

Virtual Worlds Best Practices in Education (VWEP) Conference

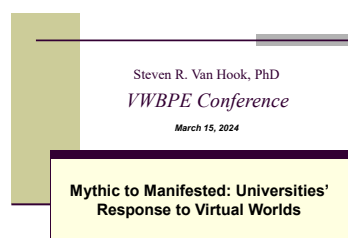
Mythic to Manifested: Universities' Response to Virtual Worlds

Steven R. Van Hook, PhD / Spotlight Speaker

March 15, 2024 / 4:00 PM PT / SLT

Slides: <http://wwmr.us/support/VWBPE-2024-Slides.pdf>

Slide 1: Intro



Thank you to the VWBPE for this opportunity.

Slide 2

Abstract & Bio



Abstract: This presentation provides a first-hand take on academia's response to virtual world learning over the last 15 years. Steve Van Hook brings more than 20 years' experience as an educator, author, innovator, and course designer. He will cover university response to over a decade of Virtual World educational possibilities, citing administrator, instructor and student concerns including:

- Appeals and protests of Virtual World learning
- Cost-effective program development
- Best VW teaching tactics and practices
- Benefits and necessities of immersive experiential learning
- Field-trip invitation to a Virtual World campus

Bio: Dr. Steven R. Van Hook has designed and taught communication and culture classes for universities in the USA and abroad for 25 years, including one of the first hybrid virtual courses for UCSB in 2000s. President of Educare Research, a nonprofit program advancing international education and technologies. He's been a newspaper columnist, radio reporter, TV news anchor, and podcast host. He was a television producer and bureau chief in Moscow, USSR from 1989; and for three years directed public education media programs in Ukraine through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He served as a trainer and officer for organizations including VISTA, Head Start, and the US Coast Guard. He has a PhD specializing in transcultural learning, and is published in scholarly journals including *UNESCO* and by SAGE. He has presented on virtual world education to administrators and groups at UCLA, UCSB, VWBPE, VWEC, The Science Circle, and elsewhere. Research website: <http://wwmr.us>

I am a working adjunct educator with 25 years at major universities developing courses and new technologies — and I've been an advocate for virtual world learning for the 16 years I've been working on educational builds in Second Life.

Slide 3

It's an intriguing conference theme this year. Many of the aspirations now manifesting thru new technologies are ancient — even mythical in their origin.

The all-knowing Oracle of Delphi is now Oracle Cloud Infrastructure.

Instead of the Akashic Record of every deed, word, and thought ... we now have Facebook. Instead of the all-powerful Merlin, we have scientists able to grab electricity right from thin air.

Instead of the Cornucopia Horn of Plenty ... we now have 3D printers pumping food.

We've gone from myths and fairytales to real-world actualization of our dreams.

Slide 4



■ Presage of AI: *The Diamond Age: Or, a Young Lady's Illustrated Primer* (1995)

■ A girl's 'magical book' acting as a personal tutor, adapting to her learning style

Neal Stephenson





■ Coiner of 'Metaverse' in *Snow Crash* (1992)



■ Conceptual groundwork for cryptocurrency, and geoengineered planets

The Atlantic [Article](#)

Neal Stephenson is known for coining the word 'Metaverse' – but he's also known for earlier envisioning an Artificial Intelligence devise that might serve as a personalized tutor adapting to our learning style. And he also foresaw cryptocurrency and geoengineered planets.

Slide 5**Birth of the WWW****Bio**

Sir Tim Berners-Lee's World Wide Web was conceived in 1989 as an academic and research tool, free from commercial influence. Designed for universal access, the Web's early ethos focused on sharing knowledge unencumbered by advertising. It was a vision of an egalitarian space, supported by consensus and open standards, with the expectation that content would be guided by knowledge sharing rather than profit. As the Web evolved, commercialization and advertising dominance challenged this ideal, leading to debates over user privacy, content quality, and the essence of the internet—a testament to the enduring significance of its original ad-free aspiration.

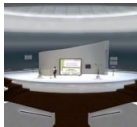


Created by Chat Smith
<https://bit.ly/chatsmith>

Tim Berners-Lee conceived of the world wide web as an educational tool: free from advertising, open to all, where success would be grounded in knowledge shared, rather than profits reaped.

Slide 6**Virtual World Tours in Zoom**

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



I've given presentations on virtual world education – to university administrators, department heads, program directors, other professors and educators and students. Lately I've been giving live tours in-world for visitors are coming through Zoom.


This Educare region has been specially designed to serve first and likely only-timers in-world for single session seminars. It's meant to demonstrate an example of *why* to come and teach in virtual worlds. Sometimes *why* is the

hardest of questions to answer.

Simplicity is key. It's set up so they can land, walk a little, then sit in the auditorium. Minimal clicks, no poses or automatic notecards. It's meant to minimize the cognitive overload and system freeze suffered by many first-timers.


Slide 7

Innovative Educators



Innovative Educators
Online Services For Orientation, Support & Training

- 75+ years in Higher Ed
- 4,262 College Clients
- 600,000+ Educators Trained



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.

[Link](#)

A Tour Of The Virtual World:
How To Engage Students &
Create A Sense Of Belonging Online

DATE	TIME
Wednesday, January 25	3:00-4:00pm (Eastern)

Overview

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.

Objectives

- Learn about the evolution of Virtual World (VW) learning
- Examine best practices in VW education
- Learn about fulfilling student desires and demands for more immersive online learning experiences
- Discover how to provide a sense of 'place' in virtual world settings
- Critique samples of VW learning centers
- Explore new models of student engagement and interactive learning
- Discover the future trends and the holistic vision of educational possibilities
- Use a free field trip invitation to a virtual world campus

I presented on virtual world learning for Innovative Educators last year. Teachers are very curious about the possibilities.

Slide 8

Courses Designed / Developed / Taught

BA & MA On -Ground, Online, & Mixed


Steven R. Van Hook, PhD
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steven@w.w.mr.us


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





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

[Link](#)

I've been designing courses for more than 20 years – helping to develop programs and curricula for state and nonprofit universities.

I'm currently adjunct faculty for four California universities.

Slide 9

Educational Platforms & Programs

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



More than half of the courses I've taught are online.

So the 'place' there has been limited to the learning platform – Blackboard, Canvas, Collaborate, BrightSpace, whatever. They provide a sense of gathering ... but not a sense of place.

Slide 10

VW Commentary & Review

- University President / Officers
- SVP of Innovation
- Program Directors
- Course Designers
- Professors
- Domestic & International Students
- Educator Training Programs
- VW Education Groups



UCLA Custom Programs
Korean Students / Kerckhoff Hall



UCSB International Students

I've collected comments from university officers, a president, a VP of Innovation, program directors, a CEO of global nonprofit Ed program, professors, students, course designers, educator training programs, virtual world organizations, board members.

