- Speaking Skills for the Global Marketplace
- Communications Skills for the Business Professional
- Fundamentals of International Advertising

### California Lutheran University

- Principles of Marketing
- International Marketing
- Cross-Cultural Marketing Communications
- Global Issues

**UCLA** Extension



### National University

- Campaign & Program Management
- Campaign & Program Evaluation
- Legal & Ethical Issues
- Integrated Marketing Communications
- Strategic Writing
- Mediated Messaging
- Communication Technologies
- Persuasion
- Art of Public Speaking

California Lutheran  
UNIVERSITY

UC SANTA BARBARA  
**EXTENSION**

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Link

# EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS & PROGRAMS

- Brightspace
- Blackboard
- Canvas
- Articulate 360
- Second Life
- EmpowerEd
- SMF
- Moodle
- Sakai
- iUniversity
- eCollege
- Captivate
- WordPress
- Desire2Learn
- YouTube
- iTunes
- Collaborate
- Adobe Connect
- GoToMeeting
- Skype
- Zoom
- FirstClass
- OpenCourseware
- Comcourse
- Sansar
- OpenSim



# ACADEMIA REALITIES

- Lower state funding
- Demographic dip
- Lower enrollments
- Stressed administration
- Limited budgets
- Adjunctification of faculty
- COVID class conversions
- Cuts into dining and dorms
- Furloughs and layoffs



**The Year That Pushed Higher Education to the Edge**  
*Chronicle of Higher Education*

# VIRTUAL WORLD TOURS IN ZOOM



- > Low Lag
- > Audio & Video Fidelity
- > Single & Group Tours
- > Zoom Familiarity
- > No VW Curve





# A DIMENSIONAL SENSE OF SPACE



**Science Circle  
Open-Air Auditorium  
in Second Life**



Landmark





# COSPLAY

INVERSE

**Superhero cosplay makes you a better person for one science-backed reason:**

- Heroic stories and experiences can create a unique emotional response: elevation
- Ninety-one percent of participants who saw a superhero poster stayed afterward to help, whereas only 75 percent of people who saw the neutral poster did.
- In a virtual reality study, half of the participants were given the power of flight, like Superman. The second half got to fly, too — but as passengers in a helicopter. Flying participants generally helped more quickly than helicopter participants

Article



# WALK IN ANOTHER'S SKIN



*Stroking a black rubber hand reduced a participant's implicit racism score*

Participants develop increased empathy for differences and suffering by VR immersion and experience

- *Gender Switch*
- *Race Switch*
- *War Zone Experience*
- *Wheelchair Accessibility*
- *Etc.*

He refers to virtual reality as an "empathy generating machine" to give people experiences they can't have in any other way.

# VISUALIZING 'DOING' HELPS US LEARN

SCIENTIFIC  
AMERICAN®

- 'Visualization and action are intimately connected, involving the motor cortex. Thinking about our body doing something—raising an arm or walking forward—activates the motor cortex directly.'
- 'This ability to trigger the motor cortex by imagining an action offers great promise in therapies for patients recovering from stroke and for athletes or dancers working to develop expertise in their craft.'



- 'As we get older, the motor cortex has to work harder to imagine actions, so exercising our visualization skills remains important throughout our lives.'

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN  
**MIND**

Article

Avatars & Personality Link



# VIRTUAL JOB FAIRS & EXCHANGES

## The State of Virtual International Exchange

Inside Higher Education

“There are many more than one ways to engage young people online in collaborative projects and in dialogue.”



## Virtual Job Recruiting Expands Access to Students

Inside Higher Education



“A new survey from the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that graduates from historically marginalized populations benefited from virtual job recruiting.”



# SENSE OF PLACE

“Students expressed their  
higher-education experience  
through images of where they  
have been,  
and where they are ...  
The common theme:  
broadening horizons.”

