



Like ducklings learning to walk, students file into Diegoland as Champion Valiant (foreground left) and Randall Allen (foreground right) look on.

# Diegoland Hosts Continuing Education Students

by Surfdaddy Orca

A field trip into Second Life for continuing education students? As announced by The Seventh Sun last week, tour guide avatars [Randall \(Cornish\) Allen](#) and [Carolyn \(O'Barr\)](#) took a group of students into the virtual world. First stop: avatar Champion Valiant's Diegoland.

Champion, a real world radiologist raised in San Diego, welcomed the students to Diegoland, "Bienvenidos! This is my version of heaven, a virtual reality San Diego. When I came to Second Life, I was a lot like you. I didn't know what this place was. It was unfamiliar—sort of frightening at times. I didn't know how to start... so I got help. There are a lot of talented folks here, and they can help you."

The no-credit class of thirty-five students from San Diego Community College District Continuing Education included a variety of individuals ranging in age from 18 to 65 wanting to establish a presence in Second Life. I asked about a syllabus for the class. Randall replied, "No syllabus. I just gave an intro to SL and talked about behavior guidelines. They wanted to know about buying land, fees, and so forth. I answered a couple dozen questions." He said that some students watched as others logged into Second Life and stumbled into Diegoland.

Randall continued, "We [Randall and Carolyn] mainly teach Adobe Creative Suite and Apple applications. SL is an exception, but fun!" Asked whether their orientation is to characterize Second Life more as a tool or as a social site, he said, "We, in part, try to get people thinking about perspective, 3D art, and business ethics—the graphic design business and ethics. Some want to learn scripting, building, adding textures, and so forth."

I was intrigued by the use of Second Life to teach ethics, "We talk about branding and how honesty is the best policy. And how social networks include individuals who brand themselves."

Long-time Second Life residents attending the class joked about "ducklings" as students arrived slightly dazed and disoriented while trying to sit on the virtual benches at the Organ Pavilion.

I could easily imagine the excitement and chaos back in the classroom as students gathered around glowing computer monitors and struggled to control their avatars and to pan, orbit, and rotate their camera controls. Here is some of the multi layered conversational chat as the students arrived. Randall replies to the question "Are we ready to start?"

Randall Allen: almost hold on

Petes4evryng Kidd: champion- how often are you at diegoland

freereed Freenote: hello everyone@!@!

Arobase Grigorovich: Ottawa, what is this ring flashing?

Raina Zabaleta: My twin, I'm just glad we have clothes, Anamari

Champion Valiant: hey Free!

Pablo Runningbear: Lee jewel: are you part of the class

Access Aeon: Oren Darwin. Hi!

Anamari Letov: Yes, that is a relief. When does this event start?

Randall Allen: lol

Lee Jewell: Pablo Runningbear

Oren Darwin: Hi Access, How are you?

Cher Harrington: any minute

Randall Allen: still chaos here in RL

Lee Jewell: Yes I am!

Garry4EvrYng Bebb: dymond is this your first time in SL?

Champion Valiant: chaos

As to be expected in trying to manage a class of thirty-five students, there was indeed initial chaos—both in real life (RL) and in Second Life (SL). However, things finally settled down and Champion started his talk. After the talk and a virtual tour, I attempted to instant message (IM) some of the students to get their reaction to the field trip. Sampling their online profiles, I could see a range of Second Life experience, although many had opened accounts within the last few days. I was especially interested in students who had opened accounts the day of the field trip.

After several attempts to politely IM students, I made contact. The student (a male avatar) explained that he was a student with a college degree employed in healthcare. He said that he was taking the class “to gain a presence in Second Life” and that IBM was building out a Second Life parcel for his employer. Whether the other students I attempted to contact were too shy or simply overwhelmed with the experience, I was unsuccessful in contacting them.

Continuing education in the twenty first century is already not-your-father’s classroom. Whether “game” or “parallel universe,” Second Life offers an opportunity for students to interact with creative designers and builders, and to learn about branding in an online environment that uses tools such as search, chat, and IM—tools that are increasingly a matter of survival in an online world.



Students attend a talk by Champion Valiant at a virtual version of San Diego’s famous Spreckels Organ Pavilion.

A recent episode of PBS’s Frontline series, “Growing Up Online,” profiles a new generation of students who have grown up on the Internet. The takeaway from this episode is that Internet technology is here to stay as a social medium, and that students need to be taught appropriate online behavior and ethics to avoid cyberbullying and predation. Randall and Carolyn’s visit to Diegoland is precisely this: an innovative use of online social networking technology in the classroom that includes behavioral guidelines and business ethics.

Diegoland, as described in previous editions of The Seventh Sun, includes such famous San Diego landmarks as Balboa Park’s California Tower, Dome, and Botanical Building; the Hotel Del Coronado; the U.S. Grant Hotel; the Point Loma Lighthouse; and the haunted Whaley House. It has an extended social network of nearly 1000 avatars, with daily events at two venues: The Diegoland Cafe and Club Wicked. Along with Ham Rambler’s Dublin, Diegoland is one of the more popular regions (in this case, a high-traffic Class V sim) in Second Life.

**BIENVENIDOS!**

- CAFE DIEGO**
- CLUB WICKED**
- THEMED MUSIC**
- DAILY EVENTS**
- SHOPS GALLERIES MUSUEMS**
- GORGEOUS VIEWS**
- HISTORIC LANDMARKS**

Welcome to **Diegoland!**

Enjoy the look and feel of San Diego, California, romantic settings, good fun, and great company!