

This Month

March 2008

Person County Community College

Virtual
JCCC





Virtual Classrooms Rez Up

Sandy Hon is the barista for a Spanish-speaking coffee bar on the island.

Facility

Cover: Nick Greenup, Saul Epstein and Davy Jones, senior analysts, ETC, (left to right) with Jonathan Bacon, academic director, ETC, (sitting, chair) are developing JCCC's Second Life island.

If you're not having fun in your first life, maybe it's time to try Second Life – a 3-D world imagined and created by its residents. Here you can

experience life as anything or anybody you want to be. Second Life is a leveling experience. It blurs county, state and country boundaries.

If all this sounds too existential to wrap your mind around, better keep wrapping. More than 11 million people have already signed on as residents, and JCCC has bought a Second Life island. Twenty pioneers, JCCC faculty and staff, met with analysts in the Educational Technology Center in fall 2007 to acquaint themselves with the building blocks of a virtual JCCC, and class activity is slated for spring-fall 2008.

"In a Web-based class you have mostly text and 2-D images. In Second Life you can have animations, movies, sound, even running water, and it's all in real time," said Nick Greenup, senior analyst, ETC. "You can add a physics engine to make objects move. Your avatar can fly or teleport anywhere. You can visit a virtual Harlem, walk through a painting in the Louvre or climb the pyramids. In my opinion, there is no limit to what you can do in Second Life."

This is no pie-in-the-sky investment for the college. According to Greenup, there are more than 60 institutions with Second Life islands. JCCC already has almost one-fourth of its

classes online, and, according to a National Public Radio report, online is growing at many times the rate of higher education overall.

Analysts in the ETC are building a Second Life campus with the Hare and Bell and familiar brick sidewalks. But what's the fun of an exact replica when you can add a beach, Spanish-speaking coffee shop and a museum of modern art showcasing students' digital artwork? Parts of the island are public, parts private. JCCC's island has an 18+ age rating. And what's the fun of being plain old you when you can build an avatar – your persona in the virtual world?

ETC is building a library of basic classroom components so instructors can pick and choose things they want in their classrooms – from a traditional chalkboard for showing PowerPoints to an elaborate science lab complete with Bunsen burners and test tubes for performing chemistry experiments.

So how involved is this for faculty?

"It is up to them," said Davy Jones, ETC senior analyst. "They can make their Second Life classrooms as simple or involved as they want. Just like for Blackboard CE or regular Web classes, the ETC is here to help."

“How much an instructor knows about Second Life isn’t as important as how excited they are about it,” said Saul Epstein, ETC senior analyst. “If Second Life really takes off, ETC can do the heavy lifting so teachers don’t have to be burdened with it.”

“It’s fair to say that at this time, setting up a Second Life classroom is time intensive. Everything has to be created. Nick, Davy and Saul are working on basic building blocks, and there are a lot of educators already involved in Second Life who are sharing objects. But Second Life is not something you can casually enter into at this point,” said Jonathan Bacon, academic director, ETC. “Right now, Second Life is a pilot project at JCCC to see if there is a valid educational use for this technology.”

Jim Hillen, adjunct professor, Spanish, is looking at Second Life as a way for students to immerse themselves in Spanish through a virtual visit to a Spanish-speaking country. Hillen’s avatar, Limes Miles, can sit on a park bench in Barcelona conversing in Spanish.

“My motivation is to look at what Second Life can do for a foreign language,” Hillen said. “There are a lot of possibilities, and some caveats. I think JCCC’s island has to be protected. It has to have the same rules as the actual college – no smoking, no weapons and no alcohol.”

That point will be addressed by Dr. Michael Robertson, professor of classics and humanities, who will use his fall 2008 sabbatical to create guidelines and institutional policies for faculty and student users of JCCC’s island. He will also develop ways to incorporate Second Life into the Learning Management System (such as Blackboard) or as an alternative to it.

Dr. Paul Decelles, science professor, has planned his 2009 spring sabbatical to script and build science experiments in Second Life, setting up scientific inquiries with variable parameters.

“I am not a Second Life evangelist,” Decelles said. “The potential for teaching is there, but it needs to be investigated.”

Technically, Second Life requires a free membership and a free download of its software. Decelles says users also need a mid-level graphics card and sufficient computer memory to access the site.

ETC analysts, if not evangelists, are enthusiastic proponents. They point out your avatar can attend class from anywhere and argue there are some things better taught in Second Life than in the classroom. For instance? Things that are too dangerous or too expensive to reproduce in the



real world. Examples already developed in Second Life include how to repair an off-shore oil rig, replace tanks under a gas station, and negotiate diplomacy between two countries that share a river near a nuclear power plant.