Some of the comments have not always been kind, especially from educators who may have had an earlier experience in a virtual world. But let's not take offense and listen to what they have to say.

Slide 11**Recent Reactions to VW Ed**

- "Don't you need a headset?"
– SVP Innovation
- "Do I *have* to wear the goggles?"
– Professor
- "Our students can't afford a headset."
– Nonprofit Education Program CEO
- "I already play in a 3D world – it's called *life*."
– Student / Gamer

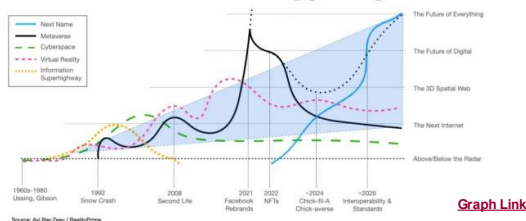


\$300 - \$600 range
\$3,500 for [Apple Vision Pro](#)

[Best VR Headsets](#)

My most recent presentations typically focus on their main question: what about the headsets?

Over the course of metaverse hype – they've gotten the impression the only way to engage virtual world learning is through a spendy 3D headset – a message that may have been amplified by Meta Facebook, Apple, Sony, and the rest.

Slide 12**The Metaverse Hype Cycle**

[Graph Link](#)

The Metaverse Hype Died Down. Where Does That Leave Colleges That Invested In It

- Businesses may have backed off the vision of a large, billion-dollar metaverse because of its link to Meta (Facebook) ... but there are still lots of little metaverses being built in education.
- Even if it's fairly common for an enthusiast to get some momentum behind building a metaverse, it's less common to have that baked into the infrastructure or the budget of the institution.
- Some of the initial lessons that the university wanted to create, like organic chemistry and anatomy labs, required details that raised the expense and priced the school out.
- "I don't have rose-colored glasses on it; it was not a perfect experience for us. But it was the spark that lit the kindling." – University Official.

[EdSurge](#)

[Article](#)

Already the metaverse is tumbling in the hype cycle ... and the stories are coming on what colleges are to do next. Once the initial 3D novelty and headsets age ... early participants are wondering if it was a smart investment.

Administrators may speak of their 'Twin Campuses' in glittering terms on the record – then off the record talk about their regrets and what else they could have bought for the \$100s of thousands.

Slide 13**Metaverse Tumbles**

- 'VR Market Keeps Shrinking: Sales Plummeting 40% 2023' [CNBC](#)
- 'Skepticism, Confusion, Frustration: The Metaverse Struggles' [The New York Times](#)
- '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](#)
- 'Disney, Microsoft say Meh to the Metaverse' [The Wall Street Journal](#)



It's not looking very good in the media and in financial reports. Sales of virtual reality glasses and headsets fell by nearly 40% in 2023, in spite of all the media hype and advertising campaigns. It's been a rocky 2024 so far as well.

Slide 14**"Metaversities Face Financial Reality"**

- "Faculty and students are taking to learning in the metaverse, but universities wonder how they will pay for it once Meta's (\$150 million) twyear pilot program ends."
- "The overall buyin for the metaverse has cooled with the rising popularity of artificial intelligence."
- "I think virtual reality and reality, augmented reality, will inevitably be central to what a learning experience looks like," he said. "But that's probably 20 or 40 years away. We have such a long way to go."



An administrator in this linked story says this multiverse technology is inevitable ... but it has a long way to go ... maybe another 20 or 40 years.

Slide 15**Commercial Virtual Space Innovators**

Students in VXRlate 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!

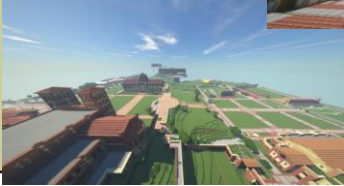


Kosy Virtual Remote Teams



Roam Virtual Space

Many commercial offerings are already in place and competing for mini metaverse campuses and classrooms, meeting space and customized service.

Slide 16**UCLA in
Minecraft**

Molloy and co-administrator Chris Ko, a second-year electrical engineering student, created the server with funding from the UCLA Bruin Gaming. Only a few days before, UCLA had announced that spring classes would be held online as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

[Article Link](#)

Some of the places I teach have been experimenting with virtual campus and metaverse builds. UCLA built a twin campus in Minecraft.

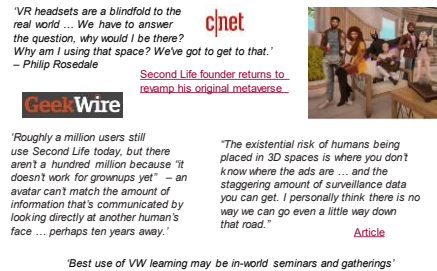
Slide 17**NU Nursing ‘Metaverse’ Build**

- With funding from a two-year, \$200,000 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, this pilot program is designed to increase access to quality health care in underserved communities.
- \$50,000 to purchase approximately 70 virtual reality headsets, and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors awarded \$25,000 to cover the cost of software and programming for the virtual reality headsets.
- Students how to treat computer generated patients in the Metaverse, preventing harm to real patients. National University's digital twin campus allows students to teleport to virtual classrooms, lecture halls, lounges, and parks.



[Media Release](#)

National University recently unveiled a \$200,000 grant-funded metaverse build of a twin campus to support its nursing program – plus they received another \$75,000 to purchase 70 headsets and software programming.

Slide 18**Philip Rosedale on Metaverse**


'VR headsets are a blindfold to the real world ... We have to answer the question, why would I be there? Why am I using that space? We've got to get to that.'
— Philip Rosedale

[Second Life founder returns to revamp his original metaverse](#)

GeekWire

'Roughly a million users still use Second Life today, but there aren't a hundred million because "it doesn't work for grownups yet" — an avatar can't match the amount of information that's communicated by looking directly at another human's face ... perhaps ten years away.'

'The existential risk of humans being placed in 3D spaces is where you don't know where the ads are ... and the staggering amount of surveillance data you can get. I personally think there is no way we can go even a little way down that road.'

[Article](#)

'Best use of VW learning may be in-world seminars and gatherings'

Virtual World founder Philip Rosedale (Second Life and Sansar) has shared some insights into the metaverse that have resonated with this educator's perspective.

We certainly need to be wary of the privacy and targeting issues if the metaverse is primarily designed by commercial interests ... and all the surveillance data gathered ... and spaces where we don't know where and how advertising is cloaked. Rosedale says we shouldn't go even a little way down that road.

He also says the virtual reality headsets for fully 3-D immersion are not quite ready for prime-time play ... and feel more like a blindfold to the real world.

