A World Without Barriers: Disability and Virtual Technology

Tuesday, 27 March 2012
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm
Room 302A
Hawai‘i Convention Center

This 90 minute workshop will demonstrate and explore areas of emerging technology such as Multi User Virtual Environments (MUVE) that hold promise for education and employment options for people with disabilities and those in the field of disability.
Presentation Agenda

1. Overview of EmployAble Project
2. Virtual Technology & Accessibility
3. Virtual Environments & PWD
4. Second Life Demonstration
Employable
World Without Barriers
Signature Employment Grant
Center on Disability Studies
Kessler Foundation
Area of Need

Need for:

**M**odern, accessible and practical employment preparation and networking options for people with disabilities.

**I**nnovative ways of addressing employment challenges faced by Veterans, including those with TBI.

**E**ngaging employers in an innovative process for employing and retaining people with disabilities.
Population and Participants

Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injury
Estimate 19% Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq have TBI.
TBI effects work-related skills such as communication, physical coordination and cognitive processing.

Other People with Disabilities
Only 21% of working-age people with disabilities nationally and 3% of people with disabilities in Hawai‘i are employed.

Employers
Employers want employees who can do the job.
Often involves high level of communication and technological skills.

Participants
500 anticipated users of Employable.
50 participants in pilot study of users with disabilities.
Half will be Veterans with TBI.
Virtual Employment Center: First of Its Kind

- Accessible
- Anonymous
- Interactive
- Multisensory
- Real-Time
- Self-Directed
- Virtual Skill Building

Employment driven by new technology

Requires higher level of technology skills

New venues for recruitment and training
Project Goals

**Overall Goal**
Develop and demonstrate a highly innovative and viable, model virtual employment orientation and support center.

**Objective One**
Develop Virtual Employment Center resulting in improved resources, tools and networking for persons with disabilities and employers.

**Objective Two**
Demonstrate Virtual Employment Center resulting in increases in employment options, access and retention for people with disabilities.
Project Operations

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
Project Outcomes

Model Virtual Employment Center, “EmployAble” that is sustainable and replicable.

50 people with disabilities supported to gain or retain employment.
Virtual Technology

Web 2.0

- Social Media - Twitter + Facebook
  Interactive
  Self-defined communities

- Virtual Environments (Worlds) with Multi-users (MUVE)
  Why Second Life?
Accessible Media Technology

- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)
  World Wide Standards for Accessible Technology
- Mouse-free Navigation + Screen Reader Access
- Digital Divide
MUVE for PWD

● Social interaction
  (examples: Virtual Ability Island, Wheelies, Veteran Amputee group)

● Education + Training

● Benefits:
  place
  + time
  + safe zone
Research on TBI & Virtual Environments

- Long-term memory skills improved
- *Immersion* increased learning
- "Improve assessment of real-world functioning"

Corporate Training & Education in Virtual Environments

- IBM Global Training in Second Life

"Our USC participants were impressed by the interactive nature of the GIO Conference. The tools and approach inspired us to re-examine how we use our own Second Life environment," Jerry Whitfield, associate director, Marshall School of Business, said.
Corporate Training & Education in Virtual Environments

- Harvard Graduate Education & Law Schools

"I think that the Second Life had quite a lot of advantages for people. One of the main things is that Second Life really allowed us to create a sense of class community — something that develops fairly naturally in a face-to-face class. So students appeared at class and had that chance to meet each other, something that rarely, if ever, happens in distance education classes [using] previous technologies. And that helped keep students engaged in the class."

Rebecca Nesson, an affiliate of Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society and an instructor at the Harvard Extension School,
Second Life Virtual Environment
Virtual Ability Island

Welcome to Virtual Ability Island

Virtual Ability Island has been developed through a partnership between The Alliance Library System and Virtual Ability, Inc. The goal of the partnership is to develop an island with an orientation and training center for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses. The entire island is accessibility-friendly for new and experienced residents and will provide ongoing training for people who want to search for and evaluate health information. Funding for this island came from an initial grant from the National Library of Medicine, and is being sustained through the generosity of individual contributors.
www.cds.hawaii.edu/employable

Email: employ@hawaii.edu

Twitter: EmployAbleVEC

Facebook: EmployAble VEC

Signature Employment Grant
Center on Disability Studies
Kessler Foundation
March 27, 2012