Greenup believes people who are having fun learning in a virtual classroom retain information better and Second Life can be more engaging than Web-based classes. Jones agrees.

“People don’t just sit and listen in a Second Life classroom,” Jones said. “They participate. It’s an interactive site.”

At this point, Second Life is meant to supplement, not supplant, Web-based or face-to-face learning. Not all of the Second Life activity has to be scheduled real time. Just like in a traditional class, a Second Life class can be a mix of live lectures, student discussions and assignments completed at the students’ convenience.

“There are a lot of things about Second Life that can benefit students,” Greenup said. “A person can look however they want. A student who is in a wheelchair can move around, fly around and participate in a game of soccer, things they couldn’t do in the real world.”

“Second Life has the potential to encourage students and reinvigorate faculty who want to look at it as an additional learning management system,” Bacon said.

You can visit JCCC’s island at: <http://shurl.com/secondlife/JohnsonCountyCommCollege>.

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JCCC Strengthens Campus Security Plans

Department
of Public
Safety

Yellow crime scene tape barricaded the first and second floors of the Carlsen Center on Dec. 20, while JCCC Department of

Public Safety officers and the Overland Park Police Department SWAT team swept the area for suspicious objects. Their search was productive, yielding a grenade and dynamite.

This exercise was the first in a series of events to establish a plan of action in the event of an “active shooter” on campus. Sgt. Ryan Miller, OPPD, focused on the time-sensitive mission of an active shooter incident.

“It’s run and gun. In 5 to 10 minutes, the shooting is over,” Miller said. “But there is always the possibility of an additional slap in the face like at Columbine High School – IEDs (improvised explosive devices).”

During the half-day exercise, officers did a walk-through of the Carlsen Center to locate points of entry and exit for a shooter and determine points of cover and rescue for the campus community. The officers also practiced tactical team formation for the group designated to engage the active shooter.

“It’s good for the JCCC DPS and Overland Park police to work together,” said Dr. Wayne Brown, JCCC executive vice president, Administration. “That way DPS knows what OPPD wants and vice versa.”

Another plan for strengthened security is to

have an armed OPPD officer on campus for eight hours a day beginning the 2008 spring semester, serving for three to six months until the board of trustees makes a decision whether or not to have Kansas-certified officers carry weapons.

Carrying weapons is not new to a majority of DPS officers nor is it new to the college, where armed officers were present during administrations up until 1981, according to Dr. Gerry Baird, executive vice president, Administrative Services.

With the addition of two officers in September 2007, DPS has a total of 25 officers who represent 679 years of public safety experience. As of March 2008, 17 of the 25 will be Kansas-certified police officers, most former officers with Overland Park or Kansas City, Mo. police departments. That includes Gus Ramirez, DPS director, who retired as a major from OPPD and has 47 years of experience, and his supervisor, Brown, who served 20 years as an officer in the U.S. Air Force, working in law enforcement, among other duties.

“Certified officers must have 40 hours of continuing education and qualify with a handgun annually,” said Larry Dixon, manager, public safety. “The majority of our staff are certified officers whether we carry guns on campus or not. It’s not like we don’t know how to use a gun.”

If the decision is made to have DPS officers carry weapons, there will be a change in DPS job descriptions for future hires and a rewrite of processes and procedures regarding the continuum of force from pepper spray to batons to drawing weapons, according to Brown.

Brown estimates it will cost \$3,000 per armed officer for items that include a uniform, belt, baton, mace, weapon, ammunition and bullet-proof vest. Vests are already on order. DPS vehicles will have to be equipped more professionally with the addition of a light bar, siren, built-in radios and cage.

Exercises between DPS and OPPD will continue every six months.

“I would rather be prepared for the worst than just hope for the best,” Brown said. 🌿



Scott Wargin, DPS officer, participated in the exercise to prepare for an active shooter.

Shaffer Is Champion of Long-Term Care

For Penny Shaffer, program director, Health and Human Services for the JCCC Center for Business and Technology, there is no

separation between her vocation as a nurse with a specialty in geriatric psychiatry and her avocation as an artist.

“They are both part of who I am,” Shaffer said.

Shaffer came to the Center for Business and Technology in July 2006 after serving as the first director of education for the Geriatric Education, Research & Training Institute in Johnson County and establishing a number of inpatient geropsychiatry programs for hospitals and long-term care centers in Greater Kansas City and for the Menninger Clinic.

