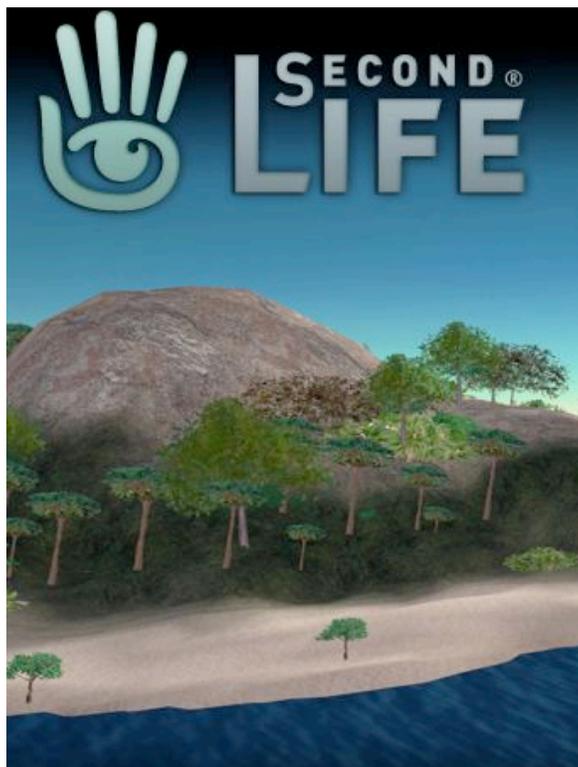


# ENHANCING THE PRESENCE OF MHCC IN SECOND LIFE

## BRINGING OUR INSTITUTION INTO THE METAVERSE



CONTENTS	PAGE
Abstract	2
I. Project Goals	3
II. TLC Goals	4
III. Innovation	4
IV. Evaluation	4
V. Post-Project Responsibilities	5
VI. Progress and Timeline	5
VII. Use of Funds	5
VIII. Personal Comment	5



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**Abstract:**

This report proposes a methodology to simultaneously reach our students in a novel way as well as to enhance the presence of Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) in a novel technology medium. We propose to accomplish these feats by providing access to and information about the Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) environment known as Second Life.

Owned by Linden Laboratories, Second Life is a virtual domain whereby one can fly, teleport, socialize, and learn in a variety of locales and with no cost to the user. In the last six months, Second Life has seen an explosion of growth potential for educators everywhere, and some institutions are partnering with Second Life schools to offer real world degrees while participating in Second Life classrooms. The potential for Second Life is virtually boundless, and new opportunities arise each day.

We wish to bring MHCC into Second Life through a series of workshops, TLC Salon presentations, student office hours, promotional materials (i.e. creating clothing and banners for the MHCC community) and more. Other institutions in Oregon and Washington have considerable presence in Second Life already (including Portland Community College and the University of Oregon), and we think MHCC should be on par with our competitors.

Note that this document may be viewed on the World Wide Web: **<http://gst-d2L.com/TLC>**

Thank you for considering our request. If we can answer any additional questions you might have, please contact us. Thank you for your time,

Walter Shriner, Valory Thatcher and Michael Russell

## **I. Project Goals:**

**Second Life** is a 3-D virtual world entirely created by its residents and managed by Linden Lab. Second Life opened to the public in 2003 and now boasts over 10 million users. It is free to join Second Life, and the software is compatible with both Windows and Macintosh computers.

Entering Second Life can be thought of as visiting another country for the first time. Users see a true digital continent complete with buildings, waterfalls, spacecraft, and much more... but, just like in other countries, the people and culture form the heart of this digital world. People can visit (either through microphone or typing) with others, socialize, trade ideas, listen to music, watch movies, and much more... money can be exchanged between the \$USD and the local \$L ("Linden dollars") and land can be purchased to construct a house or houses... the possibilities are endless!

In Second Life, one chooses an avatar to be your guide through the "Metaverse" (a term used to describe the Second Life experience.) The user controls the avatar as they explore and interact with Second Life, its inhabitants and creations. In addition, avatars can be altered to match the desires of the user: hair color, clothing style, body shape, sex, ethnicity, and even species preference can all be altered within SL.

The authors have each created their own avatar and have been exploring Second Life for a few months. What we have seen is amazing, especially for education! Second Life has a rich tapestry of educational networks devoted to specific fields (science, computer programming, etc.) with a rich array of social modalities (text chat, voice chat, conference calls, much more) to keep people tuned in and interested to the subject matter.

