

# Educational Virtual Site Visit

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## **Background**

Within the past few decades, the advancement of technology has become the driving force of increased innovative ideas and has opened doors to a world of endless knowledge and information. One way technology is used to inform people is virtually, specifically through virtual site visits. A virtual site visit allows a person to experience a location without having to physically be at the location. Virtual site visits can either be live or pre-recorded and are usually conducted with the use of digital media such as photography or video. In this research, live virtual site visits were conducted in the main Engineering building of Southern Polytechnic State University with students of a local elementary school called Marietta Center for Advanced Academics (MCAA).

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the research project was to test how informative a virtual site visit would be to students who did not have the opportunity to visit the campus of Southern Polytechnic State University, and to have them experience how life would be at college if they chose a career in the Engineering field.

## **Design/Method**

The virtual site visit consisted of a videographer, who was stationed at the college, a professor, who was there at the elementary school to help explain, and students who attended the Marietta Center for Advanced Academics. The devices used during the virtual site visits were an IBM ThinkPad Laptop, Panasonic 26x optical zoom video camera, headphones with microphones, wireless networking and a video calling program called Skype. Two virtual site visits were conducted at different times with two different groups of students, one being third graders and the other being fourth graders. For each group, we had the students set up in a classroom that had a projector and screen connected to the school's networking server. The students were connected to Skype which allowed them to connect with the videographer at SPSU who gave them a tour of the Student Center, Architecture Building and Engineering Building. The videographer was equipped with the IBM ThinkPad, which was connected to the SPSU's wireless network, along with the Panasonic video camera and headphones with microphone that was connected to the laptop. In the Engineering Building, the students were able to see the labs that consisted of different types of machinery used to teach college students. The students were also able to have an interview with a professor, Dr. Adeel Khalid, who discussed aerospace engineering and answered the many questions that the students inquired toward him. Throughout the entire process, students were able to engage, ask questions and request to have the videographer zoom in on certain areas of interest.

## **Results**

Students from both classes expressed a high level of interest toward the information that was shown to them. Discussion between the videographer and students was very engaging since the students asked several questions and even shared some of the knowledge they knew about machinery and engineering. The part of the tour that was of real interest to the students was the discussion of aerospace with the Dr. Khalid, especially dealing with the space shuttle. Specifically, the students were fascinated by the information of the launching a space shuttle how the jettison process of the fuel tanks from the craft.

## **Conclusions**

The results proved that virtual site visits are beneficial in relaying information in an educational environment. Further virtual site visits will be conducted in an attempt to inform more students about the possibility of learning without actually having to be at a location.