During Shaffer’s one-and-a-half years at JCCC, she has increased the number of HHS certificates from two to nine; increased the number of continuing education seminars by 30 percent; and organized the first Alzheimer’s Research Forum, which was cosponsored by the Alzheimer’s Association, at JCCC in fall 2007, and a Parkinson’s symposium for health care workers, patients with Parkinson’s disease and their caregivers in April 2008. Her goal is a major symposium each semester.

Shaffer is also taking continued education to health care facilities so that employees give up minimal patient-care time. She presented four lectures on topics such as dementia, difficult behavior, depression and the effect of psychotropic medications on the elderly at John Knox Village, Lee’s Summit, Mo., in 2007, and plans for other professionals to present at additional sites. As of this writing, Shaffer has a large grant pending with the Department of Labor, Department of Commerce and Workforce Investment Act to improve the quality of education for workers in long-term care.

While Shaffer has a nursing degree from JCCC, a bachelor’s degree in psychology from MidAmerica Nazarene University and a master’s degree in human resources from Webster University, she is just four credit hours short of a bachelor’s degree in fine arts. Her paintings of birds in their natural habitat hang in her Regnier Center office. Shaffer has taken classes in most media – pottery, silversmithing, photography and painting. While she hasn’t had time to paint recently (she works in watercolor and gouache), she still sculpts in



clay and shoots digital photographs.

Shaffer’s art and advocacy of improved long-term health care for the elderly are intertwined.

“The artistic side of anybody looks at new, creative ways to combine things,” Shaffer said. “To change the model of long-term care, we need to think outside the box. Right now nursing home care is structured on a linear schedule of time and place. We need to change thinking so that care is resident-centered.”

Shaffer has used her art to connect with residents in nursing homes. She asked residents with dementia to describe memories of a childhood home, which she drew on a whiteboard.

“I have used my art to validate people’s memories, spirit and persona and, in turn, learned some wonderful things about residents,” Shaffer said. “Just because people with dementia don’t know the day, year or the name of the president, doesn’t mean they can’t talk about relationships and spirituality. The essence of their personhood is not gone.”

Shaffer is a passionate champion of the elderly and improved aging services. For her, the best way to make a difference is through education – a way to open minds and teach people different ways of approaching long-term care, especially for the elderly with dementia. 🌿

Staff

Penny Shaffer, program director, Health and Human Services, is seen here with some of her paintings.

American West Scholar Looks East

Dr. Jim Leiker rests on Mt. Sinai during his Fulbright-Hays scholarship.

Faculty

Dr. Jim Leiker is an associate professor of history whose expertise is race relations in the American West. But Leiker's studies took

a decided turn east when he was selected for a Fulbright-Hays Scholarship in summer 2007.

Leiker spent three weeks in Egypt and three weeks in Israel during an immersion in the culture and history of both countries. The Fulbright-Hays group of 16 Americans were given the opportunity to meet with university professors, journalists, politicians and religious leaders.

"Intellectually, it was an incredible experience," Leiker said. "I think most Americans' conceptions of the Middle East, if they don't come from the media, come from the Bible or other Judeo-Christian traditions. We acknowledge those places as part of our religious heritage so I can't over-emphasize how moving it can be to see them. However, we also tend to have simplistic romantic images of how these places and people are supposed to look. We forget that real people are living there with contemporary problems – urbanization, poverty and religious extremism."

As a result of the Fulbright-Hays experience, Leiker met Dr. Mounira Soliman, who has been invited to be JCCC's scholar in residence March 31-April 4 (see story page 7).

Leiker's interest in the Middle East was piqued during his involvement with the development of a Middle East history class and with the U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant to infuse Islamic studies into the JCCC curriculum. Leiker is teaching JCCC's first *History of the Middle East* class in spring 2008.


Asked about the benefits of the experience, Leiker said, "I gained an appreciation of the disparities between two very different countries – Egypt, a Muslim society with a secular government, and Israel, a Jewish society with amazing internal diversity."

Leiker believes that his background in U.S. Western history was an asset.

"When you teach the American West or write about it, you deal with aridity and indigenous people – the American Indians," Leiker said. "Wherever I went in Israel and Egypt, lack of water seemed to be a constant. It's a resource more precious than gold, especially as it affects growing populations."

"I also saw in Israel views similar to settlement of the American West. When white pioneers came West, they saw open free land, available for the taking. They didn't see the people who were already living there. A similar attitude prevails in Israel: 'Before we came to Palestine, it was a wasteland; we have been the ones to improve it.' But Arab Palestinians say, 'We were always here. We built mosques, cultivated Islam and defended this land from Crusaders.' In Israel, as in most places, one is constantly confronted with dueling versions of history."

