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Collaborative web-game launches post-secondary students into space

Your assignment: a foursome bungee jump in space at supersonic speed while dodging fiery asteroids that are powerful enough to wipe out life on earth. P.S. Don't forget to take lots of pics and be sure to post them on your wiki.

Although it may sound like an impractical science lab to some, it's not. It's a glimpse of an all-new online learning challenge called Dare2BDigital – an opportunity for online learners to connect their intellect to the sciences and technologies that are changing our world.

Co-developed by BCcampus and B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions, Dare2BDigital will fast become the reality game of choice among outgoing, tech-savvy, puzzle-loving, post-secondary students scattered throughout the province. Launched February 4, the six-week game is broadcast "live" over the Internet for the world to see and join.

With so many people hooked-on reality TV and online social networking sites, Dare2BDigital's creators decided to package the game in a way that provides an opportunity to utilize the latest and greatest forms of online technology out there. The end result: a "virtual open house" for B.C.'s public post secondary institutions, faculty, students, sponsors and a live online audience.

Teams representing Thompson Rivers University, University of Victoria, Kwantlen University College, Simon Fraser University and University of B.C. will put their over-the-top creative and technical skills to the ultimate test and share all of the details through a myriad of new-media channels including creative on-line videos, graphics, links, virtual classrooms, blogs and innovative forums to compete for coveted prizes.

No team? No worries. There are challenges and prizes for the audience too! At any time, anyone can log into the game and contribute to discussions in the online forums, take the audience challenge and comment on blogs. The audience plays a huge role in this game as they, along with the panel of judges will cast their votes for their fave teams.

Who's the brainiac behind Dare2BDigital's first challenge? Meet Ron Evans. He is a math, physics, and space science and astronomy instructor at North Island College's Bella Coola campus. Evans, along with colleague Albert Balbon and fellow think-tankers, have already developed and continue to develop science-based programs with the assistance of various partner organizations. The programs let students control lab equipment and perform exercises remotely with a web browser and robotic controls similar to scientists collecting data through robotic deep-sea submarines or through the Mars Exploration Rovers.

For some, the cross-pollination of technology from the Mars project to online learning may seem straight-forward; and for others, well, completely head-spinning. Dare2BDigital teams don't need to worry about the nitty gritty of technology; however, they will be expected to unleash its potential.

"I'm excited to be working with BCcampus and taking online learning to an even greater level, one that really pushes the boundaries," states Evans. "Most importantly, I hope the teams have lots of fun

working through their weekly challenges. It will be entertaining to see what these creative minds come up with.”

What would really make Evans happy? Knowing that more colleges and universities are considering the purchase of ultra-high-tech equipment that staff and students can access 24/7, world-wide at their convenience rather than purchasing large amounts of mediocre equipment that can only be used by the institutions’ students during scheduled labs. As the discussion continues, Evans’s excitement diverges and he begins talking about how the world can live better together. He states that space exploration may be part of that astronomical puzzle. And then he begins talking about harvesting solar energy in space and obtaining material resources from asteroids and comets. Say what?

The game is on! Find out more. Be part of this global dare. Log-in today at www.event.Dare2BDigital.ca

About BCcampus

BCcampus serves B.C.’s entire public post-secondary system including institutions, educators and students by identifying, developing, acquiring and implementing technologies and services that enhance online learning. It also administers online program development funding, provides reusable online instructional resources for instructors and develops shared service and best practice options for institutions.

A complete listing of all of B.C.’s public post-secondary schools and a search tool for online courses can be found at www.bccampus.ca .

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