



Going Virtual

One of the most amazing benefits of teaching in the 21st century is the availability of digital tools that allow us to develop creative and engaging learning experiences for our students. Yet, the collection of available tools is not the most important consideration when thinking about digital technology; rather, it is how the technology's design can be used to accomplish course learning outcomes (Kuhlenschmidt & Kacer, 2010). As faculty members then, our first thoughts should be: What am I trying to accomplish or communicate? What do I want my students to learn or be able to do? After answering these questions, the process can move forward to finding the best possible tool to match the identified learning outcomes.

A first step in helping students achieve course learning outcomes is to make sure they are engaging with course content and that the messages they receive from instructors are high quality. Technological tools offer new and interesting ways to engage with digitally savvy students in a manner that captures their attention and provides some variety in course delivery. In a previous issue of *The Toolbox* ("Make a Movie and Be the Star," 2014), the process and resources for creating a movie were shared as a way of communicating about upcoming class events and engaging students with course content. Some faculty members, however, may find the idea of standing in front of a camera to be a bit disconcerting. For the camera shy, there is another option: creating video presentations featuring an avatar along with the sound of their own voice. Tellagami is a free mobile app (available for iOS and Android) that can be easily learned and used to deliver course content, reminders, or recaps of key points in a more engaging manner.

Using Tellagami

Tellagami allows users to create 30- or 90-second video messages that can be shared via e-mail, social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), or text message. Developing a gami is relatively easy, as the following steps suggest.

- **Download the app.** The Tellagami app can be downloaded to a smartphone or tablet at no cost. The edu version (\$4.99) provides access to a number of features available as in-app purchases (e.g., text-to-speech function, character customization, a variety of event-related resources) in the free version.
- **Create a background scene.** Upon opening the app, you will have a plain white screen that can be altered by copying in a background of your choice (or choosing from one of those provided by the app).
- **Create your avatar.** You can create an avatar from the collection of available tools (e.g., gender, skin tone, eyes, head size, hair, top, pants, shoes). You can choose to create an avatar that mimics your own appearance or craft an avatar who springs from your imagination.



“ In virtual reality, it's more about capturing and creating worlds that people are inhabiting. You really are a creator in the way the audience lives within the world that you are building.

—Chris Milk
American
entrepreneur/
innovator

- **Add dialogue.** Click on the “Message” button and record 30 seconds of dialogue. The ability to record a 90-second video message is available for an additional cost.
- **Share your video.** Create a link to distribute to students through a platform of your choosing.

Ways of Using Tellagami in Your Teaching

There are a variety of ways that you can use Tellagami to engage your students in active learning:

- Send your students a gami every week (either by e-mail, text message, or post on your discussion forum) to remind them of the week’s activities and upcoming assignments. Create a quirky character, with a voice to match, who performs this task for you.
- As a way of prompting students to engage with reading assignments, have your avatar do a brief commercial for what lies ahead in the pages of your textbook.
- Create an avatar that will serve to introduce discussion questions in the classroom or in your LMS-based discussion forum.
- A common goal of first-year seminars is to orient new students to a campus and its resources. Scavenger hunts are a fairly typical strategy for doing this. Gamis with actual backgrounds from various locations or services on campus can be used to create virtual scavenger hunts.

While gamis can provide an innovative way to deliver course content, instructors can also use them as a tool for helping students process what they are learning.

- Ask students to reflect on what they have learned in a particular class session by summarizing the most important take-away in a gami or by creating a video response to a prompt you provide.
- Assign your students the task of creating a gami during the first week of the semester as a way of introducing themselves to the class. Use your discussion forum as a gallery for the gamis and provide students with the opportunity to connect with one another online. This will help build a sense of community with your students.
- Have students create a brief poem (e.g., limerick, haiku, cinquain) about their experience as a first-year student. Then ask them to create a gami where they share their poetic genius.
- At the end of the semester, have students create a brief testimonial about the most memorable thing they learned or experienced (with guidelines). Embed the videos into a movie program (e.g., iMovie, Windows Movie Maker) and share it during the final class.

It is important to note that learning to use any new digital tool will take some time and effort. Additionally, as you use the tool you will become more proficient and efficient. Consider this as an investment in your student’s learning.

Go virtual today!

Additional Resources

Tellagami Website: <https://tellagami.com/>
Tellagami App Tour: <https://tellagami.com/app/>

Link to a sample Tellagami: http://media.indwes.edu/media/Tellagami/1_ud8xknod

References

- Garner, B. (2014, July). Make a movie ... and be the star! *The Toolbox*, 12(6). Retrieved from the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition website http://www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox/search_archive.html
- Kuhlenschmidt, S., & Kacer, B. (2010). The promise of technology for college instruction: From drill and practice to avatars. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 123, 23-32, doi: 10.1002/tl.406.