And we still need to answer why these particular platforms serve the experience and good of our guests. We've got to get to the 'why' of it, says Rosedale.

This is where educators may have some worthwhile suggestions.

Slide 19**Rosedale & Scoble on Future Tech**

- The 'sense of place' in VW is magical
- On producing quality VW activities: The budget for Grand Theft Auto 5 was \$400-million, for the detail and experience of it. But costs for teaching, and dancing, and hanging out and giving talks on stage, those ideas are going to carry the day
- Best use may be in-world seminars and gatherings



Video



Scoble & Rosedale Transcript

Rosedale has also said the costs of highly interactive virtual design may not come cheap. He says the budget for the video game Grand Theft Auto 5 was some \$400-million ... effective customized virtual learning experiences may also be costly.

Slide 20**The Power and the Peril of Virtual Reality in HE**

- These tools stand to reshape higher education in some powerful ways. But the immense potential is still only that: potential.
- A future where universities and their learners are divided into virtual haves and have-nots is not difficult to imagine – and it must be prevented.
- After all, an institution may well be on the cutting edge, but for what purpose? Indeed, purpose must be a guiding force for institutions seeking to answer the most pressing questions about immersive learning.
- A well-designed VR curriculum might be entertaining and engaging, but if the strengths of the programme are not tightly aligned with the needs of educators and students, it accomplishes very little.
- Equity, access and inclusion must serve as the driving force behind any conversations related to integration.
- This is not a case of using technology for technology's sake but a purposeful effort to create inclusive healthcare training for a diverse cohort of learners.



Mark Milliron
National University
President / CEO




Article

Mark Milliron is president at National University. He says there is immense potential in these tools ... but it is only that, potential. He's especially worried about the costs of gear that may further divide learners into haves-and-have-nots. He also warned against chasing cutting edge technology for its own sake – and that educators will be able to determine what innovations work based on facts, not based on who can tell the best story.

Slide 21

Artificial Intelligence



Admissions

- Admissions officers 'wringing hands' over AI college applications
- By end of 2024 80% of admissions offices plan to use 'inevitable' AI for student application review
- [Article in Inside Higher Education](#)

Cheating

- Educators scramble to catch cheaters
- Some teachers use AI to prepare syllabi, lectures, presentation slides, exams, and grading.
- [Coursera AI for Teachers](#)

Employment

- Preparing students for demand of AI-enhanced workforce
- College 'cheating' with AI may be a careerwise talking-point
- [Article in Inside Higher Education](#)

The AI feedback loop: Researchers warn of 'model collapse' as AI trains on AI-generated content: [Article](#) **VentureBeat**

A recent report says that by the end of 2024 ... 80% of admissions offices will be using AI to review student applications rather than using human eyes. It's inevitable they say.

And as educators are scrambling to catch AI cheating ... some teachers are already using it to design courses.

If an applicant was able to cheat through a college degree with AI – that may be a good job interview talking point.


An article here from VentureBeat warns AI may already be going through a 'model collapse' as it incestuously feeds on its own creations to generate ever more possibly mutated output.

We should keep our human communication skills sharp.

Slide 22

What Students Want per Survey

- Students expect 'total flexibility' in pandemic-era classroom
- 90% want to submit assignments online
- 68% want recorded asynchronous lectures
- 67% want online exams
- Majority (61%-83%) want some in-person interaction (small lab sections, group work, symposia)



[Article](#) THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

90% percent of the students want to be able to submit their work online; nearly 70 percent want recorded online lectures and online exams.

But more than 80 percent of the students want to gather for small lab sections, group work, symposia – chances to meet their peers and collaborate and maybe even party.

Slide 23**Students Want Virtual -Learning Options**

- The share of students enrolled only in online courses nearly doubled since 2019.
- "Having everything transitioned to Zoom was actually the world opening up and not closing down."
- "Remote/hybrid learning plays a vital role in our mission to provide high-quality, accessible education that is affordable and tailored to the needs of our diverse student population."
- "Remote classes offer an affordable and time-saving way to continue learning."
- "Virtual learning makes taking a meaningful stand more difficult, because we're not breathing the same air and we can't see the nuances of one another's expressions and reactions as we can when we're present, live, together."
- "College leaders, she said, need to answer to 'how they are supporting their faculty not only in developing their online pedagogy, but also in these questions of burnout, trauma, and stress.'"

[Article](#)

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Here's another recent article on what students want from virtual learning options.

Rather than remote learning and Zoom closing down the world ... they found in some ways it was opening up. People were easily gathering regardless of place. It was affordable – even saving transportation and babysitting costs.

in a room live together.

They want a sense of presence, reactions, as when they're

Slide 24**Students Demand Virtual Learning So Colleges Adjust**

- 40% of college administrators prioritizing demand for online learning; 35% reexamining strategies considering student demands
- Older students are also demanding flexibility in learning, expanding across student population
- This growing demand for online and hybrid education has likely not yet reached its peak
- Most administrators looking for balance by 2025 for a more-balanced in-person, hybrid, online courses

[Article](#)

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Colleges are now trying to figure out what to do 40% of administrators are prioritizing the demand for online learning. Administrators are aiming to find a balance between in-person and virtual courses by 2025.

So this is the time for us to shine and invite them to look closer at virtual world learning options.

Slide 25**Universities Unsure How to Use New Tech**

- University administrators see the need to implement education technology in their classrooms but are at a loss in how to do so
- While administrators are excited about offering new ed-tech tools, they are lacking knowledge and data to help them make informed decisions that benefit students and faculty
- Nearly 80 percent believe institutions will offer more hybrid courses in the future
- Almost all the administrators (92 percent) agreed more time will be spent in future classrooms using ed-tech products

[Article](#)

Administrators are excited about new possibilities – but they don't have enough knowledge or data to make informed decisions to make good things happen.

They are resolved that changes are going to happen ready or not: 80 percent say their institutions will be offering more technology enhanced hybrid courses in the future – and almost all of them say there will more class-time spent using ed-tech products. That makes this a perfect time to educate them on the benefits of virtual world learning.

Slide 26**What Must VW & Ed Tech Do?**

- **Prepare for show-time**
Online is here to stay: Some students will demand it. Administrators are looking for options and have a budget.
- **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

The virtual educational platforms and programs need to better understand the demands of academia – the limited funds available ... the overhead demands on students to learn new skills ... the Title IX issues over privacy and harassment in virtual worlds ... performance standards universities need to cover for accreditation.

This is what administrators typically reply: There's too much development time and cost, too high of a learning curve for teachers and students, with too little practical use.

We need the accessibility of Skype – where a single step gets you to where you need to be. We need the creative and simple filters of TikTok for design. We need the functionality of Zoom where slides, video, audio, files are easily shared with a single click.