*“A Sense of Place” slideshow*  
*The New York Times*





# WHAT MUST VW & ED TECH DO?

- **Prepare for show-time**  
Online is here to stay: Increasing numbers of students will demand it.
- **Understand demands of academia**  
Costs, student overhead, Title IX, privacy, harassment, performance standards, etc.
- **Ease of access**  
Instant teleport for nonmembers, limited function, prebuilt facilities
- **Rich functionality**  
Just as Zoom, Skype, TikTok



*“The affordances and resilience of online delivery in this pandemic have permanently embedded online distance education as the advancing partner in the mode of delivery of learning.”*

**The Speedy Future of Delivering  
Online Learning**  
*Inside Higher Ed*

# KEY EDUCARE LANDMARKS

## EDUCARE LANDMARKS

A Nonprofit Program for International Educators & Students

Steven R. Van Hook, PhD / Kip Roffo in SL

<http://wwmr.us>

### Welcome to Educare

First steps for a new avatar

### Educare Tour

Guided flight of the island

### Main Hall

Our large-group meeting space

### Workspace

Smaller gatherings and conferences

### Treehouse Meet Spot

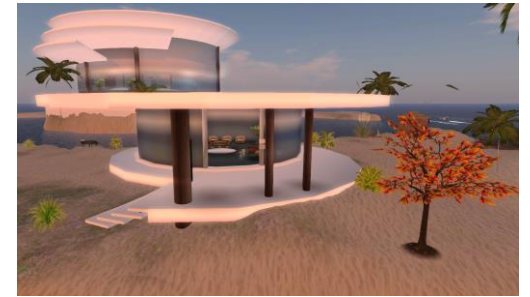
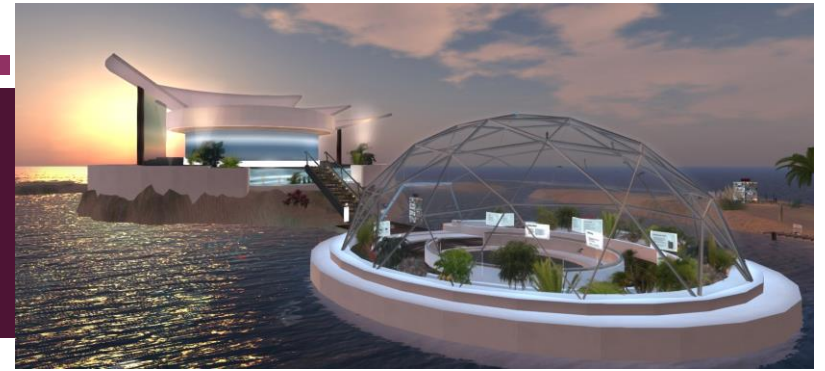
Chill and chat by the beach

### Educare Sandbox

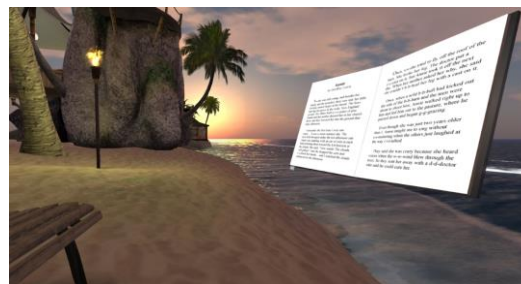
Rez and build your own stuff

### Sunset Cove

Campfire chat, tai chi, healing hypnosis, touch the Buddha



# VW LEARNING RESOURCES & RIDES



JOIN THE EDUCARE GROUP FOR ALL-RIDE ACCESS

- 🌸 [Educare Tour](#) (relax and see)
- 🌸 [Yellow Submarine Ride](#) (underwater world)
- 🌸 [Board Games](#) (chess and checkers)
- 🌸 [Air Balloon](#) (guided and self-guided tours)
- 🌸 [Sail-Surfer](#) (ride the waves)
- 🌸 [TED Talks](#) (videos: be a better you)
- 🌸 [Treehouse](#) (chill and chat by the beach)
- 🌸 [Tai Chi](#) (short-form)
- 🌸 [Healing Hypnosis](#) (hypnotherapy video)
- 🌸 [Dealing with Self-Doubt](#) (video)
- 🌸 [Storytime: Annie](#) (audio / read along)
- 🌸 [Storytime: The Dwarf](#) (audio / read along)
- 🌸 [Storytime: Seal Woman](#) (audio / read along)
- 🌸 [Watermelon Drinks & Dancing](#) (Educare Radio stream)
- 🌸 [X Marks the Spot](#) (undersea tour)
- 🌸 [Sea of Monsters](#) (surround video)
- 🌸 [Sea of Holes](#) (surround video)
- 🌸 [Seagull Flight](#) (surround video)
- 🌸 [Must Be An Angel](#) (surround audio)
- 🌸 [Sea World](#) (surround audio)
- 🌸 [Lectures & Podcasts](#) (audio and video)
- 🌸 [Educare Sandbox](#) (group use)



# THANK YOU!



**Questions  
and Other  
Ideas?**

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Innovative Educators  
Educating Faculty, Staff & Students Online



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