Leiker says the Fulbright offices in both countries gave balanced views. Scholars were exposed to tourist attractions, scientific research centers and universities, as well as areas of poverty and religious dissension.

"Before this trip, I thought of myself as a cultural relativist," Leiker said. "What I learned is that I really am an American with an American's typical naive attitude that with enough reason, any problem can be solved. What I saw with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was sobering because I realized that some problems are too complicated to be fixed. They simply have to be survived. The people of the Middle East have my respect for the issues they confront day-by-day, hour-by-hour." 



Dr. Mounira Soliman

Egyptian Scholar Focuses on Women's Issues

Dr. Mounira Soliman, assistant professor, comparative literature, in the English department, Cairo University, Egypt, will be

JCCC's scholar in residence the week of March 31.

Soliman will present *Women and Islam* at 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 2, in Hudson Auditorium, second floor of the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art. A second presentation on Middle Eastern literature will be presented from 11 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. Thursday, April 3, in the Craig Community Auditorium, second floor of the General Education Building. Both lectures are free and open to the public. During her visit, she will also be meeting with individual classes and with faculty participants in the Islamic Studies Title VI grant.

Earning a Ph.D. from Cairo University, Soliman examined magic realism in contemporary fictional work by African and African-American writers. Her research interests include American studies, African literature, postcolonial theory and gender studies.

Soliman's journal articles include *The Arab Child Between East and West* in *Alif: A Journal of Comparative Literature*; *From Past to Present and Future: The Regenerative Spirit of the Abiku* in *Contemporary Literary Criticism*; *Ethnic (-)American: With or Without the Hyphen* in proceedings of CASAR First International Conference: *America in the Middle East, The Middle East in America*, American University of Beirut. She is also the co-editor of *Developing American Studies at Arab Universities: Resources, Research and Outreach*, Cairo.

Soliman was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at New York University in 2005. She has presented widely at national and international conferences and participated in numerous seminars, including the Salzburg Seminar, Cambridge Seminar and Dartmouth Institute.

In addition to her academic work, Soliman has served as a consultant on several educational and cultural projects. She was the academic coordinator of the first regional conference on "Developing American Studies" in the Arab Universities, Cairo, by the Binational Fulbright Commission in Egypt (2004). She co-founded the American Studies Fulbright Alumni Circle and is a member of the Women and Memory Forum (a nongovernmental organization for gender studies) and coordinated the rewriting of workshops and storytelling performances of the Gender-Sensitive Fairy Tales project (2000).

In the area of teacher training, Soliman has served as consultant on prestigious international educational projects and conducted training workshops on active learning, basic methodology, educational technology, civic education and research skills.

JCCC's scholar-in-residence program is designed to bring visiting scholars to students, faculty and the public. Soliman's residency is sponsored by Dr. James Leiker, associate professor, history, and Carolyn Kadel, professor and program director, international education. For more information, contact Leiker at 913-469-8500, ext. 3673. 🌿

Scholar in Residence



Murray Is Grammy-Bound



Rapper Kanye West, pop singer Christina Aguilera and JCCC adjunct associate professor of music Alan Murray all have something in common: they are nominees in the 50th Annual Grammy Awards.

Murray is a member of the Kansas City Chorale, a professional choir of 12 men and 12 women under the direction of Charles Bruffy, who also directs the Phoenix Bach Choir. Together the two groups recorded Grechaninov's *Passion Week*, which received five Grammy nominations, including Best Classical Album and Best Choral Album. Released April 2007 on the Chandos label, the CD was recorded in surround sound at Blessed Sacrament Church, Kansas City, Kan.

Since moving to Kansas City in 2002, Murray has taught at JCCC and been director of music and media at Asbury United Methodist Church, Prairie Village. He has sung with the KC Chorale since 2003, having previously been with the Phoenix Bach Choir. Murray has a bachelor's degree from New Mexico State University and a master's degree from Arizona State University, both in vocal music/pedagogy.

At JCCC, Murray teaches three classes and has 10 to 15 private voice students.

"I work with voice students in all musical genres – jazz, pop, classical and even heavy metal – and I encourage them to find their own sound," Murray said. "I tell them they won't achieve success by trying to sound like someone else."

Murray plans to attend the Grammy Awards.

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When planning your estate, remember Johnson County Community College. For more information, call Emily Fowler, JCCC Foundation, 913-469-3835.