We don't need to educate so much — as we need to demonstrate. We need to make it obvious that we offer something of value.

Slide 27**Academia Realities**

- Lower state funding
- Demographic dip
- Lower enrollments
- Stressed administration
- Limited budgets
- Adjunctification of faculty
- Demand for course conversions
- Costs of new tech
- Cuts into dining and campus revenue



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

The transformational forces were already long in play: lower state funding, demographic dip in enrollments, administrators stressing over budget cuts and program reductions.

Slide 28**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

Our prime offering in the virtual world ... is this interactive immersion that provides a sense of place – one of the most memorable aspects of an education. Years after our education ... it's the imagery that remains ... the taste of the experience.

Slide 29

A Dimensional Sense of Space



Landmark



Science Circle
Open-Air Auditorium
in Second Life



The Science Circle presentations year after year for some 15 years are a testament to what Virtual Worlds can do – consistently with clear vision and good intent and an impressive immersive experience.

We need to do more of this.

Slide 30

Walk in Another's Skin



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

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

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

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

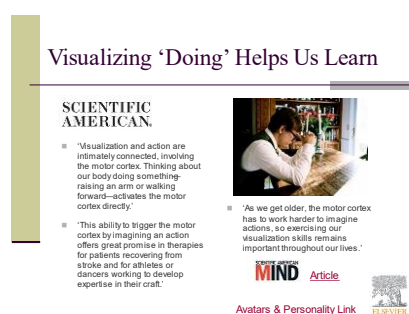
[Article](#)

Studies show when people have an immersion into someone else's experience, it increases empathic response – experiencing what it's like to switch gender or races; to experience life in a war zone or a wheelchair.

Slide 31

Here's an interesting article on Cosplay and the 'power of pretend.' It tells how heroic stories and 'pretend experiences' create an emotional response of 'elevation.'

In a virtual reality study, those who were given the power of flight like a superhero were significantly more likely to be helpful than those who simply got to fly around as a passenger in a helicopter. They got to feel a little of how a superhero feels in flight. That's elevation.

Slide 32

Scientific American reports on how visualization directly activates the motor cortex ... and how this can actually benefit ... for example ... patients recovering from a stroke — or dancers developing their art. Exercising the motor cortex with visualization becomes even more important as we get older, the article says.

Slide 33

Cuts in international travel have impacted educational exchanges between young creative students around the world. Organizers are trying out different online platforms to increase and improve international collaboration for students.


And virtual job recruiting programs are reaching out to populations of historically marginalized college graduates — they're also looking at technological alternatives to do it better.

There are plenty of other transcendent uses of Virtual World learning ... the United States Department of Education has once again made federal financial aid available for incarnated students — in prisons and jails. I would think this would open entirely new virtual worlds for those behind bars.


Slide 34

Educare VW Island


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



[Landmark](#)



[Presentations](#)





Educare Research inc
Non-profit 501(c)(3)
[Free Access](#)

Here is some access details for our Educare Campus – with a ‘free access’ primer for first-timers on how to sign up with Second Life.

Slide 35

VW Presentation / Seminar Topics

- VW Teaching Tactics & Trends
- Transcultural Course Design
- Primers & Prompts for Enticing Lectures
- Handling Difficult Students
- Global Trends for World Solutions in Education
- [More Topic Abstracts ...](#)





I’ve presented in different virtual world platforms for over some 15 years on topics including virtual world teaching tactics, transcultural course design, global trends in education access and technology.

Slide 36

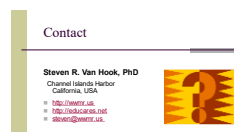
Please pay a quick visit to the Educare Campus – keep in mind that it is meant to serve first-timers with simple navigation and interaction.

This orientation dome provides a private and efficient self-guided orientation in a teacher-oriented setting ... basic skills such as how to chat, how to zoom, how to change your avatar, how to make friends ... resources for teaching in virtual worlds and landmarks to universities and campuses already here.

The auditorium is where the main action happens and the primary purpose of our campus ... to hold educational seminars and demonstrations.

Slide 37

There's a media moon with videos and podcasts on science and international education tactics. There are read-along books with audio for English lessons ... sit-and-play videos on self-improvement.

Slide 38

Please enjoy a self-guided visit to Educare using the landmark or primer link (below). No one is selling anything.

Primer: <http://wwwr.us/support/Educare-SL-Primer.pdf>

Steven R. Van Hook, PhD

VWBPE Conference

March 15, 2024

**Mythic to Manifested: Universities'
Response to Virtual Worlds**

Abstract & Bio



Abstract: This presentation provides a first-hand take on academia's response to virtual world learning over the last 15 years. Steven Van Hook brings more than 20 years' experience as an educator, author, innovator, and course designer. He will cover university response to over a decade of Virtual World educational possibilities, citing administrator, instructor and student concerns including:

- Appeals and protests of Virtual World learning
- Cost-effective program development
- Best VW teaching tactics and practices
- Benefits and necessities of immersive experiential learning
- Field-trip invitation to a Virtual World campus

Bio: Dr. Steven R. Van Hook has taught communication and culture classes for universities in the USA and abroad for 25 years, developing one of the first hybrid virtual courses for UCSB in 2000. He has led in academic positions including faculty senator, ombudsman, curriculum development, accreditation review, and instructor mentoring. He is President of Educare Research, a nonprofit program serving international educators and students. He's been a newspaper columnist, radio reporter, TV news anchor, and science podcast host. He was a television producer and bureau chief in Moscow, USSR from 1989-91; and for three years directed public education media programs in Ukraine through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He has served as a trainer and officer for organizations including VISTA, Head Start, as a licensed Master Captain by the US Coast Guard, and a private pilot. He has a PhD specializing in transcultural learning, and is published in scholarly journals including UNESCO's *Prospects*, and by SAGE. He has presented on virtual world education to administrators and groups at UCLA, UCSB, VWBPE, VWEC, The Science Circle, and elsewhere. Research website: <http://wwmr.us>

Mythic Dreams / Manifested Days



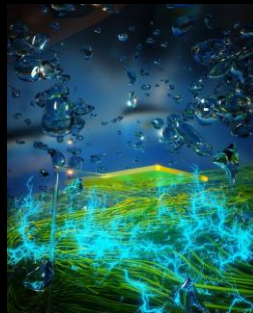
*Oracle of Delphi
to Oracle Cloud*



*Akashic Record to
Facebook*



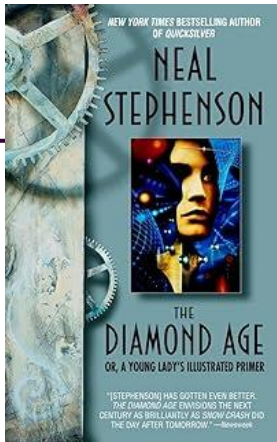
*Merlin to
Nanowires
Generating
Power from
the Air*



