



Learning Communities Initiative

Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice Part I

A. Learning Community (LC) Title

Second Life as a Pedagogical Tool for Improving Statistics Homework Sessions

B. Community Curator(s). Who has prepared Part I of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Chang Liu, submitted one (date unknown)

C. Abstract (75 Words or less) *if it has changed*

It didn't change.

D. Learning Community Members, units, roles. List your community members, their units or disciplines and roles, *if they have changed*. Who has been added, deleted?

Core members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions
Diana Schwerha	Industrial and Systems Engineering, Ohio University	Project director; leader of learning community
Chang Liu	Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Ohio University	Co-Director
Sertac Ozercan, Tripura Vadlamani, and Lev Neiman	Graduate Students	Content contributors

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Associate Members	Unit/Discipline	Contributions

E. Background & Context. Briefly describe your Learning Community Project and the context within which you undertake it. What do you intend to achieve? What technologies are you using and how? What desired ending(s) would you like for the story of your LC and its project? What types of institutional support do you have? What types of support would you like?

I wanted to complete this project because I wanted to create a way to improve out of class learning for my ISE 306 class (Engineering Statistics). We wanted to see if teamwork in a virtual world setting would improve student learning. We used Second Life and created team exercises that were done in the Human Factors and Ergonomics Laboratory in SL. We plan to use it for classes in the future. We also plan to write a larger NSF grant for curriculum development that would include some of this content but would be more encompassing. We have been very happy with our support from OLN and from OU. We are very thankful for it!

F. Description of your early work, planning and preparations. Describe the preliminary work of the learning community as you prepare for your community project and for attending your Region’s Learning Institute (April 13). What were the key components in your planning and preparation for your LC (Roles? Methods? Timelines? Coordinating schedules?)? What were key issues and concerns, and, how did you sort them out? What were the key successes and what impacts have they had? Are there any vignettes that illustrate these?

We completed this project for the winter quarter and the preliminary analysis was presented at the mid-year meeting. Our key concerns were content and delivery. We had a few methodological issues with revising the Groupthink exercise for this application. Overall, I think the new group activities were very successful but the

revised groupthink was only marginally successful (this I believe has to do with the usability of the exercise). We have had an excellent time working together on this project and I believe that all the team members have learned much from it.

G. Community building and project development. Describe early phases of building your community and developing your collaborative project. What key challenges and problems do you face and how do you handle them? What did they - or will they - lead to? What successes have you enjoyed to date? Are there any vignettes of potential consequence or impacts that you can share? What resources are you using to support community building and how are they making a difference?

I believe that this was a very successful project. We had a goal in mind and we accomplished it. Usually we had weekly meetings (many of which had food—definitely a good thing when faculty and students are involved). We wrote a conference paper and had it accepted at the Zone 1 ASEE conference at West Point. The project was well-received there. I was lucky in that we were able to recruit wonderful students to work on the project. The project could not have been done without their contributions.

H. Planning Your Assessment Strategies. How will you evaluate your work/successes? How will you assess member learning, including technology? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project? Both formative (this Case Study is part of this) and summative methods should be used.

We have written a conference paper and we plan to write a journal article. These papers summarize the project and student learning. One of the best assessment methods was that the project was good enough to be used as pilot data for a NSF Phase II grant. This grant will be due in January 2009. I have included the conference paper and will send the journal article when it is complete.

THIS IS THE END OF
Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice
Part I

[Submit Part I to eburns@shawnee.edu as a MS Word attachment by **April 13.**]

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Learning From Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice
Part II

**To be worked on after your Learning Institute
and finalized before the June 15th EXPO.)**

I. Community Curator(s). Who has prepared Part II of this Portrait on behalf of your LC? What date was it completed?

Diana Schwerha, July 31, 2008

J. Key Resources. Who and what are the beneficial people, organizations, materials, websites, and other resources you have utilized? What help/support did you get from instructional designers, IT staff and other tech support personnel? *What types of support did you receive from departments, colleges, administration? Of all resources, which were essential and why were they essential?*

<p>We have benefitted from our graduate students, from ISE's lab coordinator (Nihar Shah) and from designers that work on SL for the university. All of these resources were essential:</p>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• We needed OU's support for the maintenance fees and for the design support• We needed the ISE department's support so that our computer labs would have SL loaded and would be ready to use in the project• We needed the creativity of the project team• We needed the hard work from the faculty and students |
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<p>Most of all, we needed the volunteers from my ISE 306 class who volunteered to participate in the study.</p>

K. **Your Assessment Strategies.** How did you evaluate your work/successes? How did you assess member learning, including technology? your community's growth over the year? student learning or change connected with your project?

What have you observed or concluded at this point with respect to member learning, your community's growth, and student learning?

This project was set up to be experimental in nature. We wanted to see if this type of out-of-class learning would help students in the class. Overall, the students who participated in the SL project did better than those students who did not. We cannot answer exactly why—it could have been that they were better anyway or it could have been that they learned more of the basics in a more complete way. These fundamentals could have then helped them later in the course. The summary of the experiment is included in the conference paper.

L. **What others know about what you've done.** Beyond your community members, who else is vested in what you're doing? How did you communicate and update these stakeholders on your efforts and successes? What questions do your colleagues have? What have you told your students about your learning community?

Our department is familiar with this project, in addition we have presented it at a regional ASEE conference and at the end of year OLN conference. Most people don't have any idea of how SL could be used for statistics, but when they learn about it they are interested. We have not had any direct inquiries from people in SL who have used the project. We set up a statistics team and generated some interest, but I don't have any documentation that people outside of OU have used the content.

M. **Dissemination.** What visible bridgework -- structural elements, findings, lessons, ideas, beauties, legacies, processes, relationships, etc -- is your learning community leaving, that inspires others to *build their own bridges as they walk on them*? What digital resources have you developed that you will place into the E-Learning Athenaeum of Ohio? What might members offer, such as informal "brown bag" lunches, research, write articles, give presentations about your work? What is important to tell others "not to do"?

We wrote a conference paper and we plan to write a journal article. I would be happy to explain the project to OLN members in the future. In addition, this work will form the basis of a larger project in the future.

N. 20/20 Hindsight. If you were to start over again, what would you do differently and why? What key challenges, problems, solutions, struggles, and failures, would you handle differently? To what degree would you change your goals? What additional successes would you enjoy? *What worked - or didn't work -- and why?*

The project was very ambitious; I probably would have scaled it back a bit. We were lucky that we had great graduate students who could get the work done.

As I mentioned before, I don't think the Groupthink part of it was extremely successful. In addition, the students didn't really like the timed aspect of it (it was for 2 2-hour sessions). They would have preferred to use it during their own time preferences. We will build in this flexibility into future projects.

O. What's next? Will your community continue? Formally? Informally? What could be next in another cycle of reflective practice? The next steps may not be totally predictable and yet, they would take you in another fruitful direction that builds upon your community's growth and knowledge.

We plan to write a Phase II NSF curriculum grant.

This is the end of Part II
Learning from Experience: Developing Portraits of Practice

Please bring a Final Copy of PORTRAIT OF PRACTICE - Parts I and II

to the Ohio Learning Network's June 15, 2007 EXPO at the Reese Center, Central Ohio Technical College/OSU-Newark, and send a copy to your Southeast Regional Center.

Thank You!