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Virtual reality brings life-like anatomy to county students



OCTOBER 30, 2018

By Toni Gibbons

“The world’s first virtual dissection table” as proclaimed on the Anatomage website is scheduled to become a part of the Anatomy and Physiology curriculum offered by Northland

Pioneer College (NPC) at the Little Colorado Campus in Winslow and the White Mountain Campus in Show Low in the fall semester of 2019.

Funded by a supplemental grant to the existing Technology to Advance Learning Outcomes in Northland (TALON) grant in the amount of \$150,670, the virtual dissection tables, which feature the images of real cadavers, is an attempt to bring a lab science to the rural and remote students that NPC serves.

According to Renell Heister, TALON grant project director, the TALON project is a five-year, grant-funded opportunity “to make post-secondary educational opportunities available to students across Navajo and Apache counties, through a robust network of audio-visual linked classrooms.”

Currently, 14 high schools throughout the two counties are involved in the TALON project, including Winslow, Joseph City, Holbrook and Snowflake.

“TALON is a part of a Federal Title III program to service low-income and ethnic minority students,” shared Heister. With the goal of serving more than 550 students during the five-year time span, the project offers high school dual enrollment courses that are transferrable to all Arizona community colleges and universities.

“One of the challenges we have faced as a college, and now with the TALON program, is how to deliver science labs to remote sites,” shared Heister. “We offer remotely most of the core classes students need for their degrees, except for science, due to the lab requirement.”

When the supplemental funding became available this summer, the NPC staff scrambled to meet the four-week timeline. Coming in under the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) application that was offered in the funding, the application pursued creating a hands-on lab with the Anatomy and Physiology program through the use of a virtual anatomy table.

“These tables are being used as an anatomy training tool in medical schools,” said Heister. “You can simulate as close as possible a dissection without having an actual cadaver in front of you. The technology is amazing. You can make incisions or just say ‘I want to see the muscular system or the nervous system or a cross section of a bone.’ For our college to have access to this kind of technology to give to our students is a really big deal.”

The goal is to create the curriculum during the summer of 2019

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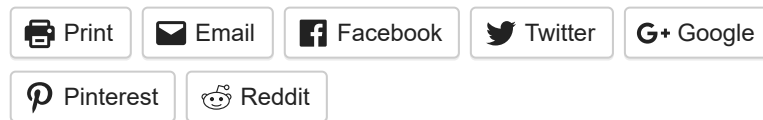
and then provide the tables to students in BIO 160 at the Winslow and Show Low campuses. “We want to first allow our teachers to deploy the Anatomage table technology in their live science labs and then we hope to roll it out remotely to our other campuses,” said Heister.

From there, the dream is to take Anatomage to a few of the high schools that are being serviced by the TALON Project, although there are many technical hurdles to overcome for that dream to become a reality. While Heister is hopeful about the remote capabilities for the NPC campuses, concerns remain as to whether the existing internet connections will allow it to be useable at a number of the high schools involved in the TALON project.

NPC serves the rural and remote regions of over 21,000 square miles with nine campuses and centers in northeastern Arizona, which includes the tribal lands of the Hopi, Navajo and White Mountain Apache people.

For more information on Anatomage, visit www.anatomage.com.

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