What's Happening at The National Resource Center

Conferences and Continuing Education

Conferences and Institutes

Save the Dates

36th Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience

February 11-14, 2017

Atlanta, Georgia

Early registration deadline: January 26, 2017

www.sc.edu/fye/annual

Institute on Sophomore Student Success

April 21 – 23, 2017

University of South Carolina

Columbia, SC 29206

Online Courses

The National Resource Center offers online courses on topics of interest in higher education. The courses provide participants the same content and opportunities for interaction with peers and the instructor as traditional (i.e., classroom-based) learning environments while taking advantage of pedagogy and teaching techniques that are not possible or common in those settings. The courses use tools such as e-mail, threaded discussions or forums, listservs, and blogs. Enrollment is limited to 25 participants, and attendees will earn 1.5 continuing education units for each course. Visit <http://www.sc.edu/fye/oc> for more information.

Online Course Offerings

Infusing Emotional Intelligence Learning into Your First-Year Seminar and First-Year Experience Programs

March 27-April 21, 2017

Facilitated by Korrel Kanoy, Professor Emeritus, William Peace University

Awards and Recognition

Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition Award Recipients

Clark University's LEEP (Liberal Education and Effective Practice) Center Advising Model and Goodwin College's Education Opportunity Programs are the 2016 recipients of the Institutional Excellence for Students in Transition Award. Presented at the 23rd National Conference on Students in Transition in New Orleans, Louisiana, the award recognizes institutions that have designed and implemented outstanding collaborative initiatives enhancing significant transitions during the undergraduate experience. Award recipients have demonstrated the effectiveness of the initiative in supporting student success, learning, and development at a variety of transition points beyond the first college year and in responding to unique institutional needs.



Early Registration Deadline January 26, 2017

Join Us

The Annual Conference on The First-Year Experience provides an ongoing forum where higher education professionals can share experiences, concerns, and accomplishments related to supporting student learning, development, and success in the first college year. We invite you to be a part of productive collaborations, conversations, and relationships as we gather in Atlanta this year.

Conference Co-hosts

- Emory University
- Georgia Institute of Technology
- Georgia State University
- Kennesaw State University



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

WWW.SC.EDU/FYE/ANNUAL



National Resource Center Exhibits and Presentations

Like many of you, the staff of the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition is actively involved in the conference circuit. We are pleased to share the following upcoming opportunities to hear about the results of research studies conducted by the Center, learn about best practices, and meet National Resource Center staff members.

Multiple HIPs and Integrated Learning: Considerations for Coherence, Equity, and Quality. Concurrent panel session by Kevin Eagan, UCLA; Jennifer Keup, National Resource Center Director; Jillian Kinzie, Indiana University Bloomington; Andrew K. Koch, John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education; and Tia McNair, Association of American Colleges and Universities, at the AAC&U Annual Meeting; January 26, 2016, 4:15pm to 5:30pm; Hyatt Regency; San Francisco, California.

Academic Peer Leaders: Resurgent 20th Century Activity Leads to Gains in 21st Century Outcomes. Research Session by Jennifer Keup, National Resource Center Director at the AAC&U Annual Meeting; January 26, 2016, 2:45pm to 3:15 pm; Hyatt Regency; San Francisco, California

Publications

The Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition is currently accepting nominations (including self-nominations) for editor. We invite you to nominate and/or forward this call to colleagues who meet the criteria for this position.

The editor will serve a three-year term, overseeing the publication of six issues of the *Journal*. Successful candidates will hold an earned doctorate in higher education administration, student affairs, or related field; have published in refereed, research journal(s); served as a reviewer for refereed journal(s); have knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies; and demonstrate an interest and expertise in issues related to or initiatives designed to support student transitions throughout the college years. Preference given to candidates who have faculty status at an institution of higher education, previous editorial experience, and familiarity with the *Journal of The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition*. An honorarium, limited travel funding, and administrative support is provided by the National Resource Center.

To request a complete job description or to apply, please contact
Dr. Tracy L. Skipper
Assistant Director for Publications
National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition
University of South Carolina
1728 College Street
Columbia, SC 29208
tlskippe@mailbox.sc.edu

Sign up for



Looking for new teaching strategies or fresh ideas for student transition programs? *E-Source*, the National Resource Center's online newsletter for college transitions, offers a wealth of information. *E-Source* also is accepting submissions for future issues. To view the archives, review submission guidelines, and receive content alerts for new issues, please visit: www.sc.edu/fye/esource.

The Toolbox

Author: Brad Garner

Telephone: 765.677.3341

E-mail: brad.garner@indwes.edu

Address: Indiana Wesleyan University
4201 South Washington Street
Marion, IN 46953

The Toolbox is an online professional development newsletter offering innovative, learner-centered strategies for empowering college students to achieve greater success. The newsletter is published six times a year by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

The online subscription is free. To register for newsletter alerts and access back issues, please visit www.sc.edu/fye/toolbox.

Publication Staff

Graphic Designer: Joey Hilton

Assistant Director for Publications:

Tracy L. Skipper