*Cornucopia of Plenty
to 3D Printing*



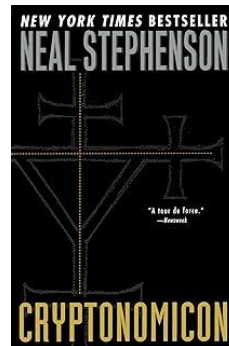
Neal Stephenson



- Presage of AI: ***The Diamond Age: Or, a Young Lady's Illustrated Primer*** (1995)
- A girl's 'magical book' acting as a personal tutor, adapting to her learning style



- Coiner of 'Metaverse' in ***Snow Crash*** (1992)
- Conceptual groundwork for cryptocurrency, and geoengineered planets



The Atlantic

Article

Birth of the WWW



Bio

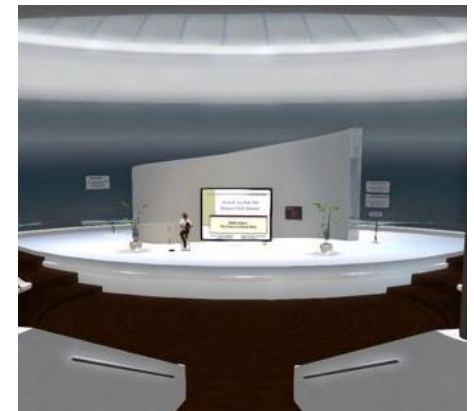
Sir Tim Berners-Lee's World Wide Web was conceived in 1989 as an academic and research tool, free from commercial influence. Designed for universal access, the Web's early ethos focused on sharing knowledge unencumbered by advertising. It was a vision of an egalitarian space, supported by consensus and open standards, with the expectation that content would be guided by knowledge sharing rather than profit. As the Web evolved, commercialization and advertising dominance challenged this ideal, leading to debates over user privacy, content quality, and the essence of the internet—a testament to the enduring significance of its original ad-free aspiration.



Virtual World Tours in Zoom



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



Innovative Educators



- 75+ years in Higher Ed
- 4,262 College Clients
- 600,000+ Educators Trained



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.

[Link](#)

A Tour Of The Virtual World: How To Engage Students & Create A Sense Of Belonging Online



DATE

Wednesday, January 25

TIME

3:00-4:00pm (Eastern)

Overview

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.

Objectives

- Learn about the evolution of Virtual World (VW) learning
- Examine best practices in VW education
- Learn about fulfilling student desires and demands for more immersive online learning experiences
- Discover how to provide a sense of 'place' in virtual world settings
- Critique samples of VW learning centers
- Explore new models of student engagement and interactive learning
- Discover the future trends and the holistic vision of educational possibilities
- Use a free field trip invitation to a virtual world campus

Courses Designed / Developed / Taught

BA & MA On-Ground, Online, & Mixed

Steven R. Van Hook, PhD
<http://wwmr.us>
steven@wwmr.us

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



California Lutheran
UNIVERSITY



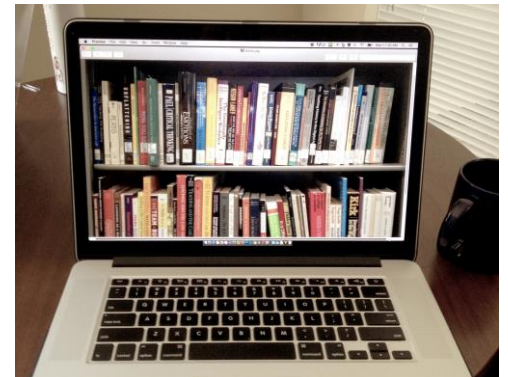
National University

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

[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



VW Commentary & Review

- University President / Officers
- SVP of Innovation
- Program Directors
- Course Designers
- Professors
- Domestic & International Students
- Educator Training Programs
- VW Education Groups



UCLA Custom Programs
Korean Students / Kerckhoff Hall



UCSB International Students

Recent Reactions to VW Ed

- “Don’t you need a headset?”
 - SVP Innovation
- “Do I *have* to wear the goggles?”
 - Professor
- “Our students can’t afford a headset.”
 - Nonprofit Education Program CEO
- “I already play in a 3D world – it’s called *life*.”
 - Student / Gamer

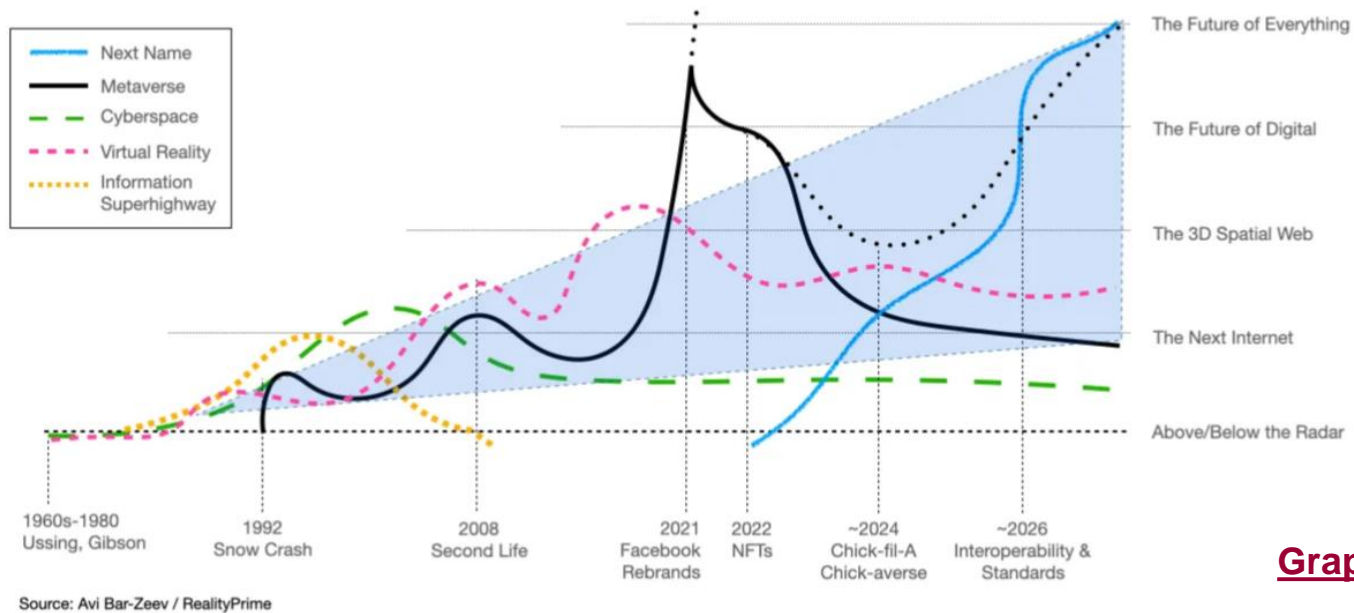


Top 3: PSVR 2, Apple Vision Pro, and Meta Quest 3

\$300 - \$600 range
\$3,500 for [Apple Vision Pro](#)

[Best VR Headsets](#)

The Metaverse Hype Cycle



[Graph Link](#)

‘The Metaverse Hype Died Down. Where Does That Leave Colleges That Invested In It?’

