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LINDENWOOD DEVELOPS INNOVATIVE IMMERSIVE ARTS AND CULTURES HUB

March 31, 2021

By Hazel Denother

Imagine a space where students, faculty, and community members can gather to explore and discover, a place full of cutting-edge interactive technology that will alter and enhance the way we teach and learn. This is Lindenwood's vision for the new Immersive Arts and Cultures Hub, a groundbreaking project first dreamed up by the School of Humanities in 2019.

The Hub is being designed in collaboration with the School of Arts, Media, and Communication (AMC), with which the School of Humanities will merge in July to form the School of Arts and Humanities. The Schools are excited about the project and about the upcoming merger; Dr. Kathi Vosevich, dean of the School of Humanities, states, "We welcome the new College because this is going to be part of our inter- and multi-disciplinary approach to our students and our courses, and we want to develop the power skills that are important for today and for the future."

The project is still in the early stages; the College is building the software for the Hub first, and then the university will find a space on campus for the resource, which will house a plethora of projects, labs, and initiatives. The Hub will support the creation and exhibition of original content through 360-degree virtual reality, and it will be the site of original virtual museum and gallery exhibitions through the use of game engine technology. With the space's resources, students and faculty will be able to complete complex data visualization studies and create original applications for distribution in STEAM, Oculus, and smartphones for educational and informational purposes in a range of disciplines. Furthermore, the Hub will supply training resources and an expansive immersive realities database.

Lindenwood faculty already use many digital humanities resources in their classes, but the college is striving to capture this momentum and focus it strategically through the creation of the Hub. The professors look forward to implementing more of these valuable tools into their curricula. In Fall 2021, many former AMC students (soon to be Arts and Humanities students) will, depending on their courses, be required to utilize Oculus Quest 2 headsets. Joseph Weber, assistant professor of studio art and the

director of art and design in the School of AMC, explains, “Our Art & Design faculty are integrating virtual reality into their teaching to help close the engagement gap between traditional and online programs by providing a shared experiential component, giving Lindenwood students a chance to experience the subject matter in a deeper manner.”

The Hub will serve as an engaging and impactful classroom tool, allow Lindenwood to connect with the community in new ways, and be an intellectually exciting space used across the university. The integration of this technology in students’ lives will help prepare them to be successful in their future endeavors. Dr. Jeremy Carnes, Associate Professor of English and Digital Humanities taskforce Leader in the School of Humanities, remarks, “The Immersive Arts & Cultures Hub will help prepare our students for careers as creative, conscientious producers and analyzers of media in a world where perpetual technological transformation is the norm.”

The Immersive Arts and Cultures Hub will ensure that students develop the digital awareness they need today while giving them the power skills and global consciousness they require to succeed in the future. The Hub will provide infinite potential for creativity, innovation, and collaboration. Dr. Vosevich enthuses, “We really look forward to all of the possibilities!”