JOINING THE 21ST CENTURY: DISABILITY, DISTANCE EDUCATION AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

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OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

I. Overview of EmployAble Project

II. Virtual Worlds: Creating a World Without Barriers
   ● Introduction to MUVE
   ● Considerations for accessibility
   ● Examples

III. Communities of Practice to Promote Accessibility and Universal Design
   ● Benefits and challenges to distance learning
   ● Communities of practice to create solutions
   ● Examples

IV. Resources
Overview of Project

EmployAble: World Without Barriers

- Virtual employment center using Second Life as a platform.
- 2 year innovation grant funded by the Kessler Foundation.
- Partnership between University of Hawaii, Abilicorp, Virtual Ability.
EMPLOYABLE

Major Components/Rooms

- **Skill Builder**
  Enhancing employment skills

- **Match Maker**
  Building connections between employees, employers, and mentors

- **Access Info**
  Supporting hiring and retention through information
**CREATING A WORLD WITHOUT BARRIERS**

**MUVE Technology**

- Multiple User Environment
- Avatars in a 3-D online environment
- Key Benefits
  - Real time
  - Immersion
  - Anonymity
  - Interactive
WORLD WITHOUT BARRIERS

Accessibility of MUVE

- Familiarity and level of technology skills
- Access to equipment, software, internet
- Device output independence
World Without Barriers

Examples

- Building specific skill sets
- Accessing information about accommodations, accessibility, technology, opportunities
- Bringing together people with disabilities, employers, educators, mentors
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Benefits and Barriers to Distance Learning

- Bridge barriers of distance, cost, environmental access.
- Bring together teachers and learners from diverse perspectives and cultures.
- Accessibility – ability to access material, content and mode of delivery
- Universal Design – designing material, content and mode of delivery for best learner outcomes
Using COPs to Address Challenges

Challenge: How do we actually implement accessibility and Universal design so that people with disabilities benefit from distance learning?

COP: A group of stakeholders with diverse perspectives but a common goal.
Communities of Practices

Examples

- Identifying individual objectives that lead to common goals.
- Using social media and new technology.
- Making it easy – usability and low investment.
- Documenting achievements for easy implementation.
**RESOURCES**

EmployAble www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable

W3C Web Accessibility Initiative www.w3c.org/wai

Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) www.cast.org

Easy Chirp http://www.accessibletwitter.com/

WebAIM http://www.webaim.com

Virtual Ability www.virtualability.org

Radegast www.radegast.org