- Businesses may have backed off the vision of a large, billionaire-controlled metaverse because of its link to Meta (Facebook) ... but there are still lots of little metaverses being built in education.
- Even if it's fairly common for an enthusiast to get some momentum behind building a metaverse, it's less common to have that baked into the infrastructure or the budget of the institution.
- Some of the initial lessons that the university wanted to create, like organic chemistry and anatomy labs, required details that raised the expense and priced the school out.
- “I don't have rose-colored glasses on it; it was not a perfect experience for us. But it was the spark that lit the kindling.” – University Official.



[Article](#)

Metaverse Tumbles

- **‘VR Market Keeps Shrinking: Sales Plummeting 40% 2023’**
[CNBC](#)
- **‘Skepticism, Confusion, Frustration: The Metaverse Struggles’**
[The New York Times](#)
- **‘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](#)
- **‘Disney, Microsoft say Meh to the Metaverse’**
[The Wall Street Journal](#)



Futurism

TheStreet

The New York Times

Forbes

**INSIDE
HIGHER ED**

DAILY BEAST

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

‘Metaversities Face Financial Reality’

- “Faculty and students are taking to learning in the metaverse, but universities wonder how they will pay for it once Meta’s (\$150 million) two-year pilot program ends.”
- “The overall buy-in for the metaverse has cooled with the rising popularity of artificial intelligence.”
- “I think virtual reality and really, augmented reality, will inevitably be central to what a learning experience looks like,” he said. “But that’s probably 20 or 40 years away. We have such a long way to go.”



Morehouse College students use Meta's virtual reality headsets to enhance their learning in a microbiology class.



A "digital twin" of California-based Fullerton College, meaning an exact replica of the college campus in the

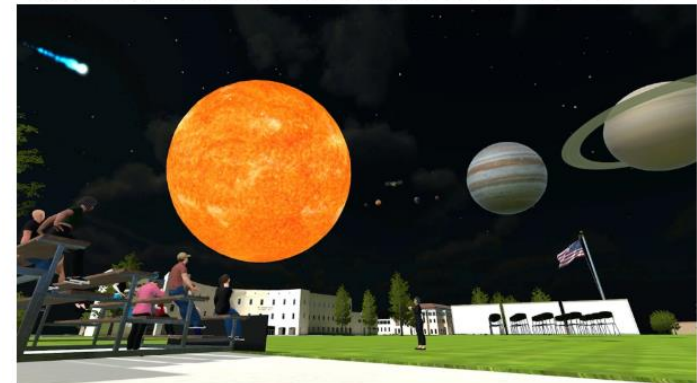


Meetings can also be held in the metaverse.

INSIDE
HIGHER ED



VictoryXR Chem Lab



New Mexico State University's metaversity includes an immersive solar system.

Article

Metaverse Innovators

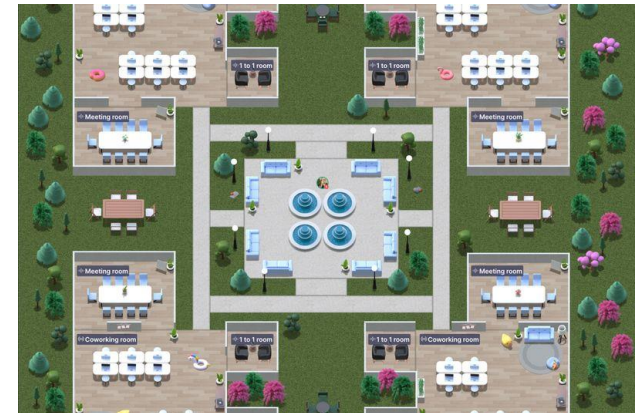


Students in VXRLabs Biology

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.

[Article](#)

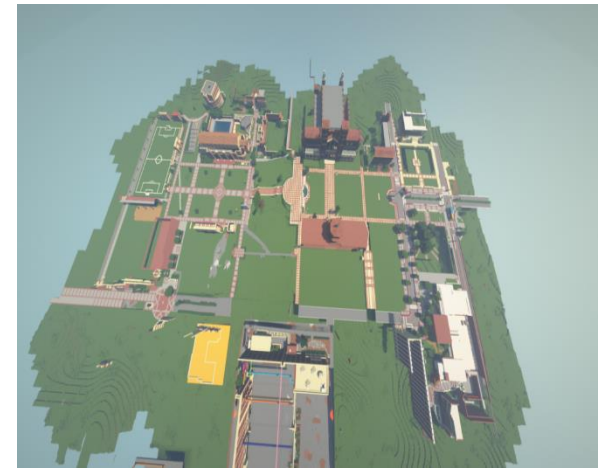
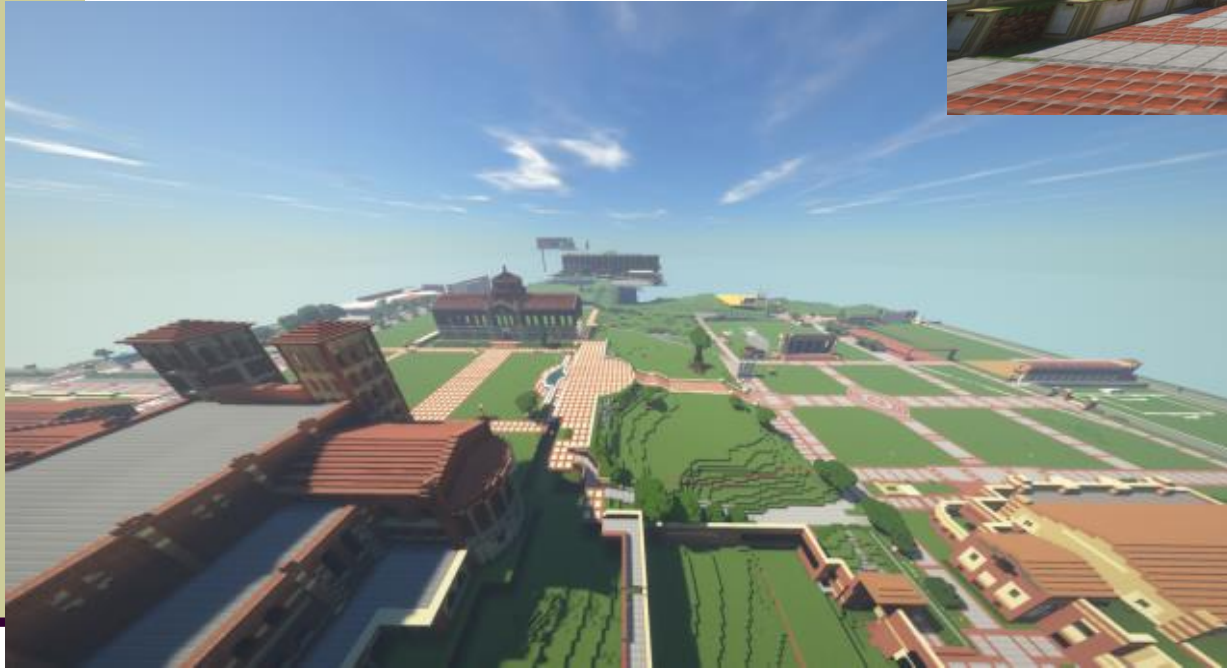