The *"Enhancing the Presence of MHCC in Second Life"* project proposes to bring the Mt. Hood Community College community into Second Life to a much greater extent than exists currently. We believe that there is great potential by interacting with this world, and we believe this potential could be used to attract and maintain students to our campus in "Real Life" (i.e. increase and enhance FTE.) We propose to accomplish these feats by fulfilling the project goals outlined briefly below:

- We wish to offer presentation(s) through the Teaching and Learning Cooperative (TLC) showing the value and enticing the community into the realm of Second Life.
- We wish to hold a "TLC Salon" one afternoon whereby interested faculty and staff could join us in Second Life for a discussion on the possibilities inherent to the Metaverse.
- We hope to provide office hours for students within Second Life as a means to attract them to this world and excite them about the possibilities within
- We hope to create a series of promotional materials that proudly pronounce the banner of MHCC within Second Life. Such materials might include shirts, hats, flags, badges, and other items that MHCC community members can wear with pride while visiting places in the Metaverse.

We wish to show others the joy at being a member of the Second Life community. Through a combination of written works, live demonstrations, virtual meetings and much more, we wish to enhance the presence of MHCC in the Metaverse and awaken our community to the incredible potential of this new virtual realm.

## **II. TLC Goals:**

This project supports several of the TLC initiatives. It serves to generate excitement about teaching advances and best practices. It encourages faculty to explore a potentially useful online world and use the novel interface to interact with students, fellow faculty and colleagues around the world.

This project will also help support and create community for sharing expertise and successes. Our goal is to enhance the presence of MHCC in Second Life. By having a presence, we hope to build a greater virtual community and market TLC events within the world. We will also articulate our experience to the TLC and support other faculty interested in exploring Second Life. We will also be building in-world marketing materials to share and highlight the virtual presence of MHCC.

Overall, this initiative supports the personal development of our skills navigating, interacting and building in Second Life. It is our goal to help contribute to this rapidly expanding world to serve the mission of the college and the goals of the TLC.

## **III. Innovation:**

We are unaware of anyone in the MHCC community attempting to enhance the presence of Mt. Hood Community College within Second Life to the extent that we are attempting here. All three of the authors have been in Second Life for a while, but not long enough to create a tangible presence... yet! We hope to be the first to accomplish these tasks.

The basic tools necessary for enhancing MHCC's presence in Second Life are readily available to the MHCC community. The programs required for the computer are cross-platform and generally free or already present on most computers. All that is needed to start this enhancement of MHCC in Second Life is a team of technological vanguards to lead the way, mastering the technical obstacles and sharing the results with everyone interested in developing such protocols for themselves, and we would be honored to be MHCC's vanguards!

## **IV. Evaluation:**

We hope to create several opportunities for interested instructors and staff to discover for themselves about the power within the Second Life environment. We shall provide a TLC Salon session for Second Life instructors and staff to meet within Second Life and explore its usefulness through direct involvement. We will provide office hours for interested students and staff to attend in a "drop in" basis to ask questions about procedure, etc. Finally, we will provide promotional materials (shirts, flags, etc.) to be distributed freely within Second Life as part of a "branding campaign" to enhance the presence of MHCC within the Second Life Metaverse.

## **V. Post-project Responsibilities:**

A presentation will be arranged before the end of Spring Term 2008 for interested faculty and staff that introduces Second Life. Later, by the end of Fall term 2008, we shall provide a Teaching and Learning Cooperative Salon session to interested faculty and staff already involved in Second Life as a means to discuss and disseminate the information we've gathered and created. A formal paper outlining the specific details and progress of this project shall be created and distributed to interested parties. A web site for our proposal (<http://gst-d2L.com/TLC>) will contain these documents as well as any other pertinent information. In addition, we can always be reached for personal consultation either through electronic mail ([watler.shriner@mhcc.edu](mailto:watler.shriner@mhcc.edu), [valory.thatcher@mhcc.edu](mailto:valory.thatcher@mhcc.edu) or [mike.russell@mhcc.edu](mailto:mike.russell@mhcc.edu)) or telephone (503.491.7362 (WS), 503.491.7337 (VT) or 503.491.7348 (MR)), and multiple presentations can be arranged to meet the interests and expectations of the MHCC community - we are happy to share the knowledge gained!

## **VI. Progress and Timeline:**

All of the plans outlined in the Project Goals section will be complete by December of 2008. The results of the project will be available for colleagues at this time. This project should be completely finished - including the paper, presentation, and all research - by December of 2008. All of the timelines are dependant on the TLC's wishes - we are *very* flexible.

## **VII. Use of Funds:**

Personnel:	\$1000 (split 33.3% between the three participants)
Materials:	\$0
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$1000</b>

Learning the software protocols and implementing the social networking strategies required to create an enhanced presence in Second Life will take considerable time, and although we have some experience with the dynamics of Second Life, we have not adequately applied them to an educational setting.

We believe that the ability to make MHCC a viable force in Second Life would benefit anyone within the MHCC community with an interest in reaching their students in novel ways. It would provide an additional learning opportunity for our students and keep MHCC technologically competitive with other colleges. All we need are the resources to get started!

## **VIII. Personal Comment:**

We appreciate your time in considering our request. If we can answer any questions that this paper does not address, please feel free to contact either of us using the information given below. Thank you for your time,

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