[Kosy Virtual Remote Teams](#)



[Roam Virtual Space](#)

UCLA in Minecraft



Molloy and co-administrator Chris Ko, a second-year electrical engineering student, created the server with funding from the UCLA Bruin Gaming. Only a few days before, UCLA had announced that spring classes would be held online as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

[Article Link](#)

NU Nursing 'Metaverse' Build

- With funding from a two-year, \$200,000 grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration, this pilot program is designed to increase access to quality health care in underserved communities.
- \$50,000 to purchase approximately 70 virtual reality headsets, and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors awarded \$25,000 to cover the cost of software and programming for the virtual reality headsets.
- Students how to treat computer-generated patients in the Metaverse, preventing harm to real patients. National University's digital twin campus allows students to teleport to virtual classrooms, lecture halls, lounges, and parks.



[Media Release](#)

Philip Rosedale on the Metaverse

'VR headsets are a blindfold to the real world ... We have to answer the question, why would I be there? Why am I using that space? We've got to get to that.'
– Philip Rosedale

c|net



GeekWire

[Second Life founder returns to revamp his original metaverse](#)



'Roughly a million users still use Second Life today, but there aren't a hundred million because "it doesn't work for grownups yet" – an avatar can't match the amount of information that's communicated by looking directly at another human's face ... perhaps ten years away.'

"The existential risk of humans being placed in 3D spaces is where you don't know where the ads are ... and the staggering amount of surveillance data you can get. I personally think there is no way we can go even a little way down that road."

[Article](#)

'Best use of VW learning may be in-world seminars and gatherings' [Transcript](#)

Rosedale & Scoble on Future Tech

- The 'sense of place' in VW is magical
- On producing quality VW activities: The budget for Grand Theft Auto 5 was \$400-million, for the detail and experience of it. But costs for teaching, and dancing, and hanging out and giving talks on stage, those ideas are going to carry the day
- Best use may be in-world seminars and gatherings



[Video](#)



[Scoble & Rosedale Transcript](#)

‘The Power and the Peril of Virtual Reality in HE’

- These tools stand to reshape higher education in some powerful ways. But the immense potential is still only that: potential.
- A future where universities and their learners are divided into virtual haves and have-nots is not difficult to imagine – and it must be prevented.
- After all, an institution may well be on the cutting edge, but for what purpose? Indeed, purpose must be a guiding force for institutions seeking to answer the most pressing questions about immersive learning.
- A well-designed VR curriculum might be entertaining and engaging, but if the strengths of the programme are not tightly aligned with the needs of educators and students, it accomplishes very little.
- Equity, access and inclusion must serve as the driving force behind any conversations related to integration.
- This is not a case of using technology for technology's sake but a purposeful effort to create inclusive healthcare training for a diverse cohort of learners.



Mark Milliron
National University
President / CEO



[Article](#)

Artificial Intelligence



Admissions

- Admissions officers 'wringing hands' over AI college applications
- By end of 2024 80% of admissions offices plan to use 'inevitable' AI for student application review
- [Article in Inside Higher Education](#)

Cheating

- Educators scramble to catch cheaters
- Some teachers use AI to prepare syllabi, lectures, presentation slides, exams, and grading.
- [Coursera AI for Teachers](#)

Employment

- Preparing students for demand of AI-enhanced workforce
- College 'cheating' with AI may be a careerwise talking-point
- [Article in Inside Higher Education](#)

The AI feedback loop: Researchers warn of 'model collapse' as AI trains on AI-generated content: [Article](#) **VentureBeat**

What Students Want per Survey

- Students expect 'total flexibility' in pandemic-era classroom
- 90% want to submit assignments online
- 68% want recorded asynchronous lectures
- 67% want online exams
- Majority (61%-83%) want some in-person interaction (small lab sections, group work, symposia)



‘Students Want Virtual-Learning Options’

- The share of students enrolled only in online courses nearly doubled since 2019.
- "Having everything transitioned to Zoom was actually the world opening up and not closing down."
- "Remote/hybrid learning plays a vital role in our mission to provide high-quality, accessible education that is affordable and tailored to the needs of our diverse student population."
- "Remote classes offer an affordable and time-saving way to continue learning."
- "Virtual learning makes taking a meaningful stand more difficult, because we're not breathing the same air and we can't see the nuances of one another's expressions and reactions as we can when we're present, live, together."
- "College leaders, she said, need to answer to "how they are supporting their faculty not only in developing their online pedagogy, but also in these questions of burnout, trauma, and stress."



Article

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Students Demand Virtual Learning So Colleges Adjust

- 40% of college administrators prioritizing demand for online learning; 35% reexamining strategies considering student demands
- Older students are also demanding flexibility in learning, expanding across student population
- This growing demand for online and hybrid education has likely not yet reached its peak
- Most administrators looking for balance by 2025 for a more-balanced in-person, hybrid, online courses



[Article](#)

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities Unsure How to Use New Tech

- University administrators see the need to implement education technology in their classrooms but are at a loss in how to do so
- While administrators are excited about offering new ed-tech tools, they are lacking knowledge and data to help them make informed decisions that benefit students and faculty
- Nearly 80 percent believe institutions will offer more hybrid courses in the future
- Almost all the administrators (92 percent) agreed more time will be spent in future classrooms using ed-tech products



[Article](#)

What Must VW & Ed Tech Do?

- **Prepare for show-time**
Online is here to stay: Some students will demand it. Administrators are looking for options and have a budget.
- **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

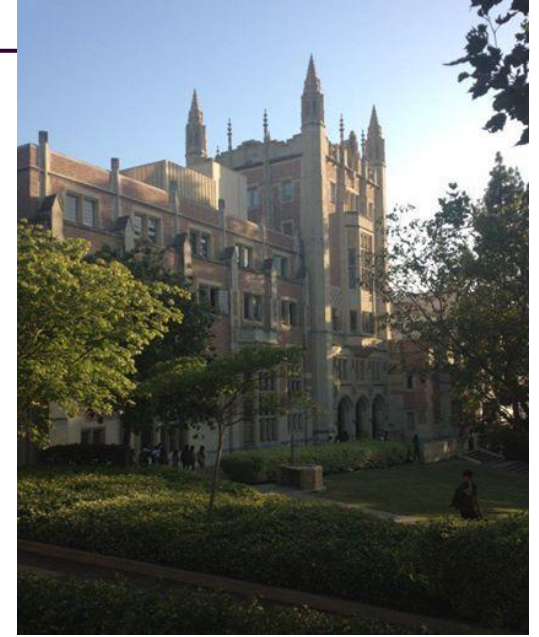


"The affordances and resilience of online delivery in this pandemic have permanently embedded online distance education as the advancing partner in the mode of delivery of learning."

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

Academia Realities

- Lower state funding
- Demographic dip
- Lower enrollments
- Stressed administration
- Limited budgets
- Adjunctification of faculty
- Demand for course conversions
- Costs of new tech
- Cuts into dining and campus revenue

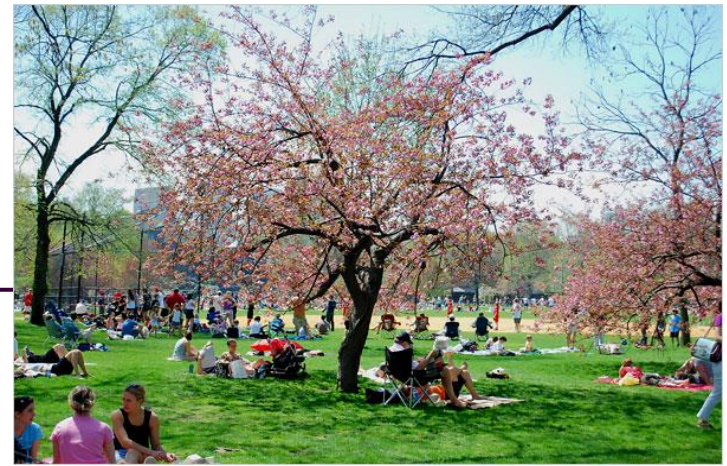


**The Year That Pushed Higher
Education to the Edge**
Chronicle of Higher Education

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](#)



A Dimensional Sense of Space



Landmark



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



Walk in Another's Skin



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

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

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

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

Cosplay

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



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.”

Educare VW Island

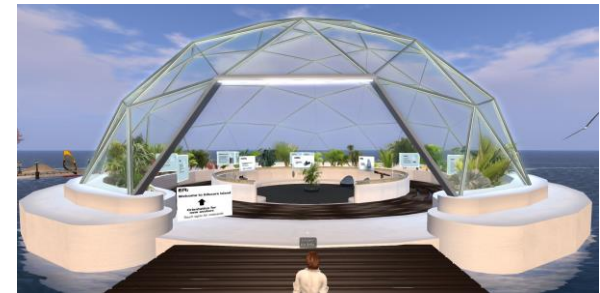
- Nonprofit educational NGO
- Simplified experience
- Orientation for educators
- Introduction to VW teaching



Landmark



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

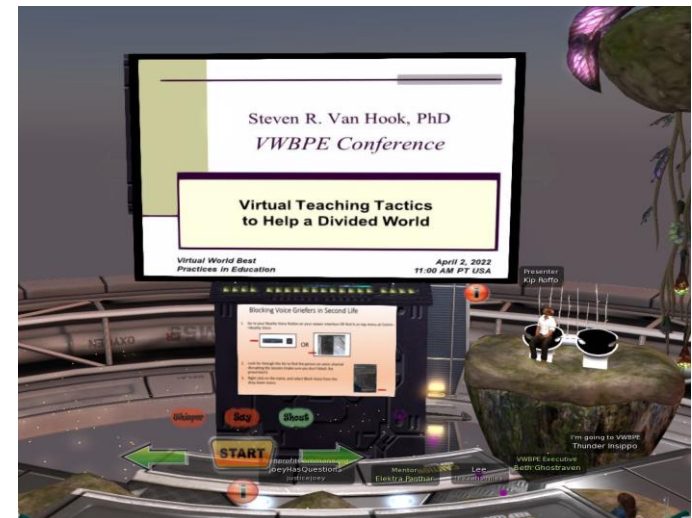


Presentations



VW Presentation / Seminar Topics

- VW Teaching Tactics & Trends
- Transcultural Course Design
- Primers & Prompts for Enticing Lectures
- Handling Difficult Students
- Global Trends for World Solutions in Education
- More Topic Abstracts ...



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

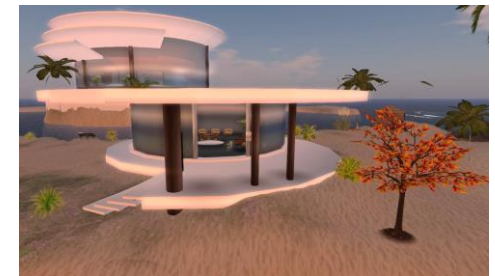
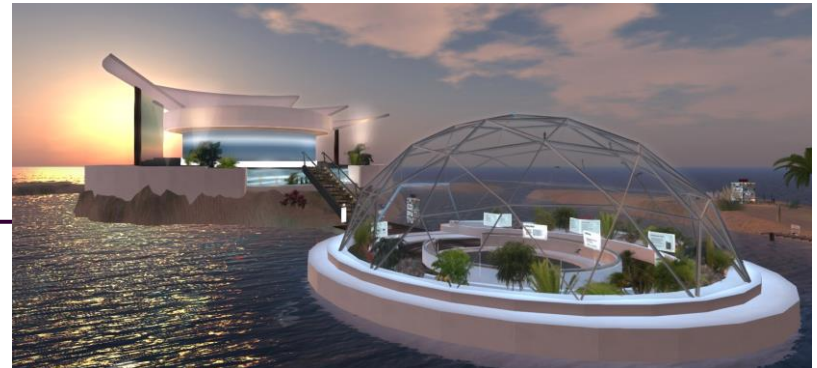
Chill and chat by the beach

Educare Sandbox

Rez and build your own stuff

Sunset Cove

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



Access

























Resources & Rides



:: Region-long water tunnel with video & music ::

